Al-Mizan - An Exegesis Of The Qur'an - Volume 1

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Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i

Translated by
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Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i [2]

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This is the first volume of this renowned commentary on the Holy Qur'an written by Allamah Tabataba'i, one of its greatest modern commentators, and translated by Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi.

This volume contains the exegesis of Surah Al-Fatiha and Surah Al-Baqarah till verse 93.

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Translator(s):

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During the editing and digitisation process, the DILP team identified various typographical, spelling, transliteration, and referencing inconsistencies. To improve clarity, readability, and accuracy, grammatical and orthographic corrections have been made, and the transliteration of Arabic names and terms has been standardised where appropriate.

In addition, sections and subheadings have been introduced to improve navigation and make the content more searchable in an online environment. As a result, the digital version diverges from the printed volume.

Users wishing to see the translation as it was published should refer to printed copies available in bookshops. Those who understand are advised to refer directly to the original text.

Miscellaneous information:
Al-Mizan - An Exegesis Of The Qur'an - Volume 1 From Surah Al-Fatiha (1) to Surah Al-Baqarah (2) verse 93 By Allamah as-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i Translated by: Allamah Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi Published by: W.O.F.I.S., World Organization for Islamic Services First edition 1982/1402 Translated from the Arabic al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Qur'an Beirut, 1393/1973 (3rd ed.) Published by: P. O. Box No. 11365 - 1545 Tehran – IRAN http://www.wofis.com

Person Tags:

Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i [2]

Foreword

-1-

The late Islamic scholar, thinker and philosopher, al-'Allamah as-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i (al-'Allamah at-Tabataba'i) came from the celebrated Tabataba'i family of Tabriz. For the last three centuries, this family has produced generation after generation of renowned religious scholars in Azarbayjan (Iran). They are descendants of the second Imam, al-Hasan Ibn 'Ali (peace be on both of them). The clan is also referred to with the title, al-Qadi.

Al-'Allamah at-Tabataba'i was the son of as-Sayyid Muhammad Ibn as-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i. al-'Allamah was born in Tabriz on 30/ 12/ 1321 A. H. (17/3/ 1904 C. E.). His father died in 1330 (1912). The orphaned child grew up in Tabriz, and after completing the religious education there, in *circa* 1341 (1923) he went to an-Najaf al-Ashraf (Iraq), the most important centre of the highest Shi'ah religious learning.

In an-Najaf al-Ashraf, he began his higher studies with such illustrious scholars as ash-Shaykh (al-Mirza) Muhammad Husayn (son of Shaykhu al-Islam al-Mirza 'Abdu 'r-Rahim) Na'ini al-Gharawi (1277/1860-1 - 1355/1936) and ash-Shaykh Muhammad Husayn (son of al-Hajj Muhammad Hasan, Mu'inu 't-Tujjar) Isfahani (1296/1878 - 1361/1942).

These two, together with ash-Shaykh Diya'u 'd-Din (son of Mawla Muhammad) 'Iraqi (1278/ 1861-2 - 1361 / 1942) are held in the highest regard in the Shi 'ah world. They were among the most prominent scholars not only in the fields of the Shi'ite jurisprudence and the fundamentals of jurisprudence, but in all Islamic subjects. The opinions they expounded and the theories they established have been followed by all those who came after them. Each of them founded his own school of thought. They trained

thousands of Shi'ah scholars and jurists; and all the *maraji 'u 't-taqlid*[1] of the Shi'ite world, to this day, are their students. The Isfahani was a philosopher, unsurpassed in his time, a man of literature and a good poet of Arabic and Persian; he was a genius whose achievements made others to look upon him as their ideal. The Na'ini has carved for himself a niche in the history because of his bold opinions and decrees in the political and social life of the Muslim *ummah.*

al-'Allamah at Tabataba'i was much influenced by these two teachers, (and especially by the Isfahani) in the development of his thoughts and knowledge. A third influence was of as-Sayyid Abu al-Qasim Ja'far (son of as-Sayyid Muhammad al-Musawi) Khwansari (1313/1895-6 - 1380/1961), known as "the mathematician." al-'Allamah at-Tabataba'i was proud of learning the mathematics from him. Also, he wrote a book on some topics of higher mathematics, applying therein some special theories of his teacher. The book is mentioned in *adh-Dhari'ah*, vol, ii, pp. 232-233.

He learned philosophy and metaphysics from as-Sayyid Husayn (s/o as-Sayyid Rida s/o as-Sayyid Musa) al-Husayni (1293/1876 - 1358/1939) of al-Badkubi[2] a well-known teacher of philosophy and related subjects in those days.

In ethical and spiritual field, he received his training from his relatives, as-Sayyid (al-Mirza) 'Ali Agha (s/o al-Mirza Husayn al-Qadi) Tabataba'i (1285/1869 - 1366/1947), a well-known divine who established a school of spiritual and ethical training which is flourishing to this day.

All those influences combined in al-'Allamah at-Tabataba'i to create in him a well-balanced academic and spiritual personality. A well-respected authority on religious subjects of jurisprudence and its fundamentals; a philosopher of independent views and various new theories; an inspired model of ethical and spiritual perfection, who not only taught morality but lived it - this was al-'Allamah at-Tabataba'i. Yet it will be correct to say that his scholarship was overshadowed by his fame and prestige as a philosopher and a spiritual man.

al-'Allamah at-Tabataba'i returned to Tabriz in 1353 (1934) where he was welcomed as a religious scholar. There he spent his time teaching higher philosophy to willing disciples - but it was a small place for his talents. In 1364 (1945) he migrated to Qum, the most important centre of religious education in Iran. In Qum, he remained engaged in imparting knowledge of ethics, philosophy and exegesis of the Qur'an to the students who had already attained to a high level of erudition. There he remained till his death on Sunday, 18/1/1402 (15/11/1981). May Allah bestow His mercy on him. Amen.

Many religious leaders of the present generation were and are among his students and disciples, the most famous being the late Murtada Mutahhari (1338/ 1920 - 1399/ 1979).

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al-'Allamah at Tabataba'i's fame rests on his various academic works - the most important being his great exegesis of the Qur'an, **al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Qur'an**. It may correctly be said to be the foundation

stone of the academic prestige which al-'Allamah at-Tabataba'i was accorded in the Muslim world.

Among his other works is *Usul-e falsafah wa rawesh-e realism* (The Fundamentals of philosophy and the Doctrine of Realism). This book is a comparative study of Islamic philosophy and various modern anti-Islamic schools of thoughts, especially the Marxism. His disciple, late Murtada Mutahhari, wrote footnotes and explanations to this work, thus making it easily comprehensible to the average man.

A third book: *Shi'ah dar Islam* (Shi'ah in Islam), was first published in Persian; later it was published in English also, with the title: Shi'ite Islam. This book is based on al-'Allamah's discussions with Professor Kenneth Morgan of Colgate University, held in the summer of 1384 (1963) about Shi'ah and Shi'ism.

However, it is the tafsir, *al-Mizan* (published in Arabic in 20 volumes) which presents the true picture of the author's academic taste and his way of thinking. Before starting this work, the author made a detailed plan to explain the Qur'an with the help of the Qur'an itself; and he faithfully fulfilled this pledge up to the end of the book. He has outlined this scheme in his Preface, in volume one.

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It was a grace of Allah that He inspired us a few years ago to prepare and publish a *tafsir* of the Qur'an in English. We wanted it to be a *tafsir* that would help the reader to understand the divine Book and its verses, as much as practically possible - a *tafsir* that would bring its sublime meanings and divine themes nearer to the human mind; would explain the context in which the verses and chapters were revealed, would cover the points that are necessary for understanding its meaning and fully comprehending its import - all this without ignoring the Tradition of the Prophet and his Ahl Al-Bayt ('a) in arriving at the final conclusion. On the other hand, we wanted it to be in sympathy with the mentality of the present day's readers, Muslim as well as non-Muslim, looking at the problems that boggle their minds and the questions that demand responsible and knowledgeable answers - to the extent it is related to the Qur'an and its explanation.

After much deliberation, we found that tafsir, *al-Mizan,* satisfies our both requirements to a great extent.

So, seeking the help of Allah, we decided to get it translated in the English language. Even before embarking on this work, we were fully aware that it was a gigantic task; we understood that the responsibility would be heavy and the efforts to bring this scheme to completion herculean; the expenses would be huge and the difficulties himalayan. We knew all of it, and our only weapon was, and is, our reliance on Allah. We sought His help to make our dream come true; and to help us reach the end goal and prepare and publish the complete set. A few years ago, we entered into an agreement with someone to translate the first volume; but he did not fulfil his promise, although we gave him all the time and facilities - and even more - that were needed for it.

At last, we requested al-'Allamah ar-Radawi to take this important responsibility on his shoulders, and we are thankful to Allah that al-'Allamah ar-Radawi fulfilled his promise.

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We have written in short about al–'Allamah as–Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar ar–Radawi (s/o as–Sayyid Abu al–Hasan [1309/1891 – 1394/1974]) in the preface of his book, *The Family Life of Islam,* in which *we, inter alia,* wrote: Sayyid ar–Radawi is one of the most sincere preachers of Islam and an active scholar, both when he was in Tanzania in the Bilal Muslim Mission (an Islamic organization active in Tanzania), and also now that he has returned to his own country of India. In the way of spreading Islam, he has rendered enormous services and has been most active.

al–'Allamah ar–Radawi has written scores of books and booklets in English, Urdu and Swahili, many of which have been published; and we have given in the above–mentioned preface some titles which have been published by us. Some of his books have been translated and published by us in French, Italian, Japanese, Thai, Indonesian, Hausa and some other languages.

Here we must express our thanks to him for the efforts he has made and the difficulties he has overcome in rendering *al–Mizan* into English. The original Arabic book is replete with academic terms of all disciplines, Islamic as well as non–Islamic, and with philosophical discussions related mostly to metaphysics. The learned translator has discharged his trust faithfully and conveyed the original idea into English truthfully. What you find in your hands is the true rendering of what al–'Allamah at–Tabataba'i wrote in Arabic. The translator has written some footnotes where he thought it necessary – without altering the original text in any way.

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We left the entire responsibility of the translation in the hands of the translator, relying on his erudition and knowledge of Arabic language, philosophy and Islamic subjects and his long experience in rendering purely Islamic esoteric ideas into a western language like English. Now he is personally responsible for the English translation, just as al–'Allamah at–Tabataba'i (may Allah have His mercy on him!) was personally responsible for the explanations of the Qur'anic verses, and the general discussions he wrote in his *tafsir, al–Mizan.*

We have prepared two lists for this book:

1. Names of the authors referred to in the twenty volumes of *al–Mizan.*

2. Names of the books which need a somewhat detailed introduction.

These two lists have been added in the first volume of the English translation only; two other lists will be printed with every volume.

We pray to Allah and beseech Him to make our deed purely for His pleasure, to help us complete the work we have started, and to guide us aright in every step we put forward on this road. Surely, He is the best Guardian and the best Helper.

World Organization For Islamic Services

(Board of Writing, Translation and Publication)

27/10/1402 17/8/1981

Tehran – IRAN

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1. مَراجِعُ التَّقْلِيد = The highest authorities of the Islamic fiqh (الْفِقْه = jurisprudence; rules of shari'ah) whose rulings are followed by others.

2. Now called Baku, capital of Soviet Azarbayjan.

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Preface

All praise is for Allah Who sent down the Qur'an to His servant so that he may be a warner to the worlds; and blessings be on him whom He sent as a witness, and a bearer of good news and a warner, and as one inviting to Allah by His permission, and as a light-giving torch; and on his progeny from whom Allah kept away the uncleanliness and whom He purified a thorough purifying.

In this preface we shall describe the method adopted in this book to find out the meanings of the verses of the Qur'an.

at-Tafsir (التفسير = exegesis), that is, explaining the meanings of the Qur'anic verse, clarifying its import and finding out its significance, is one of the earliest academic activities in Islam. The interpretation of the Qur'an began with its revelation, as is clear from the words of Allah:

***Even as We have sent among you an Apostle from among you who recites to you Our communications and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know* (*2:151*).**

The first exegetes were a few companions of the Prophet, like Ibn 'Abbas, 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar, Ubayy (Ibn Ka'b) and others. [We use the word, 'companion', for other than 'Ali ('a)1] because he and the Imams from his progeny have an unequalled distinction – an unparalleled status, which we shall explain somewhere else. Exegesis in those days was confined to the explanation of literary aspects of the verse, the background of its revelation and, occasionally interpretation of one verse with the help of the other. If the verse was about a historical event or contained the realities of genesis or resurrection etc., then

sometimes a few traditions of the Prophet were narrated to make its meaning clear.

The same was the style of the disciples of the companions, like Mujahid, Qatadah, Ibn Abi Layla, ash-Sha'bi, as-Suddi and others, who lived in the first two centuries of *hijrah.* They relied even more on traditions, including the ones forged and interpolated by the Jews and others. They quoted those traditions to explain the verses which contained the stories of the previous nations, or which described the realities of genesis, for example, creation of the heavens and the earth, beginning of the rivers and mountains, the "Iram" (the city of the tribe of 'Ad), of Shaddad the so-called "mistakes" of the prophets, the alterations of the books and things like that. Some such matters could be found even in the exegesis ascribed to the companions.

During the reign of the caliphs, when the neighbouring countries were conquered, the Muslims came in contact with the vanquished people and were involved in religious discussions with the scholars of various other religions and sects. This gave rise to the theological discourses- known in Islam as '*Ilmu'l-kalam* (عِلمُ الكلام). Also, the Greek philosophy was translated into Arabic. The process began towards the end of the first century of *hijrah* (Umayyad's period) and continued well into the third century (Abbasid's reign). This created a taste for intellectual and philosophical arguments in the Muslim intelligentsia.

At the same time, *at-tasawwuf* (التصوف = Sufism, mysticism) raised its head in the society; and people were attracted towards it as it held out a promise of revealing to them the realities of religion through severe self-discipline and ascetical rigours - instead of entangling them into verbal polemics and intellectual arguments.

And there emerged a group, who called themselves people of tradition, who thought that salvation depended on believing in the apparent meanings of the Qur'an and the tradition, without any academic research. The utmost they allowed was looking into literary value of the words.

Thus, before the second century had proceeded very far, the Muslim society had broadly split in four groups: The theologians, the philosophers, the Sufis and the people of tradition. There was an intellectual chaos in the *ummah* and the Muslims, generally speaking, had lost their bearing. The only thing to which all were committed was the word, "There is no god except Allah, and Muhammad (S)2 is the Messenger of Allah". They differed with each other in everything else.

There was dispute on the meanings of the names and attributes of Allah, as well as about His actions; there was conflict about the reality of the heavens and the earth and what is in and on them; there were controversies about the decree of Allah and the divine measure; opinions differed whether man is a helpless tool in divine hands, or is a free agent; there were wranglings about various aspects of reward and punishment; arguments were kicked like ball, from one side to the other concerning the realities of death, *al-barzakh* (البرزَخ = intervening period between death and the Day of Resurrection); resurrection, paradise and hell.

In short, not a single subject, having any relevance to religion, was left without a discord of one type or

the other. And this divergence, not unexpectedly, showed itself in exegesis of the Qur'an. Every group wanted to support his views and opinions from the Qur'an; and the exegesis had to serve this purpose.

The people of tradition explained the Qur'an with the traditions ascribed to the companions and their disciples. They went ahead so long as there was a tradition to lead them on, and stopped when they could not find any such tradition (provided the meaning was not self-evident). They thought it to be the only safe method, as Allah says:

...And those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: 'We believe in it, it is all from our Lord' (***3:7***).

But they were mistaken. Allah has not said in His Book that rational proof had no validity. How could He say so when the authenticity of the Book itself depended on rational proof. On the other hand, He has never said that the words of the companions or their disciples had any value as religious proof. How could He say so when there were such glaring discrepancies in their opinions? In short, Allah has not called us to the sophistry which accepting and following contradictory opinions and views would entail.

He has called us, instead, to meditate on the Qur'anic verses in order to remove any apparent discrepancy in them. Allah has revealed the Qur'an as guidance, and has made it a light and an explanation of everything. Why should a light, seek brightness from others' light? Why should guidance be led by others' guidance? Why should "an explanation of everything" be explained by others' words?

The theologians' lot was worse all the more. They were divided into myriads of sects; and each group clung to the verse that seemed to support its belief and tried to explain away what was apparently against it.

The seed of sectarian differences was sown in academic theories or, more often than not, in blind following and national or tribal prejudice; but it is not the place to describe it even briefly. However, such exegesis should be called adaptation, rather than explanation. There are two ways of explaining a verse - One may say: "What does the Qur'an say?" Or one may say: "How can this verse be explained, so as to fit on my belief?" The difference between the two approaches is quite clear. The former forgets every pre-conceived idea and goes where the Qur'an leads him to. The latter has already decided what to believe and cuts the Qur'anic verses to fit on that body; such an exegesis is no exegesis at all.

The philosophers too suffered from the same syndrome. They tried to fit the verses on the principles of Greek philosophy (that was divided into four branches: Mathematics, natural science, divinity and practical subjects including civics). If a verse was clearly against those principles, it was explained away. In this way the verses describing metaphysical subjects, those explaining the genesis and creation of the heavens and the earth, those concerned with life after death and those about resurrection, paradise and hell were distorted to conform to the said philosophy. That philosophy was admittedly only a set of conjectures - unencumbered with any test or proof; but the Muslim philosophers felt no remorse in treating its views on the system of skies, orbits, natural elements and other related subjects as the absolute truth with which the exegesis of the Qur'an had to conform.

The Sufis kept their eyes fixed on esoteric aspects of creation; they were too occupied with their inner world to look at the outer one. Their tunnel-like vision prevented them from looking at the things in their true perspective. Their love of esoteric made them look for inner interpretations of the verses; without any regard to their manifest and clear meanings. It encouraged the people to base their explanations on poetic expressions and to use anything to prove anything. The condition became so bad that the verses were explained on the-basis of the numerical values of their words; letters were divided into bright and dark ones and the explanations were based on that division. Building castle in the air, wasn't it? Obviously, the Qur'an was not revealed to guide the Sufis only; nor had it addressed itself to only those who knew the numerical values of the letters (with all its ramifications); nor were its realities based on astrological calculations.

Of course, there are traditions narrated from the Prophet and the Imams of Ahl Al-Bayt ('a) saying for example: "Verily the Qur'an has an exterior and an interior, and its interior has an interior up to seven (or according to a version, seventy) interiors..." But the Prophet and the Imams gave importance to its exterior as much as to its interior; they were as much concerned with its revelation as they were with its interpretation. We shall explain in the beginning of the third chapter, "The Family of Imran", that "interpretation" is not a meaning against the manifest meaning of the verse. Such an interpretation should more correctly be called "misinterpretation". This meaning of the word, "interpretation", came in vogue in the Muslim circles long after the revelation of the Qur'an and the spread of Islam. What the Qur'an means by the word, "interpretation", is something other than the meaning and the significance.

In recent times, a new method of exegesis has become fashionable. Some people, supposedly Muslims, who were deeply influenced by the natural sciences (which are based on observations and tests) and the social ones (that rely on induction), followed the materialists of Europe or the pragmatists. Under the influence of those anti-Islamic theories, they declared that the religion's realities cannot go against scientific knowledge; one should not believe except that which is perceived by any one of the five senses; nothing exists except the matter and its properties. What the religion claims to exist, but which the sciences reject - like The Throne, The Chair, The Tablet and The Pen - should be interpreted in a way that conforms with the science; as for those things which the science is silent about, like the resurrection etc., they should be brought within the purview of the laws of matter; the pillars upon which the divine religious laws are based - like revelation, angel, Satan, prophethood, apostleship, *Imamah* (Imamate) etc. - are spiritual things, and the spirit is a development of the matter, or let us say, a property of the matter; legislation of those laws is manifestation of a special social genius, who ordains them after healthy and fruitful contemplations, in order to establish a good and progressive society.

They have further said: One cannot have confidence in the traditions, because many are spurious; only those traditions may be relied upon which are in conformity with the Book. As for the Book itself, one should not explain it in the light of the old philosophy and theories, because they were not based on observations and tests - they were just a sort of mental exercise which has been totally discredited now by the modern science. The best, rather the only, way is to explain the Qur'an with the help of other

Qur'anic verses – except where the science has asserted something which is relevant to it.

This, in short, is what they have written, or what necessarily follows from their total reliance on tests and observations. We are not concerned here with the question whether their scientific principles and philosophic dicta can be accepted as the foundation of the Qur'an's exegesis. But it should be pointed out here that the objection which they have levelled against the ancient exegetes – that theirs was only an adaptation and not the explanation – is equally true about their own method; they too say that the Qur'an and its realities must be made to conform with the scientific theories. If not so, then why do they insist that the academic theories should be treated as true foundations of exegesis from which – no deviation could be allowed?

This method improves nothing on the discredited method of the ancients.

If you look at all the above-mentioned ways of exegesis, you will find that all of them suffer from a most serious defect: They impose the results of academic or philosophic arguments on the Qur'anic meanings; they make the Qur'an conform to an extraneous idea. In this way, explanation turns into adaptation, realities of the Qur'an are explained away as allegories and its manifest meanings are sacrificed for so-called "interpretations".

As we mentioned in the beginning, the Qur'an introduces itself as:

The guidance for the worlds (***3:96***).

The manifest light (***4:174***).

The explanation of every thing (***16:89***).

But these people, contrary to those Qur'anic declarations, make it to be guided by extraneous factors, to be illuminated by some outside theories, and to be explained by something other than itself! What is that "something else"? What authority has it got? And if there is any difference in various explanations of a verse – and indeed there are most serious differences – which mediator should the Qur'an refer to?

What is the root-cause of the differences in the Qur'an's explanations? It could not happen because of any difference in the meaning of a word, phrase or sentence. The Qur'an has been sent down in plain Arabic; and no Arab (or Arabic-knowing non-Arab) can experience any difficulty in understanding it.

Also, there is not a single verse (out of more than six thousand) which is enigmatic, obscure or abstruse in its import; nor is there a single sentence that keeps the mind wandering in search of its meaning. After all, the Qur'an is admittedly the most eloquent speech, and it is one of the essential ingredients of eloquence that the talk should be free from obscurity and abstruseness.

Even those verses that are counted among the "ambiguous" ones have no ambiguity in their meanings; whatever the ambiguity, it is in identification of the particular thing or individual from among the group to

which that meaning refers. This statement needs some elaborations:

In this life we are surrounded by matter; even our senses and faculties are closely related to it. This familiarity with matter and material things has influenced our mode of thinking. When we hear a word or a sentence, our mind races to its material meaning. When we hear, for example, the words, life, knowledge, power, hearing, sight, speech, will, pleasure, anger, creation and order, we at once think of the material manifestations of their meanings. Likewise, when we hear the words, heaven, earth, tablet, pen, throne, chair, angel and his wings, and Satan and his tribe and army, the first things that come into our minds are their material manifestations.

Likewise, when we hear the sentences, “Allah created the universe”, “Allah did this”, “Allah knew it”, “Allah intended it” or “intends it”, we look at these actions in frame of “time”, because we are used to connect every verb with a tense.

In the same way, when we hear the verses:

…And with Us is more yet (***50:35***)***.***

…We would have made it from before Ourselves (***21:17***)***.***

…And that which is with Allah is best… (***62:11***)***.***

…And to Him you shall be brought back (***2:28, etc.***)***.***

We attach with the divine presence the concept of “place”, because in our minds the two ideas are inseparable.

Also, on reading the verses:

And when We intend to destroy a town (***17:16***)***.***

And We intend to bestow a favour… (***28:5***)***.***

And Allah intends ease for you (***2:185***)***.***

we think that the “intention” has the same meaning in every sentence, as is the case with our own intention and will.

In this way, we jump to the familiar (which most often is material) meaning of every word. And it is but natural. Man has made words to fulfil his social need of mutual intercourse; and society in its turn was established to fulfil the man’s material needs. Not unexpectedly, the words became symbols of the things which men were connected with and which helped them in their material progress.

But we should not forget that the material things are constantly changing and developing with the

development of expertise. Man gave the name, lamp, to a certain receptacle in which he put a wick and a little fat that fed the lighted wick which illuminated the place in darkness. That apparatus kept changing until now it has become the electric bulb of various types; and except the name "lamp" not a single component of the original lamp can be found in it.

Likewise, there is no resemblance in the balance of old times and the modern scales – especially if we compare the old apparatus with the modern equipment for weighing and measuring heat, electric-current's flow and blood-pressure.

And the armaments of old days and the ones invented within our own times have nothing in common, except the name.

The named things have changed so much that not a single component of the original can be found in them; yet the name has not changed. It shows that the basic element that allows the use of a name for a thing is not the shape of that thing, but its purpose and benefit.

Man, imprisoned as he is within his habitat and habit, often fails to see this reality. That is why al-Hashawiyyah and those who believe that God has a body interpret the Qur'anic verses and phrases within the fame-work of the matter and the nature. But in fact they are stuck with their habit and usage, and not to the exterior of the Qur'an and the traditions. Even in the literal meanings of the Qur'an we find ample evidence that relying on the habit and usage in explanation of the divine speech would cause confusion and anomaly. For example, Allah says:

Nothing is like a likeness of Him (***42:11***).

Visions comprehended Him not, and He comprehends (***all***) ***visions; and He is the Knower of subtleties, the Aware*** (***6:73***).

Glory be to Him above what they ascribe (***to Him***) (***23:91*** **&** ***37:159***).

These verses manifestly show that what we are accustomed to cannot be ascribed to Allah.

It was this reality that convinced many people that they should not explain the Qur'anic words by identifying them with their usual and common meanings. Going a step further, they sought the help of logical and philosophical arguments to avoid wrong deductions. This gave a foot-hold to academic reasoning in explaining the Qur'an and identifying the individual person or thing meant by a word. Such discussions can be of two kinds:

i) The exegete takes a problem emanating from a Qur'anic statement, looks at it from academic and philosophical point of view, weighs the pros and cons and with the help of the philosophy, science and logic decide what the true answer should be. Thereafter, he takes the verse and fits it anyhow on that answer which, he thinks, is right.

The Muslim philosophers and theologians usually followed this method; but, as mentioned earlier, the Qur'an does not approve of it.

ii) The exegete explains the verse with the help of other relevant verses, meditating on them together – and meditation has been forcefully urged upon by the Qur'an itself – and identifies the individual person or thing by its particulars and attributes mentioned in the verse.

No doubt this is the only correct method of exegesis.

Allah has said:

And We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything (***16:89***).

Is it possible for such a book not to explain its own self? Also, He has described the Qur'an in these words:

A guidance for mankind and clear evidence of guidance and discrimination (***between wrong***) (***2:185***).

And He has also said:

And We have sent down to you a manifest light (***4:174***).

The Qur'an is, accordingly, a guidance, a piece of evidence, a discrimination between right and wrong and a manifest light for the people to guide them aright and help them in all their needs. Is it imaginable that it would not guide them aright in its own matter, while it is their most important need? Again, Allah says:

And (***as for***) ***those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them onto Our ways*** (***29:69***).

Which striving is greater than the endeavour to understand His Book? And which way is straighter than the Qur'an?

Verses of this meaning are very numerous, and we shall discuss them in detail in the beginning of the third chapter, The Family of 'Imran.

Allah taught the Qur'an to His Prophet and appointed him as the teacher of the Book:

The Faithful Spirit has descended with it (***26:193***).

Upon your heart that you may be of the warners, in plain Arabic language (***26:194***).

And We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them, and that haply they may reflect (***16:44***).

***…An Apostle… who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom* (*62:2*).**

And the Prophet appointed his progeny to carry on this work after him. It is clear from his unanimously accepted tradition:

I am leaving behind among you two precious things; as long as you hold fast to them you will never go astray after me: The Book of Allah and my progeny, my family members; and these two shall never separate from each other until they reach me (on) the reservoir.

And Allah has confirmed, in the following two verses, this declaration of the Prophet that his progeny had the real knowledge of the Book:

***Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanliness from you, O people of the House! and to purify you a* (*thorough*) *purifying* (*33:33*).**

***Most surely, it is an honoured Qur'an* (*56:77*).**

***In a Book that is hidden* (*56:78*).**

***None do touch it save the purified ones* (*56:79*).**

And the Prophet and the Imams from his progeny always used this second method for explaining the Qur'an, as may be seen in the traditions that have been narrated from them on exegesis, some of which will be quoted in this book in appropriate places. One cannot find a single instance in their traditions where they might have taken help of an academic theory or philosophical postulate for explaining a verse.

The Prophet (S) has said in a sermon: "Therefore, when mischiefs come to confuse you like the segments of darkened night, then hold fast to the Qur'an; as it is the intercessor whose intercession shall be granted; and a credible advocate; and whoever keeps it before him, it will lead him to the Garden; and whoever keeps it behind, it will drive him to the Fire; and it is the guide that guides to the best path; and it is a book in which there is explanation, particularization and recapitulation; and it is a decisive (world), and not a joke; and there is for it a manifest (meaning) and an esoteric (one); thus its apparent (meaning) is firm, and its esoteric (one) is knowledge; its exterior is elegant and its interior deep; it has (many) boundaries, and its boundaries have (many) boundaries; its wonders shall not cease, and its (unexpected marvels shall not be old.

There are in it the lamps of guidance and the beacon of wisdom, and guide to knowledge for him who knows the attributes. Therefore, one should extend his sight; and should let his eyes reach the attribute; so that one who is in perdition may get deliverance, and one who is entangled may get free; because meditation is the life of the heart of the one who sees, as the one having a light (easily) walks in darkness; therefore, you must seek good deliverance and (that) with little waiting.

‘Ali (‘a) said, *inter alia,* speaking about the Qur’an in a sermon: “It’s one part speaks with the other, and one portion testifies about the other.”

This is the straight path and the right way which was used by the true teachers of the Qur’an and its guides, may Allah's blessings be on them all!

We shall write, under various headings, what Allah has helped us to understand from the honoured verses, by the above-mentioned method. We have not based the explanations on any philosophical theory, academic idea or mystical revelation.

We have not put into it any outside matter except a fine literary point on which depends the understanding of Arabic eloquence, or a self-evident or practical premises which can be understood by one and all.

From the discussions, written according to the above-mentioned method, the following subjects have become crystal-clear:

1. The matters concerning the names of Allah, and His attributes, like His Life, Knowledge, Power, Hearing, Sight and Oneness etc. As for the Person of Allah, you will find that the Qur’an believes that He needs no description.

2. The matters concerning the divine actions, like creation, order, will, wish, guidance, leading astray, decree, measure, compulsion, delegation (of Power), pleasure, displeasure and other similar actions.

3. The matters concerned with the intermediary links between Allah and man, like the Curtain, the Tablet, the Pen, the Throne, the Chair, the Inhabited House, the Heavens, the Earth, the Angels, the Satans, and the Jinns etc.

4. The details about man before he came to this world.

5. The matters related to man in this life, like the history of mankind, knowledge of his self, the foundation of society, the prophethood and the apostleship, the revelation, the inspiration, the book and the religion and law. The high status of the prophets, shining through their stories, comes under this heading.

6. The knowledge about man after he departs from this world, that is, *al-Barzakh.*

7. The matters about human character. Under this heading come the various stages through which the friends of Allah pass in their spiritual journey, like submission, faith, benevolence, humility, purity of intention and other virtues.

(We have not gone into details of the verses of the law, as more appropriately it is a subject for the books of jurisprudence.)

As a direct result of this method, we have never felt any need to interpret a verse against its apparent meaning. As we have said earlier, this type of interpretation is in fact misinterpretation. As for that "interpretation" which the Qur'an has mentioned in various verses, it is not a type of "meaning"; it is something else.

At the end of the commentaries, we have written some traditions of the Prophet and the Imams of **Ahl Al-Bayt** ('a), narrated by the Sunni and Shi'ah narrators. But we have not included the opinions of the companions and their disciples, because, first, there is too much confusion and contradiction in them; and second, they are not vested with any authority in Islam.

On going through those traditions of the Prophet and the Imams (peace be on them all!), you will notice that this "new" method of exegesis (adopted in this book) is in reality the oldest and the original method which was used by the Teachers of the Qur'an (peace of Allah be on them all!).

Also, we have written separately various topics - philosophical, academic, historical, social and ethical - when there was a need for it. In all such discussions, we have confined our talk to the basic premises, without going in too much detail.

We pray to Allah, High is He, to guide us and keep our talk to the point; He is the Best Helper and the Best Guide.

Dependent on Allah,

Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i

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1. ('a): is the abbreviation of the Arabic phrase `alay-hi/hã/himu's-salãm (may peace be upon him/her/them).
2. (S): is the abbreviation of the Arabic phrase salla Allahu alayhi wa alih (may Allah's peace and blessing be upon him and his progeny).

SHARES

Surah Al-Fatiha: Verses 1-5

The Chapter of The Opening

Fatihatu al-Kitab

The Opening of the Book

7 verses — Mecca

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful (***1:1***).

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds (***1:2***).

الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Beneficent the Merciful (***1:3***).

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

The Master of the Day of Judgement (***1:4***).

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

Thee do we worship and Thee do we beseech for help (***1:5***).

Commentary

Verse 1

Qur'an: ***In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*** (***1:1***).

People often take the name of one of their great and powerful personalities at the time of doing or beginning a work. By this association, it is believed, the work would achieve success, greatness and blessings; or that it would be a memorial to keep the named one's memory alive for ever. This is also observed in naming a child, a project, a house or an association – they give it the name of a deeply loved or highly respected person, so that his name would continue in this form; for example, a man names his son after his father, in order to perpetuate the father's memory.

This verse runs on the same line. Allah began His speech with His Own name – Great is His name – so that the ideas taught in this chapter be stamped by, and associated with it. Also, it teaches a lesson to mankind, showing them the perfect manner of starting all their talks and actions; it guides them to put the stamp of the divine name on all their activities; doing every work for the sake of Allah, associating it with His good names and attributes. In this way that action would neither be rendered null and void, nor remain incomplete; it has been started in the name of Allah, and negation and annihilation cannot reach that sacred name.

Allah has declared variously in the Qur'an that what is not for His Person must perish, is in vain; He will proceed to the deeds not done for His sake and shall render them as scattered floating dust; He shall forfeit what they have done and shall nullify their deeds; and that nothing shall remain except His honoured Person.

Therefore, what is done for the sake of Allah and performed in His name, shall continue and will not perish. Everything, every work and every affair shall have its share of eternity – as much as it is related to Allah. It is this reality that has been hinted at in the universally accepted tradition of the Prophet: "Every important affair, not begun with the name of Allah, shall remain incomplete..." The word *al–abtar* (الأبتر = translated here as "incomplete") means a thing whose end is cut off, an animal whose tail is severed.

The preposition "*bi*" (بِـ = in, with), in the phrase "In the name of Allah", is related to an implied verb, "I begin". This verse, at this particular place, begins the speech which is a single action; this singleness comes from the singleness of its meaning; that is, the meaning intended to be conveyed, the aim and purpose of the speech.

Allah has mentioned the purpose for which His speech – the whole Qur'an – has been revealed:

...Indeed, there has come to you a light and a clear Book from Allah (***5:15***).

With it, Allah guides him who follows His pleasure into the ways of safety... (***5:16***).

There are other verses which show that the aim with which the Book – the speech of Allah – has been sent down is the guidance of the people.

Therefore, the full import of the sentence would be as follows: The guidance, total guidance is begun with the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful; He is Allah, Whom the servants return to; He is Beneficent, Who has opened the way of His All–encompassing mercy for believers and disbelievers alike, the mercy which provides them with all that is necessary and good for their existence and life; He is Merciful, Who has reserved His special mercy for the believers, the mercy which ensures their happiness in the life hereafter and their nearness to their Lord. Allah has said:

…And My mercy encompasses all things; so I will ordain it (***specially***) ***for those who guard*** (***against evil***) ***and pay zakat, and those who believe in our signs*** (***7:156***)

This explanation has been written, putting this verse in the framework of the whole Qur'an, of which it is the first sentence.

Again, Allah has repeatedly mentioned "chapter" in His speech. For example:

Say: "Then bring a chapter like this…" (***10:38***).

Say: "Then bring ten chapters like it, forged…" (***11:13***).

And whenever a chapter is revealed… (***9:86***).

(***This is***) ***a chapter which We have revealed…*** (***24:1***).

It shows that Allah Himself has divided His speech in various parts, each part being called a chapter. It naturally means that every chapter is a single unit in structure and in fullness of meaning; and that that unity is not found between various verses of a chapter or between one chapter and the other. It necessarily follows that the theme of every chapter is different from the other; every chapter is revealed with a certain aim in view, and when that aim is achieved the chapter comes to its end.

Therefore, the verse, "In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful" coming at the beginning of every chapter, refers to the particular theme of that chapter.

Accordingly, this verse, at the beginning of this chapter of "The Opening", refers also to the theme of this chapter. It appears from its semantic flow that its purpose is to praise Allah and to pledge the believer's servitude (declaring that he worships only Allah and seeks help from Him only) and then to pray for divine guidance. This speech has been uttered by Allah, on behalf of His servant, so that the servant may learn how, by repeating these words, he may show his gratitude to, and servitude before, Allah.

This pledging of servitude is the important work which the servant of Allah intends to do; and which he begins in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. In this context, this verse would mean: In Thy

name, I pledge my servitude to Thee.

In this first verse of this chapter, therefore, the preposition, “in”, is related to the implied verb, “I begin”; and the aim is to perfect the sincere servitude by addressing the pledge to Allah Himself. Some people have said that the implied verb is “I seek help” (by); although this view is not objectionable, but “I begin” is more appropriate – the chapter explicitly seeks divine help, “and Thee do we beseech for help”; therefore, it is not necessary in the beginning.

“al-Ism” (الإسم = name) is the word that points to the named thing or person. It is derived from *as-simah* (السّمة = sign, identifying mark) or *as-sumuww* (السّمو = height, eminence). In any case, it is the word by which an individual thing or person is spoken of or spoken to. Naturally, it is other than, and separate from, the named thing.

The following is a sample of the academic exercises so much loved by the ancients:

There is a name that means “the person himself seen in the light of an attribute”; such a name is not separate from the named person; it is the person himself. The word *al-Alim* (العالم = The Knower), one of the divine names, points to the Person of Allah as seen in the light of His attribute of Knowledge. At the same time, it refers to Allah Who cannot be known except by one or the other of His attributes.

Let us explain this matter in another way: “Name” points to the named person; likewise, the personal traits and characteristics point to the holder of those traits and characteristics – in this way, we may say that the personal traits are the “names” of the person concerned. “Name”, accordingly, can be of two kinds: in words, and in substance. The direct name is of the second type, that is, the personal trait that points to its own subjects – for example, the “Knowledge” that points to Allah, the holder of the knowledge. And the word “the Knower” is in reality an indirect name – it points to the direct name, that is, the attribute of knowledge, which in its turn directly points to its holder, that is, Allah. “Knowledge” is, thus, the name of Allah, and “the Knower” is “the name of the name”.

The above was the result of the academic analysis (or should we say, mental luxury!) mentioned earlier; but such things should not be imposed on language and literature. “Name”, according to the “plain Arabic language”, means what we have written earlier. There was a lot of controversy going on among the theologians of the early centuries of Islam: whether the name was separate from the named person or not. Such unnecessary polemics is out of place at present times; it is self-evident that “name” and “named” are two things, and not one. We should not waste time and energy in quoting the ancients’ arguments and counter-arguments, and in judging who was right.

“Allah” (الله = the divine name) was originally *al-Ilah;* the “I” in the middle was omitted because of frequent use. *Al-Ilah* (الاله) is derived from *alaha* (أَلَهَ = he worshipped) or from *aliha* or *waliha* (اَلِهَ or وَلِهَ = he was bewildered). It is on paradigm of *al-fi’al* (الفِعال) on meaning of *al-maf'u1* (المفعول = object-noun); for example, *al-kitab* (الكِتاب) means *al -maktub* (المكتوب = the written); likewise, *al-Ilah* means *al-Ma’luh* (المألوه) that is the One who is worshipped, or the One about whom minds are bewildered.

Quite clearly, it has become the proper name of God. It was commonly used in this meaning in Arabic long before the Qur'an was revealed. The fact that even pre-Islamic Arabs used this name for God, may be inferred from the following verses:

And if you should ask them who created them, they would certainly say: "Allah" ... (***43:87***).

...And they say: "This for Allah" - so they assert - "and this is for our associates" ... (***6:136***).

Other divine names may be used as adjectives for this name; for example, "the Beneficent and the Merciful Allah"; also, this name is used as subject of the verbs derived from other divine names; for example, "Allah knew", "Allah had mercy", "Allah gave sustenance" etc. But the word, "Allah", is never used as adjective to any other name, nor is the verb derived from it used to describe other names. It is a clear proof that it is the proper name of God.

The divine existence, inasmuch as Allah is the God of everything, presupposes that He should have all the attributes of perfection; and, as a result, this name points to all perfect attributes. That is why it is said that the name, "Allah", means "the Person Who is the Essential Being, and Who encompasses all the attributes of perfection". But the fact is that it is the proper name of God and no other meaning (except that related to worship or bewilderment) has been taken into consideration here.

"ar-Rahman ar-Rahim" (الرحمن الرحيم = The Beneficent, the Merciful) are two adjectives derived from *ar-rahmah* (الرحمة = mercy).

When you see someone suffering from a deficiency which he cannot remove by himself, the reaction which you experience and which tells you to provide him with what he needs in order to make up his deficiency, is called mercy. Ultimately, mercy means giving and bestowing to fulfill other's need. It is this latter meaning in which this attribute is used for Allah.

"ar-Rahman" (الرحمن) is on a paradigm which is used for magnification and exaggeration. *"ar-Rahim"* (الرحيم) is a paradigm of *as-Sifatu al-mushabbahah* (الصّفة المُشَبَّهَة = perpetual adjective, inseparable attribute). Therefore, *"ar-Rahman"* (translated here as "the Beneficent") relates to that all-encompassing mercy that is bestowed upon the believers and the unbelievers alike. It is used in the Qur'an, mostly in this meaning. Allah says:

The Beneficent (***God***) ***is firm in power*** (***20:5***).

Say: "As for him who remains in error, the Beneficent (***God***) ***will surely, prolong his length of days...*** (***19:75***)

"ar-Rahim" (translated here as "the Merciful"), on the other hand, is more appropriate for that mercy which shall remain forever, the perpetual inexhaustible mercy that shall be bestowed on the believers in the life hereafter. Allah says:

…And He is Merciful to the believers (***33:43***).

Surely, to them (***i.e., the believers***) ***He is Compassionate, Merciful*** (***9:117***).

That is why it is said that the mercy *of "ar-Rahman" is* common for the believers and the unbelievers, and that *of "ar-Rahim" is* reserved for the believers.

Verse 2

Qur'an: ***All praise is due to Allah*** (***1:2***).

It has been said that *"al- hamd"* (الحمد) is to praise someone for a good acquired by his own intention, *"al-madh"* (المَدح = also translated as praise) is more general - it is used to praise even that good which someone is given without his will and power. If you praise someone for his benevolence, you may use either word - *al-hamd* or *al-madh* but if you want to praise a pearl for its lustre, you may use the verb *al-madh,* but not *al-hamd* because the pearl has not acquired that lustre by its own will and power.

"al" (الْ = translated here as "al l") in *"al-hamd"* denotes either species or praise, or each and every praise. The end-result is the same in either case; that is why it has been translated here as "all". Allah says:

That is Allah, your Lord, the Creator of every thing (***40:62***).

Whatever there is, is created by Allah. Again, He says:

…Who made good everything that He has created (***32:7***).

Everything is good because it has been created by Allah and is attributed to Him. In other words, a thing becomes good because it is created by Allah; and everything created by Him is good. Every creature is good and beautiful because Allah has made it so; and every good and beautiful thing is created by Allah, attributed to Him. Allah says:

He is Allah, the One, the Subduer (***of all***) (***39:4***).

And the faces are humbled before the Living, the Self-subsistent God… (***20:111***).

In other words, He has created the creatures by His own knowledge, power and will, and not because He was compelled by someone else to do so. Therefore, everything is His own good work, done by His own will.

The above discourse was about Allah's action. Coming to His names, He has said:

Allah is He besides Whom there is no god; His are the very best names (***20:8***).

And Allah's are the best names; therefore, call on Him thereby, and leave alone those who violate

the sanctity of His names (***7:180***).

It is clear that Allah is good in His names and good in His actions; and that every good and beauty emanates from Him.

Therefore, Allah is praised for His good names as He is praised for His good actions. Every praise, uttered by any speaker for any good deed is in reality addressed to Allah only; because every good (which is the object of praise) emanates from Him only. In short, to Him belongs the species of the praise and all and every praise.

The verse: "Thee do we worship", shows that the whole chapter is revealed on behalf of man. Allah teaches him in this chapter how to praise his Lord and how to show his allegiance to, and humility towards, Him. And the phrase, "All praise is due to Allah", further strengthens this inference, as will be seen in the next paragraph.

The praise means to attribute, to ascribe; and Allah has declared that He is above all that His servants ascribe to Him. He has said:

Hallowed be Allah (***for freedom***) ***from what they ascribe*** (***37:159***).

Except the servants of Allah, freed (***from sins***) (***37:160***).

This declaration is general and unconditional; and it is further proved by the fact that not a single verse in the Qur'an ascribes the action of "praise" to anyone except Allah and some of the prophets (who were doubtlessly freed from sins).

Allah addresses Nuh [Noah ('a)] in these words:

…Say: "All praise is due to Allah who delivered us from the unjust people" (***23:28***).

And He quotes Ibrahim [Abraham ('a)] as saying:

"Praise be to Allah, Who gave me in old age Isma'il and Ishaq…" (***14:39***).

Also, He told His Prophet, Muhammad (S), in several places,

And say: "Praise be to Allah…" (***27:93***).

Further, he says about Dawud and Sulayman (peace be on both of them):

…And they both said: "Praise be to Allah…" (***27:15***).

Another exception is of the people of the Paradise – and they also are freed from spite and rancour as well as from vain and sinful words:

…And the last of their cry shall be: "Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds" (***10:10***).

As for other creatures, the Qur'an never says that they "praise" Allah – they always "glorify Allah with His praise". Allah says:

…And the angels declare His glory with the praise of their Lord… (***42:5***).

And the thunder declares His glory with His praise… (***13:13***).

And there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise… (***17:44***).

In all these verses "praise" is preceded by glorifying; rather "glorifying" is the main verb and "with praise" is only a clause, attached to it. None except Allah may comprehend the beauty and perfection of His work, nor can anyone else understand the beauty and perfection of His names and attributes. Allah says:

… They do not comprehend Him in knowledge… (***20:110***).

In this background, if they were to praise Him it would mean that they had comprehended Him in their knowledge; in other words, Allah would be surrounded by their limited understanding, confined within the boundary of their comprehension. Therefore, they were careful enough to first declare His glory from all the limits of their comprehension, before starting His praise. Allah says:

…Surely, Allah knows and you do not know (***16:74***).

So far as His purified servants are concerned, He treats their utterance of praise as though He Himself has said it, because they are free from sins and defects.

From the above discourse, it becomes crystal-clear what the good manner of servitude demands: The servant should praise his Lord in exactly the same words the Lord Himself has chosen for Himself; no deviation from it would be tolerable, as the Prophet has said in an universally accepted tradition; "I do not enumerate Thy praise; Thou art as Thou Thyself hast praised Thyself ..."

Therefore, the divine word, "All praise is due to Allah", is a sort of a training to the servant – a training without which he could not know how to declare the praise of Allah.

Verses 2, 3 & 4

Qur'an: The Lord of the Worlds (***1:2***).

Qur'an: The Beneficent the Merciful (***1:3***).

Qur'an: ***The Master of the Day of Judgement*** (***1:4***).

"ar-Rabb" (الرّب) is the Master Who manages the affairs of His servant. The word, thus, connotes the

idea of ownership. Ownership (in our social structure) is a special relationship of one thing with another – a relationship that allows the owner to do with the owned thing as he wishes. When we say, "This thing belongs to us", it shows that it has a special relationship with us that allows us to do with it as we wish; had it not been for this relationship, we would not have had this authority over it. In this social context, it is an idea which the society has laid down but which has no existence outside imagination. This idea is derived from another real and positive concept, which too is called "ownership": Our limbs and faculties, like the sight, the hearing, the hands and the feet, belong to us – they exist because of our own existence, they have no independent existence, they depend on us for their existence and continuity, and we use them as we like. This is the real ownership.

The ownership that may be attributed to Allah is the real one, and not that which is based on subjective outlook. Obviously, the real ownership cannot be disjoined from management of the affairs of the owned thing. The owned thing depends on the owner in its existence, as well as in all affairs related to its existence. Allah is *"ar-Rabb* "the Lord of everything because the Lord is the owner who manages the affairs of, and looks after, the owned thing – and only Allah has this attribute.

"al-'Alamin (العالمين) is the plural of al'alam (العالَم = the world) which literally means, "what one is known with". This paradigm is used for "instrument", like *al-qalab* (القالب = the mold, the form), *al-khatam* (الخاتم = the seal, the instrument of sealing), and *at-taba'* (الطابع = the stamp, the impress). The word *al-'Alam* is used for the universe – the whole creation taken together. Also it is used for each genes or species taken separately, for example, the inorganic world, the vegetable world, the animal world, the human world. It is also used for a class of a species, like the Arab world, the African world etc. This last meaning is more appropriate in the context of these verses: The verses that enumerate the good names of Allah until they come to "the Master of the Day of Judgement". The judgement is reserved for mankind alone or together with the jinn. Therefore, the "worlds" should refer to the worlds of the human beings and the jinn, that is, their various groups. The word *al-'alamin* (the worlds) has been used in this sense in other Qur'anic verses too. Allah says:

***…And has chosen you above the women of the worlds* (*3:42*).**

***…So that he may be a Warner to the worlds* (*25:1*).**

***What! do you commit an indecency which any one in the worlds has not done before you* (*7:80*).**

"The Master of the Day of Judgement": We have explained above the meaning of ownership, that is, mastership. The word *"al-malik"* (المالك) *is* derived from *al-milk* (المِلك = possession, to possess). Some reciters have read this word as *"al-malik"* (المالك = the sovereign, the king); it is derived from *al-mulk* (المُلك = country; kingdom). The king is the one who has the authority to manage his nation's affairs; nevertheless he does not own the nation or the country. In other words, he holds the authority for management and administration.

The reciters have given the reasons for their preference of either recitation. But the fact remains that

Allah is the Master as well as the King, and both words are equally correct, so far as the divine authority is concerned. Looking at it from linguistic point of view, the word, “King” is generally used in context of time and period. It is said, “The King of that time”; but they do not say “the master of that time”, as it would be stretching the meaning too far. In this verse, Allah has used this word in reference to a certain “day”; therefore, linguistically, it would be more proper to say, “The King of the Day of Judgement”. Moreover, Allah has used the word, “Kingdom” in context of the same day in other verse:

To whom belongs the kingdom of this day? To Allah, the One, the Subduer (***of all***) (***40:16***).

Traditions

Ar-Ridha’ (‘a) said in explanation of the divine words: ***In the name of Allah:*** “It means: ‘I mark my soul with one of the marks of Allah’, and it is (His) worship.” He was asked: “What is the ‘mark’?” He said; “The brand.”1

The author says: This meaning emanates from the explanation given earlier that the preposition, “in”, herein connotes beginning. As the servant marks his worship with the name of Allah, he brands his soul - real doer of the worship - with one of the divine marks.

It is narrated in *at-Tahdhib* from as-Sadiq (‘a), and in *‘Uyunu al-akhbar* and *at-Tafsir* of al-‘Ayyashi from ar-Ridha’ (‘a) that this verse “is nearer to the Greatest name of Allah than the iris of the eye is from its white”.

The author says: This tradition will be explained when we shall talk about the Greatest name.

Amir al-Mu’minin (‘a) said that (this verse) is from the chapter of The Opening; and verily the Apostle of Allah used to recite it and count it as one of its verses, and he used to say, “The Opening of the Book is ‘the seven oft-repeated’ (verses)”.2

The author says: This matter has also been narrated by the Sunni narrators. ad-Dar-qutni narrates from Abu Hurayrah that he said: “The Apostle of Allah said: When you recite (the chapter of) The Praise (i.e., The Opening), you shall recite, ***In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful,*** because it is the source of the Book and (is) the seven oft-repeated (verses), and, ***In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*** is one of its verses. as-Sadiq (‘a) said: “What have they done? May Allah destroy them! They proceeded to the greatest verse of the Book of Allah, and thought that it would be an innovation (unlawful act) if they recited it loudly!”3

al-Baqir (‘a) said: “They stole the most exalted verse of the Book of Allah, (that is) ***In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.*** It should be recited at the start of every big or small work, so that it may be blessed.

The author says: There are numerous traditions of this meaning coming from the Imams of Ahl Al-Bayt

(‘a). All of them prove that the verse (***In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful***) is a part of every chapter, except the ninth (“Repentance”); and the Sunni traditions also prove it

Anas (Ibn Malik) said that the Apostle of Allah said: “Just now a chapter has been sent down to me.” Then he began reciting, ***“In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.”***[4]

Abu Dawud narrates from Ibn ‘Abbas (and they say that its chain is “correct”) that he said: “Verily, the Apostle of Allah did not know the separation of a chapter (and in another narrative it is ‘end of a chapter’) until came down to him: ***In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful”***

The author says: This matter has been narrated by Shi’ite narrators also from al-Baqir (‘a).

It is reported in *al-Kafi, at-Tawhid, Ma’ani al-akhbar* and *at-Tafsir* of al-‘Ayyashi that as-Sadiq (‘a) said, *inter alia,* in a tradition: “And Allah is God of everything, *ar-Rahman* (the Beneficent) for all His creations, *ar-Rahim* (the Merciful) especially for the believers.”

as-Sadiq (‘a) has said: *“ar-Rahman* (the Beneficent) is a special name with a general attribute; and *ar-Rahim* (the Merciful) is a general name with a special attribute.”

The author says: The preceding commentary may explain why the mercy of “the Beneficent” is general for the believer and the unbeliever alike, and why that of “the Merciful” is reserved for the believer only. The description given in this tradition that “the Beneficent is a special name with a general attribute, and the Merciful is a general name with a special attribute”, perhaps this refers to the fact that the mercy of the Beneficent is limited to this world and is common for the whole creation; and that of the Merciful is common to this world and the hereafter but is reserved for the believer. In other words, the mercy of the Beneficent is reserved for the creative blessings that are bestowed on believers and unbelievers alike; and that of the Merciful is common to the creative and legislative blessings (the latter opening the way to happiness and felicity) and is reserved for believers, because only the bounties bestowed upon them will last for ever, and the (good) end is for guarding (against evil) and for piety.

It is narrated in *Kashf al-ghummah* that as-Sadiq (‘a) said: “A mule of my father was lost. He said: ‘If Allah brought it back to me, I would thank Him with praises He would be pleased with.” Shortly afterwards, it was brought before him with its saddle and rein (intact). When he sat on it and arrayed his clothes, he raised his head towards heaven and said: ‘Praise be to Allah.’ He said nothing more. Then he said: “I did not omit, nor did I leave out, anything; I have declared that all praises are for Allah, Powerful and Great is He!; because there is no praise but it is included in this (formula).”

It is narrated in *‘Uyun al-Akhbar* that ‘Ali (‘a) was asked about its explanation. He said: “Verily, Allah has explained to His servants broadly some of His bounties on them, as they cannot know all His bounties in detail - they are beyond enumeration and description. Therefore, He said: Say: ‘All praise is for Allah on what He has bestowed upon us.’“

The author says: The Imam points to the fact mentioned earlier that the praise, in this verse, is from the servant, and that Allah has revealed it to teach him the manners of servitude and worship.

From Philosophical Point Of View

Reason tells us that an effect, as well as all its characteristics and affairs, depend on its cause; whatever perfection it may be having, is a shadow of the cause. If beauty or goodness has any existence, then its perfect and independent entity is for Allah only, as He is the Cause of all causes. The praise and thank is addressed, in reality, to the cause which creates the perfection and excellence referred to. As every perfection is caused by Allah, every praise and thank, in reality, is addressed to Allah. Therefore, all praise is for, and due to Allah.

Verse 5

Qur'an: Thee do we worship and Thee do we beseech for help (1:5).

"al-'Abd" (العَبد) means slave, a human being who is owned. In its abstract sense, it is applied to other intellectual beings also, as the words of Allah show:

There is no one in the heavens and the earth but will come to the Beneficent God as ("'abdan" عبْداً = ***a slave*) (*19:93*).**

In modern usage, it is commonly translated as 'servant.'

"al-'Ibadah " (العِبادة = to serve, to worship, to obey) is derived from this word. Its inflexion and meaning changes according to the context. al-Jawhari has written in his dictionary, *as-Şihah,* that "the basis of *al-'ubudiyyah* (العبودية = bondage, servitude) is *"al-khudu'* (الخضوع) submission." But this explanation is not of the word; it only shows a concomitant quality of its meaning; because *al-khudu'* is used with the preposition "*li"* (لِ), and *al-'ibadah is* used without any preposition.5

When a servant of Allah worships Him, he stands before the Lord as a slave stands before his master. That is why worship is diametrically opposed to arrogance and pride - but it is not so opposed to polytheism; after all, a slave may be jointly owned by two or more masters. Allah says:

Verily those who are arrogant to My worship shall soon enter Hell, disgraced (40:60).

He also says:

...And he should not join anyone in the worship of his Lord (18:110).

It should be noted here that polytheism - joining someone in the worship of Allah - is a possibility, and that is why it has been made subject of this prohibition; none forbids an impossible thing. But arrogance does not exist with worship, and that is why the expression, "arrogant to my worship", has been used in

the first verse.

Servitude is effective in those affairs which are owned or controlled by the master; and not in other matters related to the slave, like his being son of his father, or having a height of so many centimetres – there is no submission or servitude in such things. But the mastership of Allah is not limited; His mastership is not shared by anyone else, nor is the servitude of the creatures divided between Allah and someone else. A master has only limited authority over his servants – he may employ them to perform certain duties, but he cannot kill them or punish them unjustly. But Allah has total and all–encompassing authority over His servants; He does whatsoever He wills with them and about them. His ownership is unconditional and unlimited; and the servitude of His creatures is likewise unconditional and unlimited. This "ownership" is true and exclusive on both sides: The Lord has the exclusive ownership, and the slave has the exclusive servitude. The construction of the sentence, "***Thee do we worship***", points to this exclusiveness – the object, "Thee", has been placed before the verb, and worship is mentioned without any condition.

It has been explained earlier that the owned thing exists and subsists because of, and with, its owner. In this sense, it should not divert an onlooker's attention from its owner. You look at a house belonging to Zayd; if you are looking at it merely as a house, you may possibly lose sight of Zayd; but if you look at it from the angle that it is a property of Zayd, you cannot wean your thoughts from him.

The only true attribute of the universe is that it is created and owned by Allah. Nothing in the creation can hide the divine presence, nor should looking at these things make one forgetful of Allah. He is ever present, as He has said:

Is it not sufficient as regards your Lord that he is a witness over all things? (***41:53***).

Now surely, they are in doubt as to the meeting of their Lord; now surely, He encompasses all things (***41:54***).

The true worship, therefore, is that in which the worshipped and the worshipper both are present. Allah should be worshipped as the One who is present before the worshipper – and that is why the third person of the preceding verses has been changed to the second person in this verse, "Thee do we worship". The worshipper should be present before his Lord, not only with his body but also with his soul; otherwise, the worship would be a body without soul, a form without life. Nor should he divide his attention between his Lord and someone (or something) else – neither openly, (as the idol worshippers do) – nor secretly (like the one whose mind is on something else while worshipping Allah, or the one who worships Allah because he wants to enter the Garden or to save himself from the hell). All these diversions are various facets of polytheism, and Allah has forbidden it in His Book:

…Therefore, worship Allah, being sincere to Him in religion (***39:2***).

Now, surely, sincere religion is for Allah (***alone***)***, and*** (***as for***) ***those who take guardians besides***

Him, (saying): We do not worship them save that they may make us nearer to Allah, surely, Allah will judge between them in that in which they differ (39:3).

Worship shall be a true worship when it is done with pure intention, and this purity has been named as the presence of the worshipper. This will happen only when the attention of the Worshipper is not fixed on anyone other than Allah (otherwise, it would be polytheism); and when his aim of worship is not any other hope or fear like that of the paradise or the hell (otherwise, the worship would not be purely for Allah). Moreover, he should not be concerned with his own self, as it would tantamount to egotism and arrogance, completely opposite of submission and servitude. Probably the plural pronoun – "we" worship – points to this fact; it negates the individuality of the worshipper as he includes himself in a multitude of people; it removes egotism, creates humility, and effaces the tendency of self-importance.

The declaration of one's servitude with the words, "***Thee do we worship***", is free from all defects, so far as its meaning and purity are concerned. Yet, as the servant describes the worship as his own act, it could create an impression that he thought to be independent in existence, power and will, while in fact he is only a slave and slave owns nothing. The second sentence, "***and Thee do we beseech for help***", removes this possible misunderstanding. It means: "We ascribe the worship to ourselves and make this claim only with Thy help; we are never independent of Thee. In other words, the complete verse, "***Thee do we worship and Thee do we beseech for help***", gives a single meaning, and that is "worship with purity of intention". Probably, that is why both sentences have the same style; otherwise, it could be said, '***Thee do we worship; help us and guide us...***' The style has been changed in the next verse, "guide us..." and its reason will be explained later.

The above-given explanation makes it clear why the pronouns in this verse have been changed from the third to the second person; why the restrictive device of putting the object ("Thee") before the verb has been chosen; why the worship, in "do we worship", is used without any condition; why worshipper includes others with him in this declaration of allegiance and worship; why the second sentence is needed after the first; and why both have the same construction and style.

The scholars have written other fine points about this verse; the reader is advised to refer to their books for this purpose; Allah is the creditor whose debt can never be repaid.

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1. 'Uyun al-Akhbar and Ma'ani al-akhbar.
2. 'Uyun al-Akhbar.
3. al-Khisal.
4. as-Sahih, Muslim.
5. This argument seems inconclusive. If two words are synonymous, it is not necessary for them to have the same preposition, al-Mawla (المولى) and al-awla (الأولى) have the same meaning – guardian, master, but the former is used without a preposition while the latter is followed by the preposition "bi" (بِـ = for, with, etc.)

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Fatiha: Verses 6 – 7

اهدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

Guide us to the straight path (***1:6***).

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ الضَّالِّينَ

The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours, not of those inflicted by Thy wrath, nor of those gone astray (***1:7***).

Commentary

Verses 6 – 7

Qur'an: Guide us to the straight path (***1:6***).

Qur'an: ***The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours, not of those inflicted by Thy wrath, nor of those gone astray*** (***1:7***).

The meaning of *"al-hidayah"* (الهداية = guidance, to guide) may easily be understood, if we consider first the significance of the "path". *"as-Sirat"* (الصراط = path) is synonymous with *at-tariq* (الطريق) and *as-sabil* (السّبيل). In these verses, Allah has commended the path that it is straight and that it is the path taken by those upon whom Allah has bestowed His bounties and favours. It is this path guidance to which has been asked for. And it is the ultimate goal of the worship: The servant prays to his Lord that his worship, clean from all impurities, be performed in this path.

Allah has mentioned in His Book that He has laid down a path for man, nay, for all the creation, a path upon which they are proceeding. He says:

O man! Surely, thou art striving to thy Lord, a hard striving, until thou art to meet Him (***84:6***).

…And to Him is the ultimate resort (***64:3***).

…Now surely, to Allah do all affairs eventually come (***42:53***).

There are many such verses, showing that all are proceeding on a prescribed road and that their destination is Allah. So far as the way is concerned, Allah has said that there are two ways, not one:

Did I not enjoin on you, O children of Adam! that you should not worship the Satan? Surely, he is your open enemy (***36:60***).

And that you should worship Me; this is the straight path (***36:61***).

So, there is a straight path, and also there is another path. Again, He has said:

…Then verily I am near; I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me, so they should answer My call and believe in Me, that they may walk in the right way (***2:186***).

Call upon Me, I will answer you. Verily, those who are arrogant to My worship shall soon enter hell, disgraced (***40:60***).

Obviously, Allah is near to His servants, and the nearer path to Him is that of worship and prayer. Compare it with description of those who do not believe in Him:

…These shall be called to from a far-off place (***41:44***).

Obviously, the station of unbelievers is far-off place.

There are thus two ways to Allah, a near one - the way of the believers - and a distant one, that of the others. It is the first difference between the ways.

Second difference:

Surely, (***as for***) ***those who reject Our signs and turn away from them haughtily, the doors of heaven shall not be opened for them*** (***7:40***).

What is the function of a door? To let authorized people pass through it and bar the entry to unauthorized ones. The verse shows that there is a passage from the lower level to the upper heights.

On the other hand, Allah says:

…And to whomsoever My wrath descends he shall perish indeed (***20:81***).

The word translated here as "shall perish" literally means "shall fall down". Therefore, there is another passage coming for the upper heights to the lower level. Also He says:

…And whoever adopts unbelief instead of faith, he indeed has gone astray from (***i.e., has lost***) ***the right way*** (***2:108***).

Allah uses the term "polytheism" for "going astray".[1] Accordingly, people are divided into three

categories:

First, those who proceed to the upper heights – those who believe in the signs of Allah and are not arrogant to His worship.

Second, those who fall down to the lower levels – they are those upon whom the wrath of Allah has descended.

Third, those who have gone astray from the right path; they are lost, wandering hither and thither.

The last verse under discussion points to these three categories: "the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours, not of those inflicted by Thy wrath, nor of those gone astray."

Obviously, "the straight path" is separate from the last two paths. It is the path of the believers who are not arrogant. At the same time, the following verse shows that the straight path itself may be divided in various "traffic lanes", ways or branches:

…Allah will exalt those of you who believe, and those who are given knowledge, in high degrees… (***58:11***).

This statement needs some elaboration:

Every straying is polytheism and vice versa, as may be inferred from the words of Allah:

…And whoever adopts unbelief instead of faith, he indeed has gone astray from the right way (***2:108***).

The same is the theme of the verse:

Did I not enjoin on you, O children of Adam! that you should not worship the Satan? Surely, he is your open enemy (***36:60***).

And that you should worship Me; this is the straight path (***36:61***).

And certainly he has led astray a great multitude from among you (***36:62***).

Likewise, the Qur'an counts polytheism as injustice and vice versa, as may be seen in the words which the Satan shall utter after the judgment will be delivered against him and his followers:

…Surely, I disbelieved in your associating me with Allah, before; surely, it is the unjust that shall have the painful punishment (***14:22***).

Then it counts injustice as straying:

Those who believe and do not mix up their faith with injustice, those are they who shall have the

security and they are those who shall be guided aright (***6:82***).

It should be noted that they shall be guided aright and shall have security against straying or its resulting punishment only if they do not mix their faith with injustice and inequity.

It is clear from looking at these verses together that going stray, polytheism and inequity all have the same effect; all three are adjunct to each other. That is why it is said that each of them is identifiable by the other two. For all practical purposes the three are one and the same, although they may be different in their literal meaning.

The straight path, then, is different from that of those who have gone astray; it is a path which is far away from polytheism and injustice. There can be no straying in this path – neither in hidden ideas and beliefs (for example, the disbelief or the thoughts disapproved by Allah); nor in open actions or omissions (like committing a sin or omitting a good deed). It is the true monotheism in belief and in deeds. And what is there after the truth but error? The above-mentioned verse 6:82 fits on it completely. That verse guarantees security in the way and promises perfect guidance. The promise is inferred from the fact that the original word translated as "guided aright" is noun-agent, and the grammarians say that such a noun is really made for future. This is one feature of the straight path.

Allah has identified those bestowed with divine favours, in the verse:

And whoever obeys Allah and the Apostle, these are with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favours from among the prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the righteous ones; and excellent are these as companions (***4:69***).

The belief and the obedience have been explained shortly before it in these words:

But no! by your Lord! they do not believe (***in reality***) ***until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them, and then they do not find any straitness in their selves as to what you have decided, and submit with total submission*** (***4:65***).

And if We had prescribed for them: Kill yourselves or go forth from your homes, they would not have done it except a few of them; and if they had done what they were admonished, it would have certainly been better for them and most efficacious in strengthening (***them***) (***4:66***).

Those who truly believe are really strong in their servitude and submission, in words and in deeds; in appearance and in secret. Yet such perfect believers shall be placed in a rank behind those upon whom Allah has bestowed favours; that is why Allah has said, "these are with those ..." and not, 'among those'. They shall be with them, but not of them. It is further strengthened by the last sentence, "and excellent are these as companions". Companions are other than the self.

There is another, somewhat similar, verse in fifty-seventh chapter:

***And* (*as for*) *those who believe in Allah and His apostles, these it is that are the truthful and the martyrs with their Lord; they shall have their reward and their light…* (*57:19*).**

The believers, thus, shall be included in the ranks of the martyrs and the truthful – in the life hereafter. The fact that it will happen in the next world is inferred from the words, "with their Lord", and "they shall have their reward".

Those bestowed with divine favours who are the people of the straight path – with whose relationship the straight path is identified – have greater prestige and higher rank than these believers who have cleansed their beliefs and actions from straying, polytheism and injustice. Pondering on these verses together, one feels sure that this group of the believers (with this quality) still continues; it has not come to its end. Had this group completed its term, it would have been counted among (and not, "with") those bestowed with favours; these believers would have gone up and instead of being with those bestowed with favours, would have become part of them. They probably are among those who have been given knowledge from Allah, as He says:

***Allah will exalt those of you who believe, and those who are given knowledge, in high degrees* (*58:11*).**

The people of the straight path are bestowed with excellent bounties that are more precious than that of the complete faith and perfect belief. This is the second feature of the straight path.

Allah repeatedly mentions *as-sirat* (path) and *as-sabil* (way) in the Qur'an; but He has never attributed to Himself except one straight path; although He attributes several ways to Himself.

***And* (*as for*) *those who strive hard for Us. We will most certainly guide them onto Our ways* (*29:69*).**

Likewise, He has never ascribed "the straight path" to any of his servants, the only exception being this verse under discussion which ascribes it to those who are bestowed with divine favours; but He frequently attributes "the way" to one or the other of His chosen servants:

***Say: "This is my way; I invite you unto Allah; with clear sight* (*are*) *I and he who follows me"* (*12:108*).**

***…And follow the way of him who turns to Me* (*31:15*).**

***…The way of the believers…* (*4:115*).**

It is an indication that "the way" is other than "the straight path".

There may be various and different ways taken by various chosen servants proceeding on the way of worship and submission; but "the straight path" is only one, as Allah points to it in these words:

…Indeed, there has come to you a light and a clear Book from Allah (5:15).

With it Allah guides him who follows His pleasure into the ways of safety and brings them out of utter darkness into light by His permission and guides them to the straight path (5:16).

See, how the verse refers to "the ways" (in plural), and to "the straight path" (in singular). Now, there may be two explanations for it. Either "the straight path" is the same thing as "the ways", or "the ways" on going further join together and then merges into the straight path. There is another difference between the straight path and the way. Allah says:

And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating others (with Him) (12:106).

Note how the believers are said to associate others with Allah. It shows that some sort of polytheism (that is, straying) may co-exist with belief (and the belief is a "way"); in other words, the way may co-exist with polytheism. But the straight path cannot do so because it is not the path of those who have gone astray.

Each of these ways has some excellence or some deficiency - but not so the straight path. Each way is a part of the straight path, but is distinguished from the other ways. It may be inferred from the above-mentioned verses as well as from others. For example, Allah says:

And that you worship Me; this is the straight path (36:61).

Say: "Surely, (as for) me, my Lord has guided me to the straight path; (to) a most right religion, the faith of Ibrahim the upright one" (6:161).

The worship and the religion are common to all the ways, and they are also "the straight path". The relation of the straight path to the ways of Allah is that of the soul to the body. The body, during the life, undergoes countless changes, varies from day to day - from infancy to childhood; from adolescence to youth, from middle to old age and to senility. But the soul remains the same, and is always one with body at every stage. Sometimes, the body is inflicted with undesirable effects, which the soul would never accept, if left to itself. But the soul - the creation of Allah, upon which He created the man - never deteriorates. Yet, in all these states, the body remains one with the soul.

Likewise, the ways of Allah are one with the straight path; but sometimes a way - the way of the believers, of the followers of the Prophet of those who turn towards Allah or any other way - suffers from some kind of deterioration, although the straight path is immune from all defects and imperfections. You have seen how one of the ways, the belief, sometimes combines with polytheism and straying, but the straight path does not do so. In short, the ways are of various grades - near or distant; safe or unsafe; clean or unclean - but all are in the straight path, or, let us say, are one with the straight path.

Allah has mentioned this fact, in a parable of truth and falsehood, in these words:

He sends down water from the heaven, then the valleys flow according to their measure, and the torrent bears along the swelling foam; and from what they melt in the fire for the sake of (making) ornaments or apparatus arises a scum like it; thus does Allah compare truth and falsehood; then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits the people, it remains in the earth; thus does Allah set forth parables (13:17).

It clearly shows that the hearts and mind differ in their abilities and capacities to receive the divine knowledge and spiritual perfection, although all partake of the same divine sustenance. (Its full explanation will be written in the Ch. 13).

This was, however, the third feature of the straight path.

From the above analysis it may be seen that the straight path is a sort of controller of all the ways leading to Allah. We may say that a way leading to Allah leads a man to Him as long as it remains one with the straight path; but the straight path leads to Allah unconditionally, without any if or but. That is why Allah has named it *"as-sirat al-mustaqim"* (الصراط المستقيم = the straight path). *as-Sirat* means a clear path, and is derived from *"saratttu sartan"* (صرطتُ صرطاً = I swallowed it completely); in other words, this clear path swallows its walkers without letting them go out. *"al-Mustaqim"* (المستقيم = straight) literally means the one who stands on his legs, and has full control of himself as well as of the things attached to him. In other words, it is a thing which is not subjected to change or variation. Thus *"as-siratu al-mustaqim"* = the straight path is the path which never fails to guide and to lead the walker to his destination. Allah says:

Then as for those who believe in Allah and hold fast unto Him, soon will He admit them to Mercy from Him and (His) Grace, and guide them unto Himself (by) the straight path (4:175).

Obviously, this guidance does not fail; it always succeeds. Also, He has said:

Therefore (for) whomsoever Allah intends that He would guide him aright, He expands his breast for Islam, and (for)whomsoever He intends that He should leave him to err, He makes his breast strait and narrow as though he were ascending into the sky; thus does Allah lay uncleanliness on those who do not believe (6:125).

And this is the path of your Lord, (a) straight (path) (6:126).

That is, this is Allah's path that never changes, nor does it fail to reach its destination. Again, He says:

He said: "This is a straight path with Me (15:41).

Surely, as regards My servants, thou hast no authority over them except those who follow thee of the deviators" (15:42).

The verse declares that this is His settled course which never varies. In this way, it conveys the same

idea which is contained in the verse:

***For you shall not find any alteration in the course of Allah; and you shall not find any change in the course of Allah* (*35:43*).**

The above-mentioned discourse has made the following points clear:

First: There are various ways to Allah, each differing with others in perfection, easiness and smoothness. It all depends on its nearness or remoteness from the basic reality, from the straight path, like the way of submission, of faith, of worship, of purity of intention or of humility before Allah. Some of the ways leading to the opposite direction are disbelief, polytheism, infidelity, exceeding the bounds, committing sins etc. Allah has said:

***And for all are grades according to what they did, and so that He may pay them back fully their deeds and they shall not be dealt with unjustly* (*46:19*).**

The same is the case with the spiritual knowledge which the human mind receives from Allah. They vary according to mental and spiritual capacity of the receivers, and are tinted by colours of visions of the beholders. This fact is shown in the Qur'anic parable mentioned earlier:

***He sends down water from the heaven, then the valleys flow according to their measure …* (*13:17*).**

Second: The straight path controls all the ways. Likewise, the people of the straight path (who have been firmly established in it by Allah) do enjoy complete authority to guide the other servants of Allah. Allah says:

***…And excellent are these as companions* (*4:69*).**

***Verily, your only Master is Allah and His Apostle and those who believe, those who keep up prayer and pay zakat while they are bowing down* (*5:55*).**

The last-mentioned verse was revealed about 'Ali, the Leader of the faithful ('a), as *al-mutawatir* traditions say; and he (peace be on him) was the first to open this door in Islam. More details of it will be given in the fifth chapter.

Third: The import of the guidance to the way depends on the meaning of the way itself. *al-Hiddyah* (الهِداية) means to guide, to lead; it accepts two objects, either without any preposition (as in the language of Hijaz) or with *ila* (الى = to) before the second object (as in the language of other tribes). This detail has been given in *as-Sihah* of al-Jawhari, and obviously it is correct.

Before going further, a mistaken notion should be removed. Some people think that the meaning of guidance changes, depending on whether its second object is preceded by the preposition *'ila'* or not. If

there is no such preposition, then according to them, guidance means “to convey to the destination”; if it is preceded by *ila,* then it denotes “to show the path”. In evidence, they offer the following verses:

Surely, you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He pleases (***28:56***).

This verse, in which the verbs, “cannot guide” and “guides”, have been used without preposition, says that the Prophet could not guide whom he pleased. But it is known that he, throughout his life, guided the people, that is, showed them the path of Allah. Therefore, what has been negated must be the other meaning. What the verse, then, says is this: you cannot convey to the spiritual goal whom you please; but it is Allah who conveys to that destination whom He pleases. This difference in meaning is more clearly seen in the verses:

And We would certainly have guided them in the right path (***4:68***).

The verb (in the Arabic text) has been used without any preposition and it refers to the divine guidance – that is, conveyance to destination. And Allah addresses the Prophet in these words:

And most surely, you guide to the right path (***42:52***).

Here the verb is followed by *ila* and the sentence attributes to the Prophet the task of guidance, in the meaning of showing the way. According to their reasoning the three verses put together show that when guidance is used in the meaning of “conveying to destination”, its second object accepts no preposition; when it is used for “showing the path”, the said object is preceded by *ila*.

But this notion is not supported by the Qur’an. Allah quotes the believer of the people of Pharaoh as saying:

“O my people! follow me, I will guide you to the right course” (***40:38***).

Here the Arabic text has no preposition and yet it does not mean conveying to destination, it only denotes showing the way. What has been mentioned in the verse:

Surely, you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He pleases (***28:56***).

is the reality or perfection of guidance. The verse shows that the Prophet could not bestow on his people the perfect guidance, the reality of guidance, as it was a task that Allah has reserved for Himself.

In short, the meaning of guidance does not depend on preposition *ila* coming or not coming before the second object. In both cases the meaning is the same.

al-Hidayah means to guide, to show the destination by showing the way, or, let us say, to convey to the destination. Guidance, in reality, is reserved for Allah, and He guides His servants by creating such causes that point the destination to them and lead them to their spiritual goal. Allah says:

***Therefore* (*for*) *whomsoever Allah intends that He would guide him aright, He expands his breast for Islam* (*6:125*).**

***…then their skins and their hearts become pliant to the remembrance of Allah; this is Allah's guidance; He guides with it whom He pleases* (*39:23*).**

The verb "become pliant" is followed by the preposition "to", giving the verb a shade of meaning of inclination and repose. Guidance, thus, means that Allah creates in the heart an aptitude by which it initiates, accepts, inclines towards and becomes serene in the remembrance of Allah.

It has been mentioned earlier that there are many ways leading to Allah. Consequently, guidance for one way would differ from those of the others. Each way has a special guidance of its own. This variation has been hinted at in the verse:

***And* (*as for*) *those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them unto Our ways; and Allah is most surely, with the doers of good* (*29:69*).**

A man strives "in the way of Allah"; and another strives "for Allah". There is a great difference between the two. The first tries to keep the way safe and free from all dangers and blockades; the second's attention is fixed on Allah only. It is this man who is praised in this verse – he strives hard for Allah; thereupon Allah helps him and guides him on the way most suited to his ability and power; and thereafter keeps guiding him from one way to another until He exclusively attaches him to Himself.

Fourth: The straight path is preserved in the ways of Allah – the ways that are of various grades and levels. Allah guides man to it; and the man is thus guided aright. As mentioned above, Allah may keep guiding a man from one way to the other which is of a higher grade, and then to a third one still higher. The prayer in this verse, "Guide us to the straight path" (revealed on behalf of those whom Allah has already guided to His worship) points to this very fact. If we keep this point in view, there would be no room for an objection like the following: The one who utters this prayer is already guided aright – how can he pray afresh for guidance? It would be an attempt to re-obtain a thing which is already in hand, and it is just impossible. Also, the worshipper is already on the straight path – how can he pray to be guided again to the same path? Isn't it an impossibility?

But the explanation given by us clears away the mist of such objections.

Another objection: Our Law is the most perfect and most comprehensive of all the laws sent by Allah since the dawn of humanity. Why should we ask from Allah to guide us to the path of those of the previous people upon whom He had bestowed favours?

Reply: Admittedly, the Law brought by Muhammad (S) is more perfect than any other one. But it does not necessarily mean that all those who follow this Law are more perfect than all those who followed the previous laws. An average follower of the law of Muhammad (S) cannot surpass Nuh or Ibrahim ('a),

although their laws were sent long before the Islamic Law. It is one thing to accept and follow a law; it is quite another to get spiritual perfection by total submission – by perfectly moulding oneself in that law's pattern.

A believer of previous nations who attained a high spiritual level, who became a mirror of divine attributes, is most certainly better than, and superior to, a follower of this law who did not reach that state – even though the latter would be following the most perfect and comprehensive law, that is, the Law of Muhammad (S). Therefore, it is quite in order for a believer of lower grade (although he may follow a perfect law) to pray to Allah to help him reach the level of a believer of higher grade (although he might have followed a less perfect law).

An exegete has replied to the above-mentioned objection in a way that is not free from defects. He has said: The religion of Allah is one, and that is Islam. The fundamental truths – the belief in One God, the Prophethood and the Day of Judgement and all that results from this belief – are the same in all the laws and revelations sent by Allah. The Law of Islam has an added distinction, in that it covers all aspects of human life and is, thus, the most comprehensive one. It looks more properly after public welfare. Moreover, its foundation is laid on reasoning – in all its forms: The logic, the admonition and the goodly argumentation. All divine religions are, thus, the same and the fundamental truths are common to all. The previous people have preceded us in this path. Therefore, Allah has ordered us to look into their affairs, to take lessons from them and to follow them to spiritual perfection.

The author says: The principle upon which this reply is based is against the principles that guide us in exegesis of the Qur'an. The reply assumes that the realities of fundamental truths are on the same level in all the religions; that there is no difference in their grades; that the spiritual perfections and religious virtues are of the same quality everywhere. According to this view, the highest-ranking prophet is equal to the lowest type of believer in his existence and natural perfection – so far as his creation is concerned. The difference, if any, is based on the subjective outlook of *Shari'ah,* not on any matter of creation. In their opinion, this case is similar to that of a king vis-a-vis his subjects – they are not different in their human existence, the difference is in their subjective and assumed positions only which are laid down by people and which do not have any independent existence.

This thinking, in its turn, is based on the theory of materialism, which teaches that nothing exists but matter; metaphysical "things" have no existence at all (or, at least, we are not in a position to know that they exist). The only exception is God, and we believe in His existence because of logical evidence.

Those who accepted this view did so because, coming under the influence of natural sciences, they put all their confidence in their five senses. Or because they thought that "commonsense" was enough for explaining the divine words, and therefore, neglected to meditate on the Qur'an. God willing, we shall throw more light on this subject at some other place.

Fifth: The people of the straight path are higher in rank than others, and their path is superior to the

others' ways. It is because of their knowledge, and not because of their virtuous deeds. They have that knowledge of divine attributes which is hidden from others. (We have explained earlier that perfection of virtuous deeds is found in some of the inferior ways also. Therefore, deeds cannot be the criterion by which the people of the straight path are given excellence over the rest.) The question arises as to what is that knowledge and how it is acquired. We shall deal with these questions when we shall explain the verse:

***He sends down water from the heaven, then the valleys flow according to their measure* (*13:17*).**

The following verses too point to this fact:

***Allah will exalt those of you who believe, and those who are given knowledge in higher degrees* (*58:11*).**

***To Him do ascend the good words; and the good deed lifts them up* (*35:10*).**

What ascends to Allah is the good words, that is, true belief and knowledge; good deeds lift up the good words and help them in their ascension, without themselves going up. We shall fully discuss this verse when we shall reach it.

Traditions

as-Sadiq ('a) said about the meaning of worship: "Worship is of three kinds: some people worship Allah, because they fear Him - so it is the worship of slaves; and a group worships Allah, Blessed and High is He, to seek reward - so it is the worship of hirelings; and a group worships Allah, Mighty and Great is He, because of (His) love - and this is the worship of noble persons, and it is the most excellent worship."[2]

Verily, some people worshipped Allah being desirous (of His reward) - so this is the worship of traders; and some people worshipped Allah fearing (His punishment) - so it is the worship of slaves, and a group worshipped Allah in gratitude (to Him) - so this is the worship of noble men.[3]

as-Sadiq ('a) said: "Verily people worship Allah in three ways: One group worships Him in desire of His reward, and it is the worship of covetous ones, and it is greed; and others worship Him in dread of the Fire, and it is the worship of slaves, and it is fear; but I worship Him in His love - Mighty and Great is He - and this is the worship of noble ones. (It is) because Allah has said:

***And they shall be secure from terror on that days* (*27:89*).**

and He has said,

***Say: 'If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you...'* (*3:31*).**

Therefore, whosoever is loved by Allah, he shall be among the secure ones; and it is a hidden position, cannot touch it save the purified ones."[4]

The author says: The meaning of these traditions may be understood from the preceding commentary. The Imams (of Ahl Al-Bayt) have variously attributed the worship of the noble ones sometimes to gratitude and sometimes to love, because in final analysis both are one and the same. Gratitude and thankfulness mean putting the received bounty in its proper place. It is the thankfulness for worship that should be addressed to Allah, as only He, Himself, deserves to be worshipped. Allah is worshipped because He is Allah, that is, because He alone holds all attributes of beauty and glory. He, of all things, is Beautiful; He alone is loved for Himself. What is love? It is inclination and attraction towards beauty. We say: He is worshipped because He is He; we may express the same idea if we say: He is worshipped because He is beautiful and beloved. Again, the same theme may be explained by saying that He is worshipped because He is the Bestower of favours and is thanked through worship. All three expressions carry the same import.

It has been narrated through Sunni chains that as-Sadiq ('a) explained the verse, "Thee do we worship..." in these words: "We do not ask from Thee other than Thee, and we do not worship Thee by substitute and replacement, as do those who are ignorant of Thee, removed from Thee."

The author says: This tradition points to what has been explained in the Commentary that worship demands presence (of heart) and purity (of intention) which does not allow diversion to any substitute, to anything else.

as-Sadiq ('a) said *inter alia* in a tradition: "And whosoever thinks that he worships (Allah) by (His) attributes without being conscious of Him, he refers (his worship) to an absent one; and whosoever thinks that he worships the attribute and the person (having that attribute) he nullifies monotheism, because the attribute is other than the person; and whosoever thinks that he ascribes the person to the attribute, he belittles the Great One, and they do not assign to Allah His proper prestige..."[5]

as-Sadiq ('a) explained the verse: *Guide us to the straight path,* in these words: "Guide us to adhere to the path that leads to Thy love, and conveys to Thy Garden, (the path that) prevents us from following our desires (lest we be ruined) and from adhering to our opinions (lest we be destroyed).[6]

The same book quotes Ali ('a) as saying about this verse: "Continue for us Thy help with which we obeyed Thee in our past days, so that we continue to obey Thee in our coming days also."

The author says: The two traditions point to two aspects of the reply of the previously mentioned objection - that the prayer for guidance, addressed by a person already guided aright, is trying to obtain a thing in hand, and that it was asking for impossible. The first tradition looks at the difference in the grades of guidance, and the second looks at oneness of guidance in its reality.

Again, *Ma'ani al-akhbar* quotes Ali ('a) as saying: "The straight path, in this world, is that which stops

short of excesses and rises above shortcomings, and remains straight; and, in the next world, it is the path of the believers (leading them) to the Garden."

The same book quotes the same Imam, explaining the verse: *The path of those...,* as follows: "Say: Guide us to the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours by strengthening them for Thy religion and Thy obedience – not (of those whom Thou favoured) with wealth and health because such things are sometimes given even to the disbelievers or to the sinful." (Then he said:) "And those (bestowed with divine favour) are those about whom Allah says:

And whoever obeys Allah and the Apostle, these are with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favours from among the prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the righteous ones, and excellent are these as companions (***4:69***).

ar-Ridha' ('a) narrates through his forefathers from Amir al-Mu'minin ('a) that he said: "I heard the Apostle of Allah saying: 'Allah, Mighty and Great is He, has said: "I have divided the Opening of the Book between Myself and My servant; so, its half is for Me and the (other) half is for My servant. And My servant shall get what he asks for." When the servant says:

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful (***1:1***)

Allah, Great is His Glory, says: "My servant has started with My name, and it is incumbent upon Me that I should complete his works for him and bless him in his affairs." And when he says:

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds (***1:2***).

Allah, Great is His Glory, says: "My servant has praised Me, and he knows that the bounties that are with him are from Me, and that the misfortunes that have been averted from him were so averted by My grace; (O My angels!) I appoint you as My witnesses that I shall add for him the favours of the next world to those of this world, and will avert from him the calamities of the next world as I have averted from him the calamities of this world." And when he says,

The Beneficent, the Merciful (***1:3***).

Allah, Great is His Glory, says: "My servant bore witness for Me that I am the Beneficent, the Merciful; I make you My witness that I will most surely, augment his share in My mercy, and I will most certainly increase his portion in My bounties." And when he says,

The Master of the Day of Judgement (***1:4***).

Allah, the High, says: "I make you My witness that, as he has acknowledged that I am the Master of the Day of Judgement, I will most certainly make his reckoning easier (for him) on the Day of Reckoning, and I will most certainly accept his good deeds, and look over his sins." And when he says:

***Thee do we worship* (*1:5*).**

Allah, Mighty and Great is He, says: "My servant is telling truth, He worships Me only. Be My witness that I will most surely, give him for his worship a reward that will be the (object of) envy to all who opposed him when he worshipped Me." And when he says,

***and Thee do we beseech for help* (*1:5*).**

Allah, the High, says: "From Me has My servant sought help, and in Me has he taken refuge. Be My witness that I will most certainly help him in his affairs, and will aid him in his difficulties, and will take his hand in his calamities." And when he says,

***Guide us to the right path* (*1:6*).**

Allah, Mighty and Great is He, says: "This (part) is for My servant, and My servant shall have what he asks for; and I have answered (the prayer of) My servant, and have given him what he hopes for and have protected him from what he is afraid of." "[7]

The author says: as-Saduq has narrated in *'Ilal ash-Shara'i',* an almost similar tradition from ar-Ridha' ('a). The tradition explains the chapter of The Opening in the frame of the daily prayer.

It further confirms the previously mentioned fact that this divine revelation has been sent, as though on behalf of the servants of Allah, to teach them the manners of servitude; to show them how to praise their Lord and how to declare their allegiance to Him. It is a chapter made especially for the purpose of worship; and no other chapter comes near to it in this respect. For example:

1. The entire chapter is a divine speech, revealed on behalf of His servant, so that he may recite it when he stands to worship his Lord.

2. It is divided in two parts: one for Allah and the other for the servant.

3. It contains, in spite of its brevity, all the Qur'anic wisdom. The Qur'an is a vast treasure of fundamental truths, moral values and the most comprehensive *Shari'ah* which consists of the rules of worship and mutual dealings, as well as the penal and civil codes. Further it is a valuable mine of divine promises and threats, stories of previous peoples as well as parables and moral lessons. But, in spite of this wide scope, all its teachings may be returned to four fundamental truths: the Oneness of God, the prophethood, the resurrection (with all its details) and the guidance of mankind to its bliss in this world as well as in the next. Needless to reiterate that this chapter contains all these basic realities

in these very short, and at the same time very eloquent, sentence.

It will not be out of place to compare the beauty, glory and spirituality of this chapter, used in the Muslims' prayers, with the Lord's prayer, used by the Christians in their prayer:

Our Father which art in heaven Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. (*Matthews 6/9-13*)

Ponder deeply on the teachings contained in these sentences, supposed to be of divine revelation, and see what manners of servitude does this prayer teach. First it tells them that their Father (i.e. God, in their terminology) is in heaven. Then it prays about the Father that His name be hallowed, His kingdom come and His will be done in earth as it is in heaven. The question is: Who will fulfil these wishes which look more like political slogans than spiritual invocation. Then it makes them ask for their daily bread, and for His forgiveness in lieu of their forgiveness - that He should waive His rights as they have waived theirs. But what right do they possess except that which they have been given by God Himself? Then they beseech Him not to lead them into temptation but to deliver them from evil. This is asking for impossible, because this world is the place appointed for our test and trial, so that we may acquire spiritual perfection. Would not salvation lose its meaning, if there was no test and trial?

And yet some orientalists have temerity to write: "Islam does not have any superiority over other religions, so far as spiritual knowledge is concerned, because all divine religions invite the men to the belief in one God, and ask them to purify themselves by good character and virtuous deeds. The religions excel one another only in deep-rootedness of their social fruits."

Other Traditions

It is narrated in *Man la yahduruh al-faqih* and *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi that as-Sadiq ('a) said: "The straight path is Amir al-Mu'minin ('a)."

as-Sadiq ('a) said: "(The straight path) is the path to the knowledge of Allah. And there are two paths, one in this world and the other in the next. As for the path in this world, it is the Imam whose obedience is obligatory; whosoever knows him in this world and follows his guidance, he shall proceed on the path which is the bridge over the hell in the next world; and whosoever does not know him in this world, his

foot shall slip (over that bridge) in the next world, and he shall fall down into the fire of the hell."[8]

The same book quotes as-Sajjad ('a) as saying: "There is no curtain between Allah and His proof, nor is there any screen for Allah against His proof. We are the gates of Allah, and we are the straight path, and we are the (treasure) chest of His Knowledge, and we are the interpreters of His revelation, and we are the pillars of His Oneness, and we are the place of His secret."

Ibn Shahrashub has quoted from *at-Tafsir* of Waki 'Ibn al-Jarrah from ath-Thawri from as-Suddi from Asbat and Mujahid from Ibn 'Abbas that he said about the verse: *Guide us to the straight path:* "Say O group of the servants (of Allah): Lead us to the love of Muhammad (S) and his family members."

The author says: There are other traditions of the same meaning. Such traditions are based on the "flow" of the Qur'an, that is, application of the Qur'an wherever it is applicable. It should be noted that the term, "flow" - and it will often be used in this book - has been taken from the traditions of the Imams of Ahl Al-Bayt ('a):

al-Fudayl Ibn Yasar said: "I asked Abu Ja'far ('a) about the tradition, 'There is no verse in the Qur'an but it has an exterior and an interior, and there is no word in it but it has a boundary, and every boundary has a watching place.' (I asked him) what was the meaning of exterior and interior. The Imam said: 'Its exterior is its revelation and its interior is its interpretation; some of it has already passed (i.e. happened) and some of it has not come about yet; it runs along (or flows) as run the sun and the moon; when a thing of it comes (to its appointed place and time) it happens...[9]

This theme is found in other traditions too. It is the convention of the Imams of Ahl Al-Bayt ('a) that they apply a Qur'anic verse to all things it may be applied to. And this convention was correct and reasonable, because the Qur'an was revealed as a "guidance to the worlds"; it guides the mankind to correct belief, correct ethics and correct action. The matter of belief that it has explained is eternal truth; it is not limited to a certain time or certain place. The virtue or vice and the rules laid down for them are not confined to one person or one period - they are general and applicable to all relevant persons and times.

The traditions explaining the background of revelation of a certain verse - when, why and about whom or what was it revealed - do not affect its general import. The rule is not restricted to that particular person or event; otherwise, it would cease to be valid in other similar conditions, and would die with the death of that person. The Qur'anic declaration is general. If it praises some persons, or condemns some others, it is because of the presence of good or evil characteristics in them. And wherever those good or evil characteristics are found, even in later generations, the verse will in all truth be applied to them. The Qur'an itself proves it, as Allah says:

With it (i.e., the Qur'an) Allah guides him who follows His pleasure into the ways of safety... (5:16).

…And most surely, it is a Mighty Book (41:41).

Falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it (41:42).

Surely, We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely, be its guardian (15:9).

There are numerous traditions, perhaps reaching to hundreds, which apply various verses of the Qur'an to the Imams or to their enemies. They are called the traditions of "flow". But now that the general principle has been explained, we shall not include those traditions in this book – except where it becomes necessary for the explanation of a verse or for some reasoning or discussion.

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1. As may be seen in the verses 36:60–62, quoted above.
2. al–Kafi.
3. Nahj al–Balaghah.
4. al–'ilal, al–Majalis and al–Khisal.
5. Tuhaf al–'uqul.
6. Ma'ani al–akhbar.
7. 'Uyunu al–akhbar.
8. Ma'ani al–akhbar.
9. at–Tafsir, of al–'Ayyashi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al–Baqarah: Verses 1–5

Surah Al–Baqarah, (The Cow)

286 verses – Medina

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

الم

Alif Lam mim (2:1).

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لاَ رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

This Book, there is no doubt in it, (***is***) ***a guidance to those who guard*** (***against evil***) (***2:2***).

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ

Those who believe in the unseen and keep up the prayer and spend (***benevolently***) ***out of what We have given them*** (***2:3***).

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ وَبِالآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ

And who believe in that which has been sent down to thee and that which was sent down before thee and they are sure of the hereafter (***2:4***).

أُوْلَئِكَ عَلَى هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

These are on a guidance from their Lord and these it is that shall be the successful ones (***2:5***).

General Comment

This chapter was revealed piecemeal; therefore, it does not have a single theme. However a major part of it shows a general objective: It emphasizes that a man cannot be a true servant of Allah unless he believes in all that was revealed to the apostles of Allah without making any difference between revelation and revelation, or between apostle and apostle; accordingly, it admonishes and condemns the disbelievers, the hypocrites and the people of the book because they differed about the religion of Allah and differentiated between His apostles; thereafter it ordains various important laws, like change of the direction to which the Muslims were to turn for their prayers, regulations of *hajj,* inheritance and fasting and so on.

Commentary

Verse 1

Qur'an: ***Alif lam mim*** (***2:1***).

God willing, we shall describe in the 42nd chapter some things related to the "letter-symbols" that come at the beginning of some chapters. Also, the meaning of the guidance of the Qur'an and of its being a book will be explained later on.

Verses 2 – 3

Qur'an: ***This Book, there is no doubt in it,*** (***is***) ***guidance to those who guard*** (***against evil***) (***2:2***).

Qur'an: ***Those who believe in the unseen*** (***2:3***).

Those who guard against evil, or in other words, the pious ones, are the very people who believe. Piety, or guarding oneself against evil, is not a special virtue of any particular group of the believers. It is not like doing good, being humble before God or purity of intention, which are counted as various grades of the faith. Piety, on the other hand, is a comprehensive virtue that runs through all the ranks of the true faith. It is for this reason that Allah has not reserved this adjective for any particular group of the believers.

The characteristics of piety, enumerated in these four verses, are five: Believing in the unseen, keeping up prayers, spending benevolently out of what Allah has given, believing in what Allah has revealed to His apostles, and being sure of the hereafter. The pious ones acquire these spiritual qualities by guidance from Allah, as Allah tells us in the next verse: "These are on a guidance from their Lord". They became pious and guarded themselves against evil because Allah had guided them to it. When they got that quality, the Qur'an became guidance for them: "This Book... (is) a guidance to those who guard against evil".

It clearly shows that there are two guidances, one before they became pious, the other after it. The first guidance made them pious; and thereupon Allah raised their status by the guidance of His Book.

The contrast is thus made clear between the pious ones on one hand and the disbelievers and the hypocrites (who are admonished in the next fifteen verses) on the other. The later two groups are surrounded by two strayings and two blindnesses. Their first straying causes their unbelief and hypocrisy, and the second one (which comes after their unbelief and hypocrisy) confirms their first error and strengthens it. Look at what Allah says about the disbelievers:

Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing; and there is a covering over their eyes (***2:7***).

Sealing their hearts has been ascribed to Allah, but the covering over their eyes was put by the disbelievers themselves. Likewise, Allah says about the hypocrites:

There is a disease in their hearts, so Allah added to their disease (***2:10***).

The first disease is attributed to the hypocrites themselves, and the second one to Allah. The same reality has been explained in many verses. For example:

He causes many to err by it and many He leads aright by it! But He does not cause to err by it (***any***) ***except the transgressors*** (***2:26***).

…But when they turned aside, Allah made their hearts turn aside (***61:5***).

In short, the pious ones are surrounded by two guidances, as the disbelievers and hypocrites fall between two errors.

The second guidance is by the Qur'an; therefore, the first one must have been before the Qur'an. They must have been guided by a healthy and unimpaired psychology. If a man's nature is faultless and flawless, it cannot fail to see that it is dependent on something above it. Also, it realizes that every other thing, which it may perceive, imagine or understand, depends likewise on, a thing outside the chain of dependent and needy things. Thus, it comes to believe that there must be a Being, unseen and imperceptible through the senses, who is the beginning and end of every other thing. It also sees that the said Essential Being does not neglect even the smallest detail when it comes to creative perfection of His creatures. This makes him realize that the said Creator cannot leave the man to wander aimlessly hither and thither in his life; that He must have provided for him a guidance to lead him aright in his actions and morals.

By this healthy reasoning, the man acquires the belief in One God, in the institution of prophethood and in the Day of Resurrection. In this way, his faith in the fundamentals of religion becomes complete. That faith leads him to show his servitude before his Lord, and to use all that is in his power – wealth, prestige, knowledge, power, and any other excellence – to keep this faith alive and to convey it to others. Thus, we come to the prayer and benevolent spending. The five virtues enumerated in these verses are such that a healthy nature unfailingly leads the man to them. Once a man reaches this stage, Allah bestows on him His other grace, that is, the guidance by the Qur'an.

The above–mentioned five qualities – correct belief and correct deeds – fall between two guidances, a preceding one and a following one.

This second guidance is based on the first one. This fact has been described in the following verses:

Allah confirms those who believe with the sure word in this world's life and in the hereafter (***14:27***).

O you who believe! fear Allah and believe in His apostle. He will give you two portions of His mercy, and make for you a light with which you will walk… (***57:28***).

O you who believe! if you help Allah, He will help you and make firm your feet (***47:7***).

And Allah does not guide the unjust people (***61:7***).

…And Allah does not guide the transgressing people (***61:5***).

The same is the case with error and straying of the disbelievers and hypocrites, as will be seen later on.

The above verses give an indication that man has another life, hidden behind this one. It is by that life that he lives in this world as well as after death and at resurrection. Allah says:

Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth… (***6:122***).

We shall explain it, God willing, later on.

"Those who believe in the unseen": *"al-Iman"* (الايمان = faith, to believe) is consolidation of belief in heart. It is derived from *al-amn* (الأمن = safety, to feel safe). The believer, by his belief and faith, gains safety from doubts. (Needless to say that doubt is like a poison to the faith.)

It has already been explained that faith has many grades. Sometimes one is certain of the object of faith; and this certainty has its effects; at other times the certainty increases and includes some concomitants of the said object; and at times it increases to include all the related matters of the object of faith. Naturally, the belief, thus, is of various grades and so are the believers. *"al-Ghayb"* (الغَيْب = the unseen) is opposite of "the perceived". It is used for Allah, and His great signs, including the revelation, which is referred to in the clause, "And who believe in that which has been sent down to thee and that which was sent down before thee". Also, it includes the hereafter. But in these verses, the beliefs in the revelation and in the hereafter have been separately mentioned. Therefore, "the unseen" must have been used for Allah only. In this way the belief in the three fundamentals of religion becomes complete.

The Qur'an emphasizes that man should not confine his knowledge and belief to only the perception; it exhorts him to follow healthy reasoning and rational understanding.

Verse 4

Qur'an: ***And they are sure of the hereafter*** (***2:4***).

Instead of only believing in the hereafter, they are sure of it. There is an indication here that one cannot be pious, cannot guard himself against evil, until he is really certain of the hereafter – a certainty that does not let him forget it even for a short time. A man believes in a matter, yet sometimes forgets some of its demands and then commits something contrary. But if he believes in, and is sure of, the day when he shall have to give account of all that he has done –big or small – he will not do anything against the divine law, will not commit any sin. Allah says:

…And do not follow desire, lest it should lead you astray from the path of Allah; (***as for***) ***those who go astray from the path of Allah, for them surely, is a severe punishment because they forgot the day of reckoning*** (***38:26***).

Clearly it is because of forgetting the Day of Reckoning that man goes astray. It follows that if one

remembers it and is sure of it, he will surely, guard himself against evil, will become pious.

Verse 5

Qur'an: These are on a guidance from their Lord and these it is that shall be the successful ones (2:5).

Guidance is always from Allah; it is not ascribed to anyone else except in a metaphorical way.

Allah describes His guidance in these words:

Therefore (for) whomsoever Allah intends that He would guide him aright; He expands his breast for Islam… (6:125).

If one's breast is expanded, he will be free from every tightness and niggardliness.

And Allah says that:

…Whoever is preserved from the niggardliness of his soul, these it is that are the successful ones (59:9).

Therefore, He says in this verse about those who are on His guidance that "they shall be the successful ones".

Traditions

as-Sadiq ('a) said about the words of Allah: ***Those who believe in the unseen:*** "Those who believe in the rising of *al- Qa'im* (القائم = one who stands, i.e., al-Mahdi, the twelfth Imam - a. s.) that it is truth."[1]

The author says: This explanation is given in other Tradition also; and it is based on the "flow" of the Qur'an.

According to *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi, as-Sadiq ('a) said about the words of Allah: ***and spend*** **(benevolently)** ***out of what We have given them,*** that it means: the knowledge We have given them.

In *Ma'ani al-akhbar,* the same Imam has explained it in these words: "And they spread the knowledge We have given them and they recite what We have taught them of the Qur'an.

The author says: Both Traditions explain the "spending" in a wider sense that includes spending the wealth as well as using other bounties of Allah in His cause; the explanation given by us earlier is based on this exegesis.

A Philosophical Discussion

Should we rely on rational concepts, in addition to the things perceptible through the senses? It is a subject of great controversy among the western scholars of the later days. All Muslim philosophers as well as most of the western ones of ancient times believed that we can rely on the rational as well as the sensual perceptions. They were rather of the opinion that an academic premises does not look at a tangible and sensual factor as such. But most of the modern scholars, especially the scientists, hold that nothing can be relied upon except what one perceives through the five senses. Their proof is as follows:

- Pure rational proofs often go wrong. There is no test or experiment, perceptible through the senses, to verify those rational proofs or their premises.

- Sensual perceptions are free from this defect; when we perceive a thing through a sense, we verify it through repeated tests and experiments; this testing continues till we are sure of the characteristics or properties of the object of test. Therefore, sensual perception is free from doubt, while rational proof is not.

But this argument has many flaws:

First: All the above-mentioned premises are rational; they cannot be perceived by any of the five senses. In other words, these scholars are using rational premises, to prove that rational premises cannot be relied upon! What a paradox! If they succeed in proving their view-point through these premises, their very success would prove them wrong.

Second: Sensual perception is not less prone to error and mistake than rational proof. A cursory glance at the books dealing with the optics and other such subjects is enough to show how many errors are made by sight, hearing and other senses. If rational proof is unreliable because of its possible mistakes, sensual perception also should be discarded for the same reason.

Third: No doubt, there should be a way to distinguish the right perception from the wrong. But it is not the "repeated testing", *per se,* that creates that distinction in our mind. Rather, it becomes one of the premises of a rational proof which in turn provides that distinction. When we discover a property of an object, and the property remains the same through repeated tests, a rational proof, on the following lines, is offered by our thinking power.

If this property were not this thing's own property, it would not be found in it so unfailingly; But it is always found in it without fail;

Therefore, it is its own property.

It is now obvious that sensual perception too depends on rational premises to finalize its findings.

Fourth: Let us admit that practically every sensual perception is supported by test. But is that test verified by another test? If yes, then the same question will arise about this later one. Obviously, it cannot go on *ad infinitum;* there must come at the end a test whose verification depends not on a visible test but on the above-mentioned rational proof. It means that one cannot rely on sensual perception without relying on rational concepts.

Fifth: The five senses cannot perceive absolute and major issues; they know only the particular and minor things. Knowledge depends on absolute issues, which cannot be tested in a laboratory nor can they be grasped by the five senses. A professor of anatomy operates upon, or dissects, a number of living or dead human bodies – it does not matter how large or small that number is. He finds that each of the bodies – which he has opened – has a heart, a liver and the like. And after looking at those particular cases, he feels bold enough to teach an absolute proposition that all men have a heart and a liver. The question is: Has he seen inside "all" the human beings? If only that much can be relied upon which is perceived by the five senses, how can any absolute proposition of any branch of science be accepted as true?

The fact is that sensual perception and rational concept both have their place in the field of knowledge; both are complementary to each other. By rationality and understanding, we mean that faculty which is the source of the above examples of absolute principles. Everyone knows that man has such a faculty. How can a faculty created by Allah (or as they say, by nature) be always in wrong? How can it always fail in the function entrusted to it by the Creator? The Creator never entrusts any work to an agent until He creates a connecting link between them.

So far as mistakes in rational and sensual faculties are concerned, the reader should look for it in related subjects like logic etc.

Another Philosophical Discussion

Man in his early childhood perceives the objects around him; he knows them without knowing that he knows, that is, without being aware that he has, or is using, a faculty called knowledge or cognition. This continues until a time comes when he finds himself doubting or presuming a thing. Then he realizes that before that he was using "knowledge" in his life affairs. He also gradually comes to understand that his perception or concepts are sometimes wrong, that error cannot be in the materials that he perceives – because those material things are facts and facts cannot be non-facts, that is, cannot be wrong. Therefore, the error must be in his perception. When there is no error in perception, it is knowledge – a perception that leaves no room for opposite ideas.

By these stages, he becomes aware of the basic principle that positive and negative are mutually exclusive and totally exhaustive; they are contradictories, they cannot both be present nor can both be absent. This fundamental truth is the foundation-stone of every self-evident or theoretical proposition. (Even if one doubts this statement, he intuitively knows that this "doubt" cannot be present with its negative, with its "non-doubt".)

Man relies on knowledge in every academic theory and practical function. Even when he feels doubtful about a matter, he identifies that doubt by knowing that it is a doubt. The same applies when he does not know, or only presumes, or merely imagines a thing, he identifies it by the knowledge that it is ignorance, presumption or imagination.

But in ancient Greece, there arose a group, the Sophists, who denied existence of knowledge. They showed doubt in everything, even in their own selves, even in that doubt. The Sceptics of later days are almost their successors. They deny knowledge of everything outside their own selves and their own minds. Their "arguments" run as follows:

First: The most potent knowledge (that comes through the five senses) is often wrong and in error. Then how can one be sure of the knowledge obtained through other sources? How can we rely, in this background, on any knowledge or proposition outside our own selves?

Second: When we wish to comprehend any outside object, what we get is merely its knowledge; we do not grasp the object itself. Then, how can it be possible to grasp any object?

Reply To The First Argument

First: This argument negates and annihilates itself. If no proposition can be relied upon, how can one rely on the propositions and premises used in this argument?

Second: To say that a source of knowledge is "often" wrong is to admit that it is also correct many times. Then how can it be rejected totally?

Third: We have never said that our knowledge is always correct. The Sophists and the Sceptics affirm that no knowledge is correct. To refute this universal negative proposition, a particular affirmative proposition is sufficient. That is, we have only to prove that some knowledge is correct; and we have done so in the second reply.

Reply To The Second Argument

The issue in dispute is knowledge, which means to unveil an object. The Sceptics admit that when they try to comprehend an object, they get its knowledge. Their only complaint is that they do not grasp the object itself. But nobody has ever claimed that knowledge means grasping the object itself; our only claim is that knowledge unveils some of the realities of its object, that is, of the thing so known.

Moreover, the Sceptic refutes his own views practically in every movement and at every moment. He claims that he does not know anything outside his own self, outside his own mind. But when he is hungry or thirsty, he moves to the food or water; when he sees a wall falling down, he runs away from it. But he does not try to get food when he just thinks about hunger and does not run away when he just thinks about a falling wall. It means that he does not act on the pictures in his mind – which he claims are the real things, and acts on that feeling or perception which comes to him from outside – which, according to him, does not have any reality and should not be relied upon!

There is another objection against existence of knowledge. They deny existence of established knowledge; and have laid the foundation of today's natural sciences on this rejection. Their reasoning is as follows:

Every single atom in this world is in constant movement; every single thing is continuously moving towards perfection or deterioration. In other words, what a thing was at a given instant, is not the same in the next. Understanding and perception is a function of brain. Therefore, it is a material property of a material compound.

Naturally, this process too is governed by the laws of change and development. It means that all functions of brain, including knowledge, are constantly changing and developing. It is, therefore, wrong to say that there is any such thing as established knowledge. Whatever knowledge there is has only relative permanence – some propositions last longer than others. And it is this impermanent conception that is called knowledge.

Reply: This argument is based on the presumption that knowledge is not non-material and abstract; that it is a physical thing. But this supposition is neither self-evident nor proved. Knowledge is certainly non-material and abstract. It is not a physical and material thing, because the attributes and properties of matter are not found in it:

1. All material things are divisible; knowledge, *per se,* is not divisible.

2. Material things depend on space and time; knowledge, *per se,* is independent of space and time. An event happens in a certain place and time, but we may comprehend it in any place and at any time without any adverse effect on its comprehension.

3. Material things are admittedly governed by the law of general movement and constant change. But knowledge, *per se,* does not change. Knowledge, as knowledge, is incompatible with change, as one may understand after a little meditation.

4. Suppose that knowledge, *per se,* is subject to constant change like matter and material things. Then one thing or event could not be comprehended with the same details, in exactly the same way, at two different times. Nor could a past event be remembered correctly later on. Because, as the materialists have said, “what a (material) thing was at a given instant is not the same in the next”.

These comparisons show that knowledge, as knowledge, is not a material or physical thing. It must be told here that we are not talking about the physical actions and reactions which an organ of a sense or the brain has to undergo in the process of acquiring knowledge. That action and reaction is a process, or a tool, of knowledge, it is not the knowledge itself.

For more detailed discussion of this subject one should study the philosophical works.

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1. Ma’ani al-akhbar.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 6-7

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ

Surely, those who disbelieve, alike is it to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe (***2:6***).

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing; and there is a covering over their eyes; and for them is a great punishment (***2:7***).

Commentary

Verse 6

***Qur'an: Surely, those who disbelieve, alike is it to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe* (*2:6*).**

They were the people who obstinately clung to rejection of faith and in whose hearts disbelief had established deep roots. This may be inferred from the fact that warning them and not warning them was all alike to them; they would not move from their obduracy. Probably it refers to the disbelievers of Quraysh, who were the bitterest enemies of Islam and who did try their utmost to extinguish the light of faith; they persisted stubbornly in their enmity until Allah destroyed them in Badr and other battles.

The sentence, ***"alike is it to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe"* (*2:6*)**, strengthens this interpretation; because it could not be applied to all the disbelievers of the world – otherwise the door of guidance would be closed. Also, this same sentence has come in Chapter of Ya Sin (36:10) which is a Meccan chapter. Then it appears in this chapter that is the first chapter revealed at Medina. (It was revealed before the battle of Badr.) Therefore, more probably this verse also refers to the same Meccan group. In other places too, the same explanation may be given to the word, "those who disbelieve", unless there is a reason to the contrary.

Likewise, wherever the word, "those who believe", has been used in the Qur'an it refers to the first and early Muslims – unless there is any reason to believe otherwise. This style of address was reserved for them as a protocol of honour.

Verse 7

***Qur'an: Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing; and there is a covering over their eyes; and for them is a great punishment* (*2:7*).**

Allah has ascribed the sealing to His own action, but the covering over their eyes is attributed to their own selves. It shows that they had put a curtain on their souls against the light of truth – it was their own choice. Then, after their sins and disbelief, Allah put another curtain or seal over their souls. Their disbelief and misdeeds thus fall between two curtains – the first from themselves, the second from Allah.

Its further explanation will be given under:

***Surely, Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable – that of a gnat or anything above that…* (*2:26*).**

Disbelief, like belief, has various degrees and ranks; and its effects also vary, like those of belief.

Traditions

Az-Zubayri says that he said to as-Sadiq (‘a): “Tell me how many ways of *al-kufr* (الكفر = disbelief, infidelity, to cover) are there according to the Book of Allah? Mighty and Great is He! He (the Imam) said: ‘Disbelief, according to the Book of Allah, is of five types. There is the disbelief of denial (and denial is of two kinds), and the disbelief by neglecting what Allah has ordered, and the disbelief of disavowal, and the ingratitude. As for the disbelief of denial, it is denial of the Lordship; it is the talk of those who say: “there is no Lord (i.e. Creator), nor any Garden nor Fire”. It is the word of two groups of disbelievers who are called atheists. And they are those who say:

***“Nothing destroys us but time”* (*45:24*).**

It is a religion invented by them as it seemed good to them, but they have no proof to support their view. That is why Allah has said (about them): *And they have no knowledge of that; they only conjecture* (ibid.), that it is in reality as they say. And He also said: *Surely, those who disbelieve, alike is it to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe.’“*[1]

And as for the second kind, it is the denial after knowing; it means that the denier denies (the existence of God), but he knows (very well) that He is the truth, and he is convinced of it (in his heart). And Allah has said (about such people):

***And they denied them unjustly and proudly while their soul had been convinced of them* (*27:14*).**

***…And aforetime they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved, but when there came to them that which they did recognize* (*i.e. the Prophet*) *they disbelieved in him; so Allah’s curse is on the unbelievers* (*2:89*).**

So this is the explanation of the two kinds of denial.

And the third way of disbelief is ingratitude to the bounties (of Allah); and it is as Allah says quoting (the Prophet) Sulayman:

***“This is of the grace of my Lord that He may try me whether I am grateful or ungrateful; and whoever is grateful, he is grateful only for his own self, and whoever is ungrateful, then surely, my Lord is Self-sufficient, Honoured”* (*27:40*).**

***If you are grateful, I would certainly give you more, and if you are ungrateful, My chastisement is truly severe* (*14:7*).**

***Therefore, remember Me, I will remember you, and be thankful to Me, and do not be ungrateful to Me* (*2:152*).**

(In all these verses Allah has used the word *al-kufr* = disbelief, to denote ungratefulness, and

ingratitude.)

And the fourth way of disbelief is leaving out or neglecting what Allah has ordered to do. It is as Allah says:

***And when We made a covenant with you: You shall not shed your blood and you shall not turn your people out of your cities; then you gave a promise while you witnessed* (*2:84*).**

***Yet you it is who slay your people and turn a party from among you out of their homes, backing each other up against them unlawfully and exceeding the limits; and if they should come to you as captives, you would ransom them – while their very turning out was unlawful for you. Do you then believe in a part of the book and disbelieve in the other?* (*2:85*).**

In this verse Allah has charged them with disbelief because they did not follow the commandment of Allah; (it should be noted that) Allah has (in this very verse) linked them to belief, yet He did not accept it from them and it did not benefit them before Allah.

So Allah (further) said:

***What then is the reward of such among you as do this but disgrace in the life of this world, and on the day of resurrection they shall be sent back to the most grievous chastisement, and Allah is not at all heedless of what you do* (*2:85*).**

And the fifth way of disbelief is disavowal. It is as Allah says, quoting Ibrahim ('a):

***"…We renounce you, and enmity and hatred have appeared between us and you for ever until you believe in Allah alone"* (*60:4*).**

That is, we disavow and repudiate you. And He says, describing Iblis and his disowning his friends from mankind on the Day of Resurrection:

***"…Surely, I disbelieved in your associating me* (*with Allah*) *before"* (*14:22*).**

And also He says:

***And he said: "You have only taken for yourselves idols besides Allah by way of friendship between you in the world's life, then on the resurrection day some of you shall deny others, and some of you shall curse others…* (*29:25*).**

That is, some of you shall dissociate from others.

The author says: This tradition confirms what we have previously mentioned that disbelief has many grades and ranks.

1. al-Kafi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 8 - 20

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ وَمَا هُم بِمُؤْمِنِينَ

And there are some people who say: "We believe in Allah and in the last day"; while they are not at all believers (2:8).

يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ إِلاَّ أَنفُسَهُم وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ

They desire to deceive Allah and those who believe, and they do not deceive except themselves and they do not perceive (2:9).

فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضاً وَلَهُم عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ

There is a disease in their hearts, so Allah added to their disease and for them is a painful chastisement because of the lie they were saying (2:10).

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لاَ تُفْسِدُواْ فِي الأَرْضِ قَالُواْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ

And when it is said to them, "Do not make mischief in the land", they say: "We are but peace-makers" (2:11).

أَلا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِن لاَّ يَشْعُرُونَ

Now surely, they themselves are the mischief-makers, but they do not perceive (2:12).

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُواْ كَمَا آمَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُواْ أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاء أَلا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاء وَلَكِن لاَّ يَعْلَمُونَ

And when it is said to them: "Believe as the people have believed", they say: "Shall we believe as the fools have believed?" Now surely, they themselves are the fools, but they do not know (2:13).

وَإِذَا لَقُواْ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ قَالُواْ آمَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَى شَيَاطِينِهِمْ قَالُواْ إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِؤُونَ

And when they meet those who believe, they say: "We believe"; and when they are alone with their Satans, they say: "Surely, we are with you, we were only mocking" (2:14).

اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ

Allah pays them back their mockery, and leaves them alone in their rebellion blindly wandering on (2:15).

أُوْلَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُواْ الضَّلالَةَ بِالْهُدَى فَمَا رَبِحَت تِّجَارَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُواْ مُهْتَدِينَ

These are they who buy error for the guidance, so their bargain brings (them) no gain, nor are they guided aright (2:16).

مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لاَّ يُبْصِرُونَ

Their parable is like the parable of one who kindled afire, but when it had illumined all around him, Allah took away their light, and left them in utter darkness – they do not see (2:17).

صُمٌّ بُكْمٌ عُمْيٌ فَهُمْ لاَ يَرْجِعُونَ

Deaf, dumb (and) blind, so they will not turn back (2:18).

أَوْ كَصَيِّبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاء فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ يَجْعَلُونَ أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِم مِّنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ

Or like an abundant rain from the heaven in which is utter darkness and thunder and lightning; they put their fingers into their ears because of the thunder peals, for fear of death, and Allah encompasses the unbelievers (2:19).

يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَارَهُمْ كُلَّمَا أَضَاء لَهُم مَّشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُواْ وَلَوْ شَاء اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ

إِنَّ اللَّه عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

The lightning almost takes away their sight; whenever it shines on them, they walk in it, and when it becomes dark to them, they stand still; and if Allah had pleased, He would certainly have taken away their hearing and their sight; surely, Allah has power over all things (***2:20***).

Commentary

These thirteen verses are about the hypocrites. We shall discuss this subject in detail in Chapter 63 (The Hypocrites) and in some other places.

Verse 9

Qur'an: ***They desire to deceive*** (***2:9***).

"al-Khad'ah" (الخُدعة) is deceit, duplicity.

Verse 14

Qur'an: ...***When they are alone with their Satans...*** (***2:14***).

"ash-Shaytan" (الشيطان) means evil, wicked; that is why the Iblis is called the Satan.

Verses 17 - 18

Qur'an: ***Their parable is like the parable of one who kindled afire, but when it had illumined all around him, Allah took away their light, and left them in utter darkness - they do not see*** (***2:17***).

Qur'an: ***Deaf, dumb*** (***and***) ***blind, so they will not turn back*** (***2:18***).

The hypocrites are like a man who is surrounded by a blinding darkness in which he cannot distinguish good from bad, beneficial from harmful; to remove it he kindles a fire, and in its light is able to see to some distance around it; then as soon as it has illumined all around, Allah, extinguishes it by wind, rain or some other thing like it and he is left as he was before - in utter darkness. And now he is pressed between two darknesses - that of the night and that of bewilderment and nullity of his endeavour.

This parable fits exactly on hypocrites. A hypocrite declares himself to be a Muslim, and through it gains some benefits, as he is treated as a Muslim in matters of marriage and inheritance etc. But as soon as death approaches - the time when the real and complete benefits of Islam should have appeared - Allah takes away the light, nullifies his deeds and leaves him in utter darkness in which he cannot see at all. Thus, he falls between two darknesses - his original one and the one he added with his dark deeds.

Verses 19 – 20

Qur'an: ***Or like an abundant rain from the heaven in which is utter darkness and thunder and lightning; they put their fingers into their ears because of the thunder peals, for fear of death, and Allah encompasses the unbelievers*** (***2:19***).

Qur'an: ***The lightning almost takes away their sight; whenever it shines on them, they walk in it, and when it becomes dark to them, they stand still; and if Allah had pleased, He would certainly have taken away their hearing and their sight; surely, Allah has power over all things*** (***2:20***).

"as-Sayyib" (الصَّيِّب = abundant rain); *"al-barq"* (البرق = lightning; flesh of lightning); *"ad-ra'd"* (الرَّعد = thunder that is heard after lightning); *"as-sa'iqah"* (الصّاعِقة = thunderbolt, to strike with lightning).

This is another example for the hypocrites. A man is caught in a rain pour; darkness surrounds him, he is unable to see around and loses his bearings. The rain tells him to run away; to find a shelter somewhere, but darkness prevents him from it; frightening thunder and lightning-bolts have overwhelmed him, yet when lightning appears he tries to take its advantage by walking ahead in its light – but it appears only for a fleeting moment and then disappears; whenever it shines, he walks ahead and when darkness engulfs him again, he stops.

A hypocrite is exactly in the same position. He does not like Islam, but has to profess to be a Muslim. His words do not reach his heart; what he says is different from what he believes in his heart. Because of this discrepancy his path is not illuminated as it should have been. The result is that he gropes about aimlessly and stumbles every now and then; he walks a little and then stops. Thus, Allah punishes him with disgrace; and had He wished so, He would have taken away his sight and hearing, thereby disgracing him on the very first day.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 21 – 25

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُواْ رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

O men! worship your Lord Who created you and those before you so that you may guard (***against evil***) (***2:21***).

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الأَرْضَ فِرَاشاً وَالسَّمَاء بِنَاء وَأَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاء مَاء فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ فَلاَ تَجْعَلُواْ لِلَّهِ

أَندَادًا وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

Who made the earth a bed (resting place) and the sky a structure; and (Who) sends down rain from the heaven, thereby brings forth with it subsistence for you of the fruits; therefore do not set up equals to Allah while you know (2:22).

وَإِن كُنتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَى عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُواْ بِسُورَةٍ مِّن مِّثْلِهِ وَادْعُواْ شُهَدَاءَكُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it and call on your witnesses besides Allah if you are truthful (2:23).

فَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُواْ وَلَن تَفْعَلُواْ فَاتَّقُواْ النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ

But if you do (it) not – and never shall you do (it) – then be on guard against the fire of which men and stones are the fuel; it is prepared for the unbelievers (2:24).

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِين آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُواْ مِنْهَا مِن ثَمَرَةٍ رِّزْقًا قَالُواْ هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِن قَبْلُ وَأُتُواْ بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

And convey good news to those who believe and do good deeds that for them are gardens in which rivers flow; whenever they shall be given a portion of the fruit thereof, they shall say: "This is what was given to us before;" and they shall be given the like of it, and they shall have pure mates in them; and in them they shall abide (2:25).

Commentary

Verse 21

Qur'an: ***O men! worship your Lord Who created you and those before you so that you may guard (against evil) (2:21).***

The preceding nineteen verses have described the positions of the three groups category-wise: The pious ones who are on the guidance from their Lord; the disbelievers whose hearts and ears have been sealed and who have their eyes covered; and the hypocrites in whose hearts there is disease so Allah added to their disease and they are deaf, dumb and blind.

In this background, Allah calls the men to be His good servants, to worship Him and to join, not the disbelievers and the hypocrites, but the pious ones, those who guard themselves against evil. This

context shows that the clause, “so that you may guard (against evil)”, is governed by the verb “worship” – you should worship Allah to join those who guard against evil, who are pious. It may also be governed by the verb, “created” – Allah created you in order that you may guard yourselves against evil.

Verse 22

Qur’an: ***Who made the earth a bed (resting place) and the sky a structure; and (Who) sends down rain from the heaven, thereby brings forth with it subsistence for you of the fruits; therefore, do not set up equals to Allah while you know (2:22).***

“al-Andad” (الأنداد) is plural of *an-nidd* (النِّد = alike, equal, peer). The phrase, “while you know”, is unconditional, and grammatically it is circumstantial phrase of “do not set up”; these two factors lend extra-ordinary force to the prohibition of setting up equals to Allah. The sentence shows that a man who has even a little knowledge should not ascribe any equal or partner to Allah; he should know that it is Allah Who has created him and those before him and arranged and managed this system in the creation for their sustenance and survival.

Verse 23

Qur’an: ***And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it… (2:23).***

It is a challenge which human beings and jinn can never meet. This challenge has been offered to demonstrate the miracle of the Qur’an, to show that it is a Book sent down by Allah, there is no doubt in it; that it has been revealed as an everlasting miracle that will remain alive till the end of the world. This challenge has repeatedly been given in the Qur’an:

Say: “If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Qur’an, they could not bring the like of it, even though some of them were aiders of the others” (17:88).

Or, do they say: “He has forged it?” Say: “Then bring ten chapters like it forged and call upon whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful” (11:13).

This context shows that the pronoun “it” in “like it” refers to “that which We have revealed to Our servant”, that is, the Qur’an. It is a challenge to them to bring a like of the Qur’an in its inimitable style and meaning.

The word *“min mithlihi”* (من مثلِه = translated here as “like it”) may also be rendered as “from like him”. In that case it will be a challenge to bring a like of the Qur’an written by someone like the Holy Prophet. This Qur’an has been brought by a person who was never taught by any teacher, who had not learnt these valuable and marvellous truths from any human being, nor had he taken this most eloquent style from any mortal. If the disbelievers thought that such a man can write such a Book, then let them bring

its like from some such illiterate man. In this light, the verse would have the same import as the following one:

***Say: "If Allah had desired* (*otherwise*) *I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have taught it to you; indeed, I have lived a lifetime among you before it; do you not then understand?"* (*10:16*).**

Both explanations have been given in some traditions. Obviously, this and the other challenging verses dare the antagonists to bring, if they can, like of even the shortest chapter of the Qur'an – say, the Chapter of *al-Kawthar* or *al-'Asr.*

A strange exegesis has been written by someone that "like it" means like this Chapter, The Cow, in which this verse occurs. This explanation is totally devoid of good literary taste. Those who disbelieved in the Qur'an, rejected the whole Book as being forged against Allah. What purpose could be served by challenging them to bring a Chapter like that of The Cow? Such a challenge would, in final analysis, mean this: If you are in doubt the short Chapter of *al-Kawthar* or *al-Ikhlas,* then bring a like of the largest Chapter of The Cow. Absurd, isn't it!

Miracle And Its Quiddity

The claim of the Qur'an that it is a miraculous sign, and the challenge to the doubters offered by this verse, contains in reality two claims: First, that miracles, super-natural events, do occur; second, that the Qur'an is one of such miracles. If the second claim is proved, the first will automatically be proved. That is why the Qur'an has challenged the men to bring its like, as it would prove both aspects of the claim.

How does a miracle happen? After all, it is against the deep-rooted system of the cause-and-effect which is never negated. The Qur'an explains this subject in the following two stages:

First: The miracle is a reality; the Qur'an is one of the miracles, which in itself proves the existence of miracles in general; it offers a challenge to its adversaries and in this way proves its truth.

Second: What is the reality of miracle? How can a thing happen in this world of nature against the universal law of the cause-and-effect?

The Miracle Of The Qur'an

Undoubtedly, the Qur'an has offered a continuing challenge, by which it proves itself to be a miracle. This challenge has been given in many verses of Meccan as well as Medinite period. All of them show that this Book is a divine miracle, a super-natural sign. The verse under discussion,

***"And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it…"* (*2:23*).**

Is one of those challenges: Produce a chapter like one of the Qur'an from someone like the Prophet. It should be noted that it does not purport to prove the prophethood of Muhammad (S) directly; it does not say, 'if you are in doubt as to the prophethood of Our, servant'; instead, it says, 'if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant'. Likewise, all the challenges given in the Qur'an aim to prove that this Book is a super-natural sign from Allah. And when this fact is established, the prophethood of the Prophet will automatically be proved.

The verses of challenge vary in their scope and generality. The most general is the verse:

Say: "If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Qur'an, they could not bring the like of it, even though some of them were aiders of the others" (***17:88***).

The verse is of Meccan period, and it is easy to see that it contains an all-encompassing challenge.

This challenge is not confined to its unsurpassed eloquence and purest style. Otherwise, the challenge would not cover non-Arabs; it could be addressed to only those who spoke pure Arabic before it was debased by foreign influence - in other words, only to the Arabs of the days of paganism or to those whose life-span bridged the time of paganism and that of Islam. But the verse challenges not only the whole mankind but confronts the *jinn* also.

As for other special qualities of the Qur'an (like the exposition of spiritual realities, the high morals, the most comprehensive and the fairest legal code, the information of the things unseen as well as other subjects which the man had not even thought of when the Qur'an was revealed), they are of such a nature that only a selected group - and not the whole mankind - may appreciate them. But the challenge is general and covers elites and common men and *jinn.* It is clear in this light that it is not confined to any one quality; it defies them to bring a like of this Book in all its qualities together.

The Qur'an is a miracle: For a man of eloquence, in its spellbinding sublimity and style; for a sage, in its sagacity; for a scholar, in its knowledge; for a sociologist, in its social system; for a legislator, in its legislation; for a politician, in its politics; for a ruler, in its rule of justice; and for the whole world, in such things which none of them can grasp like the information of the unseen, prophecies of future events, freedom from discrepancy in its laws, knowledge and expression.

The Qur'an claims to be a comprehensive miracle, covering all its aspects. It is a miracle for every individual man and *jinn* - an average person or a select one, learned or ignorant, man or woman, of a very high rank of excellence or of a lower level - in short, anyone who has enough intelligence to understand the Qur'anic speech. Man, by nature, comprehends a virtue and understands its various grades. Every person should look into an excellence which he or someone else has got; then he should compare that excellence or virtue with what the Qur'an contains of the same; and then he should decide - in all honestly and justice - whether it is in human power to bring a like of the Qur'an. Is it possible for a man to bring such divine knowledge, so well-reasoned, as the Qur'an has done? Is it within human power to build such character, based on foundation of reality, which may honestly be compared with the

Qur'anic teaching in purity and excellence?

Can human beings legislate perfect laws covering all human activities without blundering into discrepancies, with the spirit of monotheism and the word of piety permeating every order and its every implication, with purity and cleanliness feeding its root and shoots? Can such astonishing comprehensiveness and all-inclusiveness come from an untaught man? A man who was born and brought up among a people whose only share in human virtues was a life sustained with raids, plunders and wars; they buried their daughters alive, and killed their children for fear of poverty; they boasted of their fathers and married their mothers; debauchery was their pride; they condemned knowledge and showed off their ignorance; in spite of their haughtiness and chauvinism, they were preyed upon by every hunter and were easy targets for anyone who wished to conquer them - one day they were under the Yemenite rule, the next day were ruled over by the Ethiopians; some day Byzantine emperors lorded over them, the other day it was Persia's turn to humiliate them. This is the picture, in miniature, of the Arabs before Islam. And in such environment, the Qur'an was brought by the Prophet of Islam.

Again, suppose a man brings a book, claiming that it is a guidance for the worlds. Will he dare to include in it the news and pieces of information of the unseen - both past and future - not in one or two places but spread over a lot of topics - in stories, in prophecies, and about the events that are to happen in future? And what will be your judgment if not a single detail proves wrong?

Once again, man is a part of this natural world; this world is constantly changing and developing from perfection to perfection. Is it possible for a man to talk about each and every affair of human life; to give the world knowledge, laws, wisdom, admonition, parables, stories - concerning every matter, big or small - without committing any discrepancy, without showing any trace of gradual development? And especially so, if his talks are not delivered all at one time, are delivered piecemeal in a long period of twenty-three years? And even more so when some topics are repeated again and again, when there are shoots sprouting from a previously planted root? Undoubtedly, it is not possible, because no man can remain unchanged in his knowledge and outlook throughout his life.

When a man ponders over these facts about the Qur'an - containing the above-mentioned distinctions besides many more - he can entertain no doubt whatsoever about its divine origin; he will feel sure that it is beyond human power, over and above the natural and material causes. If someone is not in a position to understand this clear fact, he should follow the dictate of his nature - in other words, he should ask those who are knowledgeable about this subject.

Question: Why did not the Qur'an confine its challenge to the elite only? What is the use of including general public in this call? After all, a common man is easily influenced by such claims and it takes him no time to accept pretensions of every pretender. Don't you see that it was this group that surrendered to al-Bab, al-Baha', Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiyani and al-Musaylamah, even though what those deceivers brought as their proof was more like a senseless jabber and raving delirium than a sensible talk?

Reply: It was the only way to keep the miracle all–inclusive; the only possible method for discerning the perfection and excellence in a quality that has various ranks and grades. People have different grades of understanding; likewise, the virtues differ in their perfection. Those who have high level of understanding and correct perception will easily appreciate the high quality of an excellent work. Those who have a lower understanding should refer to the former for their judgement. It is the dictate of nature and demand of human psyche.

A miracle that can be universal and comprehensive, that can be addressed to every individual, in every place and at all times, that can be conveyed to all and can remain alive to the last day of the world, must necessarily be a set of divine knowledge and spiritual realities. All other miracles were either material objects or a tangible event that were governed by the laws of nature inasmuch as they were confined to a certain time and space. They were seen by only a limited number of people; even supposing, for the sake of argument, that it was observed by all people of that particular place, it could not be witnessed by people of other localities; and suppose that an impossible happened, that is, it was seen by the whole world, it could not continue eternally for the future generations to observe.

It was for this reason that Allah chose this academic and spiritual miracle, that is, the Qur'an, for the Prophet of Islam, so that it may continue its challenge to the whole mankind – in all places and in all generations. And thus, the miracle continues in its generality, defying every person, in every area and every era.

First Specific Challenge: The Knowledge It Contains

Now we come to its specific challenges. It has offered particular challenge concerning the knowledge it imparts arid cognition it contains. Allah says:

…And We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything (***16:89***).

…Nor anything green nor dry but (***it is all***) ***in a clear book*** (***6:59***).

There are many other verses of the same theme. Look at the fundamental teachings given in the text of the Qur'an; then see its details for which it has referred the people to the Prophet – as Allah says:

…And whatever the Apostle gives you, take it, and from whatever he forbids you, keep back… (***59:7***).

…That you may judge between people by means of that which Allah has taught you (***4:105***).

Then you will know that Islam has put its attention to all big and small topics relevant to divine knowledge, moral virtues and religious laws – covering worship, mutual dealings, social regulations, penal code, and, in short, everything that affects life and character. All this is based on the foundation of human nature and monotheism. Analyse the details and you will find monotheism as their basis; combine the basis with relevant principles and you will get the details.

Then it has declared that all this knowledge will remain valid to the end of the world; will continue to guide mankind and will always be relevant to human needs and environment. Allah says:

…And most surely, it is a Mighty Book (***41:41***).

Falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it; a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One (***41:42***).

Surely, We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely, be its guardian (***15:9***).

In other words, it is a Book which is beyond the reach of the law of change and development; it will never be disturbed by abrogation.

A question may be asked here: The sociologists are of the opinion that the laws and regulations controlling the society must change according to the changes occurring in the structure of society. As the time passes and civilization marches ahead, it becomes necessary to change the laws to cope with the changed situation. Then how can the *Shari'ah* of Islam continue without any change or abrogation all these centuries? We shall explain this matter, God willing, under the verse:

Mankind was but one people… (***2:213***).

Here it is enough to point out that the Qur'an has built its laws on the foundation of monotheism and excellent ethics that spring from healthy human nature; it declares that legislation must grow up from the seed of creation and existence. The scholars of sociology, on the other hand, have fixed their eyes on changes of society, totally ignoring the spiritual side of monotheism and morality. As a result, their word concentrates on material development of the society – and society is not a living organism, it does not have a soul; and the word of Allah is the highest.

Second Specific Challenge: The Recipient Of The Revelation

Another aspect of this challenge is the personality of the untaught Prophet who brought this Qur'an as a miracle in its words and in its meanings. He had not learnt from any teacher, was not trained by any instructor. This challenge is contained in the following words of Allah:

Say: "If Allah had desired (***otherwise***) ***I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have taught it to you; indeed I have lived a lifetime among you before it; do you not then understand?"*** (***10:16***).

The Prophet lived among them as one of them. In all those years, he had not risen above them in scholarship, nor was he renowned for any knowledge. He did not deliver any lecture, nor did he compose a single line of poetry, up to his fortieth year – that is to say, for about two-thirds of his total life-span; he did not get any distinction in literature or scholarship all these years. Then, all of a sudden, he brought what he said was the revelation from God, before which giants of literature felt like pigmies,

and eloquent speakers became tongue-tied. He published that revelation to the furthest limits of the world, but no one dared to bring its like in all these centuries.

The outmost that his adversaries could say was that he must have learnt those stories from Christian monks during his trade-journeys to Syria. But he had gone to Syria only twice: First, in his early childhood, with his uncle, Abu Talib and then, at the age of twenty-five, with Maysarah, the slave of Khadijah. In both these journeys he was never alone day or night, and nobody ever reported any such meeting with any supposed teacher. Even if we accept, for the sake of argument, that such training session did take place, many questions will arise from it: Who taught him this divine knowledge of monotheism? Where did he get these wise rules and these realities? And lastly, who gave him this unsurpassed elocution which has kept the silver-tongued elocutionists dumbfounded all these years?

Another suggestion was that he learned these sublime truths from a blacksmith, of Roman origin, who made and sold swords. Allah replied to this allegation in this verse:

And certainly, We know that they say: "Only a mortal teaches him". The tongue of him whom they are inclined to blame for it is barbarous, and this is clear Arabic language (***16:103***).

A third accusation was that he gained this knowledge from Salman, the Persian, who allegedly knew all about various religions and sects. But Salman met the Prophet in Medina and thereafter accepted Islam, while the major portion of the Qur'an was revealed at Mecca, and that part contained all the principles, knowledge and stories that were later repeated at Medina - we may say that Meccan revelation had more of these things, than the verses revealed at Medina. The question is: What knowledge did Salman add after his conversion to Islam? Nothing.

Moreover, read the Old and the New Testaments, and compare the stories of the previous prophets and their people written in them with those revealed in the Qur'an. You will see that the latter's history and stories are different from the former's. The Bible attributes such sins and evils to the prophets of Allah which one would be loath to ascribe to an average man of good character. But the Qur'an absolves them from such blames. Then you will find in the Bible many topics that have no bearing on, and relevance to, the spiritual knowledge or moral excellence. The Qur'an never talks except about that which is truly beneficial to people in their spiritual upliftment and character-building.

Third Specific Challenge: Its Prophecies and Information of Unseen

The Qur'an's third specific challenge is concerning its prophecies and the information it gives of the unseen. Such verses may be divided in four categories:

1. The information about previous prophets and their nations: Allah says about some of these stories:

These are of the tidings of the unseen which We revealed to you; you did not know them – (neither) you nor your people – before this… (11:49).

And He says after the story of Yusuf:

This is of the tidings of the unseen (which) We revealed to you, and you were not with them when they resolved upon their affair, and they were devising plans (12:102).

Also, about the story of Maryam:

This is of the tidings of the unseen which We reveal to you; and you were not with them when they cast their pens (to decide) which of them should have Maryam in his charge, and you were not with them when they contended one with another (3:44).

And about 'Isa:

Such is 'Isa, son of Maryam; (this is) the saying of truth about which they dispute (19:34).

There are many verses of the same import.

2. Prophecies of future events: For example: The Romans would avenge their defeat:

The Romans are vanquished (30:2).

In a near land; and they, after being vanquished, shall overcome (30:3).

Within a few years (30:4).

The Prophet would return to Mecca after his *hijrah:*

Most surely, He Who has made the Qur'an binding on you will bring you back to the destination (28:85).

The vision of the Prophet would certainly come true:

Certainly, Allah had shown to His Apostle the vision with truth: You shall most certainly enter the Sacred Mosque, if Allah pleases, in security, (some) having their heads shaved and (others) having their haircut, you shall not fear (48:27).

The behaviour, in future, of a group of Muslims:

Those who are left behind will say when you set forth for the gaining of acquisition: Allow us (that) we may follow you. They desire to change the words of Allah (48:15).

Nobody would be able to harm the Prophet:

…And Allah will protect you form the men (***5:70***)***.***

The Qur'an will remain under the protection of Allah:

Surely, We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely, be its guardian (***15:9***)***.***

We may include in this category other numerous verses giving good tidings to the believers and threatening the disbelievers and pagans of Mecca of various retributions.

In this category come the prophecies of the signs and disturbances appearing soon before the Day of Judgement. For example:

And it is forbidden to a town which We destroyed that they shall not return (***21:95***)***.***

Until when Gog and Magog are let loose and they shall hasten forth from every elevated place (***21:96***)***.***

And the true promise shall draw nigh, then lo! the eyes of those who disbelieved shall be fixedly open: O woe to us! surely, we were in heedlessness as to this; nay, we were unjust ones (***21:97***)***.***

Allah has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will most certainly make them successors in the earth as He made successors those before them… (***24:55***)***.***

Say: 'He has the power that He should send on you a chastisement from above you or from beneath your feet, or that He should throw you into confusion, (***making you***) ***of different parties; and make some of you taste the fighting of to others…*** (***6:65***)***.***

3. The verses based on such scientific realities which were unknown, and even unthought of, when the Qur'an was revealed, and which have just now been discovered after long researches:

And We send the winds fertilizing (***15:22***)

And the earth – We have spread it forth and put in it anchors (**i.e. mountains**) ***and caused to grow in it of everything, weighed*** (***15:19***)

Have We not made the earth a resting place (***78:6***)

And the mountains as pegs (***therein***)***?*** (***78:7***)

4. The verses that allude to many great events and disorders that were to happen in the Islamic community, or the world in general, after the lifetime of the Prophet. For example:

O you who believe! whoever of you turns back from his religion, then soon Allah will bring a

people that He shall love them and they shall love Him, humbled before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall strive hard in Allah's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer; this is Allah's grace, He gives it to whom He pleases (5:54).

And every nation had an apostle; so when their apostle came, the matter was decided between them with justice and they shall not be dealt with unjustly (10:47).

And they say: "When will this threat come about, if you are truthful?" (10:48).

Say; "I do not control for myself any harm, or any benefit, except what Allah pleases; every nation has a term; when their term comes, they shall not then remain behind for an hour, nor can they go before (their time)" (10:49).

Say: "Tell me if His punishment overtakes you by night or by day! What then is there of it that the guilty would hasten on?" (10:50).

Then set your face uprightly for the (right) religion in natural devotion (to the truth), the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion, but most people do not know (30:30).

...And be not of the polytheists (30:31).

Of those who divided their religion and became sects; every sect rejoicing in what they had with them (30:32).

There are many verses that come into this category, and we shall describe some of them when explaining the seventeenth chapter (The Night-journey). It should be noted here that this category is one of the specialties of this book of ours.

Fourth Specific Challenge: No Discrepancies in The Qur'an

It is one of the challenges of the Qur'an that there is no discrepancy in it. Allah says:

Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy (4:82).

This is a material world, governed by the law of change and development. Every item in this world changes day after day from weakness to strength, from deficiency to perfection – in its own self as well as in all its concomitants and attachments. Man is no exception to this rule. He also undergoes constant change and development in his existence as well as in effects of his actions and reactions. And this law applies also to what he gets through his perception and intellect. Every man finds that his today is a bit more perfect than his yesterday. Every passing hour makes him realize what mistakes he had committed in the past hour, what erroneous views he had held a few hours back. It is a fact that no sane person

can deny.

In this background, look at the Qur'an. Muhammad (S) brought this book piece by piece, one small chapter or a few verses at a time. It continued for twenty-three years in different places, various conditions and divergent situations: In Mecca and Medina, by day and by night, during journeys and at home, in thick of battle and in time of peace, during hard up days and in easy times, when Muslims suffered defeat and when they were victorious, in safety and in danger.

It contained all types of subjects - it unveiled spiritual knowledge, taught excellent ethics and ordained laws for every conceivable aspect of life. In spite of all these factors, there is not a whiff of discrepancy in its matter or meaning - it is an oft-repeated book whose parts resemble one with the other. There is not a least difference, contradiction or contrariety in the realities it has explained, in the principles it has laid down. One verse explains the rest, one sentence clarifies the others, as 'Ali ('a) said: "Its one part speaks with the other, and one portion testifies about the others."

No doubt, if such a book would have been from other than Allah, there would have been a lot of ups and downs in its style; the speech would have bounced between elegance and clumsiness; the themes would have ranged from correct to erroneous. In short, the book would have been uneven, unbalanced and full of discrepancies.

Question: This is a claim without any proof. Non-Muslim scholars have written many books showing that the Qur'an suffers from many discrepancies and mistakes - in construction of sentences (which fall short of the standard of eloquence) as well as in themes and meanings (which contain errors in its views and teachings). The replies given by the Muslims are just piteous attempts to explain away those contradictions and shortcomings. Those are defects that a correct and good speech should not have had in the first place.

Reply: The so-called discrepancies and defects have not been discovered by our adversaries; they have been mentioned (together with their replies) by Muslims in their books of exegesis and other subjects related to the Qur'an (not excepting this book of ours); the Muslim authors have used this method to show that what looks at the first glance an unusual style or expression is in fact a gem of highest eloquence. The non-Muslim writers have just picked out those supposed defects and discrepancies and collected them in their books, ignoring the replies that showed the real beauty of those expressions. If eye of love is blind, the eye of enmity is not any brighter.

Question: Well, how can you explain away the difficulty that arises out of abrogation? Many Qur'anic verses have been abrogated, as the Qur'an itself says:

Whatever signs We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it (2:106).

And when We change (one) communication for (another) communication, and Allah knows best

what He reveals… (***16:101***).

Abrogation is at least a change of opinion, an inconsistency of thought, if not an outright contradiction in speech.

Reply: Abrogation is neither a contradiction in speech nor a change of opinion or thought. A rule is abrogated when the society, the environment, changes in such a way that the underlying wisdom of that rule remains no longer valid. The difference, if any, is not in the opinion; it is rather in the subject matter. A clear piece of evidence of it may be seen in the abrogated verses themselves – they invariably always contained some phrases or clauses to show that the given order was a temporary one, that it would soon be abrogated. For example:

And as for those who are guilty of lewdness from among your women, call to witness against them four (***witnesses***) ***from among you; then if they bear witness confine them to the houses until death takes them away or Allah makes some way for them*** (***4:15***).

Note the last sentence and the hint it gives. Another example:

Many of the people of the Book wish that they could turn you back into unbelievers after your faith…But pardon and forgive (***them***) ***until Allah should bring about His command*** (***2:109***).

Here too the concluding phrase shows that the rule ordained was not forever.

Fifth Specific Challenge: Its Eloquence

The Qur'an has also challenged its adversaries to bring its like in its eloquence. Allah says:

Or, do they say: "He has forged it?" Say: "Then bring ten chapters like it forged and call upon whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful" (***11:13***).

But if they do not answer you, then know that it is revealed by Allah's knowledge and that there is no god but He; will you then submit? (***11:14***).

These verses were revealed at Mecca. Again Allah says:

Or, do they say: "He has forged it?" Say: "Then bring a chapter like this and call whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful" (***10:38***).

Nay, they have rejected that of which they have no comprehensive knowledge, and its final interpretation has not yet come to them (***10:39***).

These are Meccan verses too. All these verses challenge the doubters and disbelievers to bring the like of ten or even one chapter of the Qur'an in its style and eloquence, as eloquence was the most accomplished art of the Arabs of those days. Undoubtedly, they had reached the highest peak of

eloquence. No preceding, contemporary or following nation ever reached even near them in their mastery of literature. Their expression was elegant, their style enchanting; their words perfectly fitted their themes and meanings; their talks were always in harmony with the occasions; their words were plain and their sentences beautiful; and their speech had an easy flow and inimitable grace. It was a way of which they were the pioneers and the only walkers.

The Qur'an challenged such a nation in every possible way, so as to excite their rage, rouse their fury and fire them with determination to meet the challenge. It should not be forgotten that they were extremely proud of their art of eloquence and never acknowledged the least elocutionary skill to anyone else. In spite of that arrogance of theirs, the Prophet dared them to bring just one chapter like the Qur'an. It is a challenge that even now is ringing in the ears of disbelievers, defying them to forge, if they can, just one chapter like it. But the Arabs' only answer was to avoid it; the more forcefully they were challenged, the more evident their helplessness was. Ultimately, they used to hide themselves to avoid hearing its sound. Allah says:

Now surely, they fold up their breasts that they may conceal from Him; now surely, when they put their garments as a covering, He knows what they conceal and what they make known (***11:5***).

Even after fourteen centuries, no one has been able to bring its like. Those who tried it put themselves to shame and made themselves targets of ridicule. History has preserved some samples of those pathetic attempts. Musaylamah (who posed as a prophet) wrote these words in reply to the Qur'an Ch. 105 (The Elephant): "The elephant, what is the elephant! And what will make you understand what the elephant is? It has an unwholesome tail, and a long trunk." In another "verse", which he recited before al-Sajah (who also claimed to be a prophetess), he said: "...then we penetrate it into you women a hard penetration, and take it out from you forcefully..." Look at this rigmarole and decide its worth. A Christian in latter days wrote this "chapter" in reply to the Chapter of The Opening: "All praise is due to the Beneficent, the Lord of the beings, the King, the Subduer. For Thee is the worship, and from Thee is the help. Guide us to the path of faith." All attempts to meet this challenge suffered the same fate.

Two Questions

First: It is unreasonable to say that a speech can reach a level where it would become a miracle, a super-natural work. Language has been made by human ingenuity. How can a product of nature be above the reach of nature? A maker is more powerful than the thing he makes; a cause always encompasses its effect. It is the man who invented the words to meet his social needs, to convey to others' minds what one thinks or feels. The relationship of a word with its meaning is created by man. It is a subjective quality given to the word by man. This quality cannot reach beyond the ability of the maker himself. In other words, it is impossible for a speech to rise above the human ability.

Second: Let us accept for the time being that a particular composition of a speech may reach super-natural level, may become a miracle. Every intended theme may be clothed in various sentences, each

differing from the others in grades of perfection; and out of those numerous sentences one would reach a standard which would be beyond human ability and power – and that composition would be a miracle. It means that for every intended meaning there would be one miraculous sentence; and other structures would be below that standard. But we see that the Qur'an, more often than not, repeats many themes – and especially the stories – using different compositions and dissimilar styles. Whichever sentence–structure and style is accepted as a miracle, the other ones would fall short of that standard.

Reply: Before replying to these objections one matter should be clarified here. It were such questions which led some Muslim scholars to believe in the theory of *as–sarf* (الصَّرف = to turn away). They believed like other Muslims that it was impossible for men to bring a like of the whole Qur'an; or its ten chapters, or even one chapter. But, according to them, this inability of men was not based on the fact that the Qur'anic speech in itself was beyond the human power. The real reason was that Allah, by His predominant will and decree, has turned away and dissuaded would–be adversaries from bringing its like. Allah has done so to preserve and protect the sanctity of the prophethood.

This theory was totally wrong. This explanation is not in conformity with the clear import of the challenging verses. Allah says for example:

Or, do they say: "He has forged it?" Say: "Then bring ten chapters like it forged and call upon whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful" (***11:13***).

But if they do not answer you, then know that it is revealed by Allah's knowledge and that there is no god but He; will you then submit? (***11:14***).

Ponder on the sentences, "then know that it is revealed by Allah's knowledge". The challenge was meant to prove that the Qur'an was a revelation; that it was not a speech forged by the Apostle; and that it was revealed by Allah's knowledge and not by the Satans. The same theme is found in the following verses:

Or, do they say: "He has forged it." Nay! they do not believe (***52:33***).

Then let them bring a talk like it if they are truthful (***52:34***).

And the Satans have not come down with it (***26:210***).

And it behoves them not, and they have not the power to do (***it***) (***26:211***).

Most surely, they are far removed from the hearing (***of it***) (***26:212***).

On the other hand, this theory of "turning away" implies that the reality of the Qur'an's miracle was not in its being a revelation from Allah; the miracle was that Allah prevented the people from bringing a like of it. Again look at the verses:

Or, do they say: "He has forged it?" Say: "Then bring a chapter like this and call whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful" (***10:38***).

Nay, they have rejected that of which they have no comprehensive knowledge, and its final interpretation has not yet come to them (***10:39***).

This verse clearly says that what made them helpless before the Qur'an, what made it impossible for them to bring a like of even one of its chapters, was the fact that it has a final interpretation whose knowledge is reserved for Allah – a knowledge which they lacked. It is this inherent quality of the Qur'an which vanquished the adversaries. It was not that they had ability to bring its like but Allah prevented them from doing so. Then, there is the verse:

Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy (***4:82***).

It shows that the miracle is in the inherent quality of the Qur'an that it was free from discrepancy in its words and meanings – because it is a quality which is not within the power of any creature – not that there was some discrepancy in this Book, but Allah prevented people from finding it out.

All these Qur'anic declarations prove that the theory of *as-sarf* has no leg to stand, and one should not take it seriously.

Now we come to the objections mentioned earlier:

It is a fallacious argument that as the language is a product of human ingenuity, it can never reach a level which would be beyond the grasp or ability of human beings; language, being a product, cannot be more powerful than its producer. The fallacy lies in the fact that what has been invented by man is simple words for particular meanings. But this congruity of the words with their meanings does not teach the man how to arrange those words, how to plan, draft and deliver a talk in the best possible way – in a way that the talk reflects the beauty of the meaning as it is in the mind, and the meaning in its turn becomes a mirror of the reality, remains in complete agreement with the fact. It requires dexterity in the art of eloquence, adroitness in elocution; also it depends on sharp intelligence and comprehensive knowledge so that the speaker may be fully cognizant of all aspects of the subject matter. It is this skill and knowledge that differs from man to man, and creates difference between talk and talk in their respective perfection and beauty.

So, there are three aspects of a human talk; Knowledge of language – a man may be having the most comprehensive knowledge of the words of a language, without being able to speak it; elocutionary skill – a man may be the most accomplished orator, without being cognizant of material and spiritual realities; Knowledge of realities – a man may be the most learned scientist or theologian without having the ability to express his views and meanings intelligibly. These three factors may be found separately (as mentioned above) and may also combine together in some people. And on them depend the beauty and

the eloquence of a speech.

The first factor – single words for their meanings – has been invented by social instinct of man. But the remaining two depend on intellectual refinement and delicate discernment. Human perception, intelligence and discernment is limited and restricted. We cannot comprehend all the details of an event, all concomitants of a fact. As a result, we cannot be sure of being right at any time. Furthermore, we are gradually moving from deficiency to perfection, and so is our perception and discernment. Look at any spellbinding orator or enchanting poet; compare his earlier work with his latest and you will see the difference. In this background, let us look at human speech – any human speech.

First, we cannot be sure that it is free from errors of fact and judgment, because, as mentioned above, no speaker can have comprehensive knowledge of all the details and concomitants of an event. Second, it will not be on the same level with speaker's former or later speech. Not only that: Even in the same speech the beginning will surely, be on a level different from that of the end, although we, probably, will not be able to discern it because of the minuteness of difference.

Now, when we find a decisive speech, based on comprehensive knowledge, and free from all types of discrepancy, we will have to admit that it is not the work of a mortal man. This reality has been described in the following verses:

Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy (***4:82***).

(***I swear***) ***By the heaven endued with rotation*** (***86:11***).

And by the earth splitting (***with plants etc.***) (***86:12***).

Most surely, it is a decisive word (***86:13***).

And it is not a jest (***86:14***).

Note the adjectives used for the heaven and the earth – they point to the constant changes occurring therein, because the oath is about a Book which is free from change and difference, inasmuch as it is based on an unchangeable and lasting reality, that is, its "interpretation". (It is a Qur'anic terminology that will be explained in Ch. 3.). Also, Allah says:

Nay! it is a glorious Qur'an (***85:21***).

In a guarded tablet (***85:22***).

(***I swear***) ***by the Book that makes manifest*** (***the truth***) (***43:2***).

Surely, We have made it an Arabic Qur'an so that you may understand (***43:3***).

And surely, it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom (***43:4***).

But nay! (***I swear***) ***by the falling of stars*** (***56:75***).

And most certainly it is a great oath if you only knew (***56:76***).

Most surely, it is an honoured Qur'an (***56:77***).

In a book that is hidden (***56:78***).

None do touch it save the purified ones (***56:79***).

A revelation by the Lord of the worlds (***56:80***).

These and other similar verses show that the Qur'an is based on established realities that do not change, that are never altered. And, therefore, the Qur'an itself is safe from change, alteration and discrepancy.

To come back to the main objection: Accepted that language has been made by men. But it does not mean that there cannot be found a piece of literature that is beyond the reach of the very men who made the language. Otherwise, we would have to say that a sword-maker must be the bravest of all the swordsmen, the inventor of chess or lute must be the most accomplished chess-master or lutanist!

The perfect eloquence demands that, first, the word should be in complete harmony with the intended meaning, and, second, the conveyed meaning must be in accordance with the established fact. How the words fit the meanings? The structural sequence of the words and their parts should perfectly agree with the natural order of the intended meaning and its parts - bringing the man-made language and sentences in total agreement with the nature[1].

As for the meaning, it must be correct and true, based on a real fact existing outside our imagination - and that fact should be of permanent value, unchangeable and unalterable. The first quality (the agreement of the word with meaning) depends on this basic quality of the meaning. A very eloquent sweet-sounding jocular speech cannot stand before a serious talk; nor can an eloquent, serious speech - if it is based on wrong premises - be equal to a talk that reflects true facts and comprehensive wisdom.

A speech attains the highest standard of eloquence when its words are sweet, its style free-flowing, its meaning fitting the occasion and its conveyed proposition based on true facts.

Such a talk, based as it is on reality, can never differ with other realities; can never disagree with other truths. Truth and reality is a non-divisible entity. Truth cannot refute another truth; reality cannot oppose another reality. Lie, on the other hand, may be in opposition to another lie as it surely, is against the truth. Ponder on the verse:

…And what is there after the truth but error (***10:32***).

Note that truth is singular; there is no division in it. Again Allah says:

…And follow not (***other***) ***ways, for they will scatter you away from His ways…*** (***6:153***).

Lie has many ways, it is not only disunited but also disuniting.

Obviously, there can be no difference whatsoever between one truth and the other; instead, there shall be total union and unison between them – one truth will lead to the other, one reality will guide to the other; thus, one part of the Qur'an confirms the others, one sentence testifies for the others.

It is a wonderful quality of the Qur'an. Take any verse; it is clear in its meaning; add to it another relevant verse equally clear; and you will find them together pointing to a new reality that was not shown by either verse separately: then put them side by side with a third relevant verse, and you will gain fresh insight into new sublime realities. It is a unique quality of the Qur'an, and you will see many examples of this special characteristic in this book. Unfortunately, the exegetes had so far neglected this method. Had they followed this way since the early days, they would have discovered by now so much of its hidden treasures.

This lengthy discourse was necessary to show that the two objections laid down against the Qur'anic miracle of eloquence were baseless. Miraculous eloquence is not based on words alone. Therefore, it is out of place to say that as it is man who had made the language, how can any speech be above the reach of the man himself? Also, there is no room for the question that as only one out of many possible compositions can be the highest, how is it possible to express one idea in different ways, and then to claim that all were of miraculous standard? Our foregoing explanation has made it clear that the miracle of eloquence depends on meaning – on its agreement with sublime unchangeable reality and on its conformity with the words.

The Reality Of Miracle: According To The Qur'an

The Qur'an repeatedly asserts the occurrence of miracle – an unusual preternatural phenomenon, which shows the authority of metaphysical forces over the physical and material world. Miracle is not something against self–evident rational truth.

Some people have tried to explain away the verses that describe various miracles; their aim was to make the Qur'an fit the principles of modern physical sciences. But such attempts are unacceptable, as they are a forced burden on the language and the Qur'an.

We are going to explain, under various headings, what the Qur'an teaches us about the meaning and reality of miracle.

1. The Qur'an Confirms The General Rule Of The Cause-And-Effect

The Qur'an says that in this natural world everything, every effect, has a cause; that there is a system of cause-and-effect permeating through this world. It is a self-evident reality; and on this truth depend the scientific and academic researches and discussions. Man by nature believes that there must be a cause for every natural phenomenon. Likewise, academic researches try to find out relevant causes for all such happenings. What is a cause? It is such a thing, or a combination of things, that whenever it occurs, another thing - its effect - unfailingly comes into being. We try to find out by experiments the causes of various things. For example, experience has taught us that if there is any burn, it must have been caused by fire, movement, friction or some such cause. A cause must be unfailable, comprehensive and universal. In other words, whenever and wherever the cause is found, its effect must be found.

This matter is clearly confirmed by the Qur'an. It takes this principle for granted when it talks about life, death, sustenance and other heavenly or earthly phenomena - although it ultimately ascribes all the effects, and their causes too, to Allah.

The Qur'an, therefore, confirms the general system of the cause-and-effect; whenever a cause is found (with all its necessary conditions) its effect must come into being, and whenever we see an effect, it surely, and unfailingly proves the existence of its cause.

2. The Qur'an Affirms Miracle (Super-Natural Events)

The Qur'an, nevertheless, narrates many an event that goes against the normal, natural system of the cause-and-effect. It ascribes many super-natural miracles to various prophets, like Nuh, Hud, Salih, Ibrahim, Lut, Dawud, Sulayman, Musa, 'Isa and Muhammad (peace of Allah be on them all!). It should not be forgotten here that those events, although abnormal and uncustomary, were not inherently impossible; they were not like an assertion that 'A positive proposition and its opposite are affirmed together and are negated together'; or like a statement that 'A thing can be separated from its own self'; or that 'One is not a half of two'. We instinctively know that such propositions are impossible, they cannot be.

But the miracles shown by the prophets were not of this category; otherwise, the minds of untold billions of religionists, since the dawn of humanity, would not have accepted them and believed in them. No man accepts an inherently impossible statement, nor does any sane person ascribe such a thing to another.

Moreover, the effects that are called miracle, are not unknown to the nature. The natural world is continuously engaged in bestowing on the matter one form after the other, turning one event into another, giving life to the dead, and death to the living, transforming the misfortune into fortune and the comfort into discomfort. All this is happening daily in the world of nature; the only difference between a natural event and a miraculous one is in the speed and steps required to reach the goal. A natural cause brings about its effect, in special conditions, at a particular time and space, step by step in a long series of changes.

The matter present in a walking-stick may one day appear in a running serpent; a disintegrating skeleton may one day become a living man - but in its natural course it will take a very long time, under certain conditions of time and space, with numerous consecutive causes which would constantly change that particular matter from one form to the other, taking it from one step to the next and then to the third and so on, until it appears in the required shape and form. In normal way, it cannot happen without its proper causes, without its necessary conditions; nor can it be brought into being by will-power of a human being. But when it comes to a miracle, it happens just by the will of the prophet, without any material cause and without any lapse of time.

Of course, it is very difficult for a simple mind - as it is for a scientific brain - to understand such super-natural events; man is, after all, accustomed to the natural-causality. On the other hand, no scientist can outright reject occurrence of super-natural phenomena even in this atomic age. Every day someone or the other demonstrates his skill bringing some super-natural events about; people see it, radios and televisions broadcast it, newspapers and magazines publish it; and nobody says that it could not have happened as it was against the laws of nature.

Such phenomena have led many modern scholars to the theory that man, like everything else, is surrounded by unknown magnetic or electric currents; man may, through rigorous training, get control over the surrounding currents, and use them to affect other material things in abnormal and unusual ways, bringing those astonishing feats about.

If this theory is proved correct and all-inclusive, it will supersede all present theories that explain various happenings and effects in terms of motion and power; it will replace all previous causes with one all-pervasive natural cause: the magnetic currents.

This is their theory. They are right in their belief that every natural phenomenon must have a natural cause if the causal relationship between them is intact.

The Qur'an has not identified by name any all-pervasive natural cause that would explain all natural and super-natural events, as it is not within the main purposes of this divine book. But it affirms that every natural phenomenon has a natural cause - by permission of Allah. In other words, every phenomenon is totally dependent on Allah, Who has appointed for it a certain procedure, a natural cause through which it gets its existence - the existence that is given by Allah. Allah says:

And whoever fears Allah He will make for him an outlet (***65:2***).

And give him sustenance from whence he thinks not; and whoever trusts in Allah, He is sufficient for him; surely, Allah attains His purpose; Allah indeed has made a measure for everything (***65:3***).

Its first sentence unreservedly declares that whoever fears Allah and has trust in Him, Allah is sufficient for him, and He will surely, manage his affairs and make him succeed, even if in the normal way it may seem impossible, even if the material causes go against him. It is supported by the following verses:

And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then verily I am very near; I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me (***2:186***).

Call upon Me, I will answer you (***40:60***).

Is not Allah sufficient for His servant? (***39:36***).

The next sentence, "surely, Allah attains His purpose", explains the reason of the first declaration. The same theme is found in the verse:

…And Allah is predominant over His affair, but most people do not know (***12:21***).

This sentence too is all-inclusive and without any condition. Allah has His own way to let a thing happen, if He so wills - even if the normal ways are closed, even if usual paths to it are cut off.

This may possibly happen in two ways: First, Allah may bring that thing into being simply by His will, without resorting to any material or natural cause. Second, there may be an alternative natural cause, unknown to us, which Allah may have appointed for that phenomenon; it may be hidden from our eyes but the Maker and Creator, Who has prescribed it, knows it and uses it to attain His purpose. This second possibility seems more appropriate in view of the last sentence: ***Allah indeed has made a measure for everything*** (***65:3***). This sentence shows that every effect, whether it is in accordance with the normal causality or not, has a measure appointed by Allah, is related to other beings, has a connection with other things; Allah may bring that effect into existence through any other related thing, even if the normal cause is absent. What should not be forgotten is the basic fact that it is Allah Who has bestowed causality on a cause; this relation of cause and effect is not independent of Allah.

Allah has created causal relation between various things. He can attain His purpose through any way He wishes. No doubt, there is the system of cause-and-effect in the world; but this chain is in the hands of Allah, He may use it in any way He wills. There is a real causal relation between a thing and the things that have preceded it; but that reality is not as we know it - that is why no academic or scientific theory is capable of explaining all phenomena of the world; it is really as Allah knows, makes and manages it.

This basic principle has been referred to in the verses of "decree" or "measure":

And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure (***15:21***).

Surely, We have created every thing according to a measure (***54:49***).

…And Who created every thing, then ordain for it a measure (***25:2***).

Who created then made complete (***87:2***).

And Who made (***things***) ***according to a measure then guided*** (***them to their goal***) (***87:3***).

Look also at the following verses:

No misfortune befalls on the earth nor in your own souls, but it is in a book before We bring it into existence (***57:22***).

No affliction comes about but by Allah's permission; and whoever believes in Allah, He guides aright his heart; and Allah is Cognizant of all things (***64:11***).

These verses (and especially the first) show that the things take their particular identity in accordance with a measure appointed for it by Allah; that measure gives it its individuality and defines it; and that measure and definition precedes the thing and then accompanies it. A thing can be properly delineated only if it is seen in its perspective, clearly defining its relation to all other things. The other related things serve as a mould that gives this item its peculiar shape and particular form. Every material effect is connected with all things which precede or accompany it. All such things together serve as the cause of this effect; and this one in its turn becomes a part of the cause of other effects that come later.

Also, it may be proved from the following two verses:

That is Allah, your Lord, the Creator of every thing… (***40:62***).

…There is no living creature but He holds it by its forelock; surely, my Lord is on the straight path (***11:56***).

Add to them the fact that the Qur'an confirms the general system of causality – and you will find the complete picture displayed before your eyes.

1. The first verse says that every thing is created by Allah, and the second one states that creation is on a single pattern; there is no deviation in it as that would cause chaos and disturbance.

2. The Qur'an confirms the general system of causality for all material things.

3. It follows that every material thing and effect is invariably always created by a cause – a cause that precedes it and brings it into being. It makes no difference whether it is a normal and usual cause, or a supernatural one. There must always be a cause.

Many usual causes which sometimes fail to bring about the expected effects are not the real causes. The real causes are those which never fail to create the expected effects. An example may be given of

various diseases and their causes; influenza was previously thought to be caused by cold; but cold did not always create it, now it has been discovered that it is caused by a virus. The same is true about many supernatural feats.

3. Whatever Is Caused By Natural Causes Is Really Caused By Allah

The Qur'an, while affirming the causal relation between a cause and its effect, ascribes every effect to Allah. The inference is that these normal and usual causes are not independent in creating their effects; the real cause, in the true sense of this word, is only Allah. Allah says:

S***urely, His is the creation and the command*** (***7:54***).

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's (***2:284***).

His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth (***57:5***).

Say: "All is from Allah" (***4:78***).

There are numerous such verses showing that everything belongs exclusively to Allah; He may deal with it in any way He likes; no one else can handle it at all except by permission of Allah; He allows whomsoever He wishes to manage, influence and effect it to a certain extent. But this divine permission, establishing the relation of causality, does not make that cause independent of Allah; it is just a permission given by the real owner to use his property. The man having this permission cannot transgress the limits imposed by the owner. Allah says:

Say: "O Allah, Master of kingdom! Thou givest the kingdom to whomsoever thou pleasest and takest away the kingdom from whomsoever Thou pleasest (***3:26***).

Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (***to its goal***) (***2:50***).

…Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission? (***2:255***).

…And He is firmly established on Arsh, regulating the affair; there is no intercessor except after His permission (***10:3***).

The causes do have the causality because Allah has given it to them. They have got it, but are not independent of Allah. It is this factor that has been described in above verses as "intercession" and "permission". Permission means that there was an impediment which, but for this permission would have hindered the now–authorized agent from interfering in this affair.

In short, every cause has been given the power to create the relevant effect; but the real authority is yet in the hands of Allah.

4. The Souls Of The Prophets Do Have Influence Over The Super-Natural Events

Allah says:

***…And it was not meet for an apostle that he should bring a sign except with Allah's permission; but when the command of Allah came, judgement was given with truth, and those who treated* (*it*) *as a lie were lost* (*40:78*).**

The verse shows that it was the apostle who brought the sign – by permission of Allah. The souls of the prophets were given a special power to cause the miracle; and that causal power, like all other causes, created its effect with permission of Allah.

Again Allah says:

***And they followed what the Satans chant* (of sorcery) *against the kingdom of Sulayman; and not that Sulayman disbelieved, but* (it was) *the Satans that disbelieved, they taught men sorcery and what* was *sent down to the two angels at Babylon, Harut and Marut: Yet these two taught no one until they had said, "Surely, we are only a trial, therefore do not be a disbeliever". Even then men learned from these two that by which they might cause a separation between a man and his wife; and they cannot hurt with it anyone except with Allah's permission* (*2:102*).**

This verse proves two things: magic has some reality; and it, not unlike miracle, is caused by a psychical factor of the magician, by permission of Allah.

Take a miracle, a magic, a mysterious wonder of a saint, or a spell bringing skill acquired through rigorous practice – all these extra-ordinary or super-natural deeds emanate from their agents' psychical factors – or will-power – as the above-mentioned verses have shown. But Allah has made it clear that the psychical cause found in His apostles, prophets and believers is predominant, has the mastery, over all other causes, in all imaginable conditions; it can never be overpowered. Allah says:

***And certainly Our word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the apostles* (*37:171*).**

***Most surely, they shall be the assisted ones* (*37:172*).**

***And most surely, Our host alone shall be the victorious ones* (*37:173*).**

***Allah has written down: I will most certainly prevail, I and My apostle…* (*58:21*).**

***Most surely, We help Our apostles and those who believe, in this world's life and on the day when the witnesses shall stand* (*40:51*).**

As you see, these verses do not put any condition or restriction on the promised victory; the apostles and the believers shall be victorious over their adversaries in all conditions and situations.

It may be inferred from it that this divine source is something metaphysical, preternatural. Material things are, in their nature, measured and limited; they get the worst of it if they are faced by another thing which is superior in power. But this preternatural spiritual source, which is assisted by the will of Allah, is never defeated by any factor; whenever it is faced by any material adversary, it is given by Allah a far more superior power to achieve victory with flying colours.

5. Whatever Is Caused By Psychical Power Depends On A Command From Allah

Read again the last sentence of the following verse, mentioned at the beginning of the preceding chapter:

***But when the command of Allah came, judgement was given with truth, and those who treated* (it) *as a lie were lost* (*40:78*).**

You will see that the supernatural event caused by the psychical power of the agent depends on a command from Allah – in addition to His permission. That command may coincide with the said permission, or may be one with it. The command of Allah is His creation, described by the word 'Be' in the verse:

***His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it, "Be", and it is* (*36:82*).**

Also, Allah says:

***Surely, this is a reminder, so whoever wishes takes to his Lord a way* (*76:29*).**

***And you do not wish except that Allah wishes; surely, Allah is Knowing, Wise* (*76:30*).**

***It is naught but a reminder for the worlds* (*81:27*).**

***For him among you who wishes to go straight* (*81:28*).**

***And you do not wish except that Allah wishes, the Lord of the worlds* (*81:29*).**

These verses show that the affairs which are within the sphere of the man's will, and under his control and authority, are still dependent on the divine will for their existence. What these verses say is this: The intentional actions of a man are done by his will; but that will itself depends on the will of Allah.

The verses do not say that whatever is wished by man is wished by Allah. Had it been the case, no human wish would have remained unfulfilled – because it would have become the will of Allah! Also, many verses refute this idea;

***And if We had wished We would certainly have given to every soul its guidance…* (*32:13*).**

***And if your Lord had wished surely, all those who are in the earth would have believed* (*10:99*).**

Our will depends on the divine will; our action depends on our will, and also they depend – indirectly, through our will – on the will of Allah. And both our will and action depend on the command of Allah – on His word, “Be”.

Things, affairs and events may be either natural or supernatural; and the super–natural may be either on the side of good, like miracle, or on that of evil, like magic and sooth saying. But all of them come into being through natural causes, and at the same time they depend on the will of Allah. In other words, they cannot come into being unless the natural cause coincides, or becomes one, with the permission and command of Allah. All things are equal in this respect; but when a prophet brings about a miracle, or a good servant of Allah prays to Him for a thing, an additional factor, that is, the decisive command of Allah, is added thereto; and the desired effect or event unfailingly comes into being. Allah says:

Allah has written down: I will most certainly prevail, I and My apostles (***58:21***).

I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me… (***2:186***).

See also other such verses quoted in the preceding chapter.

6. The Qur’an Attributes The Miracle To An Invincible Cause

The preceding chapters have made it clear that miracle, like other natural and super–natural things, needs a natural cause; and that all causes depend on some metaphysical causes. All these events and effects may, thus, be divided into four categories:

First: The normal events: They come into being by normal apparent causes which are accompanied by real causes – in most cases those real causes are material ones; and those causes depend on the divine will and command.

Second: The extra–ordinary events of evil nature, like sorcery and sooth saying: They are caused by natural but unusual and abnormal causes, which are accompanied by the real causes; and those causes depend on the divine permission and will.

Third: The extra–ordinary events of good nature, like a prayer answered by Allah: They are caused by the natural and real cause, with permission and will of Allah – but such events do not contain any element of challenge, that is, they do not purport to prove the truth of any call or claim.

Fourth: The miracles: The extra–ordinary, super–natural events of good character, which are brought about as a challenge, to prove the truth of the call or claim. They too are caused by the natural and real causes with permission and will of Allah.

The third and fourth categories have an extra quality in them: Their cause is fortified by an invincible factor; it can never be overpowered, as it is always accompanied by the decisive command of Allah.

Question: It is strange to say that miracle is caused by a natural cause. Suppose, we discover the real natural cause of a miracle; will it not then be possible for us to create that miracle? If yes, then miraculousness would be a relative matter; any action would be a miracle in the eyes of those who are unaware of its cause, but quite an ordinary thing for those who know. In the same way, an event that was believed to be a miracle in dark ages would not be so impressive in this age of science and knowledge. If scientific research found out the real natural causes of the miracles, there would be no miracle at all – and no miracle could be used to prove the truth of the prophet's claim. What all this leads to is this: A miracle is not a proof except against him who is ignorant of its natural cause; therefore, it cannot be put as a piece of evidence of the truth of the prophet's claim.

Reply: Miraculousness of a miracle does not depend on unknowability of its cause; nor is it a miracle because it emanates from an extraordinary or mysterious cause. It is a miracle because it is brought about by such an extraordinary cause which is invincible, which cannot be overcome, cannot be defeated. Let us look at the case of a seriously sick person, who, all of a sudden, is cured by the prayers of a believer. It is called a miraculous event, because it emanates from an invincible cause. We know that patient could be cured by medical treatment, and it would have been a normal process; but this cause, that is, the medical treatment, could be foiled by other more powerful factors; and that is why it is not called a miracle.

7. The Qur'an Counts Miracle As A Proof Of The Truth Of The Claim Of Prophethood

Question: What is the connection between miracle and veracity of the claim of prophethood? Reason fails to see any binding relation between the two. But the Qur'an time and again asserts this concomitancy, as may be seen in the stories of various prophets, for example, Hud, Salih, Musa, 'Isa and Muhammad (peace of Allah be on all of them!). The Qur'an narrates that no sooner did they announce their claim than they were asked by their people to bring some miracle to prove the truth of their claim; and they responded to it by showing the miracle.

Not only that. Some of them were given their miracle even before their nations had asked them for it. Allah told Musa ('a) at the start of his mission:

Go you and your brother with My signs and be not remiss in remembering Me (***20:42***).

And He says about 'Isa ('a):

And **(will make him)** ***an apostle to the children of Israel: "That I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, that I create for you out of dust like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird with Allah's permission and I heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead to life with Allah's permission and I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your house; most surely, there is a sign in this for you, if you are believers"*** (***3:49***).

The same is the position of the Qur'an which was given to the Prophet right at the start of his mission.

The reason does not see any connection whatsoever between the truth of the message of an apostle or a prophet on one hand and his ability to show a super-natural sign on the other.

Moreover, the beauty of the principles expounded by the apostles and the prophets, strengthened as it is by irrefutable proofs, dispenses with the need of any miracle - for an intelligent and knowledgeable person. That is why it is said that miracles are needed for convincing the simple-minded people, because they cannot understand a learned discourse; but knowledgeable persons do not need them.

Reply: The prophets had not brought the miracles to prove any principle of religion, like belief in Oneness of God and the Day of Resurrection etc. - the truth of which could be realized by intellect and reason. They always proved such things with reasoning and logical arguments. For example, Allah says regarding the existence of the Creator:

Their apostles said: "Is there doubt about Allah, the Master of the heavens and the earth?" (***14:10***).

And He says about resurrection:

And We did not create the heaven and the earth and what is between them in vain; that is the opinion of those who disbelieve; then woe to those who disbelieve on account of the fire (***38:27***).

Shall We treat those who believe and do good like the mischief-makers in the earth? Or shall We make those who guard (**against evil**) ***like the wicked?*** (***38:28***).

Why were, then, the apostles asked to show miracle, and why did they bring it about? It was to prove that they were in fact sent by Allah; it was meant to authenticate their claim.

The prophets claimed that they were sent by Allah, that He had revealed His message to them - either directly or through an angel. It was an assertion of a super-natural event; a claim of a reality beyond the physical senses and mental cognization of their people; a fact above the level of man's perception. If that claim was right, it would be a special metaphysical disposition reserved for the prophets only. The difficulty was that the prophets were like any other human being in their humanity and in its characteristics. How could they be favoured for this especial relationship with the world beyond nature?

The disbelievers, therefore, resorted to two methods to disprove the prophets' claim:

First Method: They tried to refute it through such "arguments" as the following:

a) ***They said: "You are nothing but human being like us; you wish to turn us away from what our fathers used to worship"*** (***14:10***).

The apostles were like all other men; and other men do not receive such divine revelation as was claimed by the apostles. If they could be given revelation from God, why could not others get it as well?

Were not all of them alike in their humanity?

The apostles replied to it in these words:

Their apostles said to them: "We are nothing but human beings like yourselves, but Allah bestows (His) favours on whom He pleases of His servants..." (14:11).

They accepted that they were like all men in their humanity, but showed that apostleship was a very especial favour of Allah, and He bestows it on whom He pleases. It is not difficult to see that being alike does not preclude some of them from being reserved for some especial favours. Of course, if Allah had pleased, He could have bestowed it on anyone among them, but He chose for this favour whom He pleased. The same was the thrust of their protest against the Prophet:

"Has the reminder been revealed to him from among us?" (38:8).

b) Of the same nature, but with added sarcasm, were the following remarks of the polytheists of Mecca:

And they say: "Why was not this Qur'an revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?" (43:31).

And they say: "What sort of apostle is this that he eats food and goes about in the marts; why has not an angel been sent down to him so that he be a warner with him?" (25:7).

"Or a treasure be thrown down to him, or be for him a garden from which he may eat!" (25:8).

What they wanted to say was this: If the Apostle (of Islam) really has been chosen by God to receive divine revelation, then he must be someone above all the mortals. Then why does he require food to eat, and why is he obliged to go about in the markets to earn his livelihood? If he is truly a representative of God, he should have been accompanied by an angel to assist him in his work, or he should have been given a treasure to save him the trouble of earning his livelihood in the markets, or a garden should have been bestowed on him, so that he would not need a food like ours.

Allah answered them in these words:

See how they coin comparisons for thee! So they have gone astray, therefore they shall not be able to find a way (25:9).

And We did not send before thee any messengers but they most surely, ate food and went about in the markets; and We have made some of you a trial for others; will you bear patiently? And your Lord is Ever-seeing (25:20).

And in reply to their demand for sending down an angel, it was said in another chapter:

And if We had made him angel, We would certainly have made him a man, and We would

certainly have made confused to them what they make confused (***6:9***).

c) Going further, they raised their demands even higher:

And those who do not hope for Our meeting, say: "Why have not angels been sent down upon us, or (**why**) ***do we not see our Lord?" Now certainly they are too proud of themselves and have revolted a great revolt*** (***25:21***).

According to their thinking, there was no difference between them and the Prophet; all were human beings. Then why should he be reserved for this office of apostleship? They too should be visited by angels; or, even better, they should see the Lord. Allah replied to them:

On the day when they shall see the angels, there shall be no joy on that day for the guilty, and they shall say: "It is a forbidden thing totally prohibited" (***25:22***).

It means that if they persist in their disbelief, they shall not see the angels except at the time of death, and then they shall not find any joy in it. The same thing has been mentioned in another verse:

And they say: "O you to whom the Reminder has been revealed! you are most surely, insane" (***15:6***).

"Why do you not bring to us the angels if you are of the truthful ones?" (***15:7***).

We do not send the angels but with truth, and then they would not be respited (***15:8***).

d) This last verse shows us one more twist of their "arguments". The Prophet, according to their thinking, was truthful in his claim of revelation, but he was insane; whatever news he brought was a product of his unstable mind and was, therefore, not correct. The same "argument" was put against Nuh ('a), as the Qur'an says:

…***And they called*** (**Nuh**) ***mad, and he was driven away*** (***54:9***).

These were the variations of their "arguments" against the claims of the Prophet, the arguments which were based on similarity of the prophets and their people in their humanity.

Second Method: It was to reject outright the claim of the prophets, and demand from them proof of their veracity, asking them to bring some signs to show that they were in fact representatives of Allah and recipients of His revelation.

The apostles and the prophets claimed a distinction which was intangible and unknowable to their people. They claimed that they were given apostleship and/or prophethood; that they were spoken to by Allah – either directly or through angels. Now, such a claim could not be verified by any test or experiment. It could be objected against in two ways:

(i) There was no proof that such a claim was true;

(ii) there was proof that it was not true. Revelation, divine speech, (and the resulting *Shari'ah* and religious discipline) could not be experienced by anyone other than the claimant; the normal system of cause and effect was against it.

If such a claim were true, it would mean that the Prophet was in direct contact with the world beyond nature; he was tuned to the divine power – the power that can change the course of nature can make the effect appear without their usual causes. In that case, he should be able to produce some another tangible super–natural effect; after all, one super–natural event is like any other super–natural event so far as the divine authority is concerned. If Allah spoke to the Prophet – a super–natural effect – He should show on his hands some other tangible super–natural effects in order to prove the truth of his former claim, that is, the claim that he receives revelation from God. If God wanted to guide the people aright by means of a super–natural thing, that is, revelation, then let Him prove the truth of His Prophet by means of another super–natural, that is, miracle.

That was why the people asked for miracles whenever a prophet was sent to them. They wanted miracles to verify his claim of prophethood, and not to ensure the truth of his teachings. Suppose a man is sent by a ruler to his subjects with his commands and laws. He reaches his destination and they ask him for his credentials. Will they be satisfied if, at this juncture, he starts explaining the wisdom underlying each rule and regulation? Certainly not. They will say: All that you have said, just shows that these rules are based on wisdom and meant for our good; but it does not prove in any way that they are from our ruler, nor that you are his deputy authorized to manage our affairs on his behalf. We shall believe in your claim only when you show us a credential to this effect, for example, an appointment letter duly signed by the ruler and having his official seal. It is as the polytheists had said to the Prophet:

"…Until you bring down to us a book which we may read" (***17:93***).

From the above explanation, two things become abundantly clear.

First: Miracle has an inseparable connection with the truth of the claim of prophethood. Learned and ignorant, elite and common, all men need miracle in order to be able to accept the truth of a prophet's claim.

Second: What the prophet receives and perceives of the revelation is entirely different from those things which we feel by senses or comprehend by intellect. In plain words, revelation is not a function of mind; it is a reality totally separate from "right thinking". This fact is brilliantly clear from the Book of Allah; and no one, having an iota of common sense, can entertain any doubt about it.

But in recent times some "scholars" have closed their eyes from this reality and tried to reinterpret the spiritual facts and divine knowledge in the light of the natural sciences. They have, accordingly, based their explanations on materialistic theory. They believe that human perception and comprehension is a

characteristic of matter, emanating from the brain. They are of the opinion that all real merits and perfections – whether of an individual or of a group – are developments of matter only. Based on these premises, they have explained prophethood and all related spiritual factors on the following materialistic lines:

Prophethood is a sort of a sharp mental power, an intellectual genius. The genius who is called prophet, looks at the social conditions of his nation; analyses what they have inherited of the beliefs, ideas, customs and superstitions; and then changes them to conform with the needs of his time and place, in the most suitable manner. In that light, he frames for them the basic social principles and ordains practical rules and regulations – in order to raise their standard of life, to elevate their morality and ethics, to make them better members of society. Basing on this hypothesis, they have declared that:

1. Prophet is an intellectual genius, who calls his people to the good of their social life.

2. Revelation is the good thought which comes into his mind.

3. Divine book is the collection of those good thoughts and ideas, inasmuch as they are free from personal desires and selfish motives.

4. Angels who, the prophet says come to him, are only the natural material forces which keep the world going. Or, they are psychological traits which lead the man to his perfection. The Holy Ghost is a higher development of those material forces, which rains those pure ideas on the prophet's mind. Satan is a retrogression of the same material forces, which poisons the minds with evil thoughts and incites the people to anti–social deeds. In the same vein they have explained away all the realities which the prophets have told us about – like the Tablet, the Pen, the Throne, the Chair, the Book, the Reckoning, the Garden, and the Fire.

5. Religions are products of times; they change with the times.

6. The miracles, attributed to the prophets, are nothing more than myths and fictions; which were forged in the interest of religion, to strengthen the belief of common people; or to enhance the prestige of religious leaders in the eyes of their followers.

This in short is their explanation. But prophethood, in this meaning, should rather be called a political device than a divine reality. It is not possible here to throw light on its various facets. What the readers, however, should not overlook is that this interpretation has no resemblance whatsoever to what has been described in the Books of Allah and the traditions of the prophets. What led these "scholars" to such interpretations was their total submission to materialistic theories; that was why they rejected every metaphysical reality, and tried to bring it down to the level of lifeless matter.

Such peoples are academic descendants of an earlier group: Many early theologians interpreted every religious reality – the Throne, the Chair, the Tablet, the Pen, the Angels etc. – in material terms, adding, at the same time, that those things existed beyond the grasp of our senses. Needless to say that that interpretation was not based on any actual experiment or sensual perception. Now that the area of physical sciences has expanded so much, and every thing is being analysed, tested and experimented on, this later generation was obliged to reject the idea of physical existence of those religious realities, because, as mentioned above, their existence could not be proved by any test or experiment. Therefore, they had to invent other meanings for those realities, well within the area of sensual perception. They thought that they were serving the cause of religion in this way – because their interpretation would bring those realities within the sensual and physical recognition, and thus save them from being totally rejected by modern scholars.

Both groups have strayed from the right path. The ancient theologians correctly understood the meanings of these words, without resorting to any allegorical interpretation. But they erred when they thought that those were material things although beyond the purview of sensual perception, not subjected to the laws of matter.

The modern scholars took the wrong way from the very start; they gave these words wrong meanings in their eagerness to make them conform to material realities; in their attempt to pull these sublime truths down to the level of physical experience.

The correct way is to explain these words according to the dictates of the language and the usage; then shall come the stage of identifying what, how and where, for example, the Pen is. This should be done with the help of other relevant verses. After the Pen is identified, it may be compared with current scientific ideas to check whether it goes against them. If that examination reveals that the identified entity was beyond the domain of matter, then it should not be proved, or disproved, by the principles of physical sciences. The science is concerned with material and physical things. What authority has it got to judge metaphysical or spiritual things? Can we allow a linguist to prove, or disprove, a proposition of astronomy by the rules of grammar? If not, then why should the rules of physical sciences be applied to prove, disprove or interpret metaphysical realities?

Qur'an: ***But if you do*** **(it)** ***not – and never shall you do*** **(it)** ***– then be on guard against the fire of which men and stones are the fuel; it is prepared for the unbelievers. And convey good news to those who believe and do good deeds, that for them are gardens in which rivers flow; whenever***

***they shall be given a portion of the fruit thereof, they shall say: "This is what was given to us before;" and they shall be given the like of it, and they shall have pure mates in them; and in them they shall abide* (*2:25*).**

The chapter began with description of three groups: the pious ones, the disbelievers and the hypocrites. But then all of them were joined together by the words, "O men!", calling them to worship Allah. In this context, they could be divided in two groups only: those who answered this call (i.e. the believers) and those who did not answer it (i.e. the disbelievers). The hypocrites do not come into this picture, probably because in their appearance they are with the first group, while in reality they are included in the second. Perhaps, that is why the previous designation of the first group (*those who guard against evil*) has been changed here for "those who believe".

"al-Waqud" (الوَقود) is fuel. The verse says that man himself is the fuel of the hell. He is his own fuel, to keep the fire burning, and to get himself burned in that fire. Allah says:

***Then in the fire shall they be burned* (*40:72*).**

***It is the fire kindled by Allah* (*104:6*).**

***Which rises above the hearts* (*104:7*).**

Man shall be burned in a fire that will be kindled and fuelled by his own self.

The next verse, 2:25, runs parallel to it and we find the same principle at work here also: "whenever they shall be given a portion of the fruit thereof, they shall say: 'This is what was given to us before;' and they shall be given the like of it". It indicates that man shall get there only what he has himself prepared here. The Prophet has said: "As you live so you will die, and as you die so you will be raised." But the people of the paradise have a pleasant distinction vis-a-vis the people of the fire, because they shall be given ever-increasing rewards by their Lord:

***They have therein what they wish and with Us is more yet* (*50:35*).**

"...Of which men and stones are the fuel": The stones referred to here are the idols which the disbelievers worshipped. Allah says:

***Surely, you and what you worship besides Allah are the firewood of hell...* (*21:98*).**

"...they shall have pure mates in them": The adjective "pure", inasmuch as it qualifies the "mates", refers to purity from all such things as may create aversion and unpleasantness - whether in their bodies or in their behaviour. In other words, the mates given to the believers in paradise will be free from every disagreeable characteristic or trait.

Traditions

as-Saduq narrates that as-Sadiq (‘a) was asked about this verse and he said: “The pure mates are the ones who shall be free from menstruation and other excrements.”

The author says: Some other traditions have expanded the meaning to include cleanliness from all defective traits, all characteristics causing aversion.

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1. See for details Dala‘il al-Ijaz of ash-Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 26 - 27

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يَسْتَحْيِي أَن يَضْرِبَ مَثَلاً مَّا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَذَا مَثَلاً يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلاَّ الْفَاسِقِينَ

Surely, Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable **-** (**that of**) ***a gnat or anything above that; then as for those who believe, they know that it is the truth from their Lord, and as for those who disbelieve, they say: “What is it that Allah means by this parable?” He causes many to err by it and many He leads aright by it, but He does not cause to err by it*** (**any**) ***except the transgressors*** (***2:26***).

الَّذِينَ يَنقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِن بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَن يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الأَرْضِ أُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ

Who break the covenant of Allah after its confirmation and cut asunder what Allah has ordered to be joined, and make mischief in the land; these it is that are the losers (***2:27***).

Commentary

Verse 26

Qur’an: ***Surely, Allah is not ashamed…*** (***2:26***).

Gnat or mosquito is one of the smallest animals perceptible by naked eyes. These two verses run parallel to verses 19–21 of Ch. 13:

Is then he who knows that what has been sent down to you from your Lord is the truth like unto him who is blind? Only those possessed of understanding shall bear in mind (***13:19***).

Those who fulfil the promise of Allah and do not break the covenant (***13:20***).

And those who join that which Allah has bidden to be joined, and fear Allah and fear the evil reckoning (***13:21***).

The verse clearly shows that there is a straying, a blindness, which afflicts the man as a result of his evil deeds; it is different from that initial straying and blindness which the man opts for by his own free will. Look at the sentence, "but He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors". They transgressed first, and it was only then that Allah made them go astray.

Guidance and misguidance are two comprehensive words; they encompass every felicity and infelicity that comes from Allah to His good and wicked servants respectively. As Allah describes in the Qur'an, He makes His good servants live a happy life, strengthens them with the spirit of faith, bring them out of the darkness into the light, and gives them a light by which they walk among the people; He has taken them under His protection and guardianship, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve; He is with them, answers them when they call on Him, and remembers them when they remember Him; and the angels come down to them with good news of eternal peace.

Diametrically opposed to it is the condition of evil–doers. Allah causes them to err, takes them out of the light into the darkness, sets a seal upon their hearts and hearings, and a covering over their eyes; He alters their faces turning them on their backs; places chains on their necks and these reach up to their chins, so they have their heads raised aloft, and makes a barrier before them and a barrier behind them, then He covers them over so that they cannot see; He appoints for them the Satans to become their associates, and they turn them away from the right path while they think that they are guided aright; those Satans make their misdeeds to seem good to them and they are their guardians; Allah leads them on by steps from whence they perceive not; and yet He respites them, but His plan is firm; He makes a plan for them and leaves them alone in their rebellion, blindly wandering on.

These are some examples of the conditions of the two groups. On deeper consideration, it appears that man, in this world, lives two lives: there is this life which may be seen and perceived by all, and there is another life hidden behind this one; that hidden life is either good or bad – depending on his faith and deeds. Man will become aware of that hidden life when the veil of secrecy will be removed after death. Then he will see himself in his true form.

Further, it appears from the Qur'anic verses that man has had a spiritual life before the life of this world; and he shall have another life after this one. In other words, man has been given three lives – this life in

this world is the second one, there was one preceding it and there will be another following. The condition of the third life shall be determined by that of this second life – which, in its turn, is governed by the first one.

Many exegetes have explained away the verses about the first life; they say that it is only a literary style, which presents imaginary pictures as real facts. And as for the verses concerning the life hereafter, they too are misrepresented as allegories and metaphors. But both types of verses are too clear in this meaning to allow such misinterpretations.

We shall explain the verses about the first life under Ch. 7. As for the life hereafter, many verses show that the same good or bad deeds which man commits in this life, shall be returned to him, as their own reward or punishment, on the day of requital. Allah has mentioned this fact in many verses:

…And do not make excuses today; you shall be recompensed only what you did (***66:7***).

Then every soul shall be paid back in full what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly. (***2:281***).

then be on guard against the fire of which men and stones are fuel (***2:24***).

Then let him summon his council (***96:17***).

We too would summon the tormentors (***of the hell***) (***96:18***).

On the day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil… (***3:30***).

…They eat nothing but fire into their bellies… (***2:174***).

…Surely, they only swallow fire into their bellies… (***4:10***).

There are many verses of the same import.

Then there is the following verse, which by itself is enough to convince one of this principle:

Certainly, you were heedless, of it, but now We have removed from you your veil, so your sight today is sharp (***50:22***).

The words, “you were heedless of it”, indicate that there was something present in this world, to which the guilty one has not paid any attention; “removed from you your veil” means that, but for that veil, he could have seen that reality even in this worldly life. What the man would see on the Day of Resurrection was present even in this earthly life; otherwise, it would not be logical to say that previously you were inattentive to it, or that it was hidden from your eyes, but now that the cover has been removed, you may see it clearly.

There is no allegory or metaphor in these verses. Try to explain in plain Arabic the principle which we have mentioned just now. You will not find a more explicit way than the one used in these verses. Then, how can they be explained away as allegories? The divine talk here points at two realities:

First: Recompense: What a man will get in hereafter – reward or punishment, paradise or hell – shall be in recompense of the good or evil he would have done in this life.

Second: Embodiment of the deeds: Many verses indicate that the good or evil deeds themselves turn into their own pleasant or unpleasant recompense. (Or, that the recompense is an inseparable concomitant of the deeds themselves.) It is hidden from our eyes in this life, but we shall see it clearly on the day of reckoning.

These realities are not really two. But we had to explain it in this way to bring it nearer to the minds. The Qur'an too says that it uses similitudes to make people understand.

Qur'an: ***But He does not cause to err by it*** **(any)** ***except the transgressors*** **(*2:26*).**

"al-Fisq" (الفِسق = transgression, sinfulness). It is the Qur'an that, first of all, used this word in its now prevalent meaning. It is derived from *fasaqati 't-tamrah* (فَسَقَنت التّمرة = the date broke out of its outer rind). That is why it has been further explained by the words, "who break the covenant of Allah after its confirmation" – a thing must be whole before it is broken. Also the transgressors are described at the end of the verse as the losers – one must be owning a thing before he can lose it. Allah further says:

Surely, the losers are they who have lost themselves and their people on the resurrection day **(*42:45*).**

All these expressions show how appropriate the adjective, *"al-fasiqin"* (الفاسقين = the transgressors) is in this context.

You should never think that the adjectives used by Allah in His book for His good servants (like "those who are near to Allah", "the sincere ones", "the humble ones", "the good ones", "the purified ones" etc.) or for the evil ones (like "the unjust", "the transgressors", "the losers", "those who go astray", etc.) are cheap epithets, or that they are used as literary embellishment.

Each adjective has its own significance; each points to a particular stage in man's spiritual journey. Each has its own characteristics, and gives rise to its special effects and consequences. On physical level, every age has its own characteristics and powers, which cannot be found before or after that age; likewise, on spiritual plane, every attribute has its own special effects.

An Essay On Compulsion And Delegation

The sentence: ***But He does not cause to err by it*** **(any)** ***except the transgressors*** **(*2:26*)** explains

how Allah manages the actions of His servants. Does He compel them to act in a pre-determined way? Or, has He delegated to them all powers in this respect? It is better to solve this knotty problem here and now, by the guidance of the Qur'an.

Allah says:

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's (***2:284***).

His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth (***57:5***).

To Him belongs the kingdom, and to Him is due (**all**) ***praise*** (***64:1***).

These and other similar verses prove that to Allah belongs the whole universe; His ownership is unconditional and unlimited. A man owns a thing, let us say, a donkey; he may use it and take its advantage to a certain extent only. For example, he may ride it or use it as a beast of burden; but he cannot starve it to death, nor can he burn it alive. Why? Because his ownership is not absolute; society would condemn him if he were to commit such atrocities. His ownership allows him certain advantages only; and not every possible use.

But when we say that Allah is the Owner of the worlds, we mean absolute, real and unrestricted ownership. There is no owner except Allah; the things own, or control, for themselves neither any harm nor any profit, neither life, death nor resurrection. It is only Allah who owns and controls every affair of every creature; He may do with them whatever He pleases; no one can ask Him why; He cannot be blamed or questioned for anything He does, because He is the absolute Owner. He has, of course, allowed some of His creatures to use some other things to a certain limit; but both the user and the used are His property; and the user cannot exceed the authorized limit. Allah, as the absolute Owner, cannot be questioned about His dispositions; but others have to give account of how they exercised their authority. Allah says:

Who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission? (***2:255***).

There is no intercessor except after His permission (***10:3***).

… That if Allah please He would certainly guide all the people? (***13:31***).

And if Allah please He would certainly make you a single nation, but He causes to err whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases… (***16:93***).

And you do not please except that Allah please (***76:30***).

He cannot be questioned concerning what He does and they shall be questioned (***21:23***).

Allah disposes and manages His property in any way He pleases; no one can use any other thing except with His permission, because He is the real Owner and Sustainer of everything.

Now we come to the rules and laws which Allah ordains for His creatures. He uses the same method which has been adopted by the human society – ordaining what is good and praising and rewarding its doers; forbidding what is bad and condemning and punishing its doers. For example, He says:

If you give alms openly, it is well (***2:271***).

…Evil is a bad name after faith (***49:11***).

Obviously, the laws ordained by Allah look at the good of man and aim at perfecting the human society. Allah says:

…Answer (**the call of**) ***Allah and His Apostle when he calls you to that which gives you life*** (***8:24***).

That is better for you, if you know (***61:11***).

Surely, Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good (***to others***) ***and the giving to kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion*** (***16:90***).

Surely, Allah does not enjoin indecency (***7:28***).

There are many such verses; and they show that the principles which the laws are based upon are always the same – be it a divine commandment or a human legislation. What is good in itself and ensures the good of the society is allowed, enjoined and prescribed; and what is evil in itself and endangers the social structure is forbidden; man is praised and rewarded for doing the former, and blamed and punished for doing the later. Some of those principles are as follows:

People do whatever they do because of its underlying wisdom and good. Legislation of laws is no exception to this rule; the laws too are made because of their underlying good and benefit. They reward the law–abiding citizens and chastise, if they so wish, the law–breakers. The said recompense must be correlated to the action done – in its quantity and quality. Also, it is accepted that the enjoinment and prohibition can be addressed to him only who is not under any duress or compulsion who has got freedom of will and choice. The above–mentioned recompense too is related to such actions only which emanate from free will and choice. Of course, if someone, by his own action, puts himself in a tight corner, in a difficult position where he has to transgress a law, he may be justly punished for that trans–gression, and his plea of helplessness will not be heeded at all.

Allah uses these same principles in His dealing with His creatures. He does not compel the man to obey or to disobey the divine commands. Had there been any compulsion, rewarding the obedient ones with the paradise and punishing the disobedient ones with the hell would have been absolutely wrong: the reward would have been an unprincipled venture, and the punishment an unmitigated oppression and injustice – and all of it is evil according to reason. Moreover, it would mean favouring one against the other without any justification, without any cause – and this too is a demerit according to reason. Furthermore, it would provide the aggrieved party with a valid argument against Allah; but Allah says:

…So that people should not have an argument against Allah after the **(coming of)** ***apostles*** **(*4:165*).**

…That he who would perish might perish by clear proof and he who would live might live by clear proof **(*8:42*).**

The above discourse makes the following points clear:

First: Divine laws are not based on compulsion. These rules have been made for the good of man in this life and the hereafter. And they have been prescribed for him because he has freedom of will, he may obey the rule if he so wishes, and may disobey if he so chooses. He will be fully recompensed for whatever good or bad he does by his free will.

Second: There are things and actions which are not in conformity with the divine sanctity, yet the Qur'an attributes them to Allah, like misleading, deceiving, scheming against someone, leaving him wandering on in his rebellion, letting the Satan overpower the man and become his associate. All these actions are related to various kinds of misleading and misguidance. But Allah is above all defects and demerits, and, therefore, these words when attributed to Him, should convey a meaning in keeping with His sacred name. Initial misleading, even in the sense of making inattentive and forgetful, cannot be ascribed to Allah. What the above-mentioned expressions actually mean is this: When someone by his own free will, opts to go astray, chooses the wrong path and commits sins, then Allah leaves him in that straying, and, thus, increases his error - it is done as a punishment of his wrong choice. Allah says:

He causes many to err by it and many He leads aright, by it, but He does not cause to err by it **(any)** ***except the transgressors*** **(*2:26*).**

…When they turned aside, Allah made their hearts turn aside **(*61:5*).**

Thus does Allah cause him to err who is extravagant, a doubter **(*40:34*).**

Third: The divine decree does not cover the actions of the man inasmuch as they are attributed to him - they are done by the doer, although not created by him. We shall further explain it later.

Fourth: Now that it has been seen that the divine law is not based on compulsion, it should be clearly understood that it is not based on delegation of power either. How can a "master" issue an authoritative command if he has delegated all his powers to the servant. In other words, this theory of delegation negates the comprehensive ownership of Allah *vis-a-vis* many of His possessions.

Traditions

A great number of traditions [narrated from the Imams of Ahl Al-Bayt ('a)] says: "There is neither compulsion nor delegation (of power), but (there is) a position between these two (extremes)."

It is reported in '*Uyunu al-akhbar,* through several chains: When the Leader of the faithful, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib ('a) returned from Siffin, an old man (who has participated in that battle) stood up and said: "O Leader of the faithful! Tell us about this journey of ours, was it by Allah's decree and measure?" The Leader of the faithful said: "Yes, O Shaykh! By Allah you did not ascend any elevation, nor did you descend to any valley but by a decree of Allah and by His measure." The old man, thereupon said: "I leave to Allah all my troubles (of this journey), O Leader of the faithful!" ('Ali ('a)) replied: "Have patience, O Shaykh! Perhaps you take it to mean a firm decree and a compulsory measure! If it were so, then there would be no justification of reward or punishment, no sense of command, prohibition or admonition, no meaning of promise or threat; there would not be any blame on an evil-doer nor any praise for a good-doer. Nay, the good-doer would have been rather more deserving of blame than the evil-doer, and the evil-doer rather more worthy of grace than the good-doer. (Beware!) this is the belief of the idol-worshippers and the enemies of the Beneficent God (who are) the Qadariyyah of this *ummah* and its Majus. O Shaykh! Verily Allah ordained (the *Shari'ah*) giving freedom of will (to men) and prohibited (evil) to keep us on guard; and He gave plentiful (reward) on meagre (deeds); and He was not disobeyed by being overpowered, nor was He obeyed by compulsion; and He did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in vain; that is the opinion of those who disbelieve on account of the fire."

The author says: The topics of the speech of Allah and His decree and measure were among the earliest about which the Muslims differed among themselves. This second dispute may be described as follows:

The eternal divine will govern everything in the universe. These things are transient in their quiddity; but when they do exist, they do so because the will of Allah decreed their existence - and in this way their existence becomes essential - otherwise, the divine decree would be meaningless. Conversely, when a thing does not exist, it is because Allah did not decree its existence - and in this way its existence becomes impossible - otherwise, the divine will would be meaningless. In short, whatever exists, exists because Allah has decreed its existence, - thus turning it into an essential being.

This principle applies everywhere. But the difficulty arises when it comes to such a human action that issues from our own will and choice. We know that we can do it if we so desire, and can ignore it if we so wish. Their doing and not doing is equally possible to us. The balance is tipped in favour of either side by our own will and choice. Our actions are based on our choice, and our will brings them into existence. The difficulty that arises at this point is this: We have earlier seen that nothing comes into being without the will and decree of Allah, which turns the thing into an essential being - if so, then how can any action of ours be termed as "possible" one? It must exist because the divine will has decreed it!

Moreover, how can our will affect it in any way when it is governed by the will of Allah? Also, in this background, it cannot be said that man had power to do a certain work before he did it. And, because he did not have that power, Allah could not give him any order or command for or against that work. Going

a step further, if Allah gave him an order and he did not comply, it would mean that Allah Himself had not wanted that thing to happen; so it was impossible for it to happen.

Then the question would arise: How could Allah order him to perform an impossible task? Conversely, if someone complied with that order, it was because Allah Himself wanted it to happen. Then why should the man be rewarded without any valid reason? By the same reasoning, a sinner should not be punished, as it would be against justice, a naked oppression. One may go on enumerating the difficulties arising out of this subject. A large number of Muslims felt obliged to admit, and believe in, all these absurdities. They said that:

Man does not have power to do a work before the time comes to do it. The reason has nothing to do with the merit or demerit of any action. Whatever Allah does becomes good; and whatever He forbids becomes evil.

Accordingly, Allah may choose an action without any justification; He may give reward without any cause; He may ordain laws beyond the capacity of the doer or agent; He may inflict punishment on a disobedient servant even though the said disobedience and transgression was not of his doing.

It appears that the old man, who had asked the question, thought that the belief in the divine will and decree meant that there was no merit or demerit in any action and that man had no right of any reward (or punishment). Naturally he was disappointed when he heard that the journey was by the decree of Allah; that is why he said: "I leave to Allah all my troubles." What he meant was this: My journey to Siffin and back and my fighting in the way of Allah had no benefit for me as it was governed and done by the will of Allah; my share in all this venture was only the trouble and the inconvenience which I underwent.

Therefore, I shall leave it to Allah to balance my account, as it was He Who put me through all these troubles. The Imam ('Ali) replied to him by saying, "If it were so, there would be no justification of reward or punishment..." The Imam pointed to the rational principle on which the legislation is based. And at the end he reasoned that Allah did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in vain. If Allah could will the man's actions in a way as to deprive him of his freedom of will and choice, it would mean that He could do things without any purpose and aim; then He could create the whole creation aimlessly and in vain. This in its turn would render the principle of resurrection and reward and punishment invalid too.

It is narrated in *at-Tawhid* and '*Uyun al-akhbar* that ar-Ridha' ('a) was asked about compulsion and delegation, and he said: "Should I not teach you in this regard a principle by which you shall never differ (among yourselves), and no one will argue with you on this subject but that you shall defeat him (by it)?" We said: "(Teach it to us) if you so please." Thereupon he said: "Verily Allah is not obeyed through compulsion, nor is He disobeyed by overpowering; and He did not leave the servants remiss in His kingdom; He (still) owns what He has given into their possession, and has power on what He has put into their power. Now, if the servants decided to obey Him, He would not prevent them from it, nor would

he put any obstruction to it; and if they decided to disobey Him, then if He pleased to bar their way to it He would do so, and if He did not hinder it and they committed it, then it was not He Who led them into that (sin)." Then the Imam said: "Whoever would accurately delineate the boundaries of this speech would surely, overcome his adversary."

The author says: Why did "al-Mujabbirah" (المُجَبِّرة = the believers in compulsion) say what they said? It was because they pondered on the divine decree and measure, and it led them to the conclusion that when Allah decrees a thing it must happen inescapably. Their deliberation of this subject was correct, and so was the conclusion arrived at. Where they fell in error was in correlating that conclusion with reality; they did not understand the difference between a reality and an idea based on subjective approach; they forgot the distinction between essentiality and possibility.

It is correct to say, on the basis of the divine decree and measure, that nothing happens in this world unless it turns an essential being; it is because everything and every affair comes into being when it is decreed by Allah, according to the measure prescribed by Him; and then it cannot fail to happen, otherwise the decree of Allah would fail. At the same time, it should be kept in mind that a transient or possible thing becomes essential because of its sufficient cause. When looked at in conjunction with its sufficient cause, it would be called "essential"; but separated from that cause, it would remain as it was before – a transient or possible thing.

Let us look at an action of man which he does by his free will and choice. When we look at it in relation to all things that are necessary to bring it into being – knowledge, will, proper tools and organs, the material, formal, efficient and final causes, and all the conditions of time and space – it will become an essential being; and it is in this context that it become subject of the eternal divine will. In other words, it becomes an essential being when all aspects of its sufficient cause are complete. But, looked in relation to each of those aspects separately, it remains only a transient and possible thing. If it is seen *vis-a-vis* its efficient cause only, that is, in relation to the doer only, it will retain its characteristics of transience and possibility – it will not become an essential being.

It is now clear to see at which point the believers in "compulsion" have deviated from the right path. They thought that, inasmuch as the human action was subject to the divine will and decree, man had no power on it; he was not a free agent; he was rather a helpless tool in divine hands. But they did not take into consideration the fact that the divine will takes it into hand only when all aspects of its sufficient cause are complete, and not before that. The divine will decrees that a certain action be done by Zayd – not unconditionally, but on the condition that it is done by Zayd's free will, at a certain time and a certain place. Therefore, its relation to the divine will itself demands that it should be an action of a free agent, done by his own free will and choice.

Doubtlessly, that action will be called an "essential" one if seen in relation to the divine will; but at the same time and by virtue of the same divine will, it will be a possible and transient action when related to the doer, that is, the man. In other words, there are two wills – the human and the divine; they do not run

parallel to each other; the divine will comes after and above the human will – they are in a vertical, and not a horizontal position to each other. Therefore, there is no competition or collision between the two wills. It was a short-sightedness on part of the believers in compulsion to negate the human will in order to establish the divine one.

The Mu'tazilites said that human actions are done by man's free will. But they went to the other extreme, and fell in an error no less objectionable than that of al-Mujabbirah. They too said that if human action was subjected to the divine will man would not have any freedom of will and choice. And then they took a position diametrically opposed to that of al-Mujabbirah, and came to the conclusion that the divine will had no relation whatsoever to the human action. Thus, they had to accept another creator – the man himself – for human actions. In this way, they accepted dualism without knowing what they were doing. Going further they fell into traps more harmful than the belief of al-Mujabbirah. As the Imam has said: "The poor al-Qadariyyah, they wanted to emphasize the justice of Allah, so they removed Him from His power and authority..."

A master, showing kindness to one of his slaves, married him to a slave-girl of his; he bestowed on him a property, gave him a well-furnished house and provided him with all the necessities of life. Then there came some people there, looked at his property, and began arguing among themselves. Someone said: "Even though the master has given this property to his slave and has made him its owner, the slave has no right in, or authority over, this property at all. Does any slave own anything? The slave together with all his belongings belongs to the master."

Another said: "No. You are wrong. The master has bestowed on this slave the right of property. Now the slave is its absolute owner, and the master has lost all his rights, and authority over this property. We may say that he has abdicated in favour of his slave."

The former was the opinion of al-Mujabbirah; the later that of the Mu'tazilites.

But both were wrong. The correct view would have been to say: The master has got his status of mastership; the slave his position of servitude and bondage. The master has made the slave owner of his (i.e., master's) property. The property belongs to the master at the same time that it belongs to the slave. There are two ownerships – one over the other. This is what the Imams of Ahl Al-Bayt ('a) have taught us to believe, and what the reason supports.

'Abayah Ibn Rib'i al-Asadi asked 'Ali, the Leader of the faithful, the meaning of "capability". The Leader of the faithful asked a counter question: "Do you have that capability without God or with God?" When 'Abayah remained silent, he told him, "Tell me, O 'Abayah!" He said: "What should I say? O Leader of the faithful!" He said: "You should say that you have got that capability by (grace of) Allah, to Whom it belongs and not to you. If He made you its owner, it would be of His bounties, and if He took it away from you, it would be a trial from Him; and He is the Owner of what He gave into your possession, and has power over what He put under your power..." (*al-Ihtijaj*)

The author says: Its meaning may be understood from the preceding explanation.

al-Mufid reports in his *Sharhu al-'aqa'id:* It has been narrated from Abu al-Hasan, the third, ('a) that he was asked whether the actions of the servants were created by Allah. He ('a) said: "If He were their creator, He would not have disowned their liability. And He (Allah) has said:

Verily, Allah is free from liability to the idolaters… (***9:3***).

It does not mean that Allah was not responsible for the creation of the idolaters; what Allah has disowned any responsibility of, is their idol worship and their evils."

The author says: There are two aspects of a deed - its actual existence, and its relation to its doer. It is only when an action is seen in relation to its doer that it is called obedience or disobedience, good or bad, virtue or sin. So far as actual existence is concerned, there is no difference between marriage and fornication. What distinguishes one from the other is the command of Allah - marriage conforms with the divine law, and fornication goes against that law. Someone is killed without any reason; another is killed by a lawful authority in reprisal of a murder. A teacher punishes an orphan in order to guide him aright; an oppressor hits at the same orphan unjustly. In all these examples, the actual movements of the actions are identical. But one group is called sin because it does not conform with the divine law or goes against the common weal of the society.

Allah says:

Allah is the Creator of everything… (***39:62***).

Every action is a "thing" inasmuch as it exists. And the Imam has said: "Whatsoever may be called a thing is created, except Allah..." Also, Allah says:

Who made good everything that He has created… (***32:7***).

It may be inferred that everything is good because it is created. Creation and goodness are inseparable factors. But at the same time, we see that Allah has named some actions as evil. For example, He says:

Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it, and whoever brings an evil deed, he shall not be recompensed but only with the like of it… (***6:160***).

These are obviously the actions done by man; not the factor of recompense which cannot apply to divine actions. Such a deed is called sin. It is evil because it lacks something; because it is a nullification of a spiritual virtue or social good. In other words, a sin is sin because it is a negation, a non-being; otherwise, it would have been good.

Now, let us look at the following verses of the Qur'an:

No misfortune befalls on the earth nor in your own souls, but it is in a book before We bring it

into existence… (***57:22***).

No affliction comes about but by Allah's permission; and whoever believes in Allah, He guides aright his heart… (***64 : 11***).

And whatever affliction befalls you, it is on account of what your hands have wrought, and (**yet**) ***He pardons most*** (**of your faults**) (***42:30***).

Whatever benefit comes to you, it is from Allah, and whatever misfortune befalls you, it is from yourself (***4:79***).

…And if a benefit comes to them, they say: "This is from Allah;"- and if a misfortune befalls them they say: "This is from you." Say: "All is from Allah;" but what is the matter with these people that well-nigh they do not understand what is told (**them**)**?** (***4:78***).

On pondering upon these verses, it becomes clear that these misfortunes are relative evils. A man is bestowed with the bounties of Allah, like security and peace; health and wealth, and so on; then he loses one or more of these bounties. This misfortune, in relation to that man, is evil because it has nullified some existing things, that is, the bounties which he had previously enjoyed. Thus, every misfortune is created by Allah, and at that stage it is not an evil. But it is an evil when seen in relation to the man who loses an existing bounty because of it.

Likewise, every sin is a negative factor, and as such, it is not to be attributed to Allah at all; though it may be attributed to Him from another angle, inasmuch as it happens by permission of Allah.

al-Bazanti said: I told ar-Ridha' ('a) that some of our fellows believe in compulsion and some of them advocate the (belief of) capability. Thereupon he told me: "Write down (as I say): Allah, Blessed and High is He, has said: 'O son of Adam! By My will you have become such that you wish for yourself what you wish; and by My power you discharged the duties imposed by Me (on you); and by My bounty, you got power to disobey Me; I made you hearing, seeing (and) powerful. Whatever benefit comes to you, it is from Allah; and whatever misfortune befalls you, it is from yourself. And it is as it is because I have more right on your good deeds than you have yourself; and you are more liable to your sins than Me. And it is because I cannot be questioned concerning what I do and they shall be questioned. Thus, I have arranged for you everything that you want…'"[1]

This, or nearly the same, tradition is narrated through other chains, of the Sunnis as well as of the Shi'ahs. In short, the deeds that cannot be attributed to Allah, are the sins *per se.* It further explains the sentence of the preceding tradition: "If he were their creator, He would not have disowned their liability… What Allah has disowned any responsibility of, is their idol-worship and their evils…" Abu Ja'far and Abu 'Abdillah ('a) said: "Certainly, Allah is too Merciful to His creatures to compel them to sin and then to punish them for it. And Allah is too powerful for anyone to think that He would will a thing and it would not happen!" (The narrator) said: "Then they ('a) were asked: 'Is there a third position between the

(positions of) compulsion and (independent) capability?' They said: 'Yes, broader than (the space) between the heaven and the earth.'"[2]

Muhammad Ibn 'Ajlan said: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah ('a) whether Allah has delegated (the authority of) the affair to the servants. He said: 'Allah is too honourable to delegate (the authority) to them.' I said: 'Then has He compelled the servants in their deeds?' He said: 'Allah is too just to compel a servant on a deed and then to punish him for it.'"[3]

In the same book Mihzam is reported as saying: "Abu 'Abdillah ('a) said: 'Tell me what is that concerning which our followers (whom you have left behind) have differed among themselves.' I said: 'About the compulsion and the delegation?' He said: 'Then ask me about it.' I asked: 'Has Allah compelled the servants to (commit) sins?' He replied: 'Allah is too overpowering to do it to them.' I asked: 'Then has He delegated (the authority) to them?' He replied: 'Allah has too much power over them to do so.' I asked: 'Then what is it (i.e., the correct position)? May Allah make your affairs right for you!'" (The narrator says:) "The Imam turned his hand twice or thrice, then said: 'If I were to answer you concerning it, you would not believe.'"

The author says: "Allah is too overpowering to do it to them": Compulsion means that a *force majeure* subdues the subject in such a way that his power of action is nullified. "Too overpowering" (or, more overpowering than that) is the predominant will of Allah – He has willed that the action would emanate from the doer by his free will and choice, and this is what is actually happening in the world. The divine will has given the man freedom of will; neither the divine will negates the human will, nor the human will collide with the divine will.

It is reported in *at-Tawhid* that as-Sadiq ('a.) said: "The Apostle of Allah said: 'Whoever thinks that Allah enjoins the evil and indecency, he tells a lie against Allah; and whoever believes that the good and bad (do happen) without the will of Allah, he removes Allah from His authority.'"

It is reported that al-Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf wrote to al-Hasan al-Basri, 'Amr Ibn 'Ubayd, Wasil Ibn 'Ata' and 'Amir ash-Sha'bi, asking them to describe what they had got (and what has reached them) in respect of (divine) decree and measure. al-Hasan al-Basri wrote to him: "The best thing that has reached me is that which I heard the Leader of the faithful, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib ('a) saying: 'Do you think that He Who has forbidden you has (also) acted cunningly against you? Rather, your lower and higher (parts) have cunningly deceived you, and Allah is free from its liability.'" And 'Amr Ibn 'Ubayd wrote to him: "The best thing I have heard about the decree and measure is the saying of the Leader of the faithful, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib ('a): 'If perfidy were in reality decreed, the perfidious man, if punished, would have been oppressed.'" And Wasil Ibn 'Ata' wrote to him: "The best I have heard about the decree and measure is the saying of the Leader of the faithful, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib ('a): 'Do you think that He would guide you to the path and (then) obstruct you (from moving on)?'" And ash-Sha'bi wrote to him: "The best thing I have heard concerning the decree and measure is the word of the Leader of the faithful, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib ('a): 'Whatever you have to seek Allah's pardon for it, it is from you; and whatever you thank Allah

for it, it is from Him.'" When their letters reached al-Hajjaj and he studied them, he said: "Certainly they have taken it from a clear spring."[4]

It is narrated in the same book that someone asked Ja'far Ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq ('a) about the decree and measure, and he replied: "Whatever you may blame the servant (of Allah) for it, it is from him; and whatever you cannot blame the servant (of Allah) for it, it is the work of Allah. Allah will say to the servant: 'Why did you disobey? Why did you transgress? Why did you drink liquor? Why did you fornicate?' This is, therefore, the work of the servant. But He will not say to him: 'Why were you sick? Why were you of short stature? Why did you become white? Why were you black? (He will not ask it) because it is the work of Allah."

'Ali ('a) was asked about monotheism and justice (of Allah), and he said: "Monotheism is that you should not imagine Him; and justice is that you should not accuse Him."[5]

The author says: There are numerous traditions on this subject; but those quoted above throw light on all the aspects of the topic.

The above-mentioned traditions show various special methods of argument regarding the subject matter.

a) Some of them argue on the basis of legislation itself - order and prohibition; punishment and reward etc. - that man has freedom of will, without any compulsion or delegation of power. See, for example, the speech of the Leader of the faithful, 'Ali ('a), replying to the old man. It is similar to the argument we have inferred from the words of Allah.

b) Others bring in evidence the verses of the Qur'an which cannot be reconciled with the theory of compulsion or delegation of power. For example:

And Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth (***3:189***).

And your Lord is not in the least unjust to the servants (***41:46***).

Also, there is the verse,

Say: "Surely, Allah does not enjoin indecency" (***7:28***).

Poser: A deed may be described as unjust or indecent if it is seen in relation to us. But when it is attributed to Allah it is not called unjust or indecent. Therefore, even if all "our" deeds were actually done by Allah, it would be perfectly right to say that He is not unjust and does not enjoin indecency.

Reply: The sentence seen in the context leaves no room for such misconceptions. The complete verse is as follows:

And when they commit an indecency, they say: "We found our fathers doing this and Allah has

enjoined it on us" Say: "Surely, Allah does not enjoin indecency. Do you say against Allah what you do not know?" (***7:28***).

Look at the sentence, "and Allah has enjoined it on us". The pronoun "it" clearly refers to the indecency committed by them; and it is the same deed which is referred to in the sentence, "Surely, Allah does not enjoin indecency." Allah does not enjoin what is termed as indecency in context of human activities; it does not matter whether in other framework it is called indecency or not.

c) A third type of reasoning is based on the divine attributes. Allah has given Himself many good names, and has described Himself with many sublime attributes, which cannot be squared with compulsion or delegation of power. Allah is the Subduer, the Omnipotent, the Benevolent and the Merciful. These attributes can only be believed in if one believes that everything depends on Allah in its existence, and that its defects and shortcomings cannot be attributed to Him at all.6

d) Yet others refer to seeking the pardon of Allah as well as to the blame which society directs at the wrong-doer. If sin were not from the man himself, there would have been no meaning in asking for divine pardon. If all our actions were done by Allah why should we be blamed for only some of them and not for the others?

e) Lastly, there are the traditions which explain the words, like causing to err, sealing the hearts and misleading, when they are attributed to Allah:

ar-Ridha' ('a) said explaining the words of Allah, ***And He*** (**Allah**) ***left them in utter darkness - they do not see*** (***2:17***)***:*** "Allah is not described as leaving something as His creatures do. But when He knew that they would not return from disbelief and error, He held back His help and grace from them and let them alone with their choice."7

The same book narrates from the same Imam in explanation of the words of Allah, *Allah has set a seal upon their hearts:* "It is setting a seal on the hearts of the disbelievers as a punishment of their disbelief, as Allah has said:

...Nay! Allah has set a seal upon them owing to their disbelief, so they shall not believe except a few (***4:155***)***."***

as-Sadiq ('a) said concerning the words of Allah, ***Surely, Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable...***: "This divine word answers those who think that Allah makes (His) servants go astray and then punishes them for that straying..."8

The author says: Its meaning may be understood from previous explanations.

A Philosophical Discussion

Every species is related to a particular type of action and reaction. In fact, it is these special

characteristics which identify the species as such. We looked at various kinds of actions and reactions emanating from various groups. Our reason told us that there should be an efficient cause, an agent, to bring each kind of these actions and reactions into being. Therefore, we put every group in a separate category, identifying it as a species. When we compared human characteristics, for example, with those of an animal, and delineated them clearly, we decided that they were two different species, with different characteristics.

When the actions are seen in relation to their subjects, that is, the species, they are primarily divided into two categories:

First: The actions emanating from the nature – where the knowledge of their emanation has no effect at all on their existence. For example, the growth and nutrition of the vegetables; the movement of the bodies; our own health or illness. These things are known to us, present in our own bodies; but our knowing or not knowing them has no effect whatsoever on their coming into being; they totally depend upon their doer – that is, nature.

Second: The actions issuing forth from the doer with his knowledge – where the said knowledge has a bearing on their being, like the intentional actions of the man and even of some animals. The doer does such an action after knowing and identifying it; and it is the knowledge and perception that gives him that insight. The knowledge makes him realize what would constitute his perfection, and helps him in deciding whether a particular action would lead to that desired perfection. The knowledge distinguishes the means of perfection from other things; and this distinction helps the doer in choosing a particular course of action. And the action comes into being.

The activities based upon ingrained aptitude (like issuing forth of the required voices, when a man speaks), as well as those emanating from natural disposition, or from the dictates of nature (like breathing) and, likewise, those springing from overwhelming grief or fear etc., do not require contemplation or meditation by the doer. Why? Because there is not more than one form of knowledge here, and the doer does not have to delay his activity awaiting a final decision. Therefore, he does it immediately. But in other cases, where the doer has before his eyes two or more possible forms of knowledge to choose from, he has to spend at least a few moments in contemplation and deliberation. For example, Zayd is hungry, and he gets a bread. Its one aspect is that it may satiate his hunger; but there may be other aspects too – it may be another man's property, it may be poisoned, it may have become dirty and so on. Zayd has to reflect whether the bread is legally, morally and hygienically fit for consumption. When he reaches a conclusion, the actions follow without any delay.

The first type of activities is called involuntary, like natural reactions; the second type is called voluntary, or intentional, like walking or talking.

The intentional actions, emanating from man's knowledge and will, are again divided into two categories:

First: When the man decides to do – or, not to do – a certain work, he may do so entirely on his own,

without being influenced by any other fellow. In the example given above, Zayd may decide, on his own, not to eat the bread because it was someone else's property; or he may eat it in spite of that snag. This is called a deed done by man's free will.

Second: When the man opts for a certain course of action under the influence of someone else. A tyrant may force a helpless person to act according to that tyrant's instruction under duress. The poor fellow in this condition commits sins and crimes against his own will. This is called a deed done under compulsion.

Right? But let us look at this second category more closely. We have said that this kind of deed results from the compellers compulsion; he does not allow any freedom to the doer, who has to take the only way left open by the oppressor. But even then, it is the doer himself who decides to proceed on that way. It is true that the major factor leading to this decision was the tyrant's compulsion; but it is equally true that the decision was taken by the doer himself, even though it was taken to save himself from the tyrant's oppression. In short, even the deeds done under compulsion are done by the will of the doer. It follows that the division of intentional actions into these two categories is not real, not based on actual facts. The intentional action is the one which emanates from knowledge and a will that tips the balance in its favour.

This reality is found in the deed done under compulsion as well as in the one done by free will. It makes no difference that it was some other man's force or fear that tipped the balance in one case and the doer's own thinking that did so in the other. A man sitting near a wall looks up to find that it was about to fall; overcome by fear he sprints away from that place. And we say that he did so by his own free will. Suppose, a tyrant threatens to bulldoze the wall over him if he did not move away. Overcome by fear, he sprints away from there. And we say that it was done under compulsion. But the fundamentals in both cases are the same. The man is overcome by fear and decides to move away. So, why should we put them in two different categories?

Objection: There is enough difference between the two actions to warrant their assignment to two different categories. The deed done by free will is based on its underlying wisdom (in the eyes of the doer); the doer deserves praise or blame, and gets reward or punishment, for it. All these factors are simply absent in the case of a deed done under compulsion.

Reply: It is true. But these factors are based on subjective approach of the society. They do not have any existence outside the imagination. By talking on these subjective approaches, we have crossed the limits of philosophy. Philosophy deals with the things that exist in reality, as well as with those things' natural characteristics. What all this leads to is the conclusion that the discussion whether man is free in his actions is beyond the scope of philosophy.

We may yet bring it back on the track of philosophy from another direction:

A transient (possible) thing has equal relation with existence and non-existence. It, therefore, needs a

sufficient cause to tip the balance in favour of existence, so that it may come into being.

The transient thing, when related to its sufficient cause, becomes an essential being – it becomes impossible for it not to exist. That is why it is said that a transient does not come into being unless it becomes an essential being.

A transient, by its definition, must have a sufficient cause for its existence. A transient existing without its sufficient cause is a contradiction in terms. And that cause gives it the essentiality, so long as it exists.

Now look at the universe at a glance. You will find a chain made up of unnumerable links, all of which would be essential beings. In other words, not a single existing thing could be called a transient, so long as it exists.

But this "essentialness" comes to it only when it is looked at in relation to its sufficient cause.

The sufficient cause may be a single thing or a compound of various causes – the material, the formal, the efficient and the final causes, plus the necessary conditions of time and space as well as other preliminaries. An effect when related to its sufficient cause must invariably exist – because the said cause would make it essential. But when seen with only a part of that cause, or if related to any outside factor, it would not be essential; it would remain a transient as before.

If a transient, on being related to only a part of its sufficient cause (e.g., to its efficient cause only) become essential and come into being, its sufficient cause would be superfluous; and it would be a contradiction in term.

It shows that in this natural world two systems are found simultaneously: one of essentiality and the other of transiency. The system of essentiality covers the sufficient causes and their effects – there is no transiency in any part of this world, neither in any person nor in any action. The system of transiency permeates the matter and its potentialities when related to only a part of the sufficient cause. Take any human action; if it is related to its sufficient cause – man (the efficient cause), knowledge and will (the final), matter (the material) and its shape (the formal) plus all conditions of time and space including removal of every hindrance – it would become essential. But if it is seen in relation to only its efficient cause, that is, man, it would remain transient.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the transient things need a cause for their existence because of their transiency. And this need would not end until the chain of cause and effect finally reaches a cause Who is the Essential Being. This observation leads to the following two conclusions:

First: The need of an effect for its cause does not end on its being related to its transient cause. The need continues until it reaches the Final Cause, the Essential Being.

Second: This need emanates from its transient nature. It needs a cause to bring it into existence with all its characteristics and traits, including its relationship with its various causes, fulfilling all the conditions of

its existence.

Now we may ponder upon the question of compulsion and delegation of power, keeping in view the above-mentioned premises:

First - No delegation of power: Man, like all other things and their actions, depends on the will of Allah, for his existence. In the same way, man's action depends on the will of Allah in its existence. Therefore, the Mu'tazilites' view - that human actions have no relation at all to the divine will - is completely baseless. There was no reason at all for them to deny the decree and measure of Allah in respect of the man's actions.

Second - No compulsion: This relation to the will of Allah, inasmuch as it is concerned with existence, keeps all the characteristics of the created thing in view. Every effect emanates from its cause - with all its characteristics which have any bearing on its existence. A man's creation is attributed to Allah, keeping in view all its intermediary causes and condition - the father, the mother, the time, the place, the features, the quantity, the quality and a lot of other concomitants. Likewise, the action of man is attributed to Allah, keeping in view all its characteristics and conditions. When a man's action is attributed to Allah and His will, it does not cease to be the man's action; it is still caused by the said man's will.

The will of Allah decrees that the action be done by the man emanating from the man's own free will and choice. Therefore, it would be a contradiction in term to say that the action was no longer done by man's free will because it was related to the divine will. Allah Himself has decreed it to be a work of the man by his free will; how can it be said that the divine will lost its effectiveness and the action happened without the man's free will? It is now clear that the view of al-Mujabbirah - that the human action's relation to the divine will nullifies its relation to the human will - is absolutely devoid of truth.

The above discourse shows that the said action has a relation to the human will and a relation to the divine will; neither relation nullifies the other, because each is connected with the other vertically, not horizontally.

Third: The human action, when related to its sufficient cause; becomes essential. But seen in relation to only a part of the sufficient cause, it remains transient. For example, when the action is related to only its sufficient cause, that is, man, it does not become essential, but remains transient as before.

Therefore, what a group of modern materialist philosophers have said - that the whole system of nature is permeated by compulsion, and there is no free will at all in the universe - is totally wrong. As we have said, all effects in relation to their sufficient causes are essential, but, when related to only a part of the said causes, are transient. And it is the foundation on which man's life is based. A man teaches and trains his child and then hopes that his efforts would bear fruit. If there was no freedom in the world, if everything was essential and had to happen anyhow, then all this teaching and training would be of no earthly use; there would remain no place for hope in human life.

1. Qurbu'l-asnad.
2. at-Tawhid.
3. at-Tawhid.
4. at-Tara'if.
5. Nahj al-Balaghah.
6. Refer to the tradition quoted from at-Tawhid.
7. 'Uyun al-akhbar.
8. Majma al-Bayan.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 28 - 29

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

How do you deny Allah and you were dead and He gave you life? Again He will cause you to die and again bring you to life; then you shall be brought back to Him (***2:28***).

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُم مَّا فِي الأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاء فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth, and He directed Himself to the heaven, so He made them complete seven heavens; and He know all things (***2:29***).

General Comment

The talk reverts again to the initial topic. The beginning of the chapter dealt with three categories of mankind; then all were addressed together (verses 21-27) with the words, *"O men"*, Now these verses describe the same subject with a grater detail. The twelve verses, starting from here, depict the reality of man; show the potentialities of perfection which Allah has endowed him with; delineate the vast scope of his inner being; describe the various stages - death and life, and again death and life; then the return to Allah - through which he passes in his journey, explaining that the final destination is Allah.

In this context, the verses describe some basic bounties of Allah upon him - creative as well as legislative. He created for him all that is, in the earth and made the heaven subservient to him. He made him His deputy on the earth, ordered the angels to prostrate before him, put the first man into the Garden, opened for him the door of repentance and enhanced his prestige by guiding him to His

worship. In this background, the opening words, “How do you deny Allah”, serve to emphasize the grace and bounty of Allah on man.

Commentary

Verse 28

Qur’an*: How do you deny Allah…you shall be brought back to Him* (*2:28*).

The verse is somewhat (though not exactly) similar to the verse:

They shall say: “Our Lord! twice didst Thou give us death, and twice hast Thou give us life, so we do confess our faults; is there then a way to get out? (*40:11*).

This (later) is one of the verses that prove an *al–barzakh* (البَرزَخ = intervening period or life) between this world and the next. It says that Allah gives death twice. First is the death that transfers us from this world. But when and where shall we be given the second death? Giving of death presupposes a preceding life. It means that man shall be given a life in the period intervening between this first death and the Day of Resurrection. This argument is solid, and it has been offered in some traditions too.

Question: Both verses have exactly the same connotation. Both mention two deaths and two lives. According to the verse 2:28, the stage before the life of this world has been called the first death. Then comes the first life in this world, followed by the second death transferring the man to the next world, and lastly will come the second life on the Day of Resurrection. The second verse (40:11) too should be interpreted in the same way, because both have the same import. It means that after the death of this world, there is no life before the Day of Resurrection.

Reply: It is wrong to say that the two verses have the same connotation. The verse 2:28 mentions one death, one causing to die and two givings of life; while the verse 40:11 is talking about two givings of death and two givings of life. There is a world of difference between “death” and “causing to die”. “Causing to die” shows a preceding life; while “death” can be used just for absence of life – even when there was no life before it.

The verse 40:11 refers to the death after this life, then the life of the intervening period, then the death after that, and finally to the life on the Day of Resurrection. The verse 2:28 on the other hand, refers first to the lifeless state (“death”, and not “causing to die”) before coming to this world, then goes on mentioning this life, then death and then the life of the intervening period. There will be some delay before man is returned to his Lord. The conjunctive used *“thumma”* (ثُمَّ = then) denotes some delay. Its use here supports this explanation because after the life of the intervening period there shall come again a death and only then the man shall be returned to Allah.

Qur’an: ***and you were dead and He gave you life*** (*2:28*).

It shows the reality of man and his existence. He is a being, ever–changing, ever proceeding on his path of perfection, step by step, stage by stage. Before coming into this world, he was dead, then he was made alive by Allah and came here; again he will be caused to die and then be made alive again. Allah says:

***…And He began the creation of man from dust* (*32:7*).**

***Then He made his progeny of an extract, of water held in light estimation* (*32:8*).**

***Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit…* (*32:9*).**

***…Then We did grow it into another creation; so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators* (*23:14*).**

***And they say: "What! when we have become lost in the earth, shall we then indeed be in a new generation?" Nay! they are disbelievers in the meeting of their Lord* (*32:10*).**

***Say: "The angel of death who is given charge of you shall cause you to die, then to your Lord you shall be brought back"* (*32:11*).**

***From it We created you and into it We shall send you back from it will We raise you a second time* (*20:55*).**

The verses will be explained when we shall come to them; they have been quoted here only to show that man is a part of the earth, he was created from it, gradually developed until he grew into "another creation"; this "another creation" proceeds on the path of his perfection; then the angel of death completely removes this "man" from the body; and he returns to Allah. This is the path which the man has to take to.

The divine decree has planned the universe in such a way that every thing is related to every thing else; there is a constant action and reaction between it and the rest of the creation. Man too influences, and is in turn influenced by, all that exists in the earth and in the heavens – the elements and their characteristics, the animal world, the vegetable world, the minerals, the water, the air and, in short, every creation of nature. The fact is that the scope of man's activities is much greater, and his circle far bigger than anything else's. He has been given thinking and reasoning powers, and, as a result of this unique gift of Allah, he influences the other creatures, manages them, arranges and rearranges them, manipulates them, destroys them, amends them and perfects them, on a scale unheard of outside his circle.

Every creature is under his domain. Sometimes he imitates nature by creating synthetic items for his needs; at other times he sets some forces of nature against the others. In short, he obtains, by all possible means, whatever he wants from whatever he wants. Passage of time has further strengthened his hands; now he has deeper insight in the working of nature, and manipulates the system even more effectively. That is so that Allah may establish the reality by His words, and so that the truth of His

speech may be seen even more clearly:

And He has made subservient to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all, from Himself (***45:13***).

The verse following the verse under discussion, states the same fact:

He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth, and He directed Himself to the heavens, so He made them complete seven heavens (***2:29***).

The context – description of the bounties of Allah bestowed on man – shows that it was for the benefit of man that Allah directed Himself to the heavens and made them complete seven. (Ponder on the point!)

This is the path taken by the man in his journey of existence; and this is the imprint of his activities on the universe; it shows where he began from and what his final destination is.

Man's life in this world originates from nature, as the Qur'an confirms. But the same book declares also that this very life emanates from Allah:

…And ***indeed I created you before, when you were nothing*** (***19:9***).

Surely, He it is Who originates and returns (***85:13***).

Man is a creature that is brought up in the caressing fold of creation, gets his nourishment from the breast of production, and is connected on this level with life–less nature. But, on the level of origination, he is related to the command of Allah, to His authority:

His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it, "Be", and it is (***36:82***).

Our word for a thing when We intend it, is only that We say to it, "Be", and it is (***16:40***).

This much about genesis. As for the return journey, the path divides in two: the path of happiness, and that of unhappiness.

The path of happiness is the shortest route, leading the man to the sublime spiritual heights. It keeps raising his status and enhancing his rank until it takes him to the divine nearness. The path of unhappiness, on the other hand, is a long route that keeps demeaning and debasing him rendering him lowest of the low, until he reaches the divine presence.

And Allah encompasses them on every side (***85:20***).

This subject has been fully explained under the verse:

Guide us to the straight path (***1:6***).

This was a short description of man's path. Details about his life in this world, and before and after it, will be given in their proper place. The verse under discussion is not concerned with those details; it makes only a passing reference to it as it has some bearing on guidance and misguidance, happiness and unhappiness.

***He made them complete seven heavens* (*2:29*).** We shall write about the heavens in Chapter 32 (*as-Sajdah*), God willing.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 30 – 33

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلائِكَةِ إِنّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُواْ أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاء وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ

***And when your Lord said to the angels, "Verily I am going to make in the earth a vicegerent"; they said: "wilt thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood while we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness?" He said: "Surely, I know what you do not know"* (*2:30*).**

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الأَسْمَاء كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاء هَؤُلاء إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

***And He taught Adam the names, all of them, then presented them to the angels and He said: "Tell Me the names of those if you are right"* (*2:31*).**

قَالُواْ سُبْحَانَكَ لاَ عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلاَّ مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

***They said: "Glory be to Thee! We have no knowledge but that which Thou hast taught us; surely, Thou, Thou* (alone), *art the knowing, the Wise"* (*2:32*).**

قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنبِئْهُم بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُل لَّكُمْ إِنّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ

He said: "O Adam! Inform them of their names. And when he had informed them of their names, He said: "Did I not say to you that I surely, know the unseen* (secrets) *of the heavens and the

earth and **(that)** ***I know what you manifest and what you were hiding?"*** **(*2:33*).**

Commentary

The verses tell us why the man has been sent to this world, what is the significance of his appointment as the vicegerent of Allah in this earth, what are the characteristics and special features of this vicegerency. Unlike other Qur'anic stories, it has been told in one place only, that is, in these verses.

Verse 30

Qur'an: ***And when your Lord said*** **(*2:30*).**

We shall explain in vol. IV, what the "speech" or "saying" means when it is attributed to Allah, to angels and to the Satan.

Qur'an: ***They said: "Wilt thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it…and extol Thy holiness?"*** **(*2:30*).**

The angels heard the announcement, "I am going to make in the earth a vicegerent", and at once arrived at the conclusion that they would be vicegerent would make mischief in the earth and shed blood. Apparently, they understood the ultimate behaviour of the said vicegerent from the words, "in the earth". A vicegerent appointed in the earth would certainly be created from material components; he would necessarily be bestowed with two basic traits of desire and anger; the earth is a place of unceasing struggle and constant confrontation; its resources are limited, its opportunities finite; but the proposed vicegerent's desire would be unlimited, infinite.

The condition of the earth and earthly things was hardly reassuring. Its creatures were subjected to ever–continuing deterioration and disintegration; its good was always turning into bad; it was a place where an individual could not live without a group having similar characteristics and traits. Keeping all this in view, the angels at once understood that what Allah intended to create was not only an individual, but a species. The members of that species would have to live together, cooperating with one another; that is to say, they would have to establish a society, a social order. And with a venture like this, they were bound to cause mischief and to shed blood.

On the other hand, they knew that vicegerency – setting one thing in place of another – was unthinkable unless the vicegerent were a true copy of his predecessor in all the characteristics, traits and intrinsic abilities. The proposed earthly creature was to be made vicegerent of Allah in the earth. Allah has got for Himself the best names, the sublime attributes; His mercy and power are beyond the comprehension of His creatures; He, in His person, is untouched by any defect; and, in his actions, is free from all kinds of evil and disorder. How could an earthly vicegerent, with all his defects and deficiencies, represent the majesty and splendour of Allah in the earth? Well, could a lowly creature of earth be a mirror of divine beauty and sublimity?

This was their question – and it was no more than a question. It was not a protest, not an objection; they actually wanted to know the truth. They later asserted their belief that Allah was the Knowing, the Wise. They believed that what Allah intended to do was based on knowledge and wisdom; and their question was put in order to learn the underlying wisdom of the decision of Allah. What their question – or, pleading – amounted to was as follows:

Allah intends to appoint a vicegerent in the earth; in order that the said vicegerent should represent Allah by celebrating His praise and glorifying His holiness through his worthy presence. But his earthly nature would not let him do so; it would irresistibly pull him towards mischief and wickedness. So far as the main purpose of this vicegerency – celebrating Allah's praise and glorifying His holiness – is concerned, we are already doing it. Therefore, we are Allah's *de facto* vicegerents; and if Allah wishes, He may bestow upon us this designation. What is the need, then, of a new creation to act as vicegerent of Allah in the earth?

For the reply, Allah used a sentence, "Surely, I know what you do not know", and an action, ***"And He taught Adam the names, all of them"*** (***2:31***).

The context shows that:

First: The vicegerent was to get the vicegerency of Allah; he was not to become a successor of any earthly creature that had preceded him. If Allah had wanted the man to take the place of that previous creature, the reply, ***"And He taught Adam the names, all of them"*** (***2:31***), would be quite irrelevant.

Assuming that man was given vicegerency of Allah, this prestige would not be restricted to the person of Adam only, his descendants too would be vicegerents of Allah in the earth. Adam was taught the names; in other words, this knowledge was ingrained in human being in such a manner that, since that first day, it has been constantly bearing newer, fresher and better fruits; whenever man gets a chance, he discovers new avenues of knowledge; and thus he always finds himself imbued with previously unknown potentialities that more often than not turn into real achievements. It is a never-ending process; it is a wonder that will not cease, and ever-fresh insight that will never fail to astonish.

That this assumption is correct, and the whole mankind is vicegerent of Allah, is evident by the following verses:

And remember (**O people of 'Ad!**) ***when He made you successors of Nuh's people…*** (***7:69***).

Then We made you successors in the land after them… (***10:14***).

…And He makes you successors in the earth (***27:62***).

The word translated here as "successor" is the same that has been translated as "vicegerent" in the verse under discussion.

Second: Allah did not say that the vicegerent–designate would not cause mischief and bloodshed; nor did He reject the plea of the angels that they celebrated His praise and extolled His glory. By this silence, He confirmed that the angels were right on both counts. But then He made manifest one thing which the angels were not aware of. He showed them that there was a matter which they could not shoulder the responsibility of, while this proposed vicegerent could do so. Man was entrusted with a divine secret which the angels, in their nature, were unable to know or understand. And that divine gift would more than compensate the ensuing mischief and bloodshed.

Allah told them, first, that surely, He knew what they did not know. Then He referred to the same reply by telling them: ***"Did I not say that I surely, know the unseen*** (***secrets***) ***of the heavens and the earth?"*** (***2:33***). Looking at the intervening sentences it may easily be understood that the "unseen (secrets)" refer to "the names". It does not refer to Adam's knowledge of those names. The angels were unaware of even the existence of these "names"; it was not that they knew about the names but were not sure whether Adam knew them or not. Had the angels been doubtful only about Adam's knowledge of the names, it would have been enough to tell Adam to inform the angels of the names in order that they would have known that Adam knew. Instead, Allah first asked them to tell Him "the names of those". The angels had claimed the vicegerency of Allah for themselves, and had hinted that Adam was not fit for it; but the essential qualification for the vicegerency was the knowledge of the names; therefore, Allah asked both candidates about the names; the angels did not know them, and Adam knew; it proved that he had the qualification while they lacked it. The question (about this knowledge) addressed to the angels ends with the clause, "if you are right"; it means that they had claimed a position, essential qualification of which was this knowledge.

Verse 31

Qur'an: ***And He taught Adam the names, all of them, then presented them to the angels*** (***2:31***).

The Arabic pronoun, "them", used in "then presented them", is made for rational beings, those who have life, sense and understanding. Obviously, the names (or, the named ones) were some living and sensible being who were hidden behind the curtain of the "unseen". It follows that the knowledge given to Adam of their names was something totally different from what we understand from the knowledge of names. Merely knowing the names (in the sense known to us) has no distinction; otherwise, the angels too would have become equal to Adam in this respect as soon as they heard those names from Adam. Also, there would have been no distinction for Adam in such a knowledge. The angels could rightly complain to Allah that He taught those names to Adam, but kept them (i.e. the angels) in dark; had He taught them too, they would have been equal to, if not better than, Adam! Understandably, such favouritism could not have silenced the angels. Surely, it was something deeper then merely knowing all the names.

It would not have been a convincing argument for Allah to teach Adam a dictionary and then put it as a piece of evidence against the angels – the honoured servants who do not precede Him in speech and

who act according to His commandment only – telling them to inform Him of the words which they had not been taught, and which the mankind was to invent in future. Moreover, the only purpose of language is to convey the feelings and ideas to the hearer; but the angels do not need any language for this purpose; they convey and receive the ideas directly without the medium of words; their stage is far higher than that of human beings in this respect.

However, it is clear that the knowledge of the names which the angels got after hearing them from Adam was not the same as Adam had got by teaching of Allah – the inferior knowledge of the names they could grasp, but not the superior one which qualified Adam for vicegerency of Allah.

Adam deserved the vicegerency because he was given the knowledge of the names, and not because he informed the angels of those names. That is why they declared, "Glory be to Thee! We have no knowledge but that which Thou hast taught us". They accepted that they did not possess that knowledge.

The above discourse leads us to believe that Adam was taught the names of the named ones in such a way that he clearly knew their reality and recognized their substantial existence; it was not merely knowing the semantic value of a noun. The named ones were substantial realities, the actual beings that were, at the same time, hidden behind the curtain of the unseen (secrets) of the heavens and the earth. This especial knowledge could be learnt only by an earthly human being, but was quite incomprehensible by a heavenly angel. And this knowledge had an intrinsic bearing upon vicegerency.

"al–Asma'" (الأسماء = the names), in the sentences, "And He taught Adam the names", is a plural with the definite article "al" (the) prefixed to it. Grammatically, it denotes generality, comprehensiveness; and it is followed by the emphatic, "all of them". Clearly, Adam was taught all the names of every named thing, without any restriction or limitation. As described earlier, the pronoun, "them", in the clause, "then presented them to the angels", shows that every name, that is, the named one, was a living being having knowledge and intellect; and at the same time, he was in the curtain of the unseen – the unseen of the heavens and the earth.

"The unseen of the heavens and the earth": It is a genitive case. Somewhere else this phrase may mean the unseen parts of the heavens and the earth. But in this verse, where Allah intends to demonstrate His perfect and comprehensive power, and to show the deficiency and incapability of the angels, it must mean a secret which is unseen to all the worlds, to all the heavens and the earth; an unseen beyond the sphere of the universe.

If you look at all the particulars of this verse – that "the names" denotes generality, that the named ones were alive and had knowledge, and that they were unseen to the heavens and the earth – you will agree that it perfectly fits on the theme of the verse,

And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it and We do not send it down but in a known measure (***15:21***).

Whatever is called a thing – whatever is "named" a thing – Allah has its vast treasures, ever-lasting, never-ending, unmeasured by any measure, unlimited by any limit. Measure and limit come to it when it is created and sent down. The vastness of these treasures is not of the same kind as the multiplicity of number, because a number, no matter how large, is by definition measured, limited and quantified. The said treasures are vast in their ranks and grades. (We shall further explain it in Chapter 15.)

The named ones who were presented before the angels were sublime beings, who were well-protected by Allah, hidden in curtains of the unseen. He sent them down to the universe with their blessings and benefactions, and created all that is in the heavens and in the earth from their light and splendour. Although they had numerous identities, they were not different in their number or in their persons; whatever difference there was, it was in their ranks and grades.

Verse 33

Qur'an: ***And I know what you manifest and what you were hiding*** **(*2:33*).**

The sentence stands face to face with the mention of the unseen (secrets) of the heavens and the earth. Probably it refers to those things which are the parts of the heavens and the earth; and in this way both sentences together cover all unseen things – those which are beyond the sphere of the heavens and the earth together with those which are within that sphere.

Instead of saying "and what you hide", Allah said, "and what you were hiding". This changed style shows that there was something hidden especially in respect of Adam and his appointment as vicegerent. Probably it was the incident described in the next verse:

"… (the angels) ***prostrated except Iblis. He refused and he showed arrogance, and he was one of the unbelievers"*** **(*2:34*).**

It shows that Iblis was an unbeliever before then, and that his refusal to prostrate had sprung from that disbelief, which he had kept hidden up to that moment. Obviously, the prostration of the angels and the refusal of Iblis had happened after Allah had told them, "Surely, I know what you do not know", but before He said to them, "…I know what you manifest and what you were hiding" (i.e. the unbelief kept secret by Iblis). It also explains the reason why the former sentence was changed to, "I surely, know the unseen (secrets) of the heavens and the earth".

Traditions

as-Sadiq ('a) said: "The angels could not know what they said: ***Wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood*** **(*2:30*)**, if they had not (earlier) seen someone who had made mischief in it and shed blood."[1]

The author says: This tradition may be pointing to an earlier creature that inhabited the earth before the

mankind, as some other traditions say. It is not against what we have said that they understood it from the very words of Allah: ***Verily, I am going to make in the earth a vicegerent*** (***2:30***); rather the tradition and our explanation are complementary. The tradition, without putting it in the framework of our explanation, would show that the angels too, like Iblis, had committed the folly of unauthorized analogy – a very objectionable practice.

Zurarah said: "I visited Abu Ja'far ('a) and he asked (me): 'What do you have of Shi'ah traditions?' I said: 'I do have a large number of it; and I was thinking of kindling a fire to burn them in it.' He said: 'Hide it (somewhere), you will (naturally) forget what you are not familiar with.'" (Zurarah said): "Then, I thought about the mankind (and asked him about them). He said: 'How did the angels get their knowledge when they said, ***Wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood?'*** (***2:30***)***"*** Zurarah further reports that whenever Abu 'Abdillah ('a) mentioned this tradition, he said: "It is a shattering blow against al-Qadariyyah (i. e. those who say that man is completely independent of Allah in his actions)." Abu 'Abdillah ('a) further said: "Adam ('a) had, in the heaven, a friend from among the angels.

When Adam got down from the heaven to the earth, the angel felt lonely; he complained (of it) to Allah and sought His permission. Allah allowed him and he came down to him (Adam); he found him (Adam) sitting in a desolate region. When Adam saw him, he put his hand on his head and cried aloud." Abu 'Abdillah ('a) said: "They narrate that (it was such a loud cry that) all the creatures heard it. The angel told him: 'O Adam! I do not see but that you have disobeyed your Lord and put on yourself a burden beyond your strength. Do you know what Allah had told us about you, and (what) we had said in His reply?' (Adam) said: 'No.' (The angel) said: 'Allah told us, "I am going to make in the earth a vicegerent". We said: "Wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood?" Thus, He created you to place you in the earth. Could it be right for you to stay in the heaven?'" Abu 'Abdillah ('a) said: "Allah in this way consoled Adam for three days."[2]

The author says: The tradition shows that the Garden of Adam was in the heaven. Other traditions on this subject will be given later.

In the same book, Abu al-'Abbas is quoted as saying that he asked Abu 'Abdillah ('a) about the words of Allah, ***And He taught Adam the names, all of them*** (***2:31***)*,* (and enquired) as to what Allah had taught him. (The Imam) said: "The earths, the mountains, the canyons and the valleys." Then he looked at the rug which he sat upon and said: "And this rug is among the things which He taught him."

It is reported in the same book that al-Fudayl Ibn al-'Abbas asked Abu 'Abdillah ('a) what were the names which Allah taught Adam. He replied: "The names of the valleys and the vegetables and the trees and the mountains of the earth."

The same book narrates from Dawud Ibn Sarhan al-'Attar that he said: "I was with Abu 'Abdillah ('a); he called for the table-spread and we took our meals. Then he called for the washbowl and hand-towel. I said to him: 'May I be your ransom! The words of Allah: ***And He taught Adam the names, all of them***

(***2:31***) – was (this) wash–bowl and hand–towel among them?' He ('a) said: 'The mountain–passes and the valleys.' Saying this he pointed by his hand this and that way." as–Sadiq ('a) said: "Verily, Allah taught Adam the names of His proofs, all of them; then He presented them – and they were the spirits – to the angels, and said: 'Tell Me the names of these if you are right in your claims that you have more right, than Adam, to the vicegerency in the earth because of your glorifying and extolling (Me).'

They said: '***Glory be to Thee! We have no knowledge but that which Thou hast taught us; surely, Thou, Thou*** (alone), ***art the Knowing, the Wise'*** (***2:32***). Allah, Blessed and High is He! said: ***'O Adam! Inform them of their names.'*** When he informed them of their names, they knew of their (i.e. those spirits) high rank before Allah, Great is His name! They realized that they (i.e. those spirits) were more deserving to be the vicegerents of Allah in His earth, and (to be) His proofs over His creatures. Then Allah removed them (the spirits) from their sight, and subjugated them with their (i.e. those spirits) obedience and love; and told them,

'***Did I not say to you that I surely, know the unseen*** (**secrets**) ***of the heavens and the earth and*** (**that**) ***I know what you manifest and what you were hiding?'*** (***2:33***)***."***[3]

The author says: The meaning of this tradition may be understood from the commentary given earlier; and it may also be realized that there was no contradiction between this tradition and the preceding ones. It was explained earlier that the verse: ***And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it*** (***15:21***), that every thing originally exists in the treasures of the unseen; the things that are with us came into being on descending from there. The name given to a thing in this existence is in fact the name of that which is hidden in the treasures of the unseen. You may say that Allah taught Adam every thing that was in His treasures of the unseen – unseen that was hidden from the heavens and the earth. The same idea may be conveyed in these words: Allah taught Adam the names of all things – the things that were unseen secrets hidden from the heavens and the earth. The sum total of both statements is the same.

It is not out of place here to point to the Tradition of *at–tinah* (الطّينة = the substance, of which a thing is made). Such a tradition, narrated in *Bihar al–anwar,* is as follows:

Jabir Ibn 'Abdillah said: "I said to the Apostle of Allah (S): 'What was the first thing which Allah created?' He said 'The light of your prophet, O Jabir! Allah created it, then created from it every good; then He caused it to stand before Him in the station of "nearness", so long as Allah wished. Then He divided it into parts; and He created the Throne from one part, and the Chair from another part, and the bearers of the Throne and the occupiers of the Chair from yet another part; and He placed the fourth part in the station of love, as long as Allah wished. Then He divided it into parts; and He created the Pen from one part, and the Tablet from another part, and the Garden from yet another part; and He placed the fourth part in the station of fear, as long as Allah wished.

Then He divided it into portions, and He created the angels from one portion, and the sun from another

portion, and the moon from yet another portion, and He placed the fourth portion in the station of hope, as long as Allah wished. Then He divided it into portions, and He created the understanding from one portion, and the knowledge and forbearance from another portion, and the (divine) protection and help from yet other portion, and He placed the fourth portion in the station of modesty as long as Allah wished. Then He looked at it with awe-inspiring eye, and that Light started perspiring, and one hundred and twenty-four thousand drops dropped from it; and Allah created from each drop the soul of a prophet and apostle. Then the souls of the prophets began breathing, and Allah created from their breasts the souls of (His) friends and the martyrs and the good ones.'"

The author says: There are numerous traditions of the same type; and on deep pondering they support what we have written earlier; some of them will be discussed later on. You should not reject such tradition outright, thinking that they were forged by the Sufis. The wonders of the creation are unfathomable; the scientists and the philosophers have spent, and are spending, their lives in discovering some of its secrets; but every solved enigma brings in its wake a lot of fresh previously unthought of enigmas. Do not forget that this is the unfathomability of this physical world - the smallest in range, the narrowest in scope, the lowest in rank. How can we pass judgement about other worlds beyond this one - the worlds of light, spaciousness and abundance?

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1. at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi
2. at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.
3. Ma'ani''l-akhbar.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verse 34

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلائِكَةِ اسْجُدُواْ لآدَمَ فَسَجَدُواْ إِلاَّ إِبْلِيسَ أَبَى وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ

And when We said to the angels: "Prostrate before Adam", then all prostrated except Iblis. He refused and he showed arrogance and he was one of the unbelievers (***2:34***).

General Comment

It has been explained earlier that the preceding words, "and what you were hiding", show that there was a hidden thing that had, meanwhile, come into open. The last sentence of this verse too leads to the

same conclusion. Instead of saying, “He refused and he showed arrogance, and he disbelieved”, it says, “...he was one of the unbelievers”. It was not that he became an unbeliever at that moment; he was an unbeliever long since, but had kept it a secret, and this event brought it into open. Also, it was mentioned that the event of the prostration of the angels must have happened between the divine words, “Surely, I know what you do not know”, and the words, “...I know what you manifest and what you were hiding”.

It may be asked: Why then has Allah put this verse after those words? Probably it has been done just to create a link between the stories of creation of Adam and his being placed in the Paradise. The twelve verses (28–39) were revealed to describe how and when man was made vicegerent of Allah, how was he sent down to the earth, and what is to happen to him in this life – the happenings that will have a bearing on his lasting happiness or unhappiness. For this theme, the event of prostration has not much importance – except as a connecting link. That is why it has been mentioned here only briefly without going into details. Perhaps, it is because of the same reason that the Qur’an has changed the pronouns referring to Allah from the third person (***your Lord said***) to the first (***And when We said***).

The angels had not hidden anything from Allah; it was Iblis who had done so. Then why did Allah ascribe this deed to all of them (***you were hiding***)? Allah in this talk used the same method which even the human beings have adopted for their own speeches; we ascribe the work of an individual to the whole group, if the doer is not properly identified or if he tries to remain anonymous. Also, there may be another explanation for it. Apparently the first announcement, “I am going to make in the earth a vice-gerent”, had shown that the said vicegerent would have authority over the angels too. It may be inferred from the command obliging them to prostrate before Adam. Probably on hearing that first announcement some disturbing thought had come into their minds, as it had never occurred to them that any earthly creature could be given authority over everything including themselves. Some traditions too point to it. In this context the words, “what you were hiding”, could easily be addressed to the angels.

Commentary

Qur’an: ***“Prostrate before Adam”*** (***2:34***).

Apparently, it shows that prostration, *per se,* may be done before other than Allah, if it is done in conformity with Allah’s command, as a mark of respect to that person. A similar case is found in the story of Yusuf (‘a):

And he raised his parents upon the throne and they (**all**) ***fell down in prostration before him, and he said: “O my father! this is the interpretation of my vision of old; my Lord has indeed made it to be true”*** (***12: 100***).

This topic needs some clarification.

It was explained in the chapter of The Opening what the worship means. The worshipper places himself

in the position of servitude and performs what manifests this status, what clearly shows that he accepts the mastership of his master. Those acts must be such as to show the master's mastership or the servant's servitude; for example, prostrating before the master, bowing down to him, standing before him when he sits, walking behind him when he walks etc. The more apt an action is to show this status, the more reserved it becomes to the rites of the divine worship. Prostration is the most significant symbol of the master's status and the servant's low rank, because the man in this act falls down and puts his forehead on the ground. For this reason, it has the strongest connection with the divine worship.

However, prostration is not the same thing as worship. They have two different meanings, and worship is not a quidditative substance of prostration. A quidditative characteristic can never be separated from any being. But prostration may be done without any thought of reverence or worship – for example, just to make fun of someone. Keeping this in view, it may safely be said that although the connection of prostration with divine worship is the strongest, that worship is not its quiddity.

Therefore, prostration, *per se*, cannot be exclusively reserved for Allah. If there is any impediment or obstruction, it should emanate from the *Shari'ah* or the reason. What the *Shari'ah* and the reason forbid is ascribing the prerogatives of the lordship to anyone other than Allah. But they do not forbid honouring someone or according him respect when it is done without elevating him to godhead.

The discourse given above was from purely academic point of view. But the religious good taste, conditioned as it is by rituals of worship, has strictly reserved the prostration for divine worship; it should not be done for anyone other than Allah; in Islam, one is forbidden to prostrate before others even as a mark of respect.

Apart from prostration, there is no proof – either from the Qur'an and tradition or from reason and logic – against according respect and showing reverence to others than Allah, especially when it is done as a part of the love of Allah; examples may be given of revering and loving the good servants of Allah and paying respects to the graves of the friends of Allah or to the things attributed to them. There is no reason whatsoever why such actions should be prohibited. (We shall deal with this subject in a more appropriate place, God willing.)

Traditions

Abu 'Abdillah ('a) said: "When Allah created Adam and ordered the angels to prostrate before him, it came into the angels' mind: 'We never thought that Allah had created any creature more honourable than us; we are His neighbours, and we are the nearest of His creation to Him.' Thereupon Allah said: 'Did I not say to you that I know what you manifest and what you were hiding?' – (it was) a reference to what they had mentioned concerning the affairs of the *jinn,* and had concealed what was in their own minds. So, the angels, who had said what they had said, took refuge with the Throne."[1]

Another tradition of the same theme is narrated in the same book from 'Ali Ibn al-Husayn ('a), the last

part of which runs as follows: “When the angels realized that they had fallen into error, they took refuge with the Throne; and it was a group of the angels – and they were those who were around the Throne; it was not all the angels (who had thought so)... So, they have taken refuge with the Throne till the Day of Resurrection.”

The author says: The theme of the two traditions may be inferred from the talk of the angels: “We celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness”; and “Glory be to Thee! We have no knowledge but that which Thou hast taught us; surely, Thou, Thou (alone), art the Knowing, the Wise.”

It will be explained later that the Throne means the divine knowledge, as the traditions narrated from the Imams of **Ahl Al-Bayt** (‘a) say. (Therefore, the angels’ taking refuge with the Throne would refer to their confession that they knew only that which Allah had taught them and that only Allah was the Knowing, the Wise.)

According to some Tradition, the word “the unbelievers”, (in the clause, “and he was one of the unbelievers”) refers to the species, *jinn,* to which Iblis belonged, and which was created before man. Allah says:

And certainly We created man of clay that gives forth sound, of black mud fashioned into shape (15:26).

And the jinn We created before of intensely hot fire (15:27).

According to the above-mentioned traditions, the attribution of hiding to the angels (*what you were hiding*) needs no explanation; the clause means exactly what it says; the angels had actually hidden in their hearts the idea of their supremacy.

A third, group of traditions says that the said clause refers to Iblis and his hidden thought that he would not make obeisance to Adam and would not prostrate before him if asked to do so.

There is no contradiction between these various explanations, because all the meanings may be inferred from the Qur’anic verses. They are all true and based on fact. Various traditions throw light on various facets of the same fact.

Abu Basir said: “I said to Abu ‘Abdillah (‘a): ‘Did the angels prostrate and put their foreheads on the earth?’ He said: ‘Yes, as an honour (bestowed on him) by Allah.’“[2]

The Imam said: “Verily the prostration of the angels before Adam was in obedience to Allah and for their love of Adam.”[3]

Musa Ibn Ja’far (peace be on them both) narrates through his forefathers that a Jew asked Amir al-Mu’minin ‘Ali (‘a) about the miracles of the Prophet in comparison with the miracles of (other) prophets (in course of which) he said: “This is Adam before whom Allah ordered His angels to prostrate.” “Did He

do anything like it for Muhammad?" 'Ali ('a) said: "It was so. But Allah ordered His angels to prostrate before Adam; yet their prostration was not a prostration of worship; (it was not) that they had worshipped Adam against Allah, Mighty and Great is He! It was rather as an acknowledgement of Adam's superiority and a mercy of Allah towards him. And Muhammad (S) was given what was better than that. Verily Allah, Great and High is He!, blessed him in His omnipotence, and the angels, all of them, prayed for him, and the believers were obliged to pray for him. So this is the increase, O Jew! "[4]

Allah created Adam, and he remained for forty years in (that) shape (i.e. a statue without life). And Iblis, the cursed, used to pass by him and say: "Why have you been created?" al- 'Alim (i.e. al-Kazim ('a)) said: "Then Iblis said: 'If Allah ordered me to prostrate before this, I would certainly disobey Him. '...Then Allah said to the angels, 'Prostrate before Adam'; all of them prostrated; but Iblis showed the envy that was in his heart and he refused to prostrate."[5]

Biharu al-anwar narrates, quoting from *Qisasu al-anbiya',* as-Sadiq ('a) that he said: "Iblis was ordered to prostrate before Adam, and he said: 'O my Lord! By Thy honour! If Thou excusest me from prostrating before Adam, I would certainly worship Thee a worship no one would ever have worshipped Thee in a like manner.' Allah, Great is His glory! said: 'I like to be worshipped according to My own pleasure.'"

The Imam also said: "Verily Iblis cried aloud four times: First, on the day he was cursed, and the day he was dropped down to the earth, and the day Muhammad (S) was sent (as prophet) after a (long) interval of the apostles, and when the source of the Book was sent down. And he snorted (in satisfaction) twice: when Adam ate from the tree and when he (Adam) was sent down from the Garden."

And he said about the words of Allah:

***So their nakedness appeared unto them* (*20:121*).**

"Their nakedness was not seen before, then it was uncovered."

Also he said: "The tree from which Adam was forbidden (to eat) was the spikenard."

The author says: The traditions - and there are many - support what we have written about prostration.

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1. at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.
2. Qisasu al-anbiya, ar-Rawandi.
3. Tuhaf al-'uqul.
4. al-Ihtijaj.
5. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 35-39

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلاَ مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلاَ تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

And We said: "O Adam! dwell you and your wife in the Garden and eat **(you both)** ***from it*** **(freely)** ***a plenteous*** **(food)** ***wherever you*** **(two)** ***wish and do not approach*** **(you two)** ***this tree, for then you*** **(two)** ***will be of the unjust"*** **(*2:35*).**

فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُواْ بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَى حِينٍ

But the Satan made them both slip from it and drove them out of what they were in; and We said: "Get down, some of you being the enemies of others; and there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time" **(*2:36*).**

فَتَلَقَّى آدَمُ مِن رَّبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

Then Adam received **(some)** ***words from his Lord, so He returned to him mercifully; surely, He is Oft-returning*** **(to mercy)*****, the Merciful*** **(*2:37*).**

قُلْنَا اهْبِطُواْ مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُم مِّنِّي هُدًى فَمَن تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

We said: "Get down you there-from all together; and if there comes to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve **(*2:38*).**

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَكَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا أُوْلَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

And **(as to)** ***those who disbelieve in, and belie, Our signs, they are the inmates of the fire, in it they shall abide"*** **(*2:39*).**

Commentary

Verse 35

Qur'an: ***And We said: "O Adam! Dwell you and your wife…"*** **(*2:35*).**

Although the story of the angels' prostration before Adam has been repeated several times in the Qur'an, that of his placement in the Garden has been given in three places only:

First: The verses given above, from Chapter 2 (the Cow).

Second: In Chapter 7 (the Elevated Places):

And (We said): "O Adam! dwell you and your wife in the Garden; so eat from where you desire, but do not go near this tree, for then you will be of the unjust" (7:19).

But the Satan whispered an evil suggestion to them that he might make manifest to them what was hidden from them of their nakedness, and he said: "Your Lord has not forbidden you from this tree except that you may not both become two angels or that you may (not) become of the immortals" (7:20).

And he swore to them both: "Most surely, I am a sincere adviser to you" (7:21).

Then he caused them to fall by deceit; so when they tasted of the tree, their nakedness became manifest to them, and they both began to cover themselves with the leaves of the Garden; and their Lord called out to them: "Did I not forbid you both from that tree and say to you that the Satan is your open enemy?" (7:22).

They said: "Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves, and if Thou forgive us not, and have (not) mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers" (7:23).

He said: "Get down, some of you being the enemies of others, and there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time" (7:24).

He (also) said: "Therein shall you live, and therein shall you die, and from it shall you be raised" (7:25).

Third: In Chapter 20 (Ta–Ha):

And certainly We had covenanted unto Adam before, but he forgot; and We did not find in him any determination (20:115).

And when We said to the angels: "Prostrate before Adam", they did prostrate, but Iblis (did it not); he refused (20:116).

So We said: "O Adam! surely, this is an enemy to you and to your wife; therefore let him not drive you both forth from the Garden so that you should be put to toil (20:117).

Surely, it is (ordained) for you that you shall not be hungry therein nor bare of clothing (20:118).

And that you shall not be thirsty therein nor shall you feel the heat of the sun" (***20:119***).

But the Satan whispered an evil suggestion to him; he said: "O Adam! shall I guide you to the tree of immortality and a kingdom which decays not?" (***20:120***).

Then they both ate of it, so their nakedness appeared unto them, and they both began to cover themselves with leaves of the Garden, and Adam disobeyed his Lord, so he got astray (***20:121***).

Then his Lord chose him, so He turned to him and guided (***him***) (***20:122***).

He said: "Get down you two therefrom, all (***of you***)***, one of you*** (***is***) ***enemy to another. So if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy*** (***20:123***).

And whoever turns away from My remembrance, his shall surely, be a straitened life, and We will raise him, on the Day of Resurrection, blind" (***20:124***).

He shall say: "My Lord! why hast Thou raised me blind, and I was a seeing one indeed?" (***20:125***).

He will say: "Even so: Our signs came to you, but you forgot them; even thus shall you be forsaken this day" (***20:126***).

And thus do We recompense him who is extravagant and does not believe in the signs of his Lord; and certainly the chastisement of the hereafter is severer and more lasting" (***20:127***).

The context, and particularly the opening words of the story, ***"Verily I am going to make in the earth a vicegerent"*** (***2:30***)***,*** clearly show that it was for the earth that Adam was created; it was the original plan that he should live and die in the earth. Allah had temporarily placed the couple in the Garden to test them in order that their nakedness might be uncovered to them. Also the context in all three places shows that the order to the angels to prostrate before Adam, and then to Adam to stay in the Garden is a single, continuous, story.

It all shows that Adam (ʻa) was created specifically for the earth, and the way to send him down was through the Garden as mentioned in the Qur'an: It was shown that he was superior to the angels and, therefore, more qualified for the vicegerency of Allah; then they were told to prostrate before him, in acknowledgement of his superiority; then he was placed in the Garden but forbidden to go near a particular tree; so that on eating from it they should become aware of their nakedness and then be sent down to the earth. It means that the last link in this chain was their becoming aware of their private parts – it was this factor which irrevocably showed that they were fit for this earth, ready for this life. "*as-Saw'ah*", (السَّوأة) literally means shame, disgrace, private part of the body. In this story it has been used in the last meaning, as may be seen from the words, "and they both began to cover themselves with leaves of the Garden". That is why we have translated it as "nakedness".)

However, their awareness of their pudenda proved that in addition to their spiritual qualities, they had also animal instincts and desires ingrained in them. It naturally made them dependent on nutrition and growth. Iblis wanted them to become aware of their nakedness. Adam and his wife were given earthly, human existence and were at once placed in the Garden without any delay; they were not given time to perceive and understand their nakedness or its concomitants; they had not yet comprehended the life of this earth and its necessities.

When they were sent to the Garden their connection with the spiritual world, including the angels, was strong; their link with it was not weakened. It should be noted that Allah has said, "what was hidden from them"; He has not said, "what had been hidden from them"; it may be inferred from the expression used that their nakedness could not remain hidden for ever in this life; it was hidden for only a short period when they were placed in the Garden. The uncovering of their nakedness with all its concomitants was a predetermined fact and it depended upon their eating from that tree. That is why Allah had told them: "therefore let him not drive you both forth from the Garden so that you should be put to toil"; thereafter, the Satan "drove them out of what they were in".

It should not be overlooked that even when Allah pardoned them after their repentance, He did not return them to the Garden – they were sent down to the earth to live therein. If their eating of the tree, the uncovering of their private parts and the life of this world were not a confirmed divine plan, an irrevocable predetermined decree, they would have been returned to their place in the Garden as soon as they were forgiven their mistake. In short, it was the divine plan that they should spend sometime in the Garden to get them prepared for the life in this world; and their removal from the Garden, according to the causal relation decreed by Allah, depended on their eating from the tree and becoming aware of their nakedness, and it happened because they listened to the whispering of the Satan.

Allah says: ***"And certainly We had covenanted unto Adam before, but he forgot"*** (***20: 115***). Which covenant does this verse allude to? Does it refer to the admonition, "and do not approach (you two) this tree, for then you (two) will be of the unjust"? Or to the warning, "surely, this (i.e., the Satan) is an enemy to you and to your wife"? Or does it refer to the general covenant made with all human beings in general and with the prophets in particular?

The first possibility is out of question altogether. Allah says: "But the Satan whispered an evil suggestion to them ...And he said: 'Your Lord has not forbidden you from this tree except that you may not become two angels or that you may (not) become of the immortals...'" Obviously, when Adam and his wife committed the error and tasted of the tree they were aware of the prohibition – even the evil suggestion of the Satan had begun with a reference to it. And Allah says in this verse that "We had covenanted unto Adam before, but he forgot; and We did not find in him any determination." It, therefore, could not refer to that prohibition, because Adam had not forgotten it at all.

The second suggestion – that the covenant might refer to the warning against the Satan – is not so wide of mark; still it is not supported by apparent meaning of the verses. The said warning was given to both

Adam and his wife, while this verse refers to a covenant made especially with Adam.

It leaves us with the last alternative that the covenant means the general covenant which was made with the whole mankind and more particularly with the prophets. This verse (about the covenant with Adam and his forgetting it) occurs at the beginning of the story in the chapter of Ta-Ha; and the story concludes with the words, "So if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy. And whoever turns away from My remembrance, his shall surely, be a straitened life, and We will raise him, on the Day of Resurrection, blind. He shall say: 'My Lord! why hast Thou raised me blind, and I was a seeing one indeed?' He will say: 'Even so: Our signs came to you, but you forgot them; even thus shall you be forsaken (literally: forgotten) today.'"

These concluding verses perfectly fit that opening one. To turn away from the remembrance of Allah is not different from forgetting the covenant of Allah. Add to it the use of the same verb (*you forgot them*) in the next verse. All these references are perfectly compatible with the covenant made with the souls of the human beings about the Mastership of Allah and their own servitude. That covenant obliged the man that he should never forget that Allah is his Lord, the Ruler and Master of his affairs; nor should he lose sight of the fact that he is a wholly owned slave of Allah; that he has no authority whatsoever over his benefit or harm; nor does he have any control over his life, death or resurrection; in short he owns neither his person, his characteristics nor his actions.

The error that stands opposite to this remembrance is forgetfulness - man forgets his Lord and His All-encompassing Mastership; he becomes engrossed in his own self, getting bogged down more and more in the mire of this world's attractions.

Look at this world's life, with all its diversity; and see how it spreads its tentacles in all directions. Note how it is shared by the believer and the unbeliever both. And then find out how the two groups respond to its joy and sorrow. How different is their respective attitude towards this life's success and failure, happiness and unhappiness, content and discontent, relief and suffering. These factors affect the two groups - the believers and the unbelievers - in entirely different ways. The believer has the knowledge of Allah and the unbeliever lacks this knowledge. And it causes all the differences in their respective behaviour. Every man looks at this world; a world that is submerged in all types of misfortunes and disasters: a life followed by death, a health ruined by disease, a prosperity eaten away by poverty, a comfort destroyed by discomfort, a gain nullified by loss - this is, in a nutshell, the life of this world. The believer knows that everything and every affair belongs to Allah; nothing is independent of God, the Lord.

Every thing and every affair emanates from Him; and all that originates from Him is good and beautiful; nothing but beauty and splendour, goodness and excellence, can come from Him. And because all things and all affairs issue forth from his Lord and Master, he thinks that all is elegant and fine; he dislikes nothing and fears nothing; everything in his eyes is likeable, except that which his Master tells him to dislike. He subjugates his likes and dislikes to those of his Master. In short, all his attention is

fixed to the pleasure of his Master. He knows that everything is the sole property of God; none else has any share in anything. That being the case, why should he worry how the Master manages His own property? He does not think that he is competent to meddle in the affairs of his Lord. This submission to Allah creates a perfect tranquillity, a truly happy life, untarnished by unhappiness; a light without darkness, a joy without sorrow, a benefit without harm, and a riches without want. It all happens because he believes in Allah and in His mastership.

On the other hand, is the unbeliever who does not know Allah. By cutting himself off from the one and only Master, he has to bow his head before every creature. He believes that everything is independent in its actions – that it has a power of its own to benefit or to harm, to do good or evil. Consequently, he remains in constant fear of everything; he is ever apprehensive of every real or imagined danger. He is always grieving for want has befallen him, longing for the opportunities he has missed. He feels nostalgia for the prestige or wealth that is gone; breaks his heart for the children, relatives or friends who have left him. He is inextricably trapped by the attractions of the world; he relies on them and has trust in them; and when any thing goes wrong, he sinks into despair. Then as soon as he makes a virtue of necessity and is resigned to that misfortunate, a new calamity overwhelms him. In this way, he is always driven from pillar to post, with a heavy heart and a gloomy countenance; "thus does Allah lay uncleanliness on those who do not believe".

It can be seen, in the light of the above discourse, that forgetting the covenant and unhappiness of this world's life, both are interrelated – the later springs from the former. This fact becomes clearer if we compare the wordings of the verses 20:123–124 with those used in the verse under discussion. The former says:

So if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy (***20:123***).

And whoever turns away from My remembrance, his shall surely, be a straitened life, and We will raise him, on the Day of Resurrection, blind (***20:124***).

And the same idea has been expressed in this verse in the following words:

…***Then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve*** (***2:38***).

It may be inferred from these verses that the forbidden tree was of such a nature that if one ate from it he would certainly be entangled in the troubles and misfortunes of this life – he would spend his life in this world, heedless of his own place, forgetting his Lord. Probably Adam ('a) wanted to combine the fruit of that tree with the covenant that he had entered into with his Lord. But he could not succeed; the fruit had its effect, he forgot the covenant and fell into the troubles and toils of this world. Then he was saved when he repented before Allah and Allah turned to him with mercy.

Qur'an: ***And eat*** (**you two**) ***from it*** (**freely**) ***a plenteous*** (**food**) (***2:35***).

"ar-Raghad" (الرّغَد) literally means happiness, well-being, good life and affluence *arghada al-qawmu mawashiyahum* (أرغَدَ القومُ مواشيهم) means, "the people left their cattle to graze wherever it liked. *"Qawmun raghad"* (قومٌ رَغَد) and *"nisa'un raghad"* (نِساءٌ رَغَدٌ) means people (or women) having a life of plenty and opulence.

Qur'an: ***and do not approach*** **(you two)** ***this tree*** **(*2:35*).**

The context shows that actual prohibition was of eating from it; but they were told not even to approach it; the prohibition was couched in these terms for emphasis. What was really forbidden is seen from the verse:

So when they tasted of the tree, their nakedness became manifest to them **(*7:22*).**

And:

...*They both ate of it, so their nakedness appeared unto them* **(*20:121*).**

Qur'an: ***for then you*** **(two)** ***will be of the unjust*** **(*2:35*).**

"az-Zalimin" (الظالمين) is the *nomen agentis* of *az-zulm* (الظُّلم = injustice, to do wrong). It is not from *az-zulmah* (darkness), as has been suggested by someone. Adam and his wife acknowledged their wrong-doing, and the Qur'an quotes them as saying:

"Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves, and if Thou forgive us not, and have **(not)** ***mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers"*** **(*7:23*).**

This clause has been changed in Chapter 20 to "so that you should be put to toil"; and the toil has further been explained in these words:

Surely, it is **(*ordained*)** ***for you that you shall not be hungry therein nor bare of clothing*** **(*20:118*).**

And that you shall not be thirsty therein nor shall you feel the heat of the sun" **(*20:119*).**

Clearly, the injustice and wrong-doing, mentioned in the verse 2:25, was to bring in its wake the toil of this world - hunger, thirst, nakedness and other discomforts. The injustice or wrong that they had done was against their own selves; it was neither a sin (as this term is used in the *Shari'ah*) nor an injustice against Allah. It shows that the prohibition was in the nature of an advice pointing out to them what was good for their own comfort; it did not have the force of an ordained law. Adam and his wife did wrong to themselves, because their disregard to that divine advice caused their removal from the Garden.

When a man commits a sin (i.e. an offence, from the *Shari'ah* point of view), he is given a punishment. Then if he repents and his repentance is accepted, the punishment is completely waived off, and he is returned to his previous position as though he had not committed the sin at all. If Adam and his wife were guilty of such a sin, they should have been returned to their place in the Garden soon after their

repentance was accepted. But it was not done. It clearly shows that the prohibition did not have the force of an ordained law; it was only an advice. Even so, neglecting it had its natural effect on both of them and they had to come out of the Garden. But this removal from the Garden was not a punishment for any sin or crime; it was the natural consequence of the wrong they had done against their own selves. (We shall write again on this subject, God willing.)

Verse 36

Qur'an: ***But the Satan made them both slip from it*** **(*2:36*).**

The Satan could have misled them by creating evil thoughts in their hearts, in the same way as he misleads other human beings. But many verses, in the three narratives quoted at the beginning of this commentary, show that the Satan had appeared before Adam and his wife, and had talked to them face to face:

So We said: "O Adam! surely, this is an enemy to you and to your wife" **(*20:117*).**

Allah had pointed out the Satan to Adam, not by any verbal description but by showing to him the person of the said enemy. (Note the demonstrative pronoun, "this is".)

(The Satan) ***said: "O Adam! Shall I guide you to the tree of immortality…"*** **(*20:120*).**

The speaker, that is, the Satan, must have talked to Adam face to face.

And he **(i.e. the Satan)** ***swore to them both: "Most*** **surely,** ***I am a sincere adviser to you"*** **(*7:21*).**

Obviously, he was visible to Adam and his wife and swore during his talk with them.

…And their Lord called out to them: "Did I not forbid you both from that tree and say to you that the Satan is your open enemy?" **(*7:22*).**

It indicates that the Satan was visible to Adam and his wife. If the Satan had misled them by creating evil thoughts into their minds without appearing before them, they could have said to Allah that they were not aware that that thought was put into their minds by the Satan; that they mistook it to be their own thought because the Satan had not appeared before them.

They used to see and recognize the Satan. Likewise, other prophets – all of them covered by Allah's protection – used to see and recognize him if and when he came to them. Many traditions mention such encounters in the stories of Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa, Yahya, Ayyub, Isma'il and Muhammad (may Allah bless him and his progeny as well as the prophets). The above-quoted verses as well as the verse:

And he said: "Your Lord has not forbidden from this tree except that…" **(*7:20*).**

also show that the Satan had visited then near that tree in the Garden. He entered the Garden, talked to

them and put evil suggestion before them. He was able to do so because the Garden was not the Garden of eternal abode. The Qur'an also says that Adam, his wife and the Satan all were removed from the Garden together. (Of course, Allah had said to the Satan:

"Then get down from this, for it does not befit you to behave proudly therein" (***7:13***).

But the pronouns "this" and "therein" may refer to the angels or to the heaven. It may mean: Get down from the company of the angels; or, get down from the heaven as it is a place of honour.)

Qur'an: ***And We said: "Get down, some of you being the enemies of others…"*** (***2:36***).

The second person pronouns, used in this verse, are plural, which denote at least three persons. Clearly, it was addressed to Adam, his wife and the Satan. The Satan was turned out of the heaven and/or the company of the angels before (as described above). This verse combines in itself that previous order too; and manifests the firm decree of Allah establishing enmity between Iblis on one side and Adam and his wife and their descendants on the other. It also promulgates another decree that they shall live in the earth, die therein, and be raised again from it.

It may safely be said that the whole human race (Adam together with his descendants) is covered by the last-mentioned decree:

Therein shall you live, and therein shall you die, and from it shall you be raised (***7:25***).

This verse comes at the end of the story (in Chapter 7) which begins with the following words:

And certainly, We created you, then We fashioned you, then We said to the angels: "Prostrate before Adam" … (***7:11***).

In both verses plural pronouns have been used; and it is an indication that the creation and the decree to live and die in the earth includes more than two, that is, other human beings too besides Adam and his wife.

The story of Adam may have been used by Allah to represent the rise, fall and rise again of the whole mankind. Adam was the first representatives of humanity, and his life was a symbol, a miniature, of the human beings' life-span in this world.

The angels were told to prostrate before Adam, because he was the vicegerent of Allah in the earth. It has been mentioned earlier that this vicegerency was bestowed on the whole mankind. The angels prostrated before Adam, as he was the symbol of humanity, the representative of his race.

Adam and his wife were placed in the Garden and then were sent down from there because they had eaten of the forbidden tree. Every man may see his own face in this mirror. His soul, before coming to this world, enjoyed the sublime and lofty existence; his abode was spiritually near to his Lord - a place of

joy and happiness, of splendour and light; in the company of purified companions and spiritual friends, near to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. Then he opted for this transient life, and was at once entangled in the troubles and toils of this world; leaving that purified existence, he was attracted to this tedious and odious life.

Adam at once repented and prayed for the mercy of Allah. In the same way, man may return to Allah and consequently to the eternal abode of honour and bliss. But if he took the wrong turning, did not try to return to Allah, and, in short, followed his base desires, he would change the bounty of Allah into dis-belief and ungratefulness, would direct himself to the place of disgrace - to the hell; and how evil that resting place is!

Verse 37

Qur'an: ***Then Adam received*** **(some)** ***words from his Lord, so He returned to him mercifully*** **(*2:37*).**

"at-Talaqqi" (التَّلَّقي **=** to receive) signifies "to learn". It was this learning of the words that paved the way for the repentance of Adam.

"at-Tawbah" (التوبة) literally means to return; generally it is used for repentance, because when a man repents, he returns to his Lord. This verb is at times ascribed to Allah (as in this verse), and signifies that Allah returns or restores the servant to His grace and mercy. In other words, He accepts the plea of the servant and forgives his sins. At other times it is attributed to the servant; then it signifies the servant's return to Allah, that is, his repentance from his sins.

at-Tawbah (repentance) of man is flanked on both sides by two *tawbahs* (mercies) of Allah. Man can never do without the mercy of Allah. He needs mercy and help of Allah to turn away from sins; only then he may return to Allah, may repent from his sins; then again the mercy of Allah comes forward, and his repentance is accepted. Therefore, an accepted repentance of man issues forth from the mercy of Allah, and also ends on His mercy. The following verse clearly mentions this fact:

Then He returned to them **(mercifully)** ***so that they might return*** **(i.e. might repent) (*9:118*).**

What were the words which Adam received from his Lord? Some people think that it refers to their invocation reported in Chapter 7:

They said: "Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves, and if Thou forgive us not, and have **(not)** ***mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers"*** **(*7:23*).**

But this view is not supported by the sequence of the events. Adam and his wife had addressed that invocation before they were told to get down from the Garden (7:24); and it was after getting that order that he "received some words" from Allah, as is clear from the verse 2:36-37. Therefore, "some words" cannot refer to that previously uttered invocation.

There may, however, be another explanation: When Allah announced to the angels that He was going to make a vicegerent in the earth, they said: “Wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood, while we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness?” Allah did not say that their accusation against the would be vicegerent was wrong; His only answer was that He taught Adam all the names. There must have been something deep, meaningful and relevant in this teaching of the names; otherwise, the angels could not be satisfied, their objection could not be answered. The names taught to Adam must have contained some such thing that would come to the rescue of man if he sinned, would save him from disgrace if he erred. Probably, the words received at the time of repentance were related to the names taught to him in the beginning.

It cannot be denied that Adam (‘a) did wrong to himself by placing himself in this world – a crossroads of happiness and unhappiness; had he been ensnared by it he would have perished; but he chose to return to his original place of spiritual bliss and was saved; he had to undergo, in this process, untold miseries and unbearable hardships. In any case, he put himself in so much trouble that he became “unjust” to himself. The question arises as to why Allah selected this hard way to send him from the Garden to the earth. The fact, however, remains that in this process he attained to such heights of eternal bliss and spiritual perfection as would have been impossible to reach without coming down to the earth – and that too with a stigma of mistake.

The events leading to his removal from the Garden and, later, to the acceptance of his repentance showed to him his true reality – how humble, dependent, deficient and servile he was; and at the same time he came to realize that every difficulty of this world leads to manifold ease in the next life; every unpleasantness here results in enhanced pleasantness there; every trouble in the obedience to Allah brings in its wake the pleasure of Allah and His unlimited reward; the process continues until the servant reaches the sublime presence of his Lord. Adam knew, through his own experience, taste of many of the beautiful attributes of Allah: His forgiveness, turning mercifully to the servants, covering their mistakes, bestowing mercy on them, putting them in the shadow of His compassion and grace – these are some of the divine attributes which He has especially reserved for the sinners. Adam could not know and understand them without passing through the stages which Allah had decreed for him.

This, however, was his repentance; it made ordination of a *Shari’ah* essential. It was necessary for Adam and his descendants to know which path they should take so as to reach their destination, the abode of bliss and happiness. His repentance brought him to the stage where promulgation of religion and ordination of the *Shari’ah* was inevitable.

That is why Allah frequently mentions the repentance before the belief:

Stand fast then **(in the right path)** ***as you are commanded, as also he who has turned*** **(to Allah)** ***with you…*** **(*11:112*).**

And most surely, I am most forgiving to him who repents and believes and does good… **(*20:82*).**

There are many such verses in the Qur'an.

Verse 38

Qur'an: ***We said: "Get down you therefore all together; and if there comes to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve. And*** **(as to)** ***those who disbelieve in, and belie, Our signs, they are the inmates of the fire, in it they shall abide"*** **(*2:38*).**

This is the essence of religion ordained, for the first time, for Adam ('a) and his descendants. Allah has condensed the whole religion in these two sentences; nothing has been added, nor can be added to it up to the Day of Resurrection.

Ponder on this story and particularly the narrative of Chapter 20. You will see that Allah had issued two decrees in respect of Adam and his descendants. When he ate from the tree, it was decreed that he should get down to the earth and spend his life therein – a life of trouble and toil. And when he repented, it was ordained that he and his descendants should be honoured with divine guidance. The first decree initiated the earthly life for him; the second, issued after his repentance, bestowed dignity and grace to that life, by providing it with divine guidance. From then on, man's life is composed of two lives: A material, earthly life and a spiritual, heavenly one. It may be inferred from repetition of the order to "get down" in this narrative:

"Get down, some of you being the enemies of others; and there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time" **(*2:36*).**

"Get down you therefrom all together; and if there comes to you guidance from Me…" **(*2:38*).**

Repentance of Adam (2:37) occurred between these two orders. The sequence shows that Adam had repented before their departing from the Garden, although he had slipped from his earlier position of honour. It may also be, inferred from the change in the styles of the following verses: Allah said to Adam, when placing him in the Garden,

"***Do not go near this tree"*** **(*7:19*).**

But when they ate from it,

Their Lord called out to them: "Did I not forbid you both from that tree…" **(*7:22*).**

Note the demonstrative pronoun, "this", (for a nearer object) in the former speech, and "that" (for a farther one) in the latter. Also contrast the verb, "said", (showing proximity) of the former with "called out" (showing distance) of the latter. All this together supports the above-given explanation that at the time of the second order Adam was still in the Garden but not in his earlier honoured place.

"Get down, some of you being the enemies of others; and there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time" (***2:36*** & ***7:24***).

"Therein shall you live, and therein shall you die, and from it shall you be raised" (***7:25***).

The verses indicate that the life on the earth was very different from that in the Garden. This life is firmly connected with the earth, full of difficulties and hardships. Man, in this life, is created from the earth, then after death is returned into it, and will, on the Day of Resurrection, be raised from it. This life is different from that of the Garden. It follows that Adam had lived a heavenly – and not earthly – life in the Garden.

This observation gives us a certainty that the Garden of Adam was in the heaven, although it was not the Garden of eternal abode from which one is never turned out.

What is meant by "the heaven"? We shall, God willing explain it somewhere else.

Now, we come to the mistake of Adam. The explanation given under various verses throws sufficient light on this subject. But the importance of the topic justifies its recapitulation in a systematic way:

The verses obviously say that he had committed a mistake and disobeyed the divine command: "... for then you (two) will be of the unjust"; "and Adam disobeyed his Lord, so he got astray"; and they too acknowledged their error:

"Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves, and if Thou forgive us not, and have (***not***) ***mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers"*** (***7:23***).

But on meditating on the verses, and particularly on the admonition not to eat of the tree, we come to a definite conclusion that the said prohibition was not in the nature of an authoritative command; it was rather like an advice to guide Adam to his good and comfort. The following proof irresistibly leads us to this conclusion:

First: Allah said in this, as well as in Chapter 7, that eating of the tree would be an injustice, a wrong-doing (***for then you two will be of the unjust***). The same result has been described as "toil" (***so that you should be put to toil***); and the "toil" has been explained in the terms of worldly needs and troubles, because it was ordained "for you that you shall not be hungry therein (i.e., as long as you remained in the Garden) nor bare of clothing; and that you shall not be thirsty therein nor shall you feel the heat of the sun". It seems clear that it was to protect them from these worldly troubles and toils that they were told not to go near that tree.

The prohibition, therefore, was not more than an advice; certainly, it was not an authoritative command. Going against an advice does not entail a sin, does not involve rebellion against the adviser. The injustice, mentioned in this story, therefore, means their doing wrong against their own selves, putting themselves in this world's hardship and toil; but it cannot mean the sin committed by a servant against his master.

Second: When a servant repents, that is, returns to Allah, his Lord, and the Lord accepts that repentance, all the effects of the sin are erased, as though he had not committed any sin at all. If the prohibition against eating from the tree had the force of an authoritative command, an ordained law, Adam and his wife should have been returned to their place in the Garden as soon as their repentance was accepted. But they were not. It decisively proves that the prohibition was of advisory nature like telling someone not to put his hand in a fire; if he does not listen to the advice, his hand would certainly burn, and the subsequent apology would not unburn it, even if the apology was accepted. Likewise, Adam and his wife disregarded the advice, and as a result of eating from the tree, had to go out of the Garden and live in the earth a life of trial and hardship. Their repentance could not take them back to the Garden as their coming to the earth was the natural and inevitable result of that action.

The prohibition, in short, was not a law ordained by the Master – like the announcement that a man who neglects to pray would enter the Fire; or the one who disobeys the rules of the *Shari'ah* would be punished. If it were like such a command, the repentance would have rubbed out the effect of disobedience and they would have been sent back to the Garden straight away.

Third: ***We said: "Get down you therefrom all together; and if there comes to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve. And*** **(as to)** ***those who disbelieve in, and belie, Our signs, they are the inmates of the fire, in it they shall abide"*** **(*2:38*).**

These verses have put in a nutshell all the detailed laws, rules, and regulations sent by Allah for the mankind, through His angels, books and apostles. And it was the first *Shari'ah* which Allah ordained for the world, the world of Adam and his descendants. It was ordained after the second order to "get down" – and the order to "get down" was not a legislative, but a creative, command, resulting from his eating of the tree.

It means that at the time when Adam partook of the tree, no *Shari'ah* was ordained yet, and no law was promulgated. Therefore, whatever Adam did was not a transgression against any law of the *Shari'ah,* nor was there any sin or crime involved in acting against that advice.

Question: The order to the angels and Iblis to prostrate before Adam was an authoritative command, and it was given before the order to Adam not to go near that tree. Therefore, it is difficult to believe that at that time there was no obligatory law.

Reply: We are talking about Adam and his descendants, and not about the angels and Iblis. It is irrelevant whether the angels and Iblis were given a compulsory order before Adam was placed in the Garden.

Question: If the prohibition were of an advisory nature, Allah would not have described its disregard in the terms of "injustice", "disobedience", and "going astray".

Reply: We have already explained that the "injustice" done by Adam and his wife was against their own selves; it was not a sin against Allah.

"al-'Isyan" (العِصيان = disobedience) literally means to resist, or to yield with difficulty. The Arabs say: I broke it and it was broken; I broke it *fa-'asa* (فعَصى =) but it resisted, or yielded to my pressure with difficulty. Not heeding an order is called *al-'isyan,* because one does not yield to that enjoinment or prohibition. This resistance may occur against an advice as much as against a compulsory order. The word in itself does not imply sinning; it all depends on the nature of the order that was disregarded.

Of course, nowadays we, the Muslims, use this word as synonymous to sinning. And now it has become a terminology of the *Shari'ah* (or of the Muslims), used for disobedience to an authoritative command. But this later transformance cannot affect its original or literal meaning for which it was used in the Qur'an.

"al-Ghawayah" (الغَوايَة = to go astray) literally means inability of a man to look after his interests; not managing one's affairs properly. This word by itself does not indicate committing a sin or crime. It is the context that determines its value. Its emphasis changes depending on whether the neglected order was an advice or an authoritative command.

Question: Then why did they repent? Why did they say, "and if Thou forgive us not, and have (not) mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers?"

Reply: *at-Tawbah* (repentance) means to turn to. And the word can be used in various meanings, depending on context.

A servant rebels against his master, and thereafter returns to him and asks for his forgiveness; the master, if he so wishes, pardons him, and gives him his previous rank and position.

A doctor tells a patient not to eat certain fruits, lest his illness be prolonged or the disease be complicated. The patient disregards the prohibition and, as a result, puts his life in danger. Now he feels embarrassed and repents before the doctor, asking for his forgiveness, begging him to prescribe for him a medicine to enable him to regain his health and vigour. The doctor may tell him that now it will be necessary for him to undergo a long and difficult treatment, adding that if he persevered in the prescribed regimen his health would be much better than before.

The significance of the other words used in the narrative, like forgiveness, mercy and loss, may likewise change with the context.

Traditions

Al-Qummi ('Ali) narrates, in his *at-Tafsir,* from his father (Ibrahim Ibn Hashim) who narrates, from as-Sadiq ('a) (omitting the chain of intervening narrators, although it was fully described by his Shaykh). He

said: “as-Sadiq (‘a) was asked about the Garden of Adam whether it was a garden of this world or one of the hereafter’s. He (‘a) said: ‘It was a garden of this world, wherein the sun and the moon rose. Had it been a Garden of the hereafter, he would have not come out of it.’ He (‘a) further said: ‘Allah placed him in the Garden and allowed him its freedom with exception of the tree. (It was done) because here was a creature of Allah who could not survive without (some) enjoinment and prohibition, nor (could it continue) without food, cloth, shelter and marriage; nor could he know, without divine help, what was beneficial to him from what was harmful. Then came to him Iblis and told him: “If you (two) ate from this tree, which Allah has forbidden you, you (two) would become two angels and would abide in the Garden for ever; and if you (two) did not eat from it, Allah would turn you out from the Garden;” and he swore to them that he was a sincere adviser to them; as Allah quotes his words:

***Your Lord has not forbidden you from this tree except that you may not both become two angels or that you may* (not) *become of the immortals* (*7:19*).**

***And he swore to them both: “Most surely, I am a sincere adviser to you* (*7:20*).**

Adam believed in his words, and they (i.e. Adam and his wife) ate from the tree; and they became as Allah says: ***their nakedness became manifest to them;*** what Allah had clothed them with of the (attires of the) Garden dropped away from them, and they both began to cover themselves with the leaves of the Garden; and their Lord called out to them:

***Did I not forbid you both from that tree and say to you that the Satan is your open enemy?* (*7:22*).**

They said, as Allah quotes them:

***“Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves; and if Thou forgive us not, and have* (not) *mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers”* (*7:23*).**

Thereupon Allah said to them:

***“Get down, some of you being the enemies of others; and there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time”’* (*7:24*).**

He (the Imam) said: “that (time) is the Day of Resurrection”. He further said: “Then Adam descended on the (hill of) as-Safa – and it got this name because *Safiyu ‘llah* (صَفِيُّ الله = the sincere friend of Allah, i.e. Adam) came down on it; and Hawwa’ (Eve) descended on the (hill of) al-Marwah – and it was named al-Marwah because *al-mar’ah* (المرءة) the woman descended on it. The Adam remained in prostration for forty days, weeping for the Garden. So Jibril (Gabriel) came to him and said: ‘Did Allah not create you with His hand, and (did He not) breath into you from His spirit, and (did He not) made His angels prostrate before you?’ He said: ‘Certainly.’ (Then Jibri1 said:) ‘and He ordered you not to eat from the tree and you disobeyed Him?’ Adam said: ‘Iblis swore to me falsely.’”

The author says: There are other traditions too from Ahl Al-Bayt (‘a) to the effect that the Garden of

Adam was of this world; although some of them are from the same Ibrahim Ibn Hashim.

The phrase, "a garden of this world", has been used in contrast to the Garden of everlasting abode. It indicates a state between this world and the hereafter. Adam's garden was not the Garden of everlasting abode, but neither was it a garden like is the state, place and time that of ours *al-Barzakh* (البَرزَخ) between one's death and the Day of Resurrection. The said Garden may be called a Garden of al-Barzakh, and it may well have been situated in this world. The sentences, "Adam descended on the (hill of) as-Safa", and "Hawwa' descended on the (hill of) al-Marwah", indicate that, before it, they were somewhere above this world. The interpretation of "a time" with the "Day of Resurrection" is also revealing. Man remains in al-Barzakh after his death, and at the same time he remains in the earth. Many Qur'anic verses use these expressions interchangeably.

For example:

***He will say: "How many years did you tarry in the earth?"* (*23:112*).**

***They will say: "We tarried a day or part of a day", but ask those who keep account* (*23:113*).**

***He will say: "You did tarry but a little - had you but known* (it)" (*23:114*).**

***And at the time when the Hour shall come, the guilty shall swear* (that) *they did not tarry but an hour; thus they used to utter lies* (*30:55*).**

***And those who are given knowledge and faith will say: "Certainly you tarried according to the decree of Allah till the Day of Resurrection, but you did not know"* (*30:56*).**

Apart from that, many traditions of **Ahl Al-Bayt** ('a) show that the Garden of Adam was in the heaven, and that he and his wife descended from the heaven. For the one who is familiar with the language of traditions, it is not difficult to believe that the said Garden was in the heaven and that they had descended from the heaven to the earth, even if they were created in the earth itself and live therein all along. These expressions are not any different from those which say that the Garden is in the heaven, and yet say that the grave is an orchard from the orchards of the Garden or a pit from the pits of the Fire. Many similar expressions are found in the traditions. Any lingering doubt will be removed when we shall write about the heaven, God willing.

There is no mention in the correct and reliable traditions as to how Iblis found his way to Adam and his wife, or as to what means he adopted for this purpose. Some traditions mention the serpent and peacock as the two helpers of Iblis in his endeavour to mislead Adam and his wife; but they are extremely unreliable. Obviously, such traditions were interpolated under the influence of Judaism. This story has been taken from the Jews, and to make this point clear, we are quoting it from the Bible (King James version). The story is given in the book of Genesis:

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;

and man became a living soul. And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone.

And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth towards the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely, die. And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature that was the name thereof.

And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said: This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God has made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely, die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof

I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of the life; And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it, bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." (Genesis, Ch. 2: vs. 7 to Ch. 3: vs. 24)

Compare the narrative of the Qur'an with that of the Bible, then ponder on various traditions narrated in the Shi'ah or Sunni books; you will come to know many revealing differences. But we are not going into it because it is beyond the scope of this book.

Question: How could Iblis enter the Garden and mislead Adam therein? The question arises because:

i) the Garden is a place of cleanliness and purity,

***Wherein there shall be nothing vain nor any sin* (*52:23*).**

ii) The garden is in the heaven, and Iblis was already turned out therefrom when he refused to prostrate before Adam.

***Then get out of it, for surely, you are driven away* (*15:34*).**

***Then get down from this, for it does not befit you to behave proudly therein* (*7:13*).**

Reply: (i) The Qur'an disallows vain and sinful acts in the Garden of eternal abode (in which the believers shall be placed after resurrection) and the Garden of al-Barzakh wherein they are placed after death. But it is silent about the Garden of Adam, in which he was placed together with his wife before

man was sent to this world and given any authoritative law. Rather, it may be said that it shows not only possibility of disobedience therein, but also its occurrence.

Proof: This very disobedience of Adam and his wife.

Moreover, vanity and sin are relative terms; and they do not occur until man comes into this world, and is given some authoritative laws to follow.

(ii) The argument may be replied as follows:

a. It cannot be definitely said that the clauses, "get down of it" and "get down from this" were meant to turn Iblis out of the heaven, because "the heaven" has not been mentioned in preceding sentences. The order, therefore, could mean, 'get out of the ranks of the angel', or 'get down from the honour and dignity given to thee.'

b. May be, the order to get down or to get out meant only that he could not live or stay in the heaven with the angels. If so, then it was not a prohibition against occasionally going or ascending thereto. This interpretation is supported by the verses which describe the Satans' occasional goings up to the heaven to eavesdrop the conversations of the angels.[1] Also,

c. it has been narrated that before the time of 'Isa ('a), the Satans were going up to the seventh heaven; when he was born they were barred from the fourth heaven and above; then after the birth of the Prophet they were barred from all the heavens.

d. There is no mention in the Book of Allah that Iblis had entered the Garden. Therefore, the question does not arise at all. It has, of course, been narrated in the traditions; but they are not *al-mutawatir;* and possibly the narrators have described the story in their own words, and not exactly as the Imam said. Utmost that may be put as evidence that Iblis had entered the Garden is the verse: *and he* (i.e. the Satan) *said:*

***"Your Lord has not forbidden you from this tree except that you may not become two angels..."* (*7: 19*).**

As he had used the pronoun, "this", ("this tree") which denotes nearness. But if it is taken to mean nearness in place, it would give the same meaning in Allah's command,

***...Do not go near this tree* (*7: 18*).**

Surely, it, cannot be said that the pronoun indicates that Allah was in that place near the tree.[2]

'Abdu 's-Salam al-Harawi[3] said: "I said to ar-Ridha' ('a): 'O son of the Messenger of Allah! tell me about the tree from which Adam and Hawwa' ate, what was it? Because people do have different views about it; some have narrated that it was a wheat-plant, and others have reported that it was the tree of

envy.' He said: 'All this is true.' I said: 'Then what do these explanations, with their differences, mean?' He said: 'O son of as-Salt! Verily the tree of the Garden bears (fruits of) many kinds; and it was a wheat-plant and (yet) it bore grapes; and it was not like a tree of this world. And when Allah raised the status of Adam by making the angels prostrate before him and by placing him in the Garden, he said: "Has Allah created any man superior than me?" And Allah knew what had came into his mind; so He called out to him: "Raise your head, O Adam! and look at the pillar of the Throne."

So, he looked at the pillar of the Throne and found written on it: "There is no god except Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib is the Leader of the faithful, and his wife, Fatimah is the Chief of the women of the worlds, and al-Hasan and al-Husayn are the Chiefs of the youths of the people of the Garden." Adam said: "O my Lord! who are they?" He, Mighty and Great is He said: "O Adam! they are (from) your off-springs; and they are better than you and all My creation; and if it were not (for) them, I would have not created you, nor the Garden, nor the fire, nor the heaven, nor the earth. So be careful not to look at them with envious eyes; otherwise, I will turn you out of My nearness." But he looked at them with envious eyes and entertained the hope of (attaining to) their rank. So, the Satan got the better of him, until he ate from the forbidden tree; and got the better of Hawwa', and she looked at Fatimah with envious eyes until she too, like Adam, ate from the tree. Thereupon, Allah turned them out of His Garden, and got them down from His nearness to the earth.'"[4]

The author says: This matter has been described in many traditions, some more detailed than this; others, more concise. In this tradition, the Imam has confirmed that the tree was the wheat-plant, and also that it was the tree of envy. The former implies that the tree was not worthy of attention of the people of the Garden; the later indicates that it was too lofty to come within the grasp of Adam and his wife (as a tradition says that it was the tree of the knowledge of Muhammad and his progeny).

Apparently, the two interpretations are totally different from each other, and the tradition seems a problematic one. But if you ponder on the covenant referred to earlier, you will see that both meanings are complementary, and not mutually exclusive. Adam ('a) wanted to combine the pleasures of the Garden - a place of nearness to Allah, where it was necessary to always keep the covenant before one's eyes, and not to let one's attention divert to anyone or anything else - with the forbidden tree - which would bring all the world's troubles in its wake; but he failed in his endeavour, was sent down to the earth because he had been heedless of the said covenant and of its demands. It was reserved for the Prophet to combine these two seemingly apposite factors; it was he who, for the first time, harmonized this world with the next, synchronized the matter with the spirit, and brought into being a whole man. However, Allah again guided Adam aright, chose him for His vicegerency, and as a result of his repentance, raised him above the worldly desires and made him remember again the forgotten covenant.

"But he looked at them with envious eyes and entertained the hope of (attaining to) their rank": The second clause explains the first; Adam wanted that he too should attain to that status; it was not that he

was envious (i.e., had any ill will) against them. Envy is a vice, while aspiring to raise one's status is not.

Now let us look at the following two traditions:

1. ath-Thumali narrates from Abu Ja'far ('a) that he said: "Allah made a covenant with Adam that he should not go near the tree. But when the time came when, according to the knowledge of Allah, he was to eat of it, he forgot (the covenant) and ate from it. And that is (the meaning of) the words of Allah:

***And certainly We had covenanted unto Adam before, but he forgot; and We did not find in him any determination* (*20:115*).** 5

2. al-'Ayyashi narrated in his *at-Tafsir* from one of the two (i.e., the fifth or the sixth) Imams, that he was asked as to why Allah punished Adam for his forgetfulness. He said: "He had not forgotten; and how could he forget when he had remembered it (very well) and (even) Iblis had told him:

***Your Lord has not forbidden you from this tree except that you may not both become two angels or that you may* (not) *become of the immortals* (*7:20*).**

The way to harmonize these seemingly conflicting traditions is clear if one applies to them the foregoing explanation.

Abu 's-Salt al-Harawi said: "al-Ma'mun gathered for 'Ali Ibn Musa ar-Ridha' ('a) people of various sects from among the Muslims, the Jews, the Christians, the Magians, the Sabaeans and all other religions. Nobody stood (for religious discussion with the Imam) but that he was forced to accept his (Imam's) arguments and was put to silence. Then stood before him 'Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Jahm and said to him: 'Do you believe in sinlessness of the prophets? O son of the Messenger of Allah!' He said: 'Yes.' He ('Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Jahm) said: 'Then what would you do with the words of Allah: ***and Adam disobeyed his Lord, so he got astray?...'*** Then said our master, ar-Ridha' ('a):

'Woe unto you! O 'Ali! Have fear of Allah (in your heart) and do not ascribe indecencies to the prophets of Allah, and do not interpret by your own opinion the Book of Allah (Mighty and Great is He!) Verily Allah (Mighty and Great is He!) says:

***...But none knows its interpretation except Allah and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge* (*3:7*).**

As for the words of Allah,

***And Adam disobeyed his Lord, so he got astray* (*20:121*).**

(the fact is that) Allah (Mighty and Great is He!) had created Adam (to be) His proof in His earth and (to be) His vicegerent in His towns; He had not created him for the Garden; and the disobedience was (done) by Adam in the Garden, and not in the earth; (and it came to pass) so that the measures of the

decree of Allah (Mighty and Great is He) might be fulfilled. So when he was sent down to the earth and was made (Allah's) proof and vicegerent, he was protected (i.e. became sinless), as Allah says:

Surely, Allah chose Adam and Nuh and the descendants of Ibrahim and the descendants of 'Imran above all the worlds'" (***3:33***).[6]

The author says: The sentence, "and the disobedience was...in the Garden", points to what we have already mentioned that there was no religious law ordained in the Garden; and that Adam ('a) even before his creation, was destined to live in the earth; and, therefore, the disobedience was of an advice, and not of an ordained law. In this context, there appears no reason why anyone should try (as someone has done) to explain away this tradition in a round-about way.

'Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Jahm said: "I was present in the court of al-Ma'mun; and 'Ali Ibn Musa was there with him. And al-Ma'mun said to him: 'O son of the Messenger of Allah! Is it not your belief that the prophets are sinless?' He said: 'Yes.' (al-Ma'mun) said: 'Then what is the meaning of the words of Allah, the High:

And Adam disobeyed his Lord, so he got astray (***20:121***).

(The Imam) said: 'Verily Allah said to Adam:

Dwell you and your wife in the Garden and eat (**you both**) ***freely wherever you*** (**two**) ***wish and do not approach*** (**you two**) ***this tree,*** (**pointing to a tree**) ***for then you*** (**two**) ***will be of the unjust*** (***2:35***).

Allah did not say to him: Do not eat from this tree nor from another tree of its kind. And they did not eat from it; they ate from another (similar) tree because the Satan whispered evil suggestion to them and said:

"Your Lord has not forbidden you from this tree except that you may not both become two angels or that you may (**not**) ***become of the immortals"*** (***7:20***).

And he swore to them both: "Most surely, I am a sincere adviser to you" (***7:21***).

And Adam and Hawwa' had not seen before that anyone swearing falsely in the name of Allah; thus, he caused them to fall by deceit and they ate from that (tree) because they believed in his oath in the name of Allah. And it all happened before Adam was made a prophet, and it was not a big sin leading one to the fire; it was only a forgiven minor (sin) that is permissible to the prophets before they begin receiving revelation. But when Allah chose him and made him prophet, he became sinless, not committing any minor or major sin. Allah (Mighty and Great is He!) has said:

Surely, Allah chose Adam and Nuh and the descendants of Ibrahim and the descendants of 'Imran above all the worlds... (***3:33***)."[7]

The author says: as-Saduq (may Allah have mercy on him!) after narrating the tradition in full, has commented as follows:

"Strange that 'Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Jahm, in spite of his open hostility towards, and enmity and hatred of, Ahl Al-Bayt ('a), should narrate this tradition."

This comment only looks at the belief of the sinlessness of the prophets which this tradition purportedly proves; but as-Saduq (may Allah have mercy on him!) did not look deep into its implications. The reported reply is not in accord with the well-known belief of the Imams of Ahl Al-Bayt, that all the prophets were fully protected from all major and minor sins before as well as after getting the prophethood.

Moreover, the reply presumes that the verse does not mean what it apparently says. According to this tradition, the verse, "Your Lord has not forbidden you from this tree except that you may not both become two angels...", should be read as follows:

"Your Lord has not forbidden you from this (i.e. the other similar) tree; He has only forbidden you from approaching that one; and He has not forbidden you from that tree except that you may not both become two angels ..." Such deletions are against the norms of eloquence. The quoted speech of the Satan clearly shows that he was instigating them to eat from the very tree that was forbidden, holding out to them the hope of becoming angels or immortals:

"Your Lord has not forbidden you from this tree except that you may not both become two angels or that you may **(not)** ***become of the immortals"*** **(*7:20*).**

"O Adam! shall I guide you to the tree of immortality and a kingdom which decays not?" **(*20:120*).**

The narrator, that is, 'Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Jahm, had himself been given the correct and complete answer in the court of al-Ma'mun, as the preceding tradition shows; therefore, there is something wrong in this narration of his, although some parts may be somehow interpreted correctly.

As-Saduq has narrated (through his chain) from al-Baqir ('a), through his forefathers, from 'Ali ('a) that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: "Adam and Hawwa' stayed in the Garden, (till they were sent out of it) for seven hours according to the (counting of the) days of the world, until Allah sent them down on the same day."

'Abdullah Ibn Sinan said: "Abu 'Abdillah ('a) was asked - and I was present there: 'How long did Adam and his wife stay in the Garden until their mistake removed them from it?' He said: 'Verily Allah breathed His spirit into Adam after the midday on Friday; then created his wife from his lowest rib; then He made His angels prostrate before him and placed him in His Garden the same day. And by God! he did not stay therein but six hours of the same day until he disobeyed Allah. Thereupon, Allah removed them both from it after the sunset, and they were put into the courtyard of the Garden till the morning; then

their nakedness became manifest to them; and their Lord called out to them:

"Did I not forbid you both from that tree?" **(*7:22*).**

Adam felt ashamed and bowed (his head) and said:

***"Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves and we confess our sins; therefore, forgive us* (our sins)*"* (*7:23*).**

Allah said to them: *"Get down you both from My heavens to the earth; because no sinner shall remain in My nearness – neither in My Garden nor in My heavens.""*[8]

The author says: The tradition gives a new detail, that Adam and Hawwa' were removed first from the Garden to its courtyard and then from the courtyard to the earth. There are some indications in the Qur'an to support this information:

First: They were twice told to "get down"[9]. It was a creative, and not a legislative, order, and a creative order takes effect the instant it is given.

If the first order told them to get down to the earth, there was no question of their not getting down to the earth at once; and, therefore, the second order would be superfluous. But in the light of this tradition the two commands would be perfectly in order.

Second: As mentioned in the commentary, this idea may be inferred from the changed verbs and pronouns of the verses. Allah describes in these words his talk with Adam when he was being placed in the Garden:

***And We said: "O Adam! dwell you and your wife in the Garden …And do not approach* (*you* two) *this tree…"* (*2:35*).**

But after they had eaten from the tree, their Lord called out to them:

"Did I not forbid you both from that tree?" **(*7:22*).**

The verb, "We said" of the former has been changed to "called out to them" in the latter; as the demonstrative pronoun, "this tree" (showing nearness) was replaced by "that tree" (showing distance).

These changes show that Adam had been removed, by the time of the second address, from his original place of nearness in the Garden to a distant place – which the tradition describes as the courtyard. But this tradition says that Hawwa' was created from the lowest rib of Adam; it is a Biblical story which has been totally rejected by the Imams of *Ahl Al–Bayt,* (as will be seen from the traditions which will be quoted under the verses of the creation of Adam). This tradition, therefore, is unacceptable unless this expression is taken to mean that Hawwa' was created from the clay left over from the creation of Adam and which was lying near his lowest rib.

Whether he stayed in the Garden for six hours (as this tradition says) or seven (as the former says) is not very important, because such things are mere approximation.

It is reported from the fifth or the sixth Imam (peace be on them both) that he said about the verse, ***then Adam received* (some) *words from his Lord,*** that (the words were as follows): "There is no god except Thee; Glory be to Thee, O Allah! and praise! I have committed evil and been unjust to myself; therefore, forgive me (my sin) and Thou art the best of the forgivers. There is no god except Thee; Glory be to Thee, O Allah! and praise! I have done wrong and been unjust to myself; therefore, have mercy on me, and Thou art the best of the forgivers. There is no god except Thee; Glory to Thee, O Allah! and praise! I have committed evil and been unjust to myself; therefore, have mercy on me, and Thou art the best of those who have mercy. There is no god except Thee; Glory be to Thee, O Allah! and praise! I have done wrong and been unjust to myself; therefore, forgive me (my sin) and turn to me (with mercy); surely, Thou, Thou alone, art oft-returning (with mercy), the Merciful."[10]

The author says: This theme has been narrated also by as-Saduq, al-'Ayyashi, al-Qummi and others; nearly the same thing has been narrated through the Sunni chains; and it may possibly be inferred from the apparent meaning, of the verses.

al-Kulayni has written in *al-Kafi: "And* another tradition says in respect of this verse: (Adam) had asked from (Allah) by the right of Muhammad and 'Ali and Fatimah and al-Hasan and al-Husayn."

The author says: This explanation too has been narrated by as-Saduq, al-'Ayyashi, al-Qummi and others. A nearly similar tradition has been narrated through the Sunni chains. it is reported in *ad-Durru al-manthur* that the Prophet said: "When Adam committed the sin that he committed, he raised his head towards the heaven and said: 'I beseech Thee, by the right of Muhammad, to forgive me.' Allah revealed to him (i.e., asked him through revelation): 'And who is Muhammad?' He said: 'Blessed is Thy name! When Thou created me, I raised my head towards Thy Throne and saw written therein: There is no god except Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Thus I knew that no one could be more honoured in Thy presence than him whose name Thou hadst placed with Thy name.' Thereupon, Allah revealed to him: 'O Adam! Verily he is the last of the prophets, from thy descendants; and if it were not for him, I would have not created thee.'"

The author says: Although these traditions seem not to be in accord with the apparent meaning of the verse, on deeper consideration this explanation does not look so far-fetched. The sentence, "Then Adam received (some) words from his Lord", shows that he was taught those words by the Lord, and that he had got that knowledge before his repentance. Also, it is known that Allah had taught him all the names. Allah told the angels that He was going to make in the earth a vicegerent:

***They said: "Wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood, while we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness? He said: "Surely, I know what you do not know"* (*2:30*).**

***And He taught Adam the names, all of them* (*2:31*).**

There must have been something in those names to wipe out every injustice, to erase every sin and to cure every spiritual and moral disease; otherwise, the objection of the angels could not be answered – Allah did not say a single word to refute the angels' assertion; all He did was to teach Adam all the names. It means that those names could cure all the ills of humanity; the angels understood it and surrendered to the knowledge and wisdom of Allah. We have earlier explained that those names were sublime creations, hidden from the heavens and the earth; they were intermediaries to convey the grace and bounties of Allah to His creation; and no creature would be able to attain to its perfection without their assistance.

At this stage, we may refer to some traditions which say that Adam saw the figures of Muhammad and his Ahl Al-Bayt, and also their light at the time he was taught the names; and the ones which mention that he saw them when Allah took out his offspring from his back; and the others which describe his seeing them in the Garden. However, Allah has not identified those words, and has used it as a common noun, "(some) words"; nevertheless, the Qur'an has clearly used the expression, "word", for an individual being, as for example, in the verse:

***…Allah gives you good news of a word from Him whose name is the Messiah, 'Isa son of Maryam…* (*3:45*).**

Some exegetes have written that the "words", mentioned in this verse, refer to the plea of Adam and his wife reported in Chapter 7:

***They said: "Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves, and if Thou forgive us not, and have* (not) *mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers."* (*7:23*).**

But the sequence of events does not support this view. The repentance of Adam, according to the narrative of Chapter 2, had occurred after his coming to the earth. The verse (2:37) describing the repentance comes after the verse (2:36) that mentions his descent to the earth[11].

But they had uttered that plea while they were still in the Garden, before coming down to the earth. The plea is given in verse 7:23; and the order to "get down" comes after that in verse 7:24. Apparently, this plea was in response to their admonition by Allah:

"***Did I not forbid you both from that tree…?"* (*7:22*).**

they wanted to declare their servitude and to surrender themselves to Allah; acknowledging that all the authority was in the hands of Allah and He might do what He pleased; He was their Lord, and they had put themselves in danger of loss by being unjust to themselves.

as-Sadiq ('a) said: "Verily, Musa asked his Lord to let him meet Adam; and he was joined with him (i.e., Adam). Musa said to him: 'O father! Did Allah not create you with His hand, and breathe into you of His

spirit; and make the angels prostrate before you, and order you not to eat of the tree? Then why did you disobey Him?' (Adam) said: 'O Musa! How long before my creation did you find my mistake (mentioned) in the Torah?' He said: 'Thirty thousand years before.' (Adam) said: 'That is it."' as-Sadiq ('a) said: "Thus refuted Adam the argument of Musa."[12]

The author says: as-Suyuti has narrated in *ad-Durr al-manthur* approximately similar traditions, through various chains, from the Prophet.

Al-Baqir ('a) said: "By God, Allah had surely, created Adam for the world, and He gave him place in the Garden, in order that he might disobey Him and thus He might return him to that for which He had created him."[13]

The author says: A tradition of the same theme, narrated by al-'Ayyashi from as-Sadiq ('a), concerning an angel friend of Adam, has been quoted earlier.

A Syrian asked 'Ali ('a) as to which valley in the earth was the most honoured. He ('a) said: "The valley called Sarandib wherein Adam descended from the heaven."[14]

The author says: In contrast to it, there are numerous traditions showing that he had descended at Mecca (and some of them have been quoted above). May be, he first came down to Sarandib and then got down to Mecca.

It has been reported by at-Tabarani, Abu 'sh-Shaykh (in his *al-'Azamah*) and Ibn Marduwayh, from Abu Dharr, that he said: "I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! What do you say, was Adam a prophet?' He said: 'Yes. He was a prophet (and) an apostle; Allah talked to him before; He had told him: "O Adam! dwell you and your wife in the Garden."

The author says: The Sunnis have narrated almost similar traditions through various chains.

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1. For example:
And We have guarded it (i.e. the heaven) against every accursed Satan (15:17).
But he who steals a hearing; so there follows him a visible flame (15:18).
2. The first and third replies seem strange, to say the least. The author himself has said (while commenting on the phrase, "...the Satan made them both slip from it") that the order to "get down" or to "get out" may mean, "Get down from the company of the angels; or, get down from the heaven". But here he rejects the second alternative altogether! The third reply is based on القياس مع الفارق an unacceptable analogy – that which overlooks the important differences between the two sides. If the Satan is governed by time and space, how does it imply that Allah too should be governed by them? Moreover, in the same commentary the author has proved on the strength of this same verse that "the Satan had visited them near that tree in the Garden. He entered the Garden...(and) Adam, his wife and the Satan all were removed from the Garden together." This leaves us with the second reply, which is doubtlessly without any flaw and is supported by the Qur'an. (tr.)
3. That is, Abu 's-Salt Abdu 's-Salam Ibn Salih al-Harawi.
4. 'Uyun al-akhbar.
5. Kamalu 'd-din.

6. al-Amali, as-Saduq.
7. ‘Uyun al-akhbar.
8. at-Tafsir, al-‘Ayyashi.
9. vide vs. 2:36 and 2:38.
10. al-Kafi.
11. It is not in accord with the author’s earlier assertion that the verse 2:36 describes Adam’s removal from the earlier-held place of honour to the courtyard of the Garden; after which he learned “some words” from Allah and repented (2:37); and it was later that he was sent down from the courtyard to the Garden (2:38). (tr).
12. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
13. ‘Ilal ash-Shara’i’.
14. al-Ihtijaj.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 40 - 44

يا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُواْ نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَوْفُواْ بِعَهْدِي أُوفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونِ

O children of Israel! Remember My bounties which I bestowed on you, and be faithful to (your) covenant with Me, I will fulfil (My) covenant with you; and of Me, Me alone, should you be afraid (2:40).

وَآمِنُواْ بِمَا أَنزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ وَلاَ تَكُونُواْ أَوَّلَ كَافِرٍ بِهِ وَلاَ تَشْتَرُواْ بِآيَاتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلاً وَإِيَّايَ فَاتَّقُونِ

And believe in what I have sent down verifying that which is with you, and be not the first to deny it, neither take a mean price in exchange for My signs; and Me, Me alone, should you fear (2:41).

وَلاَ تَلْبِسُواْ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُواْ الْحَقَّ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

And do not mix up the truth with the falsehood, nor hide the truth while you know (it) (2:42).

وَأَقِيمُواْ الصَّلاَةَ وَآتُواْ الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُواْ مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ

And keep up prayer and pay the zakat and bow down with those who bow down (2:43).

أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنسَوْنَ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلاَ تَعْقِلُونَ

What! do you enjoin men to be good and forget your own selves while you read the Book? Have you then no sense? (***2:44***).

General Comment

Now begins the rebuking of the Jews that continues for more than a hundred verses. Allah reminds them of the bounties bestowed, of the honours given; contrasting it with their ingratitude and disobedience; showing how at every juncture they paid the favours of Allah with disregard of their covenant, open rebellion against divine commands and even with polytheism.

The series reminds them of twelve events of their history – like rescuing them from Pharaoh and his people by parting the river, drowning of Pharaoh and his army, the appointed rendezvous at the mount Sina'i, the Jews' starting calf–worship in Musa's absence, and Musa's order to them to kill themselves, their demand from Musa to show their Lord to them face to face, their death by lightning and then their arising from dead etc. – all of which shows how they were chosen to receive the especial favours of Allah.

But their ingratitude runs parallel to it. They repeatedly broke the covenants made with Allah, committed capital sins, hideous crimes and shameful deeds; more despicable was their spiritual poverty and moral bankruptcy – in open defiance to their book and total disregard to the reason? It was all because their hearts were hardened, their souls lost and their endeavours worthless.

Commentary

Verse 40

Qur'an: ***…And be faithful to*** **(your)** ***covenant with Me*** (***2:40***).

(العَهد = covenant) literally means guarding and *"al–'Ahd"* maintenance. By association it has come to mean covenant, oath, testament, will, encounter, house, etc.

Qur'an: ***…And of Me, …should you be afraid*** (***2:40***).

"ar–Rahbah" (الرّهبة = fear) is opposite of *ar–raghbah* (الرغبة = desire).

Verse 41

Qur'an: ***…And be not the first to deny it*** (***2:41***).

That is, first among the people of the book, or first among your own people. This firstness is not all–

inclusive, because the disbelievers of Mecca had rejected the Message before the Jews.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 45 - 46

وَاسْتَعِينُواْ بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلاَةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلاَّ عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ

And seek assistance through patience and prayer; and most surely, it is a hard thing, except for the humble ones (***2:45***).

الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُم مُّلاَقُو رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

who know that they shall meet their Lord and that they shall return to Him (***2:46***).

Commentary

Verse 45

Qur'an: ***And seek assistance through patience and prayer…*** (***2:45***).

Man seeks assistance in such affairs and tasks as he cannot manage alone, and in hardships and difficulties which he cannot overcome himself. In reality there is no helper except Allah. Man can, therefore, manage all his affairs and overcome all his difficulties by courage and steadfastness (i.e. by patience) and by looking towards Allah (i.e. by prayer). These two factors are the best way to get assistance: patience makes even the great misfortunes look trivial, and putting all his confidence in Allah awakens the spirit of faith; and thus man comes to realize that the cause which he is relying upon can never fail to produce the desired effect.

Qur'an: ***And most surely, it is a hard thing except for the humble ones*** (***2:45***).

The pronoun, it, refers to the "prayer". It is difficult to relate it to "seeking the assistance", because it will then cover patience too, and the word "the humble ones" will not look appropriate – humbleness does not fit very much with patience. The word used here for humbleness is *"khushu'"* (الخشوع); *"khudu'"* (الخضوع) too has the same meaning but with one difference: while the latter shows itself in the limbs of the body, the former refers to the inner feeling.

Verse 46

Qur'an: ***Aho know that they shall meet their Lord…*** **(*2:46*).**

The word used in this verse for "knowing" is *"yazunnun"* (يظنون); it literally means "they think". But the context, that is, the belief in the hereafter, demands a firm conviction that would leave no room for any doubt or supposition. Allah says:

***And they are sure of the hereafter* (*2:4*).**

Or, may be, Allah, by using this word, makes us realize that even an elementary idea of the hereafter is sufficient to create in a man humility and humbleness before his Lord. Many a knowledge comes to man in stages:

(1) first he becomes aware of an idea;

(2) then he has some doubts about its correctness;

(3) then he becomes inclined to accept it; (

4) then gradually the possibility of his accepting the opposite view vanishes completely and he becomes firmly convinced of the truth of that idea – and this firm conviction is called knowledge.

If such knowledge is concerned with some frightening affair, then his worry and disquiet will begin as soon as he reaches the third stage when he is only inclined to accept it – is only "thinking" that probably it may be true. This Qur'anic expression, in other words, says that man, for showing humbleness before Allah, needs only to be aware of the idea that there is a Lord Whom he may return to after his death. In this context only a strong supposition should be enough to make him desist from disobeying his Lord; it would not be necessary, for this purpose, to reach the stage of firm knowledge. From this point of view, the verse looks almost similar to the verse:

***…Therefore, whoever hopes to meet his Lord, he should do good deeds, and not join any one in the worship of his Lord* (*18:110*).**

The above discourse is based on the assumption that the words, "they shall meet their Lord…", refer to the Day of Resurrection. But if they are interpreted in, another way (as we shall describe in Chapter 7), there should be no difficulty at all in its explanation.

Traditions

as-Sadiq ('a) said: "Whenever 'Ali ('a) faced a difficulty, he used to stand up for the prayer and then recite this verse:

And seek assistance through patience and prayer* (*2:153*)*". [1]

The same Imam said about this verse: "The patience means fasting." Also he said: "When a man is confronted by a hard misfortune, he should fast. Surely, Allah says: ***And seek assistance through patience* (*2:153*)*,*** that is, fast."[2]

The author says: al-'Ayyashi too has narrated the theme of these two traditions in his *at-Tafsir.* Interpretation of "patience" as fast is based on the "flow" of the Qur'an.

Abu al-Hasan ('a) said about this verse: "The patience means fast; when a man is visited by a hardship or misfortune, he should fast; surely, Allah says: ***And seek assistance through patience and prayer* (*2:153*)*,*** and most surely, it is a hard thing except for the humble ones. And the humble one is he who shows humility in his prayer, turning all his attention to it; and it means the Messenger of Allah (S) and the Leader of the faithful ('a)."[3]

The author says: The Imam has inferred from this verse the desirability of fasting and praying when one is facing any hardship or turmoil; and likewise, the desirability of seeking the divine help through the medium of the Prophet and 'Ali ('a) at that time. In this way, the tradition interprets the fast and the prayer as the Prophet and 'Ali ('a).

'Ali ('a) said about the verse:

***Who know that they shall meet their Lord…* (*2:46*).**

Allah says that they are sure that they would be resurrected. And the supposition *az-zann* (الظن) means certainty.[4]

The author says: as-Saduq also has narrated this tradition, al-Baqir ('a) said that this verse was revealed about 'Ali, 'Uthman Ibn Maz'un, 'Ammar Ibn Yasir and (some of) their friends[5].

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1. al-Kafi.
2. al-Kafi.
3. al-'Ayyashi.
4. al-'Ayyashi.
5. al-Manaqib, Ibn Shahrashub.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 47 - 48

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُواْ نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

O Children of Israel! Call to mind My favour which I bestowed on you and that I made you excel the nation (***2:47***).

وَاتَّقُواْ يَوْماً لاَّ تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَن نَّفْسٍ شَيْئاً وَلاَ يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلاَ يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلاَ هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ

And be on your guard against the day when one soul shall not avail another in the least; neither shall intercession on its behalf be accepted, nor shall any compensation be taken from it, nor shall they be helped (***2:48***).

Commentary

Verse 48

Qur'an: ***And be on your guard against the day when one soul shall not avail another in the least*** (***2:48***).

The temporal power and authority, with all its various systems and varying conditions, is based on a necessity of life - the only justification of this institution is that it fulfils this need in the framework of the prevailing factors of the society. It sometimes exchanges a commodity for another, gives up a benefit for another, substitutes an order with another - without any hard and fast criterion to regulate such dispensations. The same phenomenon is observed in their judiciary. Logically, a crime must be recompensed with punishment. Yet some times the judge, because of some extraneous reasons, decides not to punish the criminal.

Sometimes the criminal rouses in the judge an overwhelming feeling of pity by his passionate appeal for mercy. Or he wins him over by bribe which induces him to deliver an unjust judgement. Or an influential man intercedes with the judge on behalf of the said criminal and the judge cannot ignore that intercession. Or, the said criminal becomes a state witness leading to the conviction of even greater criminals, and is himself, thus, released without any punishment. Or his tribe or colleagues get him freed from the clutches of the authorities. Whatever the cause may be, it is a well-established custom in the worldly governments and human societies to let the wrong-doers go free at times.

The ancient tribes and the idol-worshippers believed that the life hereafter was an extension of this one; that the customs of this world were valid for that one too, and that the next world was permeated by the

same actions and reactions which prevailed in this one. Thus, they offered sacrifices and offerings to their deities seeking forgiveness for their sins or assistance in their needs; the offerings were supposed to intercede on their behalf. Sometimes a sin was expiated or help was sought by offering even a human sacrifice. They carried this idea of continuation of the life so far as to bury with a man all types of necessities of life, not forgetting his ornaments and arms, in order that he might use them on his onward journey; sometimes even his concubines and soldiers were buried alive with him to keep him company. You may see a lot of such finds in archaeological museums around the world. Some such ideas have persisted even among the Muslims – with all their diverse cultures and languages, albeit in modified forms.

The Qur'an has rejected all such superstitious beliefs and baseless ideas in no uncertain terms:

…And the command on that day shall be entirely Allah's (***82:19***).

…And they see the chastisement and their ties are cut asunder (***2:166***).

And certainly you have come to Us alone as We created you at first, and you have left behind your backs the things which We gave you, and We do not see with you your intercessors about whom you asserted that they were (**Allah's**) ***associates in respect to you; certainly the ties between you are now cut off and what you asserted is gone from you*** (***6:94***).

There shall every soul become acquainted with what is sent before, and they shall be brought back to Allah, their true Master and what they did fabricate shall escape from them (***10:30***).

There are many similar verses; and they show that the life hereafter is cut off from the natural causes which govern this life, and is quite separate from material connections. Once this principle is understood all the above-mentioned myths would automatically be cleared away. But the Qur'an is not content with this general declaration; it refutes each and every myth and superstition described above:

And be on your guard against the day when one soul shall not avail another in the least; neither shall intercession on its behalf be accepted, nor shall any compensation be taken from it, nor shall they be helped (***12:48***).

…Before the day comes in which there is no bargaining, neither any friendship nor intercession (***2:254***).

The day on which a friend shall not avail (***his***) ***friend aught…*** (***44:41***).

…There shall be no saviour for you from Allah… (***40:33***).

What is the matter with you that you do not help each other? (***37:25***).

Nay! On this day they are submissive (***37:26***).

And they worship beside Allah what can neither harm them nor profit them, and they say: "These are our intercessors with Allah." Say: "Do you (presume to) ***inform Allah of what He knows not in the heavens and the earth?" Glory be to Him, and supremely exalted is He above what they set up with Him*** (***10:18***).

…The unjust shall not have any friend nor any intercessors who should be obeyed (***40:18***).

So we have no intercessors (***26:100***).

Nor a true-friend (***26:101***).

There are many other verses of the same theme, all rejecting the intercession on the Day of Resurrection. On the other hand, the Qur'an does not totally reject the intercession; rather it confirms it to a certain extent. For example, it says:

Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six periods and He is firmly established on the throne; you have not besides Him any guardian or any intercessors; will you not then mind? (***32:4***)

…There is no guardian for them, nor any intercessor besides Him (***6:51***).

Say: "Allah's is the intercession altogether" (***39:44***).

…Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them (***2:255***).

Surely, your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods; and He is firmly established on the throne, regulating the affair; there is no intercessor except after His permission (***10:3***).

And they say: "The Beneficent God had taken to Himself a son." Glory be to Him! Nay! they are honoured servants (***21:26***).

They do not precede Him in speech and (only) ***according to His commandment do they act*** (***21:27***).

He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they do not intercede except for whom He approves, and for fear of Him they tremble (***21:28***).

And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for intercession, but he who bears witness of the truth, and they know (him) (***43:86***).

They shall have no authority for intercession, save he who has made a covenant with the Beneficent God (***19:87***).

On that day shall no intercession avail except of him whom the Beneficent God allows and whose word He is pleased with (***20:109***).

He knows what is before them and what is behind them, while they do not comprehend Him in knowledge (***20:110***).

And intercession will not avail aught with Him save of him whom He permits (***34:23***).

And how many an angel is there in the heavens whose intercession does not avail at all except after Allah has given permission to whom He pleases and chooses (***53:26***).

Some of these verses (like the first three) say that intercession is reserved for Allah, while the rest declare that others too may intercede with Allah's permission. In any case, all of them confirm the intercession *per se.* How are these verses related to the preceding ones which totally reject intercession? It is exactly the same relation that exists between the verses that say that the knowledge of unseen is reserved to Allah and those which declare that others too may have that knowledge with the permission of Allah. As Allah says:

Say: "No one in the heaven and the earth knows the unseen but Allah" (***27:65***).

And with Him are the keys of the unseen, does not know it any except He (***6:59***).

The Knower of the unseen! so He does not reveal His secrets to any, except to him whom He chooses of an apostle (***72:27***).

The same is the case with various verses on the subjects of creating, sustaining, giving death, causity, command, authority and similar things. Some verses reserve them for Allah; while some say that others too may do these things. It is a well-known style of the Qur'an: first it rejects the idea that anyone other than Allah has any virtue or perfection; thereafter it confirms the same virtue or perfection for others depending on the permission and pleasure of Allah. When read together, the verses show that nobody has any virtue by his own power and right; whatever excellence there may be, he has got it because Allah has given it to him. Allah puts much emphasis to this fact; He attaches the proviso of His will even for those things which are firmly decreed by Him. For example:

So as to those who are unhappy, they shall be in the fire; for them shall be sighing and groaning in it (***11:106***).

Abiding therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord please; surely, your Lord is the (**mighty**) ***doer of what He intends*** (***11:107***).

And as to those who are made happy, they shall be in the garden, abiding in it as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord please; a gift which shall never be cut off (***11:108***).

Note that abiding for ever is made dependent on the pleasure of Allah, even in case of the garden, although it is a gift which shall never be cut off. It emphasizes the fact that even when Allah firmly decrees a thing, it does not pass out of His control or authority;

Surely, your Lord is **(mighty)** ***doer of what He intends*** **(*11: 107*).**

When Allah gives a thing, it does not go out of His total possession. When He denies something to someone, it is not done to protect Himself against any need or poverty!

In short, the verses that reject intercession – albeit talking about the Day of Resurrection – do so in the context of intercession independent of Allah's authority; while the ones proving it, prove it basically for Allah and then, depending on His pleasure, for others.

Thus, the intercession is proved for other than Allah with His permission.

Now we should see what is the meaning of intercession? Who may intercede? On behalf of whom? And when? How is it related to the divine forgiveness?

1. What Is The Meaning Of Intercession?

"ash-Shafa'ah" (الشّفاعة = intercession) is derived from *"ash-shaf'"* (الشّفع) which means "even" as opposed to odd – the interceder adds his own recommendation to the plea of the petitioner; in this way the number of pleaders becomes even, and the weak plea of the petitioner is strengthened by the prestige of the intercessor. We are accustomed in our social and communal life to seek others' intercession and help for fulfilling our needs. We resort to it to get an advantage or to ward off a disadvantage.

Here we are not talking about an advantage or a disadvantage, a benefit or a harm that is caused by natural causes, like hunger and thirst, heat or cold, illness or health; because in such cases we get what we want through its natural remedies, like eating and drinking, wearing clothes, getting treatment and so on. What we are talking here about is the benefit and harm, punishment and reward resulting from the social laws made by civil authorities.

Rising from the very relationship of mastership-and-servitude – and for that matter, between every ruler and ruled – there are some commandments, orders and prohibitions; one who follows and obeys them is praised and rewarded, and the one who disobeys is condemned and punished; that reward or punishment may be either material or spiritual. When a master orders his servant to do or not to do a thing, and the servant obeys him he gets its reward; and if he disobeys, he is punished. Whenever a rule is made, the punishment for its infringement is laid down too. This is the foundation which all the authorities are built upon.

When a man wants to get a material or spiritual benefit but is not suitably qualified for it; or when he

desires to ward off a harm which is coming to him because of his disobedience, but has no shield to protect himself, then comes the time for intercession.

In other words, when he wants to get a reward without doing his task, or to save himself from punishment without performing his duty, then he looks for someone to intercede on his behalf. But intercession is effective only if the person for whom one intercedes is otherwise qualified to get the reward and has already established a relationship with the authority. If an ignorant person desires appointment to a prestigious academic post, no intercession can do him any good; nor can it avail in case of a rebellious traitor who shows no remorse for his misdeeds and does not submit to the lawful authorities. It clearly shows that intercession works as a supplement to the cause; it is not an independent cause.

The effect of an intercessor's words depends on one or the other factor which may have some influence upon the concerned authority; in other words, intercession must have a solid ground to stand upon. The intercessor endeavours to find a way to the heart of the authority concerned, in order that the said authority may give the reward to, or waive the punishment of, the person who is the subject of intercession.

An intercessor does not ask the master to nullify his mastership or to release the servant from his servitude; nor does he plead with him to refrain from laying down rules and regulations for his servants or to abrogate his commandments (either generally or especially in that one case), in order to save the wrong-doer from the due consequences; nor does he ask him to discard the canon of reward and punishment, (either generally or in that particular case). In short, intercession can interfere with neither the institution of mastership and servantship nor the master's authority to lay down the rules; nor can it effect the system of reward and punishment. These three factors are beyond the jurisdiction of intercession.

What an intercessor does is this: He accepts the inviolability of the above-mentioned three aspects. Then he looks at one or more of the following factors and builds his intercession on that basis:

a. He appeals to such attributes of the master as give rise to forgiveness, e.g., his nobility, magnanimity and generosity.

b. He draws attention to such characteristics of the servant as justify mercy and pardon, e.g., his wretchedness, poverty, low status and misery.

c. He puts at stake his own prestige and honour in the eyes of the master.

Thus, the import of intercession is like this: I cannot and do not say that you should forget your mastership over your servant or abrogate your commandment or nullify the system of reward and punishment. What I ask of you is to forgive this defaulting servant of yours because you are magnanimous and generous, and because no harm would come to you if you forgive his sins; and/or

because your servant is a wretched creature of low status and steeped in misery; and it is befitting of a master like you to ignore the faults of a slave like him; and/or because you have bestowed on me a high prestige, and I implore you to forgive and pardon him in honour of my intercession.

The intercessor, in this way, bestows precedence on the factors of forgiveness and pardon over those of legislation and recompense. He removes the case from the latter's jurisdiction putting it under former's influence. As a result of this shift, the consequences of legislation (reward and punishment) do not remain applicable. The effect of intercession is, therefore, based on shifting the case from the jurisdiction of reward and punishment to that of pardon and forgiveness; it is not a confrontation between one cause (divine legislation) and the other (intercession).

By now it should have been clear that intercession too is one of the causes; it is the intermediate cause that connects a distant cause to its desired effect.

Allah is the ultimate Cause. This causality shows itself in two ways:

First: In creation. Every cause begins from Him and ends up to Him; He is the first and the final Cause. He is the real Creator and Originator. All other causes are mere channels to carry His boundless mercy and limitless bounty to His creatures.

Second: In legislation: He, in His mercy, established a contact with His creatures; He laid down the religion, sent down His commandments, and prescribed suitable reward and appropriate punishment for His obedient and disobedient servants; He sent prophets and apostles to bring us good tidings and to warn us of the consequences of transgression. The prophets and apostles conveyed to us His message in the best possible way. Thus, His proof over us was complete:

and the word of your Lord has been accomplished with truth and justice, there is none to change His words… (***6:115***).

Both aspects of causality of Allah may be, and in fact are, related to intercession.

1. Intercession in creation: Quite obviously the intermediary causes of creation are the conduits that bring the divine mercy, life, sustenance and other bounties to the creatures; and as such they are intercessors between the Creator and the created. Some Qur'anic verses too are based on this very theme:

Whatever, is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission (***2:255***).

Surely, your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six periods, and He is firmly established on throne, regulating the affair; there is no intercessor except after His permission (***10:3***).

Intercession in the sphere of creation is only the intermediation of causes between the Creator and the created thing and effect, in bringing it into being and regulating its affairs.

2. Intercession in legislation: Intercession, as analysed earlier, is effective in this sphere too. It is in this context that Allah says:

On that day shall no intercession avail except of him whom the Beneficent God allows and whose word He is pleased with (***20:109***).

And intercession will not avail aught with Him save of him whom He permits (***34:23***).

And how many an angel is there in the heavens whose intercession does not avail at all except after Allah has given permission to whom He pleases and chooses (***53:26***).

…And they do not intercede except for him whom He approves… (***21:28***).

And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for intercession, but he who bears witness of the truth and they know (***him***) (***43:86***).

These verses clearly affirm intercessory role for various servants of Allah both men and angels – with divine permission and pleasure. It means that Allah has given them some power and authority in this matter, and to Him belongs all the kingdom and all the affairs. Those intercessors may appeal to Allah's mercy, forgiveness and other relevant attributes to cover and protect a servant who otherwise would have deserved punishment because of his sins and transgressions. That intercession would transfer his case from the general law of recompense to the special domain of grace and mercy. (It has already been explained that the effect of intercession is based on shifting a case from the former's to the latter's jurisdiction; it is not a confrontation between one law and the other.) Allah clearly says:

…So these are they of whom Allah changes the evil deeds to good ones (***25:70***).

Allah has the power to change one type of deed into other, in the same way as He may render an act null and void. He says:

And We will proceed to what they have done of deeds, so We shall render them as scattered floating dust (***25:23***).

…So He rendered their deeds null (***47:9***).

If you avoid the great sins which you are forbidden, We will expiate from you your (**small**) ***sins*** (***4:31***).

Surely, Allah does not forgive that any thing should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases (***4:48***).

The last quoted verse is certainly about the cases other than true belief and repentance, because with belief and repentance even polytheism is forgiven, like any other sin. Also, Allah may nurture a small deed to make it greater than the original:

These shall be granted their reward twice (***28:54***).

Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it (***6:160***).

Likewise, He may treat a non-existent deed as existing:

And (**as for**) ***those who believe and their offspring follow them in faith, We will unite with them their offspring and We will not diminish to them aught of their work; every man is responsible for what he has done*** (***52:21***).

To make a long story short, Allah does what He pleases, and decrees as He wills. Of course, He does so pursuant to His servants' interest, and in accordance with an intermediary cause – and intercession of the intercessors (e.g., the prophets, the friends of Allah and those who are nearer to Him) is one of those causes, and certainly no rashness or injustice is entailed therein.

It should have been clear by now that intercession, in its true sense, belongs to Allah only; all His attributes are intermediaries between Him and His creatures and are the channels through which His grace, mercy and decrees pass to the creatures; He is the real and all-encompassing intercessor:

Say: "Allah's is the intercession altogether" (***39:44***).

…You have not besides Him any guardian or any intercessor (***32:4***).

…There is no guardian for them nor any intercessor besides Him (***6:51***).

The intercessors, other than Allah, get that right by His permission, by His authority.

In short, intercession with Him is a confirmed reality – in cases where it does not go against the divine glory and honour.

2. The Objections Against Intercession

Intercession, as explained above, is a confirmed reality – not in every case but in approved ones. The Qur'an and the traditions do not prove more than this. A little meditation on the meaning of intercession is enough to lead to this conclusion. Intercession is mediation in causality and effectiveness. Obviously, causality cannot be limitless and unconditional. No cause can be a cause of every effect, nor can an effect be governed by every cause – otherwise it would render the system of cause and effect null and void. Those who do not believe in intercession have fallen in this very trap – they thought that we affirm the intercession in its totality without any condition or limit. All their objections emanate from this very

misunderstanding:

First Objection

Allah has threatened to punish the wrongdoer; now supposedly He waives the punishment on the Day of Judgement. The question is whether this waiver is justice or injustice. If it is justice, then the original promise of punishment would be injustice, quite unworthy of divine majesty; and if it is injustice, then the intercession of the prophets, for example, would be a plea for injustice, and it is a folly that should not be attributed to the prophets.

Reply

First: What will they say about those orders that are given only to test the loyalty of a servant and are changed at the last moment, like the order to Ibrahim to kill Isma'il? Surely, its waiver too like the original order was based on justice. Such orders are given only to test the hidden quality of the servant concerned. Likewise, it may be said that salvation is written for all the believers. The laws of the *Shari'ah* were ordained with punishments prescribed for transgressors – in order that the disbelievers should perish because of their disbelief. As for the obedient believers their rank would be enhanced by their good deeds. And as for the disobedient believers, they would be rescued by intercession: that intercession might be effective either totally or partially; in later case, they would have to suffer some of the punishments in al-Barzakh or on the Day of Judgement itself and then they would get deliverance.

Thus the original law with the prescribed punishment for the defaulters is nothing but justice, and, the subsequent waiver of that punishment too is nothing but justice.

Second: The waiver of the prescribed punishment as a result of intercession could be compared with the previous order – in being based on justice or injustice – only if that waiver were a contradiction of the previous order. But we have explained that it is not so. Intercession is not a contradiction of, or confrontation between one cause (divine legislation) and the other (intercession); it is in fact shifting his case from one jurisdiction (reward and punishment) to the other (mercy and forgiveness).

Second Objection

It is the established practice of Allah, that His actions are always safe from contradiction and conflict. Whatever He decrees and orders, without any exception, runs on an established pattern. And this is the foundation which the system of cause and effect has been built upon. Allah says:

This is a straight path with Me (***15:41***).

Surely, as regards My servants, thou hast no authority over them except those who follow thee of the deviators (***15:42***).

And surely, Hell is the promised place of them all (***15:43***).

***And* (*know*) *that this is My path, the straight one, therefore,* follow *it, and follow not* (other) *ways, for they will scatter you away from His way* (*6:153*).**

***For you shall not find any alteration in the course of Allah; and you shall not find any change in the course of Allah* (*35:43*).**

And intercession, if effective, would certainly create conflict and contradiction in the actions of Allah: If intercession caused waiver of punishment from all the sinners, of all their sins, then it would defeat the very purpose of the *Shari'ah* and would turn the whole system into a joke. And if only some of the sinners or only some of their sins were forgiven, then there would occur contradiction in divine actions and change and alteration in Allah's established course. Certainly, all the sinners are transgressors and every sin is disobedience of divine command. Therefore, forgiving only some of them or only some of their sins, because of intercession, would be impossible.

Intercession is used in this life of ours, where people are influenced by their desires or social connections. It cannot work in the affairs of the *Shari'ah* nor can it influence the divine judgement in any way.

Reply

No one doubts that the path of Allah is straight and His course without any change or conflict. But it should not be forgotten that this one and unchanged course is based on all His relevant attributes, not on only one or two of them.

Allah is the One Who bestows on every creature diverse things like life, death, sustenance, bounty and so on. These are the decrees that are contradictory or unrelated to each other; they do not have the same connection with the issuing authority i.e. God. Otherwise the relationship of cause and effect would become null and void. For example, Allah does not restore a sick man to health by virtue of His death-giving power; rather He does so because He is Merciful, Benevolent, Giver of health and Bestower of bounties. Likewise, He does not destroy an arrogant tyrant by His mercy and beneficence, but because He is the Avenger, the Omnipotent and the Subduer. The Qur'an is the best witness of this fact: Whenever it ascribes an event or affair to Him, it invariably always mentions the appropriate attribute by which that affair or event was decreed and managed.

You may say that every affair and every thing is decreed by Allah because of its underlying benefit and good. And He does whatever He does by His all-relevant attributes, and not by only one or some of them. There is always action and reaction between benefits and good of various courses of a certain affair; and Allah issues His decree as a result of His knowledge that encompasses all those aspects; His vision is not limited to one or two sides only. Had there been one fixed cause or attribute, there would have been no change or difference between a believer and a non-believer, between a pious person and a debauchee; but there are numerous causes and attributes, and their sum-total often has effects quite different from the effect of its individual parts.

Therefore, intercession, and the consequent waiver of punishment – based on sum–total of numerous causes like mercy, pardon, judgement, and giving everyone his due right – does not entail any change in the established course, nor any deviation from the right path.

Third Objection

Intercession, according to common understanding, prevails upon the authority to do against his original will. In other words, the original will is abrogated and changed because of the intercessor. A just judge would never accept an intercession unless his knowledge is changed, e.g., his original judgement was wrong, and then he was made to realize that justice demanded a course opposite to his original plan. An unjust judge would accept intercession of his friends knowing fully well that the course suggested was wrong; but he values his personal relations more than the demands of justice and equity. Obviously, both these alternatives are impossible so far as Allah is concerned; His will is related to His knowledge, and His knowledge is eternal and unchangeable.

Reply

Intercession has nothing to do with change of will or knowledge. What actually changes is the thing willed about or known. Allah knows that a certain man will pass through various stages in his life; for a time, his condition will be excellent – and Allah wills about him a certain will; and He knows that later his condition will change – and He wills about him another will; and every day He is in a (new) state (of glory). And He has said:

Allah effaces what He pleases and establishes **(likewise),** ***and with Him is the basis of the Book*** **(*13:39*).**

Nay, both His hands are spread out, He expends as He pleases **(*6:64*).**

The same happens with our knowledge and will. We know that soon night will come and we will not be able to see in darkness, but a few hours later the sun will rise dispelling the darkness. When night comes, our will is directed to light a lamp, and later when the morning comes the will is directed to extinguish that lamp. In this case, there was no change at all in our knowledge and will; what changed was the objects of that knowledge and will. And consequently, they ceased to be governed by that knowledge and that will. After all, not every knowledge is related to every known object, nor every will is connected to every purpose.

What is impossible for Allah is disagreement of His knowledge with the thing known, or of His will with its object – while that thing or object remains unchanged. In other words, it is impossible for Him to be mistaken in His knowledge or for His will to be ineffective. We see an apparition far away and take it to be a man; on coming nearer we find that it was a horse. In this case, our “knowledge” did not agree with its object; it was a mistake.

Likewise, we intend to do a certain work, then we realize that it would be wrong to do so; here our "will" was cancelled and became ineffective. But in these cases, the objects of our knowledge and will had not changed. Such "disagreement" is certainly impossible for Allah. But as we have seen, intercession and the subsequent waiver of punishment does not come into this category.

Fourth Objection

Had Allah promised intercession, or had His prophets brought this message to their nations, the people would have been emboldened to disobey the commandments of Allah, and to transgress the limits of the *Shari'ah.* It would have defeated the whole purpose behind the institutions of prophethood and religion. If we are to avoid this inherent difficulty, we shall have to interpret the relevant Qur'anic verses and traditions in a way that does not collide with this basic concept.

Reply

First: What will they say about the verses showing that Allah's mercy and forgiveness is all-encompassing? For example:

Surely, Allah does not forgive that any thing should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases (***4:48***).

This verse, as explained earlier, covers the cases other than repentance, as the exception of polytheism shows - because in cases of repentance even polytheism may be forgiven.

Second: The promise or message of intercession could incite people to disregard the rules of the *Shari'ah,* if it were accompanied by one of the following factors:

1. If it had pin-pointed either the sinner - by name or description - who was to be forgiven through intercession; or the particular sin that was to be wiped off - unconditionally, definitely and without any ambiguity.

2. Or, if intercession were effective against all types of punishment and at all times.

Read the following sentences to understand what the above conditions mean: "All men, or a named group of men, will never be held responsible for any sins they commit; nor will they ever be punished for their transgressions."

"A particularly named sin will never be punished for."

Obviously, such declarations would defeat the basic purpose of the *Shari'ah.*

But Allah has kept both things vague. He has never said what sins or which sinners might benefit from intercession, nor has He said whether all or only some of the punishment would be waived; nor has He made it clear whether or not the intercession would be effective in every condition and at all times. As all

these things have been kept vague, no one could be sure of getting the benefit of intercession. In view of this uncertainty, he cannot feel bold to trespass the limits of Allah. On the other hand, the possibility of intercession would save him from losing the hope of divine mercy, will keep him away from despair and despondency, from pessimism and hopelessness. Then there is the verse:

If you avoid great sins which you are forbidden, We will expiate from you your **(small)** ***sins…*** **(*4:31*).**

It clearly says that Allah will forgive small sins and waive the punishment, provided the servant shuns great sins. If Allah can say, "If you avoid great-sins, I shall forgive the small ones", He can as easily say, "If you keep your belief pure until you come to Me with unpolluted faith, I shall accept the intercession of intercessors on your behalf."

The important thing is to keep the faith strong; the sins weaken the faith, harden the heart and lead to polytheism. Allah has said: But none feels secure from Allah's plan except the people who shall perish **(*7:99*).**

Nay! Rather what they used to do has become like rust upon their hearts **(*83:14*).**

Then evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the signs of Allah… **(*30:10*).**

The hope of divine mercy (generated by the belief of intercession), in many cases, leads to repentance, piety and good deeds - and often the servant reaches a stage where intercession is not needed after all. It is in fact the most important benefit of this belief.

Likewise, if it were mentioned who would benefit from intercession or which sins were likely to be interceded about, but it was declared that it would nevertheless entail some types of punishment up to a certain period, the man could not feel bold to commit sins.

And the fact is that the Qur'an has nowhere pin-pointed the sin or the sinner likely to benefit from intercession. On the contrary, it speaks only of averting the punishment from some people. And no objection can be levelled against such a vague expression.

Fifth Objection

Utmost that reason may prove is the possibility, and not the actuality, of intercession - in fact, it does not prove even that much. So far as the Qur'an is concerned, it does not show that intercession will actually take place. Some verses refute the idea of intercession altogether, e.g.

…The day comes in which there is no bargaining, neither any friendship nor intercession **(*2:254*).**

Other verses say that intercession shall be of no avail, e.g.,

So the intercession of intercessors shall not avail them **(*74:48*).**

Still others, after refuting the actuality of intercession, add the proviso like:

But by His permission (***2:255***).

Except after His permission (***10:3***).

Except for him whom He approves (***21:28***).

This style (a negative followed by exception of divine permission or approval) is used in the Qur'an invariably always to emphasize the negative statement; for example, it says:

We will make you recite so you shall not forget (***87:6***).

Except what Allah pleases (***87:7***).

Abiding therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord pleases (***11:107***).

Obviously, there is no definite declaration in the Qur'an proving the actuality of intercession. As for the traditions, those giving its details are not reliable; and the reliable ones do not say more than the Qur'an does.

Reply

As for the verses refuting the intercession we have already explained that what they reject is the intercession without the permission of Allah. The verse 74:48, which says that "the intercession of intercessors shall not avail them", is not a proof against intercession; on the contrary it proves its actuality. The verse is in the Chapter, "The Clothed One" and speaks about "them", i.e., a particular group of wrong-doers mentioned in verses 41 to 47; it is they who shall not benefit from the intercession of intercessors; it does not speak about all the sinners. Moreover, it uses the phrase, "the intercession of intercessors".

There is a difference between saying, "Intercession shall not avail them", and saying, "Intercession of intercessors shall not avail them". When an infinitive verb or verbal noun is used in genitive or possessive case, it proves its actual existence, as ash-Shaykh 'Abd al-Qahir has clearly written in *Dala'ilu al-i'jaz*. Therefore, the expression, "intercession of intercessors" proves that some intercession shall definitely take place on that day, although that particular group shall not be able to benefit from it. Also, the plural, "intercessors" points to the presence of a group of intercessors. Look for example at the phrases:

She was of those who remained behind (***7:83***).

And he was one of the unbelievers (***2:34***).

So he is of those who go astray (***7:175***).

My covenant does not include the unjust ones (***2:124***).

The plurals in all these phrases would have been irrelevant if they did not mean existence of more than two persons having the attributes mentioned. Likewise, the verse: *So the intercession of intercessors shall not avail them,* instead of refuting the intercession, clearly proves the existence of intercessors and, therefore, intercession. As for the verses that contain the exceptions, "but by His permission", "except after His permission", they clearly prove the actuality of intercession, especially as the infinitive verb "permission" is used in genitive case (*His permission*). No one having a taste of Arabic literature can entertain any doubt about it.

It is childish to say that the two phrases, "but by His permission" and "except for him whom He approves" mean the same thing, i.e., the divine will. Moreover, the Qur'an has used various phrases of exception in various places, e.g., "but by His permission", "except after His permission", "except for him whom He approves" and "but he who bears witness of the truth and they know (him)".

Even if we accept that the divine permission and divine approval mean the same thing, i.e., divine will, can it be said that the last-mentioned phrase (*but he who bears witness of the truth...*) too implies the same? Such interpretation implies such inexactness and laxity in talk as even an ordinary Arab would not like attributed to him, let alone an eloquent one. Can we accuse the most eloquent divine speech, i.e., the Qur'an, of such inarticulateness?

As for the traditions, we shall show later that they too follow the line adopted by the Qur'an.

Sixth Objection

The verses do not say clearly that on the Day of Judgement, the punishment would be averted from the wrong-doers, after the sin has been proved and the sentence pronounced. The intercession attributed to the prophets means that they were the intermediaries between the Lord and His servant, they received revelation from their Lord and conveyed it to the people and guided them to the right path, leading them to spiritual and ethical perfection. In this sense, they are the intercessors for the believers in this world as well as in the hereafter.

Reply

No doubt, it is one of the aspects of intercession; but intercession is not limited to this much. The prophets called their people to the true faith and repentance, and this is the intercession mentioned by the objector. Now let us look again at the verse:

Surely, Allah does not forgive that any thing should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases (***4:48***).

As described earlier, this verse covers the cases other than the true faith and repentance. (True faith and repentance would wipe out the polytheism too.) The exception of polytheism shows that here the talk is about other things – and intercession, in the meaning explained by us, is one of those cases.

Seventh Objection

Reason does not prove that intercession really exists; and the Qur'anic verses on this subject are ambiguous – in one place they prove it, at others refute it; sometimes they add some proviso, at the other they speak unconditionally. Therefore, the ethics of religion demands that we should believe in all of them and leave their meaning to Allah.

Reply

The ambiguous verses, when referred to the decisive ones, become decisive themselves. It is an easy process which is not beyond our ability and power. We shall explain this subject when writing about the verse:

Of it there are some verses decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are ambiguous… (***3:7***).

3. Who Will Benefit From Intercession?

As explained earlier, it was not in the best interest of religious guidance to pin-point who should benefit from intercession on the Day of Judgement. But vague hints and ambiguous statements can do no harm, and the Qur'an has used them to give us a general idea. Allah says:

Every soul is held in pledge for what it has earned (***74:38***).

Except the people of the right hand (***74:39***).

In gardens; they shall ask each other (***74:40***).

About the guilty (***74:41***).

"What has brought you into hell?" (***74:42***).

They shall say: "We were not of those who prayed" (***74:43***).

"And we used not to feed the poor" (***74:44***).

"And we used to enter **(into vain discourse)** ***with those who entered*** **(into vain discourse)**" (***74:45***).

"And we used to call the Day of Judgement a lie" (***74:46***).

"Till death overtook us" (***74:47***).

So the intercession of intercessors shall not avail them (***74:48***).

The verses declare that every soul shall remain mortgaged on the Day of Judgement for the sins it has earned, held responsible for the wrongs done in this life. The only exception is of the people of the right hand – they shall be released from that pledge, and shall settle in the gardens. They shall see the wrong-doers who shall be held captive of their sins, and herded into hell; they shall ask them for the reason of their entering into hell, and the guilty shall reply by enumerating four sins as the cause of their disgrace and punishment. And because of those sins, they shall lose the benefit of the intercession of intercessors.

It implies that the people of the right hand would be free from those sins which deprive a man of the benefit of intercession. Allah shall release them from the fetters of sins and wrongs; and this release shall be as a result of the intercession of intercessors.

The verses are a part of the Chapter 74 (The Clothed One); it was revealed at Mecca at the beginning of the Call, as its contents amply prove. At that time the prayer and *zakat* as known to us were not promulgated. In this context the prayer, mentioned in the verse, "We were not of those who prayed", could only mean turning one's face towards Allah with humility and submission; likewise, the verse, "and we used not to feed the poor", could only refer to general spending on the poor in the way of Allah.

al-Khawd (الخوض = translated here as entering into vain discourse) literally means to wade into water, to plunge or rush into something. The verse, "we used to enter (into vain discourse) ...", implies entanglement in the vain things of this life, which distract a man from remembrance of the hereafter; it may also mean vilification of the verses which remind one of the Day of Reckoning.

Those wrong-doers, therefore, shall be guilty of four sins:

(1) Not turning their faces towards Allah with humility and submission;

(2) not spending in the way of Allah;

(3) vilification of divine revelations; and

(4) calling the Day of Judgement a lie.

These four evils destroy the foundation of religion. Religion demands following the purified guides, setting one's face towards Allah, turning away from the worldly distractions, setting one's eyes on the Day of Judgement. If a man succeeds in it, he will be free from the third and the fourth sins, i.e., vilification of divine revelation and calling the Day of Judgement a lie. When, in this way, his fundamental belief is secured, he shall feel the urge to turn towards Allah and to help fellow human beings. These two factors are represented in these verses by prayer and spending in the way of Allah. Faith and deed all would thus combine to build the structure of religion. Other elements, like belief in Oneness of God and the prophethood, would naturally follow.

The people of the right hand are the ones who shall benefit from the intercession; and they are the ones whose religion and faith Allah is pleased with. They may come on the Day of Judgement with perfect deeds – and in that case there will be no need for any intercession; or they may come burdened with some sins – and it is they who shall benefit from the intercession. Therefore, the intercession shall be for those people of the right hand who may have committed some sins.

Allah says:

***If you avoid the great sins which you are forbidden, We will expiate from you your* (*small*) *sins* (*4:31*).**

Therefore, anybody coming on the Day of Judgement with an unexpiated sin shall certainly be guilty of a great sin – had it been a small one it would have been expiated long ago. We have to conclude from this verse that the intercession shall be for those people of the right hand who shall be guilty of great sins. The Prophet has said: "Verily my intercession is for those of my *ummah* who shall have committed great sins; as for the good–doers, there shall be no difficulty for them..."

The designation, "the people of the right hand", is the opposite of "the people of the left hand". These Qur'anic terms are based on the fact that man, on the Day of Judgement, shall be given his book of deeds either in his right hand or in the left. Allah says:

(Remember) ***the day when We will call every people with their Imam; then whoever is given his book in his right hand, these shall read their book; and they shall not be dealt with a whit unjustly*** **(*17:71*).**

***And whoever is blind in this, he shall* (also) *be blind in the hereafter; and more erring from the way* (*17:72*).**

We shall describe, when writing about this verse, that getting the book in the right hand is synonymous with following the rightful Imam; likewise getting the book in the left–hand means following a misguiding leader or Imam. Allah says about Pharaoh:

***He shall lead his people on the resurrection day, and bring them down to the fire* (*11:98*).**

It means that not only the required four qualities but even the nomenclature, "the people of the right hand", is based on the fact that they followed an approved religion, that Allah was pleased with them.

Allah says in another place:

***And they do not intercede except for him whom He approves* (*21:28*).**

This approval is general and without any condition or qualification. It is not like the one mentioned in verse:

…***Except of him whom the Beneficent God allows and whose word He is pleased with*** (***20:109***).

Where approval or pleasure is related to a servant's word. In the verse under discussion the pleasure or approval is related to them, not to their deed; in other words, "whom He approves" means 'whose religion he approves'. Accordingly, this verse too has the same import as the previous ones.

Again, Allah says:

The day on which We will gather the pious ones to the Beneficent God as the guests of honour (***19:85***).

And We will drive the guilty to hell like (**thirsty**) ***herd*** (**to the watering place**) (***19:86***).

They shall own not any intercession, save he who has made a covenant with the Beneficent God (***19:87***).

The one who has made a covenant with Allah shall be given possession of intercession. It should not be forgotten that not every guilty servant is an unbeliever. Allah says:

Whoever comes to his Lord (**being**) ***guilty, for him is surely, hell; he shall not die therein nor shall he live*** (***20:74***).

And whoever comes to Him a believer (**and**) ***he has done good deeds indeed, these it is who shall have the high ranks*** (***20:75***).

According to these verses, anyone who is not a good-doing believer is guilty, no matter whether he is an unbeliever or a wrong-doing believer. The latter group, i.e., those who have true belief but have also committed sins, is the one that has made a covenant with God. Allah says:

Did I not enjoin you (**make a covenant with you**)***, o children of Adam! That you should not worship the Satan? Surely, he is your open enemy*** (***36:60***).

And that you should worship Me; this is the straight path (***36:61***).

The phrase, "and that you should worship Me", is a covenant in the meaning of order, enjoinment; and the sentence, "this is the straight path", is also a covenant by implication because the straight path leads to felicity and safety. However, such believers shall enter the hell because of sins they had committed, then they shall be rescued by intercession. It is to this covenant that the following verse alludes:

(**The Jews**) ***say: "Fire shall not touch us but for a few days." Say: "Have you received a promise*** (**covenant**) ***from Allah?"*** (***2:80***).

These verses too, therefore, lead us to the same conclusion, namely, the group that shall benefit from intercession on the Day of Judgement is that of the believers who would have committed great sins; it is

they whose religion and belief Allah is pleased with and has approved.

4. Who Are The Intercessors?

It has been described that intercession takes place in two spheres: in creation and in legislation. So far as the intercession in creation is concerned, all intermediary causes are intercessors because they are placed between the Creator and the created.

As for the intercessors in the sphere of legislation and judgement, they may be divided into two categories: (1) intercessors in this life, and (2) those in the hereafter.

Intercessors In This Life

All the things that bring a man nearer to Allah and make him eligible for divine forgiveness. The following come into this category:

a. Repentance: Allah says:

Say: "O my servants! who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah; surely, Allah forgives the faults altogether; surely, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful" (***39:53***).

"And return to your Lord..." (***39:54***).

It covers all the sins, even polytheism; if one repents from it and believes in One God, one's previous polytheism is wiped out and forgiven.

b. True faith: Allah says:

O *you who believe! fear Allah and believe in His Apostle: He will give you two portions of His mercy, and make for you a light with which you will walk, and forgive you ...* (***57:28***).

c. Good deed:

Allah has promised those who believe and do good deeds (**that there is**) ***for them pardon and great recompense*** (***5:9***).

O *you who believe! fear Allah and seek an approach* (**medium**) ***to Him...*** (***5:35***).

There are many verses of this theme.

d. The Qur'an:

Indeed, has come to you from Allah a light and a manifest Book whereby Allah guides him who follows His pleasure, into the ways of peace, and takes them out from darkness towards the light

by His will and guides them to the straight path (***5:16***).

e. Any thing related to a good deed, like the mosques, holy places and auspicious days.

f. The prophets and the apostles, as they seek forgiveness for their people. Allah says:

and had they, when they were unjust to themselves, come to you and asked forgiveness of Allah, and the Apostle had (**also**) ***asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah oft-returning*** (**to mercy**), ***Merciful*** (***4:64***).

g. The angels, as they too ask forgiveness for the believers. Allah says:

Those who bear the throne and those around it celebrate the praise of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who believe (***40:7***).

…And the angels celebrate the praise of their Lord and ask forgiveness for those on earth… (***42:5***).

h. The believers themselves, as they seek pardon for their believer brothers and for themselves. Allah quotes them as saying:

And pardon us, and forgive us, and have mercy on us, Thou art our Guardian… (***2:286***).

Intercessors In The Hereafter

We use the term, intercessor, in the meaning explained in the beginning. The following come into this category:

a. The prophets and the apostles: Allah says:

And they say: "The Beneficent God had taken to Himself a son." Glory be to Him! Nay! they are honoured servants (***21:26***).

They do not precede Him in speech and (**only**) ***according to His commandment do they act*** (***21:27***).

He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they do not intercede except for whom He approves (***21:28***).

Those who were called 'son' of God, are in fact His honoured servants and they do intercede for him whom He approves. Among them is 'Isa, son of Maryam, and he was a prophet. It means that the prophets do intercede for approved persons.

Again, Allah says:

And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for **(or, do not own)** ***intercession, but he who bears witness of the truth and they know*** **(him)** **(*43:86*).**

b. The angels: The preceding two verses prove that the angels too may intercede, because they too were called daughters of Allah. Moreover, Allah says:

And how many an angel is there in the heavens whose intercession does not avail at all except after Allah has given permission to whom He pleases and chooses **(*53:26*).**

On that day shall no intercession avail except of him whom the Beneficent God allows and whose word He is pleased with **(*20:109*).**

He knows what is before them and what is behind them … **(*20:110*).**

c. The witnesses: Allah says:

And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for **(or, do not own)** ***intercession, but he who bears witness of truth and they know*** **(him)** **(*43:86*).**

This verse shows that those who bear witness of the truth do own (or, have authority for) intercession. The witness mentioned here does not mean the one killed in the battlefield. It refers to the witness for the deeds, as was described in the Chapter of the Opening, and will be further explained under the verse:

And thus, we have made you a medium **(i.e. just)** ***nation that you may be witnesses over the people and*** **(that)** ***the Apostle may be a witness over you…*** **(*2:143*).**

d. The believers: They shall be joined to the witnesses on the Day of Judgement; it follows that they too may intercede like the witnesses. Allah says:

And **(as for)** ***those who believe in Allah and His apostles, these it is that are the truthful and the witnesses with their Lord …*** **(*57:19*).**

5. Intercession: About What?

The intercession in creation is related to every cause in this world of the cause and effect.

As for the intercession in matters of legislation and judgement, some of them wipe out every sin and its punishment, right from polytheism to the smallest one. For example, repentance done, and true faith acquired, before the Day of Resurrection. Some wipe out effects of some particular sins, like some specified good deeds.

As for the issue under discussion, i.e., the intercession of the prophets and other believers on the Day of Judgement, we have already explained that it shall avail those believers who might have committed big

sins, but whose faith Allah is pleased with.

6. When Will Intercession Be Effected?

We are talking here too about the intercession on the Day of Judgement to waive off the punishment of sins. We have earlier quoted the verses of the Chapter 42 (The Clothed One):

Every soul is held in pledge for what it has earned (***74:38***).

Except the people of the right hand (***74:39***).

In gardens; they shall ask each other (***74:40***).

About the guilty (***74:41***).

As explained earlier, the verses clearly say who would benefit from the intercession, and who won't. They also imply that the intercession will get the wrong-doing believers released from fetters of their sins, and protect them from abiding for ever in the hell.

But there is nothing to show that intercession might avail against the turmoils of the Day of Resurrection. Rather, the verse proves that it will be effective only for rescuing the guilty believers from the hell, or preventing them from entering into it.

It may be inferred from the verses that this talk will take place after the people of the garden have settled in the gardens, and the people of the hell in the hell; and that the intercessors shall then intercede for a group of the guilty ones and rescue them from the hell. The phrase, "in gardens", implies it, as does the question, "What has brought you into hell?" Both phrases imply a more or less permanent abode. Likewise, the comment, "so the intercession...avails them not", denotes something occurring in present time i.e. after both groups have settled in their abodes.

As for al-Barzakh (البرزخ = the period between death and the Day of Resurrection) and presence of the Prophet and the Imams of the Ahl Al-Bayt ('a) at the time of death and at the questioning in the grave and the help given by them to the believer to overcome those difficulties (as will be described under the verse:

And there shall not be any one of the people of the book but he must certainly believe in him before his death (***4:159***).

These things have nothing to do with intercession. It is rather exercising the authority given to them by Allah over the creation. Allah says:

And on the most elevated places there shall be men who know all by their marks, and they shall call out to the dwellers of the garden: "Peace be on you; they shall not have yet entered it, though

they hope" (***7:46***).

And the dwellers of the most elevated places shall call out to men whom they will recognize by their marks, saying: "Of no avail were to you your amassing and your behaving haughtily" (***7:48***).

"Are these they about whom you swore that Allah will not bestow mercy on them?" "Enter the garden; you shall have no fear nor shall you grieve" (***7:49***).

It gives a glimpse of the authority or rule vested in them by the permission of Allah. If we look at the following verse from this angle, it too throws light on this aspect:

(**Remember**) ***the day when We will call every people with their Imam; then whoever is given his book in his right hand…*** (***17:71***).

The intermediary position of the Imam in calling every people and giving them their books is a sort of authority and rule vested in him by Allah.

To make a long story short, intercession shall happen at the very last stage on the Day of Judgement; it shall bring the divine forgiveness to the guilty believers, prevent them from entering into hell and take those out who would have entered into it; it shall be by extension of mercy and/or manifestation of benevolence and magnanimity.

Traditions

Al-Husayn Ibn Khalid narrates from ar-Ridha' ('a), who narrated through his forefathers from the Leader of the faithful ('a) that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) said: 'Whoever does not believe in my reservoir, may Allah not bring him to my reservoir, and whoever does not believe in my intercession, may Allah not extend to him my intercession.' Then he (S) said: 'Verily, my intercession is for those of my *ummah* who shall have committed great sins; as for the good-doers, there shall be no difficulty for them.' "al-Husayn Ibn Khalid said: "I asked ar-Ridha' ('a): 'O son of the Messenger of Allah! What is then the meaning of the words of Allah, Mighty and Great is He: ***…And they do not intercede except for him whom He approves…*** (***21:28***)***?'*** He ('a) said: 'They do not intercede except for him whose religion Allah is pleased with.'"[1]

The author says: The tradition of the Prophet, "Verily my intercession is…", has been narrated by both sects with numerous chains; and we have shown earlier that it is based on the theme of Qur'anic verses.

Suma'ah Ibn Mihran narrates from Abu Ibrahim ('a) that he said about the words of Allah: ***maybe your Lord will raise you to a praised position*** (***17:79***): "The people, on the Day of Resurrection, will remain standing for forty years; and the sun will be ordered so that it will ride over their heads and they will be bridled by sweat - and the earth will be told not to accept any of their sweat. So, they shall approach Adam to intercede for them, and he will direct them to Nuh, and Nuh will direct them to Ibrahim, and

Ibrahim will direct them to Musa, and Musa will direct them to 'Isa, and 'Isa will direct them saying: 'You should seek help of Muhammad, the last prophet.'

Thereupon, Muhammad (S) will say: 'I'll do it;' and will proceed until, arriving at the door of the garden, he will knock at it. It will be asked, 'Who is it?' (while Allah knows better!), and he will say: 'Muhammad.' Then it will be said: 'Open for him.' When the door will be opened, he will turn to his Lord, falling in *sajdah.* He will not raise his head until he is told: 'Speak up and ask, you shall be given; and intercede, your intercession shall be granted.' He will raise his head and turning to his Lord will fall (again) in *sajdah.* Then he will be promised as before; then he will raise his head. (Thereupon, he shall intercede) until he will intercede even for him who would have been burnt in the fire. Therefore, on the Day of Resurrection, no one among all the nations will be more eminent than Muhammad (S); and it is (the meaning of) the words of Allah: ***Maybe your Lord will raise you to a praised position*** (***17:79***)*."*[2]

The author says: This meaning is narrated by both sects in great number, in detail as well as in short, with numerous chains; and it proves that the "praised position" means the position of intercession. This tradition is not in conflict with intercession of other prophets, because probably their intercession will be an offshoot of our Prophet's, and it will begin on his hand.

'Ubayd Ibn Zurarah said: "Abu 'Abdillah ('a) was asked whether a believer would have the right of intercession. He said: 'Yes.' Then someone said: 'Will even a believer need the intercession of Muhammad (S) on that day?' He said: 'Yes. The believers too will come with wrongs and sins; and there will be none but he shall need the intercession of Muhammad on that day.'" ('Ubayd) said: "And someone asked him about the words of the Messenger of Allah: 'I am the Chief of the children of Adam, and I say this without boasting.' He said: 'Yes.' (Then) he said: 'He will hold the chain-link of the door of the garden and open it; then he will fall in *sajdah,* and Allah will tell him:

'Raise your head, do intercede, your intercession shall be granted; ask, you shall be given.' So he will raise his head and again will fall in *sajdah;* then Allah will (again) say to him: 'Raise your head, do intercede, your intercession shall be granted, and ask, you shall be given.' Thereupon he will raise his head and intercede - and his intercession will be accepted; and he will ask and be given."[3]

Muhammad Ibn al-Qasim narrates through his chains from Bishr Ibn Shurayh al-Basri that he said: "I said to Muhammad Ibn 'Ali ('a): 'Which verse in the Book of Allah is the most hope-inspiring?' He said: 'And what do your people say (about it)?' I said: 'They say, (it is the verse,) ***Say: "O my servants! who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah"*** (***39:53***). 'He said: 'But we, the people of the house, do not say so.' I said: 'Then what do you say about it?' He said: 'We say (it is the verse,) ***And soon will your Lord give you so that you shall be well pleased*** (***93:5***). (It means) the intercession, by Allah the intercession, by Allah the intercession.'"[4]

The author says: The words of Allah, ***maybe your Lord will raise you to a praised position*** (***17:79***), refers to the Prophet's glorious position of intercession, as the numerous traditions of the Prophet

himself prove. Moreover, the wording of the verse too supports it: “will raise you” shows that it is a position which he will attain in future, i.e. on the Day of Judgement; “praised” is general and unconditional, and implies that he shall be praised by all men, past and present. *Al-Hamd* (الحمد) means to praise someone for a good done to you intentionally. This definition shows that the Prophet will do something by his own will and power which will benefit all of them and in return everyone will praise him. That is why the Imam said in the tradition of ‘Ubayd Ibn Zurarah, “and there will be no one but he shall need the intercession of Muhammad on that day.”

We shall later explain it further.

Now about the declaration that the verse, “and soon will your Lord give you so that you shall be well pleased,” is the most hope-inspiring one in the Qur’an - especially when compared to the verses:

Say: “O my servants! who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah; surely, Allah forgives the faults altogether; surely, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.” (***39:53***).

And return to your Lord and submit to Him before there comes to you the punishment… (***39:54***).

And follow the best that has been revealed to you…” (***39:55***).

Al-Qunut (القنوط = to lose hope, to despair) has been mentioned several times in the Qur’an. Allah quotes Ibrahim (‘a) as saying:

And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord but the erring ones (***15:56***).

Also He quotes Ya’qub (‘a):

Surely, none despairs of Allah’s mercy except the unbelieving ones (***12:87***).

But the context in both places shows it as referring to losing hope of divine mercy in matters of creation. As for the verse under discussion the context slows that it admonishes against losing hope of divine mercy in matters of legislation and judgement; look for instance at the words, ***who have acted extravagantly against their own souls*** (***39:53***). They clearly say that one who has committed sins should not despair of the mercy of Allah. Also, Allah has promised forgiveness for the *faults altogether* without any exception. But this promise is followed by admonition to repent (*turn to your Lord*) and submit to Allah and follow the divine commandments. The text on the whole demonstrates that a man who might have committed sins need not despair of the mercy of Allah as long as he is in a position to turn to Allah, to submit to Him, and to follow His commandments.

In short, this mercy is conditional. And there is a vast difference between this conditional mercy and the all-encompassing, unconditional mercy and unrestricted granting and pleasing which Allah has promised His Apostle, who himself was a mercy for all the mankind. It is that promise which will make the Apostle

of Allah (S) well pleased: ***and soon will your Lord give you, so that you shall be well pleased*** (***93:5***).

This last-mentioned verse occurs in a context where Allah mentions His grace and bounties to the Prophet; it is a unique promise never made to anyone else. The phrase, "will give you," is unconditional and unrestricted. A promise, somewhat similar, has been made to a group of the people of the garden:

They shall have what they please with their Lord (***42:22***).

They have therein what they wish and with Us is more yet (***50:35***).

These verses show that those people shall be given more than they wish for - and man by nature desires all that he can think of happiness, good and felicity. It means that they shall be given more than they can think of, as Allah says:

So no soul knows what is hidden for them of the joy of the eyes (***32:17***).

Now this is what Allah has promised those who believe and do good; and even this is beyond human imagination. Surely, what He shall give to His Prophet as His special grace, must be far greater than this.

This much about the grace of Allah. Now let us reflect upon "you shall be well pleased". Obviously, this pleasure has no relation whatsoever to the pleasure a man should have for whatever Allah gives Him and decrees for him. Allah is the Master and the servant has nothing of his own except the inherent need and poverty. He must always be happy and grateful for whatever his Master gives him, no matter whether it is more or less, big or small; he must always be pleased with whatever Allah decrees for him, whether it looks comforting or distressing.

This is what is expected of every good believer; surely, the Prophet knows this ideal better, and acts upon it more perfectly, than anyone else; in short, he likes for himself only that which Allah wills for him. Therefore, it would have been superfluous and irrelevant to say that he would be pleased after he was given something. It follows that this promised pleasure refers to something else. It refers to that happiness or satisfaction which a needy person experiences when his need is fully met. A similar promise was given to some of His virtuous servants:

(**As for**) ***those who believe and do good, surely, they are the best of men*** (***98:7***).

Their reward with their Lord is gardens of perpetuity beneath which rivers flow, abiding therein for ever; Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him; that is for him who fears his Lord (***98:8***).

Its context shows that this too is to show some special divine favour for them, and hence it must be a very exclusive and comprehensive pleasure. At this juncture, it should be mentioned that Allah has praised His Apostle in these words:

to the believers **(he is)** ***compassionate, merciful*** **(*9:128*).**

Keeping all these things in view, ponder on this question:

Can the Prophet be pleased to enjoy the bounties of the garden, or can he be happy with the pleasures of the paradise, when some believers are imprisoned inside the hell? Remember that they are the people who believed in Allah as the One God, in the Prophet as the true prophet, and in what he brought with him as the true revelation; but they were overcome by their indiscretion and Satan twisted them between his fingers as a toy, and so they committed errors and sins – without any thought of revolting against God, of any arrogance before Him.

Even we, when we remember what mistakes we committed in past, what chances of spiritual perfection we missed before, we start blaming ourselves for all the shortcomings; then if we see some inexperienced youth indulging in youthful frolics, we are reluctant to condemn them; we feel compassion for them. But this mercy of ours is a manifestation of the imperfect compassion put in our nature by the Creator. How can we understand the mercy of the Lord of the worlds, in a place where the magnanimity of the compassionate, merciful Prophet and the mercy of the Most Merciful of all have to decide about the indiscretions of a powerless human being? Especially so when he had undergone all the torments of *al-barzakh* in proportion to his misdeeds?

al-Qummi narrates a tradition in his *at-Tafsir,* under the verse:

And intercession will not avail aught with Him save of him whom He permits **(*34:23*).**

That Abu al-'Abbas al-Mukabbar said: "A servant of a wife of 'Ali Ibn al-Husayn ('a), named Abu Ayman, came (to the fifth Imam ('a)) and said: 'O Abu Ja'far! You mislead the people, saying, intercession of Muhammad, intercession of Muhammad.' (Hearing this) Abu Ja'far became so angry that his face took a glowering expression; then he said: 'Woe unto you! O Abu Ayman! Are you deluded by chastity of your stomach and genitals? Why, when you will see the terrors of the resurrection, you shall certainly be in need of intercession of Muhammad.

Fie on you! Would he intercede except for him who would have been sentenced to the fire?' (Then) he said: 'There is no one from the early people to the later ones but he will need the intercession of Muhammad (S) on the Day of Resurrection.' Then again Abu Ja'far said: 'Certainly the Messenger of Allah has (authority of) intercession for his *ummah,* and we have (authority of) intercession for our Shi'ahs, and our Shi'ahs have (authority of) intercession for their families.' Then he said: 'And surely, a believer shall intercede for (very large number of) people like the (tribes of) Rabi'ah and Mudar. And surely, a believer shall intercede for his servant, saying: "O my Lord! I owe this to him, he was protecting me from heat and cold." '

The author says: This tradition refers to a general intercession ("There is no one from the early people to the later ones but he will need the intercession of Muhammad...") and a particular one ("Fie on you!

Would he intercede except for him who would have been sentenced to the fire?”). We find similar idea in al-‘Ayyashi’s tradition from ‘Ubayd Ibn Zurarah mentioned earlier. There are other traditions of the same theme narrated by both sects. It is supported also by the verse:

And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for intercession, but he who bears witness of the truth and they know **(him)** **(*43:86*).**

This verse shows that the prerequisite of intercession is the witnessing of the truth. The witnesses are the intercessors, the owners of the intercession. And we shall describe under verse:

And thus We have made you a medium **[just]** ***nation that you may be witnesses over the people and*** **[that]** ***the Apostle may be a witness over you*****)** **(*2:143*).**

That the prophets are the witnesses and that Muhammad (S) is the witness over them; so he (S) is the witness over the witnesses, and thus he is the intercessor for the intercessors; and without the testimony of the witnesses the foundation of the Day of Judgement would crumble.

The (fifth) Imam said about the verse, ***And intercession will not avail aught with Him save him whom He permits*** **(*34:23*)**: “No prophet or apostle may intercede until Allah permits him, except the Apostle of Allah, because Allah has already given him permission before the Day of Resurrection; and intercession is (allowed) to him and to the Imams from his progeny, and after that to the prophets.”5

‘Ali (‘a) said: “The Apostle of Allah (S) said: ‘Three (groups) shall intercede with Allah and their intercession will be accepted: The prophets, then the (religious) scholars, then the martyrs.’“6

The author says: *ash-Shuhada’* (الشهَداء) *in* the Qur’anic terminology means witnesses of the deeds; but in the traditions of the Imams it is generally used for the martyrs who are killed in the way of Allah. And apparently it is in this meaning that the word has been used in this tradition.

The Imam said: “We have the (authority of) intercession; and the people who love us have the (authority of) intercession.”7

The author says: Numerous traditions prove that the Lady of paradise, Fatimah (‘a) has the power and authority of intercession, as do his descendants other than the Imams. Likewise, a lot of traditions bestow similar authority on the believers - even to their miscarried foetus. There is a well-known tradition that the Prophet said: “Marry (and) procreate; for I shall boast of you (i.e. your number) against other nations on the Day of Resurrection - even of miscarried foetus; he shall stand at the door of the garden in a restive mood; he shall be told to enter, but he will say: ‘No, until my parents enter it...’“

Abu ‘Abdillah narrates, through his father and grandfather, from ‘Ali (‘a) that he said: “The garden has eight gates: one for the entry of prophets and the truthful ones, the other for the martyrs and the good ones; and five gates are for the entry of our Shi’ahs and lovers - I shall be standing on the *as-Sirat* (الصراط = the path; the bridge over the hell) praying and saying: ‘My Lord! Save my Shi’ahs and my

lovers and my helpers and those who followed me in the (life of the) world.' Then all of a sudden there will come a voice from inside the throne: 'Your prayer is granted and your intercession for your Shi'ahs accepted. And every Shi'ah of mine and everyone who loves me, helps me and fights my enemies by (his) deed or word, shall intercede for seventy thousands of his neighbours and relatives – and (there is) a gate from which shall enter all the Muslims who witness that there is no god except Allah and in whose heart there is not an iota of enmity towards us, the people of the house."[8]

Hafs al-Mu'adhdhin narrates that Abu 'Abdillah ('a) wrote, *inter alia,* in a letter to his companions: "And know that none of the creatures of Allah shall avail you against Him, neither an angel who is near to Him, nor an apostle prophet nor any one below them. Whoever likes intercession of intercessors to avail him, should ask Allah to be pleased with him."[9]

as-Sadiq ('a) said: "Jabir told Abu Ja'far ('a): 'May I be your ransom, O son of the Apostle of Allah! Narrate to me a tradition about your grandmother, Fatimah.' (Then the tradition continues, mentioning the intercession of Fatimah on the Day of Resurrection, until it says:) Abu Ja'far ('a) said: 'Then, by God, no one among the people will remain (unsaved) except a doubting one or an unbeliever or a hypocrite. When they shall be (put) into (various) ranks of the hell, they shall cry out – as Allah has said:

***So we have no intercessors* (*26:100*).**

***Nor a true friend* (*26:101*).**

***But if we could but once return, we would be of the believers* (*26:102*).**

Then Abu Ja'far ('a) said: 'But oh! how preposterous! They shall be denied what they asked for;

***And if they were sent back, they would certainly return to what they were forbidden, and most certainly they are liars* (*6:28*).'"**[10]

The author says: The Imam has proved by the sentence, "So we have no intercessors", that intercession will take place on the Day of Judgement. In this light, it is amusing to see our adversaries trying to use it as an argument against intercession! Just as we said about the verse:

***So the intercession of intercessors avails them not* (*74:48*).**

This verse too shows that intercession will surely, take place on that day.

If the Qur'an wanted to negate the intercession altogether, it would have used the singular form (...no intercessor nor a true friend). But it has used the plural, "So we have no intercessors"; and it proves that there shall be a group interceding on behalf of some people, but it will not be of any avail to those particular speakers. Moreover, the following sentence, "But if we could but once return, we would be of the believers," shows a desire within the frame of grief. Obviously, such a desire is related to that thing loss of which has caused the grief. Therefore, what this sentence implies is this: Would that we could

return to the previous life; then we would be of the believers, so that the intercession of intercessors would avail us too, as it has benefited the believers. The verse, therefore, is a good proof for intercession.

Al-Kazim ('a) narrated from his father, through his forefathers, from the Prophet that he said: "My intercession is for those of my *ummah* who would have committed big sins; as for the doers of good, there shall be no difficulty for them." He was asked: "O son of the Messenger of Allah! How can the intercession be for those who would have committed big sins, while Allah says,

***And they do not intercede except for him whom He approves* (*21:28*).**

And a committer of big sins cannot be approved?" He ('a) said: "No believer commits a sin but he regrets it and feels ashamed. And the Prophet has said: 'Enough is regret as repentance.' And also he (S) has said: 'Whoever is pleased by a good deed and displeased by a bad deed, he is a believer.' Therefore, if there is someone who does not feel remorse for a sin he has committed, he is not a believer, and intercession will not avail him, and he will be an unjust one. And Allah says:

***The unjust shall not have any true friend nor any intercessor who should be obeyed* (*40:18*).**"

It was said to him: "O son of the Messenger of Allah! How is it that he who is not sorry of a sin he has committed, he does not remain a believer?" He said: "Anyone who commits a big sin, knowing that he must be punished for it, will certainly feel remorse for what he has done. And as soon as he is sorry, he is repentant, eligible for intercession. But if he is not sorry, then he is persisting in it, and a persistent (sinner) is not forgiven, because he does not believe in the punishment of what he has done; had he believed in that punishment, he would have been sorry. And the Prophet has said: 'No big sin abides with apologizing, and no small sin remains (small) with persistence.' And as for the words of Allah, ***and they do not intercede except for him whom He approves* (*21:28*)**, it means that they do not intercede except for him whose religion He approves. Religion is an acknowledgement that good and bad deeds have to be recompensed. If one's religion were approved, one would feel remorse for the sins one would have committed, because he would know what their result would be on the (day of) resurrection."[11]

The author says: The words of the Imam, "and he will be an unjust one": It gives the definition of "unjust" as applicable on the Day of Resurrection. It alludes to the Qur'anic verse,

***...Then a crier will cry out among them that the curse of Allah is on the unjust* (*7:44*).**

***Who hinder* (people) *from Allah's way and seek to make it crooked and they are disbelievers in the hereafter* (*7:45*).**

Accordingly, unjust is he who does not believe in the Day of Judgement; naturally, such a man would not be sorry if he neglected to do what he was ordered to do, or if he indulged in sins and crimes. May be, he outright rejects basic truths and teachings of religion; or may be he just does not care, is not worried

of punishment of sins on the Day of Reckoning. In later case, his verbal acknowledgement of the Day of Judgement would be but a joke and mockery.

"...as soon as he is sorry, he is repentant, eligible for intercession": The adjective, repentant, is not used here in its well-known terminological sense - repentance (in the terminological sense) is by itself the best intercessor and saviour. What the Imam meant here is this: If he feels remorse for the sin committed, he returns to Allah, his religion is thus approved by Him, and therefore he becomes eligible for intercession.

"And the Prophet has said: 'No big sin abides with apologizing...'": The Imam narrated this tradition to prove that persistence in a sin (even a small one) changes it from its original smallness to a far greater transgression - it shows one's disbelief in the Day of Judgement and injustice towards the signs of Allah. And such a thing is not forgiven. A sin is forgiven if the sinner sincerely repents, or if intercession avails him - and this depends on his religion being approved; and both repentance and approved religion are absent in case of persistence.

A similar theme is found in a tradition quoted in *'Ilal ash-Shara'i'* from Abu Ishaq al-Laythi that he said: "I said to Abu Ja'far Muhammad Ibn 'Ali al-Baqir ('a): 'O son of the Messenger of Allah! Tell me about a believer, possessing religious understanding when he reaches (a high point in) knowledge and becomes perfect, does he commit fornication?' He said: 'By God! No.' I said: 'Then does he indulge in sodomy?' He said: 'By God! No.' I said: 'Then does he steal?' He said: 'No.' I said: 'Then does he drink intoxicant?' He said: 'No.' I said: 'Then does he commit any of the big sins or indulge in any of these indecencies?' He said: 'No.' I said: 'Then does he commit a sin?' He said: 'Yes, and he is a believer, sinner, submissive.' I said: 'What does submissive mean?' He said: 'The submissive (servant) does not persist in it, does not keep doing it...'"

ar-Ridha' ('a) narrated through his forefathers that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: "When the resurrection comes, Allah, Great and Mighty is He, will manifest Himself to His believing servant, and will remind him of his sins one by one; then Allah will forgive him; Allah will not let (even) a near angel or an apostle prophet know of his (sins), and will cover it lest anyone becomes aware of it. Then He will say to his bad deeds: 'Be good deeds.'"[12]

Abu Dharr said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) said: 'A man will be brought on the Day of Resurrection; and it will be said: "Show him his small sins; and keep back from him his big sins." Then it will be said to him: "You did so and so on such and such a day." And he will go on confessing, while apprehensive of his big sins. Then it will be said: "Give him a good deed in place of every bad deed." Then he will say: "I had done some sins which I do not see (mentioned) here". Abu Dharr said: "And I saw the Messenger of Allah laughing until his teeth were shown."[13]

As-Sadiq ('a) said: "When the Day of Resurrection comes, Allah, Glorified and Sublime is He, shall spread His mercy until even Iblis will hope for His mercy."[14]

The author says: The last three traditions are of general nature. The traditions about intercession of the Prophet, emanating from the Imams of *Ahl Al-Bayt* ('a) as well as from the Sunni sources have successively been narrated by so many narrators as to leave no room for any doubt about their authenticity. Altogether they prove that intercession will take place, and that it will avail the believers who might have committed sins; it will prevent them from entering into hell, or will rescue them from it if already sent therein. It is however certain that the sinning believers shall not be allowed to abide for ever in the hell. And we have earlier explained that the Qur'an too does not say more than this.

A Philosophical Contemplation

According to Abu 'Ali Ibn Sina, intellectual reasoning cannot give us details concerning the resurrection and judgement (as given in the Qur'an and *sunnah*), as it lacks the premises necessary to lead to a conclusion. Nevertheless, it may contemplate the future of man after the soul leaves the body and lives in the form of (Platonic) ideas – how it proceeds on the path of happiness or unhappiness reaching the ultimate station.

Whatever man does in beginning leaves an imprint on his psyche – either of happiness or unhappiness. By "happiness" we mean what is good for him as a man; on the other hand, "unhappiness" denotes what is bad for him as a man. If the action is repeatedly performed the imprint becomes deeper and deeper until it becomes a deep-rooted characteristic, until it reshapes the psyche in its own mould.

If the mould is good, the resulting shape as well as the actions emanating from it are good and agreeable to the man "as a man", and man is "happy". If on the contrary the mould is bad, the resulting shape and actions become ugly and disagreeable to the man "as a man"; and although the deformed psyche seemingly enjoys those actions, in reality it remains unhappy "as a man". Here we are talking about a man who is happy in his psyche and good in his deed *vis-a-vis* a man who is unhappy in his psyche and evil in his deeds.

It is the former that is the subject of our discussion here. A man may be good and happy in his person, because he has got correct belief of eternal truth; but his psyche has been polluted by the sins and transgressions committed as a result of weakness of flesh and error of judgement and choice. Consequently, psyche becomes "unhappy". But this pollution and unhappiness is a matter of constraint that has been forced on his inherently happy psyche; and we know from intellectual reasoning that constraint does not continue for ever. That soul will most certainly get rid of that unhappiness, pollution and rust in the fire of chastisement in al-Barzakh or on the Day of Judgement – it depends on its own strength and stage of inner perfection.

The opposite is true for the latter group. Whatever the effects of good deeds, they are no more than cosmetics; it is a forced appearance not agreeable to its inner-self; and sooner or later it is bound to disappear.

There remains a fifth category: The soul which could not turn its potentials into achievements – good or bad – in this life. They will remain in suspense, waiting for the divine judgement.

This much could be discerned from intellectual reasoning, concerning the reward and punishment, the inseparable results of the deeds.

Reasons also prove that existence has various grades of perfection – ideally perfect or less so, stronger or weaker. Consequently, the souls have various ranks in relation to the Creator – nearer to, or further from him. They are therefore one above the other, the highest being the nearest to the First Cause. They are the most perfect and ideal souls, like those of the prophets (may peace of Allah be on them!). They may become the mediums through which the unnatural pollution and rust may be removed from the weaker souls which are further below. It is this role which we call intercession.

A Social Discourse

Some people say: "Human society cannot continue without some laid rules, nor without an authority to look after its affairs. When all members maintain discipline and obey the rules, social justice is maintained and strengthened. This system is based on temporal benefits which the society cannot do without, as well as on spiritual and ethical ideals, like truth, sincerity, keeping one's word etc. which the development and good of the society depend upon. For these rules and regulations to have any force and effect, it was necessary for them to be accompanied by punishment laid down for the transgressors. Only in this way the system could be protected against the wilful transgression of some and indifference and negligence of others. That is why when a government (no matter which ideology it follows) is strong and capable enough to make people obey its edicts, the country marches forward, and society proceeds on the path of development. On the contrary when it is weak, the country is overcome by lawlessness and disorder, and plagued by troubles and turmoil.

"In view of the above, it is essential for the good of society to make people believe that they could not escape the consequences if they transgressed the law. Nothing should be said or done to raise a hope in them that they could avoid the punishment by some means, like intercession, bribe or deception.

"The biggest objection against Christianity is aimed at its belief of atonement: That Christ was crucified in order to atone for the sins of his followers. Now the Christians rely on that atonement to get salvation in the next world, without caring what they do in this life. Religion, in this way, destroys the very foundation of society, retards civilization and pulls it backwards. Data show that lies and injustice are found in ardent followers of religion to a far greater extent than in those who do not follow any religion. Its only reason is that the former are confident that their sins would certainly be wiped off through intercession."

This is in short what some "scholars" hold against the belief of intercession: That it weakens the foundation of civilization and social justice. But neither Islam proves intercession, in the meaning they

have given it, nor the intercession which Islam speaks of gives the result they have claimed. Before writing against intercession, as taught by Islam, they should learn what Islam teaches, how it applies its laws to the society, what type of intercession it promises and how, when and to what extent it is to be applied and effected:

First: What the Qur'an confirms of the intercession is this: The believers shall not abide in the hell, on the Day of Resurrection, provided they come to their Lord with approved belief and true faith. Thus, it is a conditional promise. Then it has emphasized that the faith remains in grave danger from sins, especially the big ones, and more particularly if one persists in them. Such a believer would be tottering on the brink of eternal damnation. When a believer remembers that promise, his hope of deliverance soars high; when he needs this warning, he is overcome by dread of perdition. His soul remains hovering between hope and fear; he worships his Lord both with love and awe. Thus, he spends his life in a moderate way, on the middle course. He experiences neither discouragement of pessimism, nor the rashness of over-optimism.

Second: Islam has made comprehensive laws for temporal and spiritual upliftment of the society; these laws cover all aspects of life of an individual and a group. It has prescribed suitable punishments for those who violate any of those rules - from monetary compensation to chastisement to firmly fixed punishment - until a stage comes when the offender is deprived of his rights as a member of society and is condemned to eternal shame, or even death. All this system has been entrusted into the hands of divinely appointed *ulu al-amr* (اولو الأمر = people vested with authority). Then each Muslim has been made responsible, for all other Muslims, as he is obliged to enjoin his compatriots, to do good and desist from evil. To cap it all, the Muslim nation is obliged to call others to the right path, and the way to affect this call is to give them good news of eternal reward if they do good and to warn them of eternal perdition if they indulge in evil.

It is this knowledge of this and the next world which is the foundation of Islam's character-building. The Prophet promulgated this system; and experiment has proved its effectiveness and potency. Its power to mould the society into divine image was proved during the time of the Prophet and continued to do so until Umayyids came into power. They made the *Shari'ah* a toy to play with; put the Islam's penal code in cold storage and behaved as though they were above all law, as if nothing could hinder them in their pursuit of pleasure. The result of that exercise is before our eyes today. The standard of "freedom" has been raised; western civilization is making inroads in our society. In Islamic countries, Islam exists in name only.

It is this manifest weakening of religion and this retrogressive movement of the Muslims which has caused their fall from heights of justice and virtue, and made them slip down the plane of morality and ethics. It is their debauchery and their wallowing in their base desires and sensualities that has made them bold to transgress every limit, to violate every rule, so much so that even the atheists look down at their debauchery, dishonesty and immorality.

This is the real and only cause of the deterioration of Muslim society. The objector is completely off the mark when he attributes this state of affairs to those sublime religious realities whose only aim, and only effect, was and is the man's felicity and happiness in this world as well as in the hereafter.

The data, mentioned in his argument, are irrelevant here. They have looked at a Muslim society which has got no guardian and no authority to enforce Islamic laws within its jurisdiction, and at an atheist society which has a strong authority to enforce its laws and to keep the people within the limits, with help of education and training of its own choice. Therefore, this comparison is quite clearly unjustified.

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1. al-Amali, as-Saduq.
2. al-'Ayyashi.
3. al-'Ayyashi.
4. at-Tafsir, Furat Ibn Ibrahim.
5. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
6. al-Khisal.
7. al-Khisal.
8. al-Khisal.
9. al-Kafi.
10. at-Tafsir, Furat Ibn Ibrahim.
11. at-Tawhid.
12. al-Khisal.
13. Muslim.
14. al-Amali, as-Saduq.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 49 - 61

وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَاكُم مِّنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوَءَ الْعَذَابِ يُذَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءكُمْ وَفِي ذَلِكُم بَلاء مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ

And when We delivered you from Pharaoh's people, who subjected you to severe torment, killing your sons and sparing your women, and in this there was a great trial from your Lord (***2:49***).

وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمُ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنتُمْ تَنظُرُونَ

And when We parted the sea for you, so We saved you and drowned the followers of Pharaoh while you watched by (***2:50***).

وَإِذْ وَاعَدْنَا مُوسَى أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِهِ وَأَنتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ

And when We appointed (**a time of**) ***forty nights with Musa, then you took the calf*** (**for a god**) ***after him and you were unjust*** (***2:51***).

ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنكُم مِّن بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

then We pardoned you after that so that you might give thanks (***2:52***).

وَإِذْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

And when We gave Musa the book and the distinction that you might walk aright (***2:53***).

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعِجْلَ فَتُوبُواْ إِلَى بَارِئِكُمْ فَاقْتُلُواْ

أَنفُسَكُمْ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ عِندَ بَارِئِكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

And when Musa said to his people: "O my people! you have surely, been unjust to yourselves by taking the calf (**for a god**)***, therefore turn to your Creator*** (**penitently**) ***and kill your people, that is best for you with your Creator; so He turned to you*** (**mercifully**), ***for surely, He is the Oft-returning*** (**with mercy**), ***the Merciful"*** (***2:54***).

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَى لَن نُّؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّى نَرَى اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ وَأَنتُمْ تَنظُرُونَ

And when you said: "O Musa! we will not believe in you until we see Allah manifestly," so the punishment overtook you while you looked on (***2:55***).

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكُم مِّن بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

then We raised you up after your death that you may give thanks (***2:56***).

وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوَى كُلُواْ مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَـكِن كَانُواْ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

And We made the clouds to give shade over you and We sent to you manna and quails: Eat of good things that We have given you; and they did not do Us any harm, but they did harm their own selves (***2:57***).

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُواْ هَـذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُواْ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَداً وَادْخُلُواْ الْبَابَ سُجَّداً وَقُولُواْ حِطَّةٌ نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطَايَاكُمْ وَسَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And when We said: "Enter this city, then eat from it a plenteous (**food**) ***wherever you wish, and enter the gate making obeisance, and say, forgiveness, We will forgive you your wrongs and give more to those who do good*** (**to others**) (***2:58***).

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ قَوْلاً غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ رِجْزاً مِّنَ السَّمَاء بِمَا كَانُواْ يَفْسُقُونَ

But those who were unjust changed it for a saying other than that which had been spoken to them, so We sent upon those who were unjust a pestilence from heaven, because they transgressed (***2:59***).

وَإِذِ اسْتَسْقَى مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِب بِّعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ فَانفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْناً قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ كُلُواْ وَاشْرَبُواْ مِن رِّزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلاَ تَعْثَوْاْ فِي الأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ

And when Musa prayed for drink for his people, We said: "Strike the rock with your staff." So there gushed from it twelve springs; each tribe knew its drinking place: "Eat and drink of the provisions of Allah and do not act corruptly in the land, making mischief" (***2:60***).

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَى لَن نَّصْبِرَ عَلَىَ طَعَامٍ وَاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنبِتُ الأَرْضُ مِن بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّآئِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِهَا وَبَصَلِهَا قَالَ أَتَسْتَبْدِلُونَ الَّذِي هُوَ أَدْنَى بِالَّذِي هُوَ خَيْرٌ اهْبِطُواْ مِصْراً فَإِنَّ لَكُم مَّا سَأَلْتُمْ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَآؤُوْاْ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُواْ يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّينَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَواْ وَّكَانُواْ يَعْتَدُونَ

And when you said: "O Musa! we cannot bear with one food, therefore pray to your Lord on our behalf to bring forth for us out of what the earth grows, of its herbs and its cucumbers and its garlic and its lentils and its onions. He said: "Will you exchange that which is better for that which is worse? Enter a city, so you will have what you ask for." And abasement and humiliation

***were brought down upon them and they returned with Allah's wrath; this was so because they disbelieved in the signs of Allah and killed the prophets unjustly; this was so because they disobeyed and exceeded the limits* (*2:61*).**

Commentary

Verse 49

Qur'an: ***and sparing your women* (*2:49*).**

They left your women alive in order that they (i.e. the women) might serve them. *"al-Istihya'"* (الاستحيآء) means to wish someone to remain alive. The word may also mean: They behaved indecently with the women until they (i.e. the women) lost their modesty.

"Yasumunakum" (يسومونكم) translated here as "they subjected you to", literally means, they imposed upon you.

Verse 50

Qur'an: ***And when We parted the sea for you* (*2:50*).**

al-Farq (الفرْق) is opposite of *al-jam'* (الجَمْع); the words mean to separate and to gather, respectively. The same is the case of *al-fasl* (الفَصْل) vis-a-vis *"al-wasl"* (الوَصْل). To separate the sea means to part its water. *"Bikum"* (بِكُم), translated here as "for you", may also mean, "Soon on your entering the sea".

Verse 51

Qur'an: ***And when We appointed* (a time of) *forty days with Musa* (*2:51*).**

The same event has been described in Chapter 7 in these words:

***And We appointed with Musa a time of thirty nights and completed them with ten* (more), so *the appointed time of his Lord was complete, forty nights* (*7:142*).**

This verse mentions the total duration of the two promises together, as a tradition says.

Verse 54

Qur'an: ***Therefore, turn to your Creator* (penitently) (*2:54*).**

al-Bari' (الباريء) is one of the beautiful names of Allah, as Allah says:

***He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner; His are the most beautiful names...* (*59:24*).**

This name has been used three times in the Qur'an: twice in the verse under discussion and once in Chapter 59, quoted just above. Perhaps Allah used this name here because it was most suitable in the context of the event described.

While it is nearer in meaning to *al-Khaliq* (الخالق = the Creator) and *al-Mujid* (الموجِد = the Inventor), it is derived from *bara'a, yabra'u, bar'an* (بَرَءَ يَبْرَءُ بَرَءً = he separated, he separates, to separate). Allah thus separates His creation from inexistence, or He separates man from the earth. This name in this context conveys the following idea: No doubt it is very hard to repent by killing your own people. But Allah, Who now orders you to destroy yourselves by killing, is the same God who had created you. He was pleased to create you when it was good for you; and now He has decreed that you should kill your own people, and this order too is good for you. How can He decide anything for you except that which is good, and He is your Maker and Creator. The phrase, "your Creator", points to a special relation which they have with Him, and it emphasizes the fact that the given command is not for revenge; it is based on divine love, in order to purify them.

Qur'an: ***That is best for you with your Creator*** **(*2:54*).**

This and the preceding verses (that enumerate their transgressions and sins) are addressed to the whole Jewish nation, although the sins were committed by only some groups of them and not by all. Obviously, it is because they were very much united as a nation; if one did a thing, others were pleased with it. It was because of this feeling of their national unity that one group's action is attributed to the whole nation. Otherwise, not all the Israelites had killed the prophets, nor had all of them indulged in the calf-worship, or committed other sins mentioned herein. It proves that the order, "kill your people", actually meant, kill some of your people, i.e., the calf-worshippers. It may also be inferred from the words, "you have surely, been unjust to yourselves by taking the calf for worship", and the words, "that is best for you with your Creator" (which apparently is the final part of the speech of Musa).

The words, "so He turned to you (mercifully)", prove that their repentance was accepted. Tradition says that their repentance was accepted and sin forgiven when only a few of them had been killed. This forgiveness before the order was fully complied with shows that the command was given as a trial. The case is somewhat similar to the dream of Ibrahim ('a) and his being told to sacrifice Isma'i1; before he could reach the ultimate stage, he was told:

...O Ibrahim! **(*37:104*).**

You have indeed made the vision come true **(*37:105*).**

Likewise, Musa ('a) told his people ***"Turn to your Creator*** **(*penitently*)** ***and kill your people, that is best for you with your Creator"*** **(*2:54*),** and Allah confirmed the order, yet He took the killing of some as equal to the execution of all, and informed them that their repentance was accepted, "so He turned to you (mercifully)".

Verse 59

Qur'an: ***A pestilence from heaven*** **(*2:59*).**

"ar-Rijz" (الرجز = punishment).

Verse 60

Qur'an: ***Do not act corruptly*** **(*2:60*).**

"La ta'thaw" (لا تعثَوا) is derived from *al-'ayth* and *al-'athy* (العيْث، العَثى) it means the biggest chaos and mischief.

Verse 61

Qur'an: ***And its cucumbers and its garlic*** **(*2:61*).**

"al-Khiyar" (الخِيار) is cucumber; *"al-fum"* (الفوم) is garlic or wheat.

Qur'an: ***And they returned with Allah's wrath*** **(*2:61*).**

"Ba'u" (باءوا = they returned).

Qur'an: ***This was so because they disbelieved*** **(*2:61*).**

It gives the reason of preceding statement; and the next sentence, "this was so because they disobeyed and exceeded the limits" is the reason of that reason. Their disobedience and perennial excesses caused them to reject the signs of Allah and kill the prophets. Allah says in another verse:

Then evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the signs of Allah and used to mock them **(*30:10*).**

How was the disbelief caused by disobedience? One of the coming traditions explains it.

Traditions

Abu Ja'far ('a) said about the words of Allah: *and when We appointed* (a time of) *forty nights with Musa:* "It was thirty nights in the (divine) knowledge and measure, then something else happened (to show that it was not the final decree) and Allah added ten more; and in this way the appointed time of his Lord, the first and the last, was completed forty days."[1]

The author says: This tradition supports what we have mentioned earlier that the forty was the total of the two appointed times.

‘Ali (‘a) said about the words of Allah: ***and when Musa said to his people: “O my people! you have surely, been unjust to yourselves…”*** (***2:54***)*: “They* asked Musa: ‘How should we repent?’ He said: ‘Some of you should kill the others.’ Thereupon, they took the knives and everyone started killing (the others), even his brother, father and son, without caring, by God! whom he killed. (It continued) till seventy thousands of them were killed. Then Allah revealed to Musa: *‘Tell them to stay their hands;’ and he who was killed was forgiven and he who remained, his repentance was accepted.”*[2]

The Imam said: “Musa (‘a) went to the appointed place and time, and then came back to his people; and they had started worshipping the calf; then he told them: ***‘O my people! you have surely, been unjust to yourselves by taking the calf*** (**for worship**), ***therefore turn to your Creator*** (**penitently**) ***and kill your people, that is best for you with your Creator’*** (***2:54***). They asked him: ‘How should we kill our people?’ Musa said to them: ‘Tomorrow every one of you should come to Bayt al-Maqdis[3] with a knife or a piece of iron or a sword; when I ascend the pulpit of the Children of Israel you should all keep your faces hidden, so that nobody should recognize the other at his side; then you should kill each other.’ Thus seventy thousands of those who had worshipped the calf assembled in Bayt al-Maqdis. When Musa finished praying with them and ascended the pulpit, they started killing each other. (This continued) until Jibril came down and said: ‘Now tell them, O Musa! to stop killing (each other), because Allah has accepted their repentance.’

And (by that time) ten thousand of them had been killed. And Allah revealed: ***that is best for you with your Creator; so He turned to you*** (**mercifully**), ***for surely, His is Oft-returning*** (**with mercy**), ***the Merciful. ”***[4]

The author says: According to this tradition, the sentence, “that is best for you with your Creator”, was said by Musa (‘a) and was also used in the divine speech. In this way, Allah confirmed the word of Musa (‘a), and made it clear that what had actually happened - the execution of ten thousand calf-worship-pers - was all that was intended from the very beginning; and that the order of Musa was carried out in full, and not partially. According to what appears from the wording of Musa (‘a), it was best for them if all of them were killed; but only some of them got killed, not all. By repeating the same words, Allah made it clear that what Musa (‘a) had meant from the words, “the best for you”, was not the execution of all.

The same *at-Tafsir* says about the words of Allah: ***And We made the clouds to give shade over you*** (***2:57***): “When Musa crossed the sea with the Israelites, they landed at a desert. They said: ‘O Musa! you have really destroyed and killed us, by bringing us from an inhabited land to a desert where there is, either any shadow or tree nor even water.’ At daytime a cloud appeared over them to protect them from the sun; and at night, manna came down to them, settling on leaves, trees and stones, and they ate it; and at dinner time roasted birds fell on their dinner-spread, and when they finished eating and drinking, the birds (became alive and) flew away. And Musa had a stone which he used to place in the midst of the station (of the caravan), striking it with his walking-stick and, lo! Twelve springs gushed from it, as Allah described, every spring going to the station of a particular tribe - and they were twelve tribes.”[5]

Abu al-Hasan al-Hadi (‘a) said about the words of Allah: ***And they did not do Us any harm but they did harm their own selves*** (***2:57***): “Surely, Allah is too powerful and too unassailable to be harmed or to ascribe any harm to Himself. But He has joined us to Himself and took any injustice done to us as an injustice done to Him, and treated our love as His love; then He revealed it in a (verse of the) Qur’an to His Prophet, and said: ***and they did not do Us any harm, but they did harm their own selves*** (***2:57***). The narrator says: “I said, ‘This is the revelation?’ He said, ‘Yes.”[6]

The author says: Nearly the same thing has been narrated from al-Baqir (‘a).

“...too unassailable to be harmed”: It is the explanation of the Qur’anic expression, “they did not do Us any harm”; the next sentence, “or to ascribe any harm to Himself”, rejects also the opposite proposition. Allah can neither be harmed nor does He do any injustice Himself. Why did the narrator ask the question, “This is the revelation?” Obviously, for a negative sentence to be plausible there should be a real or hypothetic possibility of a positive connection between the subject and its predicate. We do not say, “This wall does not see”. Why? Because wall has no possible connection with seeing. Now, Allah can have no possible connection at all with injustice or oppression. Therefore, the sentence, “they did not do Us any harm”, would seem a superfluous and implausible assertion, because there was no need for saying that Allah could not be harmed nor did He harm anyone – unless it was meant to convey some fine point to the listeners. And that point is this: Great persons often speak on behalf of their servants and dependants; likewise, Allah in this verse is speaking on behalf of Muhammad and his progeny (peace be on them all), joining them to Himself in this declaration.

as-Sadiq (‘a) recited the verse: ***this was so because they disbelieved in the signs of Allah and killed the prophets unjustly; this was so because they disobeyed and exceeded the limits*** (***2:61***), and then said: “By God, they did not hit them with their hands, nor did they kill them with their swords; but they heard their talks and announced it (to their enemies); so the prophets were caught on that charge and killed; this was the killing, the exceeding the limit and the disobedience.”[7]

The author says: A similar tradition from the same Imam is found in *al-Kafi.* Apparently, the Imam inferred it from the words, “this was so because they disobeyed...” Needless to say that murder, and especially of the prophets, and rejection of the signs of Allah cannot be termed as mere disobedience. It should be the other way round. But if we take the disobedience to mean disclosing the secrets then it would be perfectly right to say that they killed the prophets, because they (disobeyed them and) did not keep their secrets and thus delivered them into the hands of their enemies who killed them.

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1. al-`Ayyashi.
2. ad-Durru al-manthur.
3. Musa was called to the Mount Sina’i and given Torah while the Israelites were still in the wilderness. And it was at that time that the events in question took place. They had not entered Palestine at that time and Baytu al-Maqdis was not built yet. Therefore, the word “Baytu al-Maqdis” used in this tradition must mean the tent which Musa erected for divine worship.

4. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
5. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
6. al- Kafi.
7. al-'Ayyashi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verse 62

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَالَّذِينَ هَادُواْ وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحاً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Surely, those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabaeans, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve (***2:62***).

Commentary

The verse first mentions the believers, and then says, "whoever believes in Allah..." The context shows that the latter phrase refers to the real belief, the true *Iman,* and that the word, "those who believe", (mentioned at first) refers to those who call themselves believers. The verse says that Allah gives no importance to names, like the believers, the Jews, the Christians or the Sabaeans. One cannot get a reward from Allah, nor can he be saved from punishment, merely by giving oneself good titles, as they, for example, claim that:

No one will enter the Garden except he who was a Jew or a Christian (***2:111***).

The only criterion, the only standard, of honour and happiness is the real belief in Allah and the Day of Resurrection, accompanied by good deeds. It should be noted that Allah did not say, 'whoever of them believes'; otherwise, it would have accorded some recognition to these titles, and would have implied that there was, after all, some benefit in acquiring these names.

This theme has been repeatedly expounded in the Qur'an. The honour and felicity depend entirely on true and sincere servitude; no name, no adjective, can do any good unless it is backed by correct belief and good deeds. This rule is applicable to all human beings, right from the prophets to the lowest rank. Look how Allah praises His prophets with all beautiful and excellent attributes, and then says:

And if they had set up others **(with Him)** ***certainly what they did would have become ineffectual for them*** **(*6:88*).**

Also, He describes the high status and great prestige of the Holy Prophet and his companions, and then ends it with these words:

Allah has promised those among them who believe and do good, forgiveness and a great reward **(*48:29*).**

Ponder on the significance of the phrase "among them".

Then we find that Allah had given a man some of His signs but he went astray:

and if We had pleased, We would certainly have exalted him thereby, but he clung to the earth and followed his low desire… **(*7:176*).**

There are many verses clearly showing that the honour and respect with Allah depends on reality, not on appearance.

Traditions

Salman al-Farisi said: "I asked the Prophet (S) about the people of that religion which I followed (prior to Islam), and I described their (way of) prayer and worship. Then it was revealed: ***Surely, those who believe, and those who are Jews…*** **(*2:62*).*"***[1]

The author says: Various other traditions with different chains of narrators, say that this verse was revealed about the people of Salman.

Ibn Faddal said: "I asked ar-Ridha' ('a) why *"an-Nasara"* (النصارى = the Christians) were given that name. He said: "Because they were from a village called an-Nasirah (الناصرة = Nazarath) in Syria.[2] Maryam and 'Isa settled there after they returned from Egypt."[3]

The author says: We shall comment on this tradition when writing on the stories of *'Isa* ('a) in Chapter 3 (The House of 'Imran), God willing.

The same tradition says that *"al-Yahud"* (اليهود = the Jews) got this name because they are descended from Yahuda, son of Ya'qub.[4]

The Imam said: "The Sabaeans are a people, neither Zoroastrian nor Jews, neither Christians nor Muslims; they worship the stars and planets.[5]

The author says: It is idol-worship of a special type; they worshipped only the idols of the stars, while others worshipped whatever idol caught their fancy.

A Historical Discussion

Abu Rayhan al-Biruni writes in his book *al- 'Atharu al-baqiyah:*

"The earliest known among them (i.e., the claimants of prophethood was Yudhasaf.6 He appeared in India at the end of the first year of the reign of Tahmurth; and he brought the Persian script. He called to the Sabaean religion, and a great many people followed him. The Bishdadian kings and some of the Kayanis who resided in Balkh held the sun, the moon, the stars and the planets together with other elements in high esteem and believed that these luminaries were very sacred. It continued until Zoroaster appeared at the end of the thirtieth year of Peshtasav's reign. The remnants of those Sabaeans are now in Harran, from which they have got their new name, Harraniyyah. Also it is said that this nomenclature refers to Haran, son of Tarukh (Terah) and brother of Ibrahim ('a), as he allegedly was one of their religious leaders and its staunchest follower.

'Ibn Sancala, the Christian, has written a book against Sabaeans. In that book he has attributed many ridiculous things to this Haran. For example, he describes the Sabaeans' belief about Ibrahim ('a) in these words: 'Ibrahim ('a) was removed from their community because a white spot had appeared on his foreskin, and the Sabaeans believed that a person having a white spot was unclean, and avoided mixing with such person. To remove that defect, Ibrahim cut his foreskin, i.e. circumcised himself. Then he entered one of the temples; and lo! an idol called out to him: "O Ibrahim! You went away from us with one defect and came back with two; get out and do not ever come back to us." Ibrahim was enraged; he smashed the idols; and went out. After some time, he felt remorse for what he had done, and decided to sacrifice his son on the altar of Jupiter, as it was their custom to kill their children to please the deities. When Jupiter was convinced of the sincerity of his repentance, it sent a lamb to him to slaughter in place of his son."

"'Abd al-Masih Ibn Ishaq al-Kindi wrote a book in reply of a book by 'Abdullah Ibn Isma'il al-Hashimi. In that book 'Abd al-Masih writes about the Sabaeans:

"'It is generally believed that they indulge in human sacrifice, although nowadays they cannot do so openly. But so far as our own information goes, they are monotheists who believe that God is free from every defect and evil, they describe God in negative, not positive, terms; for example, they say: Allah cannot be defined or seen, He is not unjust or oppressive. According to them, the beautiful divine names may be used for God, but only in an allegorical sense, because no divine attribute can truly describe the reality.

They believe that the management of all affairs is done and controlled by the sky and the heavenly bodies; the sky and those bodies are living things having the characteristics of speech, hearing and sight. They revere the light and the luminaries. One of their legacies is the dome above the niche in the Umayyid mosque of Damascus; it was their prayer house, and at that time even the Greeks and the Romans followed the same religion. Then it came under Jewish control and they turned it into a

synagogue. Later, the Christians took it over and converted it into a church. Then came the Muslims, and they changed it into a mosque.

The Sabaeans had their numerous places of worships, and their idols were named after various names of the sun, and shaped with fixed patterns, as has been described by Abu Ma'shar al-Balkhi in his book, *The Houses of Worship.* For example, there was the temple of Ba'labak which housed the idol of the sun; of Qiran, which was related to the moon and built in the moon's shape, like a shawl worn over head and shoulders. And there is a village nearby, Salamsin by name; it is a corruption of its original name, صنَم سين (Sanam Sin = the idol of the moon). Likewise, another village is called Tara'uz, that is, the gate of Venus. They do also claim that the Ka'bah and its idols belonged to them, and that the Meccan idol-worshippers were of the Sabaean religion.

According to them the idols, Lat and 'Uzza, represented Saturn and Venus. They have many prophets in their hierarchy, most of them being the Greek philosophers, for example, Hermes of Egypt, Agadhimun, Walles, Pythagoras and Babaswar (maternal grandfather of Plato) and many others like them. Some of them do not eat fish - lest it be spume; nor poultry, because it is always hot. Also, they do not use garlic, because it creates headache and burns the blood and semen (which is the source of continuity of the human race); and they avoid beans, because it dulls the intelligence and also because it had first sprouted in a human skull. They observe three compulsory prayers: at sunrise (eight *rak 'at*); at noon (five *rak 'at*) ; and at the third hour of the night.

"'They prostrate three times in each *rak 'ah*. Also, they observe two optional prayers - at the second and ninth hours of the day.

"'They pray with *taharah* and wudu'; they take bath after *janabah;* but they do not circumcise their children because they have not been told to do so. Most of their laws concerning marital and penal codes are like the *Shari'ah* of Islam; while the rules about touching a dead body are similar to Torah's. They offer sacrifices to the stars, their idols and the temples; the sacrificial animals are killed by the priests and witch-doctors, who read in it the future of the man who offers the sacrifice and answer to his questions.

"'Hermes is sometimes called Idris, who is mentioned in Torah as Akhnukh. Some of them say that Yudhasaf was Hermes.

"'Some others have said that the present-day Harraniyyah are not the real Sabaeans; rather these are mentioned in the books as heathens and idolators. The Sabaeans were those Israelites who stayed behind at Babylon when their majority returned to Jerusalem in the reigns of Cyrus and Artaxerxes. They were favourably disposed to Zoroastrian beliefs, as well as to the religion of Nebuchadnezzar. What resulted from this exercise was a mixture of Judaism and Zoroastrianism - like the Samaritans of Syria. Most of them are found in Wasit and the rural areas of Iraq around Ja'far and Jamidah; they trace their genealogy to Enosh, son of Seth. They criticize and oppose the Harraniyyah and their religion. With

exception of a few things, there is no similarity between the two religions: The Sabaeans face towards the North Pole in their prayers, while the Harraniyyah face towards the South Pole.

"'Some people of the book have said that Methuselah had a son (other than Lamech), named Sabi, whom the Sabaeans have descended from. The people, before the *Shari'ah* spread and before Yudhasaf appeared on the scene, followed Samanian beliefs; they lived in the eastern part of the world and worshipped idols. Their remnants are found in India, China and Taghazghaz, and the people of Khurasan call them Shamnan. Their relics, places of worship and idols are seen in eastern Khurasan adjoining India. They believe in eternity of the universe and transmigration of soul. According to them, the sky is falling down in an endless vacuum, and that is why it is moving round and round.'

"According to some writers, a group of them rejects the theory of eternity of the universe and says that it came into being one million year ago."

The author says: All the above description has been taken from the book of al-Biruni. The opinion, attributed to some writers, that Sabaeans' religion was a mixture of Judaism and Zoroastrianism flavoured with some elements of Harraniyyah's beliefs, seems better suited in this context; after all, the verse obviously enumerates the groups which followed a divinely inspired religion.

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1. ad-Durru al-manthur.
2. In those days, all the land now divided into Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine, was called Syria or Greater Syria.
3. Ma'ani al-akhbar.
4. Ma'ani al-akhbar.
5. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
6. It is now almost certain that Yudhasaf is a corruption of Budhastav, the title of Gautama Buddha, the founder of Bhuddhism.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 63 - 74

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُواْ مَا آتَيْنَاكُم بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُواْ مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

And when We took a promise from you and lifted the mountain over you": "Take hold of what We have given you with firmness and bear in mind what is in it, so that you may guard **(against evil)" (*2:63*).**

ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُم مِّن بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَلَوْلاَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَكُنتُم مِّنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

Then you turned back after that; so were it not for the grace of Allah and His mercy on you, you would certainly have been among the losers (***2:64***).

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَواْ مِنكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُواْ قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ

And ***certainly you have known those among you who exceeded the limits of the Sabbath, so We said to them: "Be apes, despised and hated"*** (***2:65***).

فَجَعَلْنَاهَا نَكَالاً لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا وَمَا خَلْفَهَا وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

So ***We made them an example to those who witnessed it and those who came after it, and an admonition to those who guard*** (**against evil**) (***2:66***).

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُواْ بَقَرَةً قَالُواْ أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُواً قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِاللّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

And when Musa said to his people: "Surely, Allah commands you that you should sacrifice a cow"; they said: "Do you ridicule us?" He said: "I seek the protection of Allah from being one of the ignorants" (***2:67***).

قَالُواْ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّن لَّنَا مَا هِيَ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لاَّ فَارِضٌ وَلاَ بِكْرٌ عَوَانٌ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ فَافْعَلُواْ مَا تُؤْمَرونَ

They said: "Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is". Musa said: "He says, Surely, she is a cow neither advanced in age nor too young, of middle age between that (**and this**); ***do therefore what you are commanded"*** (***2:68***).

قَالُواْ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّن لَّنَا مَا لَوْنُهَا قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنّهَا بَقَرَةٌ صَفْرَاء فَاقِعٌ لَّوْنُهَا تَسُرُّ النَّاظِرِينَ

They said: "Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what her colour is." Musa said: "He says, surely, she is a yellow cow; her colour is intensely yellow, giving delight to the beholders" (***2:69***).

قَالُواْ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّن لَّنَا مَا هِيَ إِنَّ البَقَرَ تَشَابَهَ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنَّآ إِن شَاء اللَّهُ لَمُهْتَدُونَ

They said: "Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is, for surely, to us the cows are all alike, and if Allah please we shall surely, be guided aright" (***2:70***).

قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لاَّ ذَلُولٌ تُثِيرُ الأَرْضَ وَلاَ تَسْقِي الْحَرْثَ مُسَلَّمَةٌ لاَّ شِيَةَ فِيهَا قَالُواْ الآنَ جِئْتَ بِالْحَقِّ فَذَبَحُوهَا وَمَا كَادُواْ يَفْعَلُونَ

Musa said: "He says, Surely, she is a cow not made submissive that she should plough the land, nor does she irrigate the tilth, sound, without a blemish in her." The said: 'Now you have brought the truth;" so they sacrificed her, though they had not the mind to do (**it**) (***2:71***).

وَإِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْساً فَادَّارَأْتُمْ فِيهَا وَاللّهُ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا كُنتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ

And when you killed a man, then you disagreed with respect to that, and Allah was to bring forth that which you were going to hide (***2:72***).

فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا كَذَلِكَ يُحْيِي اللّهُ الْمَوْتَى وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

So, We said: "Strike the (**dead body**) ***with part of the*** (**sacrificed cow**)**"**, ***thus Allah brings the dead to life, and He shows you His signs so that you may understand*** (***2:73***).

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُم مِّن بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَّقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاء وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللّهِ وَمَا اللّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks, rather worse in hardness; and surely, there are some rocks from which streams burst forth, and surely, there are some of them which split asunder so water issues out of them, and surely, there are some of them which fall down for fear of Allah, and Allah is not at all heedless of what you do (***2:74***).

Commentary

Verse 63

Qur'an: ***And lifted the mountain over you*** (***2:63***).

"at-Tur" (الطور) is mountain; that is why has been substituted by *"al-jabal"* (الجَبَل = mountain) in verse:

And when We wrested away the mountain over them as if it were a covering overhead (***7:171***).

"an-Natq" (النَتْق = to wrest away; to pull out).

The verse at first mentions taking of a promise; and ends with the command to take hold of what they were given and to bear in mind what was in it; in between it refers to the lifting of the mountain over them, without saying why it was lifted. But the context clearly shows that it was done to frighten them without putting them under compulsion, in order that they might obey what they were told – if Allah had wished to compel them, there was no need to take any promise before.

Objection: If we were to take the sentence, "and lifted the mountain over you", in its literal meaning, it would be a miraculous sign that would have forced the Israelites to obey the given command under duress and coercion; but Allah says:

***There is no compulsion in the religion* (*2:256*).**

***…Will you then force men till they become believers?* (*10:99*).**

Reply: The objection is baseless. The sentence shows only that they were threatened and frightened. Just lifting the mountain over their head was not enough to coerce and force them to believe and obey. Otherwise, most of the miracles shown by Musa ('a) could be termed as "compulsion"! The said questioner has tried to explain away this sentence in this way: "The Israelites were at the foot of the mountain; it was shaken violently and during that convulsion its summit loomed over them, until they thought that it was going to fall over them. It is this natural phenomenon that has been described as pulling out the mountain and lifting it over them."

Such misinterpretations emanate from rejection of the principle of "miracle" altogether. We have already written in detail on this subject. If we were to explain away the verses of miracle in this way, no speech would remain safe from distortion; and no sentence could be taken to mean what it says; as a result, all the norms of eloquence and literature would lose their value.

Qur'an: *so that you may guard* (against evil) (*2:63*).

"La'alla" (لَعَلّ) is a particle meaning "perhaps", "may be"; it denotes hope – the speaker may be hoping for something, or the person spoken who gives rise to the hope, or the situation justifies the hope although the speaker or the listener does not feel optimistic himself. In any case, it implies some uncertainty about the final outcome. When this particle is used in a divine speech, it indicates hopefulness either with reference to the listener or in context of the situation; but it can never refer to the speaker, that is, Allah, because He can never be uncertain of any result. It has clearly been explained by ar-Raghib in his *al-Mufradat.* Therefore, whenever this word is used in the Qur'an, it is translated as "so that...", "in order that..."

Verse 65

Qur'an: ***Be apes despised*** **(*2:65*).**

"Khasi'in" (خاسئين = despised, humiliated).

Verse 66

Qur'an: ***So We made them an example*** **(*2:66*).**

"an-Nakal" (النَّكال) means exemplary punishment meted out to one in order that others may desist from such transgression.

Verse 67

Qur'an: ***And when Musa said to his people: "Surely, Allah commands you that you should sacrifice a cow..."*** **(*2:67*).**

This is the story of the cow of the Israelites, and it is these verses which have given this chapter its name, the Cow.

The Qur'an has used a dramatic style for this story. It opens with the middle of the story (verses 67 to 71), followed by its beginning (verse 72) and ending with its conclusion (verse 73). Another thing to note is the changes of the pronouns – up to verse 66, the Israelites were directly addressed in second person; but verses 67 to 71 are addressed to the Prophet mentioning the Israelites in third person; then it reverts again to the original second person (verses 72–73).

However, let us follow the narrative in the light of the Qur'an. Allah addresses the Prophet referring to the Israelites in third person: "And when Musa said to his people: 'Surely, Allah commands you that you should sacrifice a cow'; they said..." Obviously the order given to sacrifice a cow with subsequent description of its various characteristics and qualities, contained in these five verses (67–71), is like a parenthetic statement which clarifies the meaning of the next two verses (72–73), addressed to the Israelites: "And when you killed a man, then you disagreed with respect to that, and Allah was to bring forth that which you were going to hide. So We said: 'Strike the (dead body) with part of the (sacrificed cow),' thus Allah brings the dead to life, and He shows you His signs that you may understand."

The five verses (67–71) also show how ill-mannered the Israelites were; how offensive their behaviour was towards their prophet. See how off-handedly they accused their prophet of speaking idle words, how arrogantly they made demand after demand of the Lord to make His command clear and plain, as though there was any ambiguity in the divine command or the prophetic utterance. Add to it their insulting mode of referring to God: Musa had told them, "Surely, Allah commands you..."; but they repeatedly used the words, "Call on your Lord for our sake...", as though He was not their Lord. Then

again they went on repeating the demand to be told “what she is”, “what her colour is”; and when all was explained to them, they arrogantly claimed, “Surely, to us the cows are all alike”. It should be noted that they did not say that that particular cow seemed indistinct to them; they instead claimed that all the cows were alike in their eyes – implying that the cows *per se* were the same, and if a certain individual cow had some special quality, this much description was not enough for identification purpose; they did not realize that it was not the cow, but the divine will, which produced the desired result. They were given a simple command to sacrifice “a cow”, that is, any cow; they should have acted on that general unrestricted command, but they went on asking for more and more particulars; this was in itself a height of arrogance.

Then, look at their rudeness in asking their prophet, “Do you ridicule us?” It cast an aspersion on the prophet that he was, God forbid, an ignorant person who talked aimlessly. That is why he vehemently defended himself saying, “I seek the protection of Allah from being one of the ignorants”. Even then, they had the temerity to say at the end of the story, “Now you have brought the truth”, implying that the previous explanations were not “the truth”, that the preceding divine speech and prophetic messages were, God forbid, untruths!

This story is not mentioned in the current Torah. Therefore, it was better not to address it to the Israelites. This may be another reason of changing the mode of address – the story was initially addressed to the Prophet, and after establishing the base, the pronouns were again changed to the original second person directly addressing the Israelites. Nevertheless, the Torah contains an order that implies that some such events must have taken place:

“If one be found slain in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him: Then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain: And it shall be, that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take an heifer, which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn the yoke: And the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer’s neck there in the valley: And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the Lord the God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the Lord; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried. And all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley: And they shall answer and say: Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel’s charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them.” (Deut., 21/1–8)

It must now be clear that the story as given here is not intended as a simple narrative. The main theme is taken up in verse 72 (***And when you killed a man…***), but before that, a part of the story is narrated to the Prophet in some detail in verses 67–71 for obvious reasons.

Let us now recapitulate what has been explained above, the verses 67–71 (***And when Musa said to his people: "Surely, Allah commands you…***), addressed to the Prophet, is a prologue to the forthcoming episode (verses 72–73), although the listeners do not know it yet. As the audience does not know why the Israelites were told to sacrifice a cow, its curiosity is aroused and the suspense continues until the relation between the sacrifice of the cow and detection of the murderer is revealed. It was this apparent irrelevance of the former to the latter that prompted the Israelites to accuse Musa ('a) of ridiculing them, of joking with them. This accusation showed that they were completely devoid of discipline, were very arrogant and disobedient. They were not inclined to obey any command without knowing its why and wherefore. They were not ready to believe in that which they could not see – belief in the unseen was against their grain. They were the people who had said to Musa ('a):

"O Musa! we will not believe in you until we see Allah manifestly" **(*2:55*).**

Their trouble was that they wanted total independence in every affair, no matter whether it was within their domain or not. They erroneously thought that the unseen could be brought down to the level of the seen. Consequently, they wanted to adopt a deity which they could see by their naked eyes:

They said: "O Musa! make for us a god as they have **(their) gods."** ***He said: "Surely, you are a people acting ignorantly"*** **(*7:138*).**

No wonder that they did not understand the sublime status of their prophet Musa ('a) and thought that he, like themselves, followed his own desires and joked with, and ridiculed, the people. They accused him of joking and acting like ignorant ones. And Musa ('a) had to refute this charge: "I seek the protection of Allah from being one of the ignorants". Why did Musa ('a) seek the protection of Allah? Why did not he say straight away that he was not an ignorant person? It was because Musa ('a) preferred to rely on the divine protection which cannot fail, rather than on his own virtues.

The Israelites believed that one should not accept anything without proof. This principle is correct, of course. But they were mistaken in believing that man must know the reason of every order in full detail; that a command of general nature was not enough. That is why they went on asking for more and more detail about the cow they were told to slaughter. They thought that the cow, by its nature, could not bring a dead body to life; if somewhere there was a particular cow possessing this unheard of quality, it should be pin-pointed with accurate and detailed description. It was this trend of thought which prompted them to say: "Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is". They unnecessarily put themselves into a corner; and Allah, on this uncalled for demand, gave them a few particulars; "Musa said: 'He says, Surely, she is a cow neither advanced in age (i.e. not passed the calf-bearing age) nor too young (i.e. not virgin, nor one that has not given birth to a calf yet) of middle age between that (and this)." *"al- 'Awan"* (العَوان) means a female in middle of child-bearing age.

Then their Lord took mercy on them and admonished them not to indulge in too much questioning, and to be content with that which they were told: "do therefore what you are commanded". But they did not

listen to the divine advice and said: " 'Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what her colour is.' Musa said: 'He says, surely, she is a yellow cow; her colour is intensely yellow, giving delight to the beholders'. "This much explanation should have been enough for them, as by then the cow's age and colour had been described to them. But no, it was not enough for the Israelites who unhesitatingly repeated their first question, shamelessly accusing Musa – and God too – of not giving them clear description as yet: "They said: 'Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is, for surely, to us the cows are all alike, and if Allah please we shall surely, be guided aright.'

"So, Allah further particularized her nature and characteristics, saying: "Surely, she is a cow not made submissive that she should plough land, nor does she irrigate the tilth"; and then He put a further restriction about her colour, "sound, without a blemish in her." Now that they were given all the details and could not think of any more questions, they said: "Now you have brought the truth." The sentence shows that they had to accept the command because they could not think of any more excuses to avoid it – but even then they put the blame of their previous disobedience on Musa – and by implication on Allah: that they had not complied with the order before because Musa ('a) and Allah had not explained it correctly. All this is implied in the last clause, "so they sacrificed her, though they had not the mind to do (it)."

Verse 72

Qur'an: ***And when you killed a man...*** **(*2:72*).**

It is the beginning of the main story. *"at-Tadaru'"* (التّدارء = translated here as "disagreed") is derived form *ad-dar'* (الدّرء = repulse) and literally means to push one another. A man was killed and every group was disowning its responsibility, putting the blame on others. But Allah was to disclose what they wanted to hide.

Verse 73

Qur'an: ***So We said: "Strike the*** **(dead body)** ***with part of the*** **(sacrificed cow)" (*2:73*).**

The Arabic text contains two pronouns – the first (masculine) refers to the dead body and the second (feminine) to the cow. The translation omits the pronouns replacing them with the nouns they stand for.

Someone has denied the actuality of this story, suggesting that the verses simply describe the promulgation of a law (as given in the Deut., 21/1-8, quoted above). According to him, raising someone from the dead (mentioned in these verses) merely means finding out the identity of the killer – as Allah says:

And there is life for you in **(the law of)** ***retaliation*** **(*2:179*).**

In short, he claims that there was no miracle involved, nor was there any dead body brought back to life.

But the context of the story leaves no room for such misinterpretation – especially if we look at the words, "So We said: 'Strike the (dead body) with part of the (sacrificed cow)', thus Allah brings the dead to life."

Verse 74

Qur'an: ***Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks, rather worse in hardness*** (***2:74***).

"al-Qaswah" (القَسوة = sternness) in heart is like "hardness" in rock. *"Aw"* (أو = or) is used here in the meaning of *bal* (بَل = rather). The next sentences show why their hearts were worse than rocks in hardness: "and surely, there are some rocks from which streams burst forth". The sentence offers a contrast between rocks and water. Rocks are used as examples of hardness, while water is proverbially used to denote softness. Even then, there are some rocks – with all their hardness – from which streams of water – with all its softness – burst forth; "and surely, there are some of them which split asunder so water issues out of them": The hard rocks send forth the soft waters; but the Israelites' hearts were so hard as never to allow any truth to issue out of them.

Qur'an: ***And surely, there are some of them which fall down for fear of Allah*** (***2:74***).

We see how the rocks and stones fall down – big rocks on the summits of mountains crack up, and then an ordinary earthquake is enough to dislodge them causing an avalanche. Also, the cracks fill up with ice and snow during winter, then the warmth of spring melts the ice sending the streams down the valleys. This phenomenon is related to its natural causes, yet Allah says that the rocks fall down from fear of Allah. Why? Because all the natural causes ultimately return to the First Cause, that is, Allah. Rocks, when they fall down because of the natural causes, are in fact obeying the divine decree which put them under the influence of those secondary causes. It may, therefore, be said that they understand the command of their Lord – an understanding that is created nature. They obey the decree of Allah inasmuch as they are thus moulded by Him. Allah says:

And there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification (***17:44***).

All are obedient to Him (***2:116***).

Fear too is based on perception, as are the glorifying and the obeying. It may therefore be said that the rocks fall down for fear of Allah. This sentence is of the same genre as the following ones:

And the thunder declares His glory with His praise, and the angels too for awe of Him (***13:13***).

And whoever is in the heavens and the earth makes obeisance to Allah only, willingly and unwillingly, and their shadows too at morn and eve (***13:15***).

Here the sound of thunder has been counted as the declaration of divine glory and the shadow is said to prostrate for Allah. There are many verses of the same style and all are based on the same analysis as mentioned above.

However, the sentence, "and surely, there are some of them which fall down for fear of Allah", further shows how the Jews' hearts were worse than rocks in hardness: The rocks are afraid of Allah and do fall down for His fear, but there is no fear of Allah in the Jews' hearts, they are not afraid of divine wrath.

Traditions

As –Sadiq ('a) was asked about the words of Allah: ***Take hold of what We have given you with firmness*** (***2:63***), whether it meant the strength of the bodies or the firm resolution of the heart. He (a. s.) said: "Both together"[1]

The author says: This tradition has also been narrated by al–'Ayyashi in his *at–Tafsir.*

Al–Halabi narrates in explanation of the words of Allah; ***and bear in mind what is in it*** (***2:63***), that he said: "Bear in mind what is in it and also bear in mind the chastisement that is laid down for its negligence."[2]

The author says: It has been inferred from the position of this clause – it follows the threat implied in lifting the mountain over them.

Abu Hurayrah said that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: "If the children of Israel had not said: ***and if Allah please we shall surely, be guided aright*** (***2:70***), they would have never been given (respite). And had they (in the beginning) taken any cow and slaughtered her; it would have been enough for them; but they went on pressing (for more and more particulars), so Allah made it harder (and harder) for them."[3]

Ibn Faddal said: "I heard Abu al–Hasan ('a) saying: 'Surely, Allah ordered the children of Israel to slaughter a cow – and what they needed was its tail. (But they asked for more and more details) so Allah made it harder (and harder) for them.'"[4]

al–Bazanti said: "I heard ar–Ridha' ('a) saying: 'A man from the children of Israel killed one of his relatives, then he took the body and put it in the path (leading) to the best of the Israelites' clans. Thereafter he came demanding (the revenge of) his blood. Musa ('a) was informed that such and such a clan had killed such and such a man, and he was asked to tell them who the killer was. Musa said: "Bring me a cow." They said: *"Do you ridicule us?"* He said: ***"I seek the protection of Allah from being one of the ignorants"*** (***2:67***). And had they taken any cow, it would have been enough for them, but they pressed (for more particulars); therefore, Allah made it harder for them.

They said: "Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is" Musa said: "He says,

Surely, she is a cow neither advanced in age nor too young, of middle age between that* (and this)*" (2:68).

Even then, if they had taken any cow (fitting this description) it would have been enough. But they pressed for more, so Allah made it harder for them.

They said: "Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what her colour is". Musa said: "He says, Surely, she is a yellow cow; her colour is intensely yellow, giving delight to the beholders" (2:69).

Even then if they had taken any such cow, it would have been enough for them. But they persisted (in asking for more details) and Allah made it even harder for them.

They said: "Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is, for surely, to us the cows are all alike, and if Allah please we shall surely, be guided aright" (2:70).

He said: "He says, Surely, she is a cow not made submissive that she should plough the land, nor does she irrigate the tilth, sound, without a blemish in her." They said: 'Now you have brought the truth" (2:71).

They began their search and found such a cow with an Israelite youth. He said: "I shall not sell it but for a hide full of gold." Thereupon they came to Musa and informed him. He told them to buy it. So they bought and brought it. And Musa ordered it to be slaughtered. Then he ordered them to strike the dead body with its tail. As soon as they did so, the murdered man rose from the dead, and said: "O messenger of Allah! Surely, it is my cousin who had killed me, and not the man against whom he has lodged his claim."

In this way, they knew who the killer was. Thereafter, a companion of the messenger of Allah, Musa, said to him: "There is a story behind this cow". He asked: "And what is it?" He said: "(That) Israelite youth was very devoted to his father. And he purchased some goods, and came to his father (who was asleep) and keys were under his head. And he did not like to awaken his father, and cancelled the deal. When his father woke up, he told him about it. The father said to him: 'Well done! Take this cow; it is a recompense for what you have lost." The messenger of Allah, Musa, said to him: "Look at the faithfulness and good deed, where does it take its people to?" '"

The author says: The tradition perfectly fit the description which we inferred from the verses.

A Philosophical Discourse About Making The Dead Bodies Alive And About Metamorphosis

This chapter describes several miraculous signs in the stories of the Israelites and the others – for example, parting the sea and drowning the followers of Pharaoh:

And when We parted the sea for you, so We saved you and drowned the followers of Pharaoh… (***2:50***).

Giving death to the Israelites by thunder-bolt and then raising them again from dead:

And when you said: "O Musa! we will not believe in you…" (***2:55***).

Making the clouds to give shade over them and sending for them manna and quails:

And We made the clouds to give shade over you… (***2:57***).

Making the streams to gush out from the rock:

And when Musa prayed for drink… (***2:60***)

Lifting the mountain over them:

…And lifted the mountains over you… (***2:63***).

Transforming some of them into apes:

…So, We said to them: "Be apes…" (***2:65***).

And bringing a dead body back to life by hitting it with a part of a slaughtered cow:

So We said: "Strike the [**dead body**] ***with part of the*** [**sacrificed**] ***cow…"*** (***2:73***).

Among the non-Israelites, there are many stories of dead men and/or animals brought back to life - for example, a large group that had fled their homes for fear of death:

Did you not see those who went forth from their homes… (***2:243***).

A chosen servant of Allah who passed by a ruined town:

Or like him who passed by a town and it had fallen down upon its roofs… (***2:259***).

And the birds which were raised from dead through the agency of Ibrahim:

And when Ibrahim said: "My Lord! show me how Thou givest life to the dead …(***2:260***).

Altogether, there are twelve miracles, most of them occurring among the Israelites. The Qur'an has narrated them; and we have already shown that miracles do occur, and super-natural events do take place. We have also shown that such happenings are not in conflict with the system of the cause and effect. It was clearly proved that it is not justified to interpret the verses of miracle in such a way as to deny their apparent meanings.

Of course, the miracle is not related to an inherently impossible proposition, like dividing three in two equal wholes, or birth of a child that would be his own father. But if something is possible in itself and the Qur'an says that it did happen, one should not try to explain it away as an allegory or a metaphor.

However, some miracles, like raising someone from dead and transformation, that is, metamorphosis, require a somewhat detailed study because they are sometimes criticized from philosophical point of view.

Objection: It is an accepted fact that if an existent thing, a being, having a potentiality of perfection, converts it into actuality, then it is impossible for it to retrace its steps and turn that actuality back into the same potentiality. Likewise, a more perfect being does not change, in its forward march, to a less perfect one.

When a man dies, his soul is released from the fetters of matter; he becomes an immaterial "idea" or a spiritual being. Both these stages are above the matter; the existence in these planes is much stronger than that in the material sphere.

Therefore, it is impossible for a soul – once death has separated it from the body – to re-establish its connection with that material body. Otherwise, it would mean that a thing, having converted its potentiality into actuality, again retrogressed to the same potentiality – and as we have explained above it is not possible.

Also, man is on a higher level of existence than that of the animals. Therefore, it would be impossible for a man to change, by metamorphosis, into an animal.

Reply: Accepted that once a potentiality is turned into reality it cannot be regressed to the self-same potentiality. But raising someone from dead in this world, as well as metamorphosis, is outside the domain of this law.

Perception and reason show that a vegetable substance, when consumed by an animal, proceeds to its ultimate perfection, that is, animality, and takes the animal form. This form in itself is an incorporeal and immaterial thing. Having reached this stage, the vegetable has turned its potentiality into actuality. Now it cannot turn back to vegetable kingdom.

The animality is the fountain-head of the animal's conscious actions and perceptions. When it performs a deed, an impression is outlined on its psyche. When it indulges in the same activity over and over again, that impression gets deeper and deeper until it becomes an ineradicable trait. This new trait may become the building block of an animal species with pronounced characteristics; for example, the fox with its cunning, the pig with its lascivious lust, the panther with its predatory stalking. If, on the other hand, it fails to acquire any characteristics, the psyche remains at its original level of simple animality. It is like the case of a vegetable which fails to reach the threshold of animality and remains at the original level of vegetable-kingdom.

Likewise, an animal, becoming a part of a human being, progresses forward on the path of humanity. A human being has the capacity of perceiving his self in absolute incorporeal terms. When it thus changes its potentiality to this actuality, it is impossible for it to go back to the self-same potentiality. The humanity too, by repeatedly doing a certain type of deed, acquires especial traits and characteristics – and it creates various kinds of human beings with their particular properties in the same way as happens in animal kingdom.

Now, let us suppose that a dead man was returned to life in this world, and his soul re-established its relation to the matter, that is, the body. Obviously, it would not affect the incorporeality of the soul – it was incorporeal in the first life, remained so after that connection was severed, and would remain in this second life too. Body is the tool by which the soul carries on its material and intellectual activities, just as an artisan makes articles with the help of his tools and equipments. When the man died, the soul lost that tool; when he was revived the soul regained the possession and control of that tool. Now, it may use that tool to acquire new talents, to attain to a higher level of perfection than before. It cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be said to be a retrogression or a retreat from perfection to imperfection, nor is it a change from reality to potentiality.

Objection: The scenario given above entails perpetual compulsion, which is obviously a false and void proposition. An incorporeal and immaterial soul, separated by death from the body, does not have any more potentials of acquiring further perfection through re-establishment of its relation to the body. Remember that only a negligible number of people are claimed to have risen from the dead. And the multitude of human beings remain unrevived. If it were in their nature to acquire new perfections through re-establishing their link with their bodies and – yet they were denied that opportunity, they would be perpetually deprived of what their nature demanded. And this perpetual deprivation is nothing but perpetual compulsion.

Reply: There is no compulsion involved here at all. The soul has already progressed from its potentiality to the actuality. It reached a certain level and died. Now, at present it does not have any more potentiality. It will continue to possess the actuality it has already acquired. Let us suppose that there is a man who did some good and some bad deeds, and then died. Had he remained alive he could have added to his deeds and acquired a somewhat different spiritual form, either lovelier or uglier than before.

Likewise, if he is returned to life, he may acquire better or worse traits than before. But if he is not revived, then he already owns his actuality, and will accordingly be rewarded or punished in al-Barzakh, until he acquires a spiritual form according to his earned qualities. Even then, if he is returned to this world, he would get new potentiality for spiritual perfection, and may acquire another spiritual form by using the material tool, for example, his body. But, if he is not returned, there is neither any potentiality nor any question of compulsion, perpetual or otherwise.

We should not forget that mere deprivation of a possible perfection is not a compulsion. Otherwise, every happening in this world could be called a perpetual compulsion. Every event, every development

here affects each and every thing of the universe, directly or indirectly. There is a never–ending struggle and conflict going on in the universe; and it affects the whole system – including the ability of a man to fully attain to his perfection. That effect may be beneficial or harmful. But nobody claims that because he was prevented, by the circumstances beyond his control, from obtaining a possible benefit, he was under perpetual compulsion.

If a talent for a certain perfection is ingrained in someone's nature and then he is prevented from achieving it, either by some factors in his own nature or some external forces bent on nullifying that talent, then only it may be called a perpetual compulsion – because in this case, putting that talent or potentiality in that species be a vain thing, an aimless venture.

Now we come to metamorphosis. If a man's figure is transformed to that of a pig or an ape, it is just an external change. He is still a man in the form of an animal; not that his humanity was erased and replaced by the nature of pig or ape. We have already described that when one repeatedly carries on an activity, its impression is etched on one's psyche. When a man repeatedly indulges in debauchery, his psyche turns into that of a pig; and it is not impossible for that figure to appear in his facial features in this world too – as it would certainly appear in the next world. Such a man is still a man, albeit a transformed one; not that he has lost his humanity.

By the way, we sometimes read, in the newspapers and magazines, reports of academic conferences in Europe and America that tend to prove that it is possible to revive a man after his death, and that a man's facial figures may change to something else. Of course, we do not base over belief on such news and reports; nevertheless, we expect our adversaries not to forget today what they had read yesterday.

Poser: Then there is no difficulty in believing in transmigration of the souls.

Reply: There is a world of difference between metamorphosis and transmigration of the souls. In metamorphosis the same body changes its figure to look like something else; while the believers in transmigration of the souls say that a soul, after attaining its perfection and leaving the body, establishes a new connection with a new body. Obviously, it is an impossible proposition. A question may be asked whether or not the new body was already connected to a soul of its own.

If it already belonged to another soul, it would entail domination of one body by two souls, which is impossible – two persons cannot have one body, nor can one body be governed by two personalities. If, on the other hand, the body did not have a soul already, it would mean that an accomplished and developed soul was burdened by an unaccomplished and undeveloped body. It would certainly be a regression from actuality to potentiality – just like returning a wise old man to his infancy! And this too is impossible.

Also, it should be apparent from what we have explained that it is certainly impossible for a human soul, after leaving its human body, to be incarnated in a vegetable or animal body. In short, the belief in transmigration of the souls entails impossibility after impossibility.

An Academic And Ethical Discourse On Unquestioning Adoption Of Concepts And Rulings

The nation, most frequently described in the Qur'an, is that of the Israelites; and the prophet most numerously referred to therein is their prophet, Musa (‘a), son of ‘Imran. His name has been mentioned in one hundred and thirty-six places, twice as many as the second most numerously mentioned name, that is, of Ibrahim (‘a), who has been named sixty-nine times only - as some people have calculated.[5]

It is not difficult to understand the reason for these frequent references. Islam, the true religion, is based on the belief of monotheism; its present foundation was laid by Ibrahim (‘a); and Allah completed and perfected it for His Prophet, Muhammad (S), as He says:

...The faith of your father Ibrahim; He named you Muslims before and in this... (***22:78***).

And the Israelites were the most disputatious and most quarrelsome of all the nations; they were the most obstinate and most abstruse of all when there was a question of submitting to the truth. And the heathens of Arabia, whom the Prophet of Islam had to contend with, were of the same mould, so much so that Allah said to His Prophet:

Surely, those who disbelieve alike is to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe (***2:6***).

Every vice, every depravity found in the Israelites could be found in them; they, in their hard-heartedness and impertinence were the mirror-image of the Israelites.

Ponder over the stories of the Israelites, as narrated in the Qur’an; look at the picture of their characters and morals as it emerges from those narratives. You will find a nation deeply submerged in sensualism and materialism. They did not believe in what was beyond the reach of their external senses; for them spiritual happiness was a word without meaning; their only ambition was the pursuit of sensual pleasure; their eyes could not focus on intellectual progress or spiritual perfection, so their only aim in life was the material development. And to this day, they have not changed a whit. It was this tendency which made their mind and will totally subservient to the matter and the material phenomena. They did not understand except that which they could see, hear, touch, taste or smell; they did not strive but for some tangible and material goals.

Their servitude to the sensual phenomena prevented them from accepting any thing outside the domain of the five senses - even if it was truth; their thraldom to matter encouraged them to accept every thing told by their materially advanced big bosses - even if it was false. It created a clear contrariety and inconsistency in their words and deeds. They condemned every adoption of others’ concepts, ridiculing it as blind following, if that concept was unperceivable by the external senses - no matter how correct it was. And at the same time, they appreciated every adoption of others’ concepts, labelling it as the

pleasure of life, if it conformed with their material base desires – no matter how wrong that concept was. This trait became deeply rooted in their psyche during their long sojourn in Egypt, where the Egyptians humiliated them, enslaved them and castigated them; they subjected them to severe torment, killed their sons sparing their daughters, and in this was a great trial for them from their Lord.

However, it was this deep-rooted trait which made them heedless to what their prophets and divine scholars told them about what was good for them in this life as well as in the hereafter. (Remember their disputations with Musa and others!) And these very people were ever ready to accept and follow what their big bosses called them to, for gratification of their worldly desires.

Today the truth and reality has been afflicted by this very tragedy. The modern civilization, presented to the humanity by the western world, is likewise based on sensual perception and material outlook. It is not prepared to accept any proof for something which is not perceivable by the external senses; and does not ask for any proof of validity, if a thing gives material and sensual pleasure. This has resulted in weakening of the hold of human instincts, and in disappearance of deep knowledge and high morals from our society. This trait has exposed the edifice of humanity to ruin and is confronting the society with chaos and disorder. And you will surely, see its real face in a not-too-distant future.

Actually, not every proof is asked for, nor every unquestioning adoption of others' ideas and concepts is objectionable. Man proceeds on the road of perfection through his intentional activities. His actions emanate from his will, and the will springs from thought and notion. Thinking, therefore, is the foundation of his perfection. Man depends on practical or intellectual cognition to which his perfection is directly or indirectly related. This cognition creates in his mind the need for individual or collective actions; this knowledge leads to intention and will which produce the desired activity.

Man, by his instinct, tries to find out the cause of every event, happening inside or outside his self. He does not do any action without knowing its reason; he does not accept any theory without ascertaining its proof. It is his unfailing trait; he always looks for the cause of the events and actions; it is his nature and the nature never deviates from its set course.

But this trait puts an unbearable burden on him. No individual can accomplish all the academic and practical processes required for his material and spiritual well-being. It is this burden which led the man to establish a society and cooperate with other human beings. Various people were given responsibilities to perform various tasks, in order that the society, taken as a whole, might collectively accomplish all tasks, and fulfil all the needs of all its members put together.

Human needs are expanding by leaps and bounds; various branches of knowledge – sciences, technologies, arts etc. – are growing larger and larger, to such an extent that every subject has grown into hundreds of subjects – each requiring its own specialists. Look for example, at medical science. In old days it was a branch of physics; now it has branched out into hundreds of independent subjects, and no single physician or surgeon may gain expertise in more than one or two of them.

This vast multitude of special fields has instinctively led man to limit his inquiry for cause, and his search for proof, to only those branches of knowledge in which he has gained some expertise; and accept and follow the verdicts of other specialists in other fields. A sane person invariably always relies on the experts in the fields of their expertise. The confidence in their expertise creates a certainty that what has been said or done is correct; and this serves as the proof demanded by human nature.

The nature dictates that man should try his best to find out the detailed proof of the rightness of his idea and action in the fields of his specialty; and as a corollary it directs that he should unquestioningly accept the concepts and verdicts of others in other fields. In short, an ignorant man should follow the decree of a learned one. It is impossible for one man to be an expert in all the branches of knowledge, or independent in all the activities necessary for his life and well-being. Therefore, it is impossible for any man to be free from blindly following a lot of experts in numerous avenues of life. Anyone claiming contrary to this, is a fool.

Of course, it is a shame if a man remains content with unquestioning following, even where he can form an independent opinion based on detailed knowledge; as it is a shame if he forms independent opinion without acquiring necessary knowledge. Both trends are undesirable, both are ruinous to a healthy civilization, both are dangerous to the society.

It is the prerogative of Allah that His decrees and orders be followed without any questioning, without any if or but; because He is the First and Final cause, an no other cause or reason is needed when He has spoken.

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1. al-Mahasin.
2. al-'Ayyashi.
3. ad-Durru al-manthur.
4. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
5. Vide al-Mu'jamu'l-mufahris, by Muhammad Fu'ad 'Abdu'1-Baqi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 75 - 82

أَفَتَطْمَعُونَ أَن يُؤْمِنُواْ لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلاَمَ اللّهِ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُونَهُ مِن بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

Do you then hope that they would believe in you? While a party from among them indeed used to

hear the word of Allah, then altered it after they had understood it, and they know (**this**) (***2:75***).

وَإِذَا لَقُواْ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ قَالُواْ آمَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلاَ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَىَ بَعْضٍ قَالُواْ أَتُحَدِّثُونَهُم بِمَا فَتَحَ اللّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لِيُحَآجُّوكُم بِهِ عِندَ رَبِّكُمْ أَفَلاَ تَعْقِلُون

And when they meet those who believe they say: "We believe"; and when they are alone one with another they say: "Do you talk to them of what Allah has disclosed to you that they may argue with you by this before your Lord? Do you not then understand?" (***2:76***).

وَلاَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ

What! Do they not know that Allah knows what they conceal and what they proclaim? (***2:77***).

وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُّونَ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلاَّ أَمَانِيَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلاَّ يَظُنُّون

And there are among them illiterates who know not the Book but only lies, and they do but conjecture (***2:78***).

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَـذَا مِنْ عِندِ اللّهِ لِيَشْتَرُواْ بِهِ ثَمَناً قَلِيلاً فَوَيْلٌ لَّهُم مِّمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَّهُمْ مِّمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ

Woe, then, to those who write the book with their hands and then say: "This is from Allah", so that they may sell it for a small price; therefore woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn (**thereby**) (***2:79***).

وَقَالُواْ لَن تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلاَّ أَيَّاماً مَّعْدُودَةً قُلْ أَتَّخَذْتُمْ عِندَ اللّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَن يُخْلِفَ اللّهُ عَهْدَهُ أَمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللّهِ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ

And they say: "Fire shall not touch us but for a few days." Say: "Have you taken a promise from Allah, then Allah will never fail to keep His promise, or do you speak against Allah what you do not know?" (***2:80***).

بَلَى مَن كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيـئَتُهُ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

Yea! whoever earns evil and his sins beset him on every side, these are the inmates of the Fire;

in it they shall abide (***2:81***).

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

And (**as for**) ***those who believe and do good deeds, these are the dwellers of the garden; in it they shall abide*** (***2:82***).

Commentary

The context shows that the unbelievers, and especially those of Medina, thought that the Jews were the likeliest people to help and support the Apostle of Allah at his advent. The pagan tribes of Aws and Khazraj lived with the Jews of Medina, and they knew that the latter followed a divine religion and a revealed book. Thus, it was not too much to expect them to believe in the latest in the series of divine religions and books.

This was the basis of their hope that the Jews would accept the Apostle of Allah as the true prophet, and would strengthen the cause of religion, and actively participate in the propagation of truth. But no sooner did the Prophet migrate to Medina than the Jews showed their latent hostility. The hope was shattered and the expectation turned to disappointment. That is why Allah addresses the believers, saying: "Do you then hope that they would believe in you?" Concealment of truth and alteration of divine words was their deep-rooted life-pattern. Why wonder if they go back on what they used to say before the advent of Islam?

Verse 75

Qur'an: ***Do you then hope that they would believe in you? While a party from among them indeed used to hear the word of Allah, then altered it after they had understood it, and they know*** (**this**) (***2:75***).

The speech is now addressed to the Prophet and the believers, referring to the Jews in third person. This same style was used in the preceding story of the Cow, because the Jews had omitted the event from the Torah. These verses continue that mode of address because it exposes their habit of altering and manipulating the divine book.

Verses 76 - 77

Qur'an: ***And when they meet those who believe they say: "We believe"; and when they are alone one with another they say: "Do you talk to them of what Allah has disclosed to you that they may argue with you by this before your Lord? Do you not then understand?"*** (***2:76***).

Qur'an: ***What! Do they not know that Allah knows what they conceal and what they proclaim?***

(***2:77***).

The two conditional clauses, “when they meet those who believe” and “when they are alone one with another” are not in opposition to each other – as were the clauses in the verse:

And when they meet those who believe, they say: “We believe”; and when they are alone with their Satans, they say: “Surely, we are with you, we were only mocking (***2:14***).

Here the two clauses simply describe two instances of the Jews’ transgressions and ignorance:

First: They indulge in hypocrisy, showing that they have accepted Islam, and trying in this way to protect themselves from trouble, ridicule and even death.

Second: They want to deceive Allah, forgetting that He is the Knower of the seen and the unseen, Aware of what they conceal and what they proclaim.

We may infer from the verses that the Jewish laity in Medina sometimes talked openly with the believers, telling them of some of the foretellings about the Prophet or giving them some information that proved the truth of Islam and its Prophet. But their leaders used to admonish them for it, telling them that it was a thing revealed to them, it should not be disclosed to the believers, lest they argued with the Jews before the Lord – as though if the believers did not argue with them before God, He would not know of it!

Such thinking implies that Allah knew only the apparent, not the hidden and concealed things or thoughts. Allah refuted this foolish idea and said: “What! Do they not know that Allah knows what they conceal and what they proclaim?” It is our, and not God’s, knowledge which is limited to the seen and does not comprehend the unseen, because our perception depends on the senses which in their turn depend on body organs – equipped with nervous instruments, surrounded by space and time, influenced by a hundred other material causes.

This talk also throws light on the materialistic outlook of the Israelites. They were so steeped in that belief that they applied the human limitations to God too. They thought that God was present and active inside the matter and prevailed over it. But that presence and that control and management were based on the same principles as a material cause brings out and controls a material effect. Such a belief was not a specialty of the Jews; it was and is held even by those followers of Islam who believe in fundamentality of matter. For these people, God's life, knowledge, power, choice, will, decree, order and management have the same meanings as do their own life, knowledge etc.

It is a disease for which there is no cure. And the signs and warnings can avail nothing to a people who do not understand. Such views have made Islam a laughing–stock in the eyes of those who have no access to the true faith and correct Islamic knowledge. Those detractors say: The Muslims ascribe to their Prophet the saying, “Allah created Adam in His likeness”; and these followers of the Prophet have created a god in the likeness of Adam. One group of the Muslims ascribes to its Lord all the qualities of

the matter. Another group does not understand anything of God's beautiful attributes; consequently, it reduces all divine attributes to negatives. It says that the names and adjectives, which are used for both God and His creatures, have quite different meanings in both cases.

When we say, "God is Existent, Knowing, Powerful and Alive", the words denote some divine qualities totally incomprehensible to us, completely different from the meanings they have when they are applied to a human being. Therefore, it is necessary to reduce these words to their negatives. What the above sentence, for example, means is this: "God is not non-existent, not unaware, not powerless and not lifeless." Such explanation implies that they believe in that which they do not understand, worship that which they are uncertain about and invite others to believe in that which neither they nor anyone else knows anything about.

The word of truth is enough to dispel such falsehoods. The people have been admonished by the true religion to hold fast to the essence of reality and steer clear between the above-mentioned two extremes. They should know that Allah is not like His creatures, nor is He a set of negative propositions. The true religion directs common people to believe that Allah is a thing, unlike other things; that He has knowledge, unlike our knowledge; power, unlike our power; and will, not produced by contemplation; that He talks, not with a mouth; and hears, not with ears. As for the people of higher understanding, they must ponder on His signs and acquire deep knowledge of His religion. He has said:

***Say: 'Are those who know and those who do not know alike?" Only those possessed of understanding shall bear in mind* (*39:9*).**

The people of higher understanding are not equal to a common man in their knowledge of truth and religion; likewise, the two are not alike in their respective responsibilities. This, therefore, is the teaching of religion for both groups respectively; it is there for them to follow, would they do so?

Verse 78

Qur'an: ***And there are among them illiterates who know not the Book but only lies and they do but conjecture* (*2:78*).**

"al-Ummiyy" (الأميّ = one who does not read or write) is related to *"al-umm"* (الأم = mother).

It is as though the excessive love of the mother prevented her from entrusting her child to a teacher to teach and train him; consequently, he could learn only from his mother. *"al-Amainiyy"* (الأماني) is plural of *"al-umniyyah"* (الأمنية = lie). The verse says that some of the Jews were literates who did read and write the book - but making alterations in it; and the rest were illiterates who knew nothing of the book except the lies of the former group.

Verse 79

Qur'an: ***Woe, then, to those who write the book with their hands ...*** (***2:79***).

"al-Wayl" (الويل = woe, disaster,, severe punishment, adversity, affliction) ;*"al -ishtira'"* (الإشتراء = to sell).

Qur'an: ***Therefore, woe to them for what their hands have written...*** (***2:79***).

The pronouns may refer either to all Jews or only to the interpolators among them. If the former view is taken then the woe and condemnation would cover the illiterates too.

Verse 81

Qur'an: ***Yea! whoever earns evil and his sins beset him on every side...***

"al-Khati'ah" (الخطيئة = translated here as "sins") actually refers to the psychical condition resulting from evil-doing. That is why the verse speaks first of his evil-doing and then of the effects of the sins besetting him on every side. When he is beset by his sins on every side, there should remain no opening for the guidance to reach him; he, therefore, will go to Hell and abide there forever.

Had there been an iota of faith in his heart, or some good traits like justice in his character, it would have been possible for the rays of guidance to penetrate to him. The overwhelming besetting of sins on every side, therefore, is possible in case of polytheism, as Allah says:

Surely, Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases (***4:48***).

And also, in case of disbelief and denial of the divine signs, Allah says:

And (**as to**) ***those who disbelieve in and belie Our signs, they are the inmates of the Fire, in it they shall abide*** (***2:39***).

In short, the earning of evil and being beset by sins on all sides is a broad expression covering all that would make one to abide in the Hell forever.

The two verses under discussion are almost similar to the verse:

Surely, those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabaeans, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward ... (***2:62***).

Both show that the basis of salvation and eternal happiness is the true belief and good deeds. The only difference between the two sets of the verses is that the verse 2:62 shows that mere taking to oneself nomenclatures like the Muslim, the Jew etc. is of no use; while the verses under discussion show that mere claiming of salvation is of no worth at all.

Traditions

al-Baqir (‘a) said about the words of Allah, ***And when they meet those who believe…*** (***2:76***)*:* “Some of the Jews (who were not inimical to the Muslims and were not a party to the Jewish conspiracy against them), on meeting the Muslims, used to narrate what the Torah contained of the description of Muhammad (S); so their elders forbade them to do so and said: ‘Do not inform them of what the Torah contains of the attributes of Muhammad (S), lest they argue with you by that before your Lord.’ Thereupon, this verse was revealed.”[1]

It is narrated from the fifth or the sixth Imam that he said about the words of Allah, ***Yea! whoever earns evil…*** (***2:81***): “If they deny the *wilayah* (الوِلاية = friendship, overlordship) of the Leader of the faithful, then they are the inmates of the Fire, in it they shall abide.”[2]

The author says: ash-Shaykh at-Tusi has narrated in his *al-Amali* a tradition of nearly the same theme. The two traditions are based on the principle of the “flow” of the Qur’an and fit the verse on one of its best example. Allah has counted the love of, and submission to, the Prophet’s family-members as a good deed, as He says:

Say: “I do not ask of you any recompense for it except the love for (my) ***near relatives; and whoever earns good, We give him more of good therein*** (***42:23***)***.***

Also, the tradition may be taken as another explanation of the verse, as we shall describe in the Chapter 6 (The Table) that “the good” means complying with the demands of the belief of monotheism. If so, then the tradition particularly mentions ‘Ali (‘a) because he was the first of this *ummah* to open this door.

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1. Majma’ al-bayan.
2. al- Kafi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 83 - 88

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لاَ تَعْبُدُونَ إِلاَّ اللّهَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَاناً وَذِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَقُولُواْ لِلنَّاسِ
حُسْناً وَأَقِيمُواْ الصَّلاَةَ وَآتُواْ الزَّكَاةَ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً مِّنكُمْ وَأَنتُم مِّعْرِضُونَ

And when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel: "You shall not worship (**any**) ***but Allah and*** (**you shall do**) ***good to*** (**your**) ***parents, and to the near of kin and to the orphans and the needy, and speak to men good*** (**words**) ***and keep up prayer and pay the zakat." Then you turned back except a few of you and*** (**now too**) ***you turn aside*** (***2:83***).

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لاَ تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءكُمْ وَلاَ تُخْرِجُونَ أَنفُسَكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ

And when We made a covenant with you: "You shall not shed your blood and you shall not turn your people out of your cities;" then you gave a promise while you witnessed (***2:84***).

ثُمَّ أَنتُمْ هَـؤُلاء تَقْتُلُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَتُخْرِجُونَ فَرِيقاً مِّنكُم مِّن دِيَارِهِمْ تَظَاهَرُونَ عَلَيْهِم بِالإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَإِن يَأْتُوكُمْ أُسَارَى
تُفَادُوهُمْ وَهُوَ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ إِخْرَاجُهُمْ أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ فَمَا جَزَاء مَن يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ مِنكُمْ إِلاَّ
خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَى أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ وَمَا اللّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

Yet you it is who slay your people and turn a party from among you out of their homes, backing each other up against them unlawfully and exceeding the limits; and if they should come to you as captives, you would ransom them – while their very turning out was unlawful for you. Do you then believe in a part of the Book and disbelieve in the other? What then is the reward of such among you as do this but disgrace in the life of this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they shall be sent back to the most grievous chastisement, and Allah is not at all heedless of what you do (***2:85***).

أُولَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُاْ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالآخِرَةِ فَلاَ يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلاَ هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ

These are they who have bought the life of this world for the hereafter, so their chastisement shall not be lightened nor shall they be helped (***2:86***).

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِن بَعْدِهِ بِالرُّسُلِ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ أَفَكُلَّمَا جَاءكُمْ
رَسُولٌ بِمَا لاَ تَهْوَى أَنفُسُكُمُ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ فَفَرِيقاً كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِيقاً تَقْتُلُونَ

And most certainly We gave Musa the Book and We sent apostles after him one after another; and We gave 'Isa, the son of Maryam, clear evidence and strengthened him with the holy spirit. What! whenever then an apostle came to you with that which your souls did not desire, you were insolent, so you called some (***of them***) ***liars and some you slew*** (***2:87***).

وَقَالُواْ قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ بَل لَّعَنَهُمُ اللَّه بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيلاً مَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ

And they say: "Our hearts are covered." Nay, Allah has cursed them on account of their unbelief – so little it is that they believe (***2:88***).

Commentary

Verse 83

Qur'an: ***And when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel: "You shall not worship*** (**any**) ***but Allah…"*** (***2:83***).

To begin with, the verse refers to the Children of Israel in third person, and then ends by addressing them in second person, ***"Then you turned back…"*** (***2:83***). The first sentence mentions making a covenant with them – which must naturally be in words – then describes that covenant; this in its turn begins with a declarative sentence, ***"You shall not worship*** (***any***) ***but Allah"*** (***2:83***), and ends up with some imperative ones, ***"and speak to men good words…"*** (***2:83***). When the stories of the Israelites began, they were addressed in second person, because the verses contained a lot of admonition and reprimand; it continued to the story of the Cow when, because of demands of eloquence, it was changed to third person. Consequently, this verse too began with third person, but when time came to quote the verbal covenant, the style reverted to the second person.

"You shall not worship (***any***) ***but Allah"*** (***2:83***): It is a prohibition in the form of information. This style shows the utmost importance attached to the ban by the speaker – it is as though the speaker has no doubt whatsoever that the order shall be complied with, and that, in this case, the servants will not dare to go near idolatry.

The same style is continued in the next clause, ***"and*** (***you shall do***) ***good to*** (***your***) ***parents, and to the near of kin and to the orphans and the needy"*** (***2:83***).

The change over to second person, although resorted to for the purpose of quoting the covenant, has put the speech back to the original style and has linked the last clauses of the covenant to the fresh admonitary ones: "and keep up prayer and pay the *zakat.* Then you turned back..."

Qur'an: ***And*** (**you shall do**) ***good to*** (**your**) ***parents…*** (***2:83***).

As translated here, it is a declarative sentence with the sense of imperative. It may also be translated as an imperative sentence: "and (do) good..." The verse gives in descending order of importance, the list of those whom one should do good to. The parents are the root of man's existence, and nearest of all to him. Then come the near of kin. Going outside the circle of relatives, the orphans are most deserving of kindness and beneficence, because in their small age they are deprived of their father – their guardian, protector and bread–earner. Other needy persons come after them.

Qur'an: ***"And to the orphans"*** (***2:83***).

"al-Yatim" (اليتيم = orphan) is he whose father has died. The word is not used for him who has lost his mother. Also, it is said that a human child is called "orphan" if his father dies, but in animals, the adjective is used for one whose mother dies.

Qur'an: ***"And the needy"*** **(*2:83*).**

"al-Masakin" (المساكين) is plural of *al-miskin* (المسكين = needy, impoverished, destitute, lowly).

Qur'an: ***"and speak to men good* (*words*)*"* (*2:83*).**

"Husnan" (حُسناً= beauty, excellence) is an infinitive verb, used for adjective (beautiful, excellent, good) to give emphasis. Some reciters have recited it *hasanan* (حَسَناً = beautiful, excellent, good). However, the sentence enjoins them to speak nicely to the people; it is an indirect way of ordering them to maintain good social relations to behave with people nicely, gently and good-manneredly - no matter whether the opposite party is a believer or an unbeliever. It cannot be said to be abrogated by the verse of fighting, because the two verses are not contradictory to each other; the place and time of social contact is other than the place and time of fighting. For example, using hard words when admonishing a child to correct his behaviour is not contrary to maintaining good social relation.

Verse 84

Qur'an: "***You shall not shed your blood…*****" (*2:84*).**

This too is a prohibitory order, in the form of an information - the same style which was used in, ***"You shall not worship* (*any*) *but Allah"* (*2:83*)**. *"as-safk"* (السّفك = to shed blood).

Verse 85

Qur'an: ***Backing each other up against them* (*2:85*).**

"at-Tazahur" (التظاهر = to help each other). *Az-Zahir* (الظهير = helper); it is derived from *Az-zahr* (الظهر = back) as though the helper strengthens the back of the helped one.

Qur'an: ***While their very turning away was unlawful* (*2:85*).**

for you: Its literal translation will be, 'while it was unlawful for you their very turning out.' The pronoun *"it" is* not related here to any previously mentioned noun etc., it is a pronoun used to begin a sentence. In the verse,

***Say: "He, Allah is one"* (*112:1*).**

The pronoun "He" has the same grammatical significance.

Qur'an: ***Do you believe in a part of the Book…* (*2:85*).**

Why should you follow the rule of paying ransom for them and disobey the prohibition of turning them out? Are not both rules in the same book? Do you believe in a part of the Book and disbelieve in the other?

Verse 87

Qur'an: ***And We sent apostles after him one after another*** **(*2:87*).**

"at –Taqfiyah" (التقفية = to send someone after someone else).

Qur'an: ***and We gave Isa son of Maryam, clear evidence*** **(*2:87*).**

This subject will be dealt with in Chapter 3, (The Family of 'Imran).

Verse 88

Qur'an: ***And they say: "Our hearts are covered"*** **(*2:88*).**

al–Ghulf (الغُلف) is plural of *al–aghlaf*. It is derived from *ghilaf* (الغلاف = cover). They say: Our hearts are protected under various covers and veils – your call cannot reach our hearts. The sentence has the same import as the verse:

And they say: "Our hearts are under coverings from that to which you call us **(*41:5*).**

Traditions

Abu Ja'far ('a) said about the words of Allah, ***and speak to men good*** **(words)** **(*2:83*)**: "Speak to men the best of that which you would like to be said about yourself."1

As–Sadiq ('a) said about this verse: "Speak to men, and do not speak but good until you know what it is.

al–Baqir ('a) said: "Speak to men the best, of that which you would like to be said about yourself; for certainly Allah, Mighty and Great is He, dislikes an abuser, curler, speaker of evil against the believers, indecent, shameless (and) beggar, and He loves the modest, mild–tempered, chaste (and) moderate."2

The author says: A tradition, similar to the first one, has been narrated in al–Kafi from as–Sadiq ('a) with another chain of narrators; and similarly, in al–'Ayyashi.

Another tradition, like the second one has been written from the same Imam in al–Kafi; and one like the third is narrated from al–Baqir ('a) in al –'Ayyashi. Apparently, these meanings of the "good word" have been inferred from general usage.

As–Sadiq ('a) said: "Verily Allah sent Muhammad (S) with five swords: So (there is) a sword against a *dhimmi* (الذِمـيّ = free non–Muslim subject of an Islamic country). Allah said: *and speak to men good*

(words); it was revealed about the *dhimmis,* then it was abrogated by another verse,

Fight those who do not believe in Allah… (***9:29***)3

The author says: In this tradition the Imam has taken the "speech" to mean behaviour. We say: Do not speak to him but good; what we mean is: Do not deal with him but in a good and decent manner. This meaning will apply only if we take the word, "abrogated" in its terminological sense. But it may also be taken in its literal sense (as we shall explain under the verse:

Whatever signs We abrogate or cause to be forgotten (***2:106***)

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And in that case this verse will not be in conflict with that of the fighting. It should be pointed out that such uses of words in their literal meanings (as against their terminological ones) are not infrequent in the traditions of the Imams.

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1. al-Kafi.
2. Ma'ani al-akhbar.
3. al-'Ayyashi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 89 - 93

وَلَمَّا جَاءهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِندِ اللّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُواْ مِن قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ فَلَمَّا جَاءهُم مَّا عَرَفُواْ كَفَرُواْ بِهِ فَلَعْنَةُ اللَّه عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ

And when there came to them a Book from Allah verifying that which they have, and aforetime they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved, but when there came to them that which they did recognize, they disbelieved in him; so Allah's curse is on the unbelievers (***2:89***).

بِئْسَمَا اشْتَرَوْاْ بِهِ أَنفُسَهُمْ أَن يَكْفُرُواْ بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ بَغْياً أَن يُنَزِّلُ اللّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ عَلَى مَن يَشَاء مِنْ عِبَادِهِ فَبَآؤُواْ بِغَضَبٍ عَلَى غَضَبٍ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ

Evil is that for which they sold their souls - that they should deny what Allah has revealed, out of

envy that Allah should send down of His grace on whomsoever of His servants He pleases; so they returned with wrath upon wrath, and there is a disgraceful punishment for the unbelievers (***2:90***).

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُواْ بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ قَالُواْ نُؤْمِنُ بِمَآ أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَيَكْفُرونَ بِمَا وَرَاءهُ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقاً لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ قُلْ فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنبِيَاء اللّهِ مِن قَبْلُ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ

And when it is said to them, "Believe in what Allah has revealed," they say: "We believe in that which was revealed to us;" and they deny what is besides that, while it is the truth verifying that which they have. Say: "Why then did you kill Allah's prophets before if you were indeed believers?" (***2:91***).

وَلَقَدْ جَاءكُم مُّوسَى بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِهِ وَأَنتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ

And most certainly Musa came to you with clear evidence, then you took the calf (***for a god***) ***in his absence and you were unjust*** (***2:92***).

وَأُشْرِبُواْ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِهِمْ قُلْ بِئْسَمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِهِ إِيمَانُكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ

And (**remember**) ***when We made a covenant with you and raised the mountain over you: "Take hold of what We have given you with firmness and listen*** (**to Our words**)". ***They said: "We hear and disobey." And they were made to imbibe*** (**the love of**) ***the calf into their hearts on account of their unbelief. Say: "Evil is that which your belief bids you if you are believers"*** (***2:93***).

Commentary

Verse 89

Qur'an: ***And when there came to them a Book…*** (***2:89***).

The context shows that "a Book" refers to the Qur'an.

Qur'an: ***… And aforetime they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved…*** (***2:89***).

It appears that whenever the pagans of Arabia clashed with the Jews, the latter prayed for victory by the right of the Prophet, and by his prophethood and emigration; and that this was their usual custom before the advent of the Prophet, so much so that even the pagans knew it of them. It all is implied in the word, "they used to".

Qur'an: ***...But when there came to them that which they did recognize...*** **(*2:89*).**

They knew that Muhammad (S) was the awaited Prophet, because all the attributes and particulars mentioned in their books fitted on him perfectly. And yet they denied his truth.

Verse 90

Qur'an: ***Evil is that*** **for** ***which they sold their souls...*** **(*2:90*).**

"Baghyan" (بغياً = out of envy) is in accusative case, explaining the reason why they disbelieved in Muhammad (S) even after recognizing him. What they did was "out of envy", "that Allah should send down of His grace on whomsoever of His servants He pleases" was the object of their envy. "So they returned with wrath upon wrath", that is, they returned doubly enraged. It may also mean that they invited double wrath of Allah upon themselves – the first because they disbelieved in Torah and the second because they disbelieved in the Qur'an.

The verse says that they were partisans of the Prophet long before he was born; they prayed to Allah for victory by his name and his Book. When the Prophet was sent and the Qur'an was revealed, they very well recognized that he was the Prophet in whose name they used to pray for victory, and whose coming they awaited. But they were overwhelmed by envy and arrogance. No sooner did the Prophet begin his call then they denied his truth, and forgot all that they used to tell about the awaited prophet. It was not surprising as they had earlier disbelieved in Torah too. Thus, they committed disbelief after disbelief, and invited the wrath of Allah upon themselves, not once but twice.

Verse 91

Qur'an: ***...And they deny what is besides that*** **(*2:91*).**

That is, they claim that they do not believe in any book other than Torah; but the fact is that they do not believe even in Torah.

Qur'an: ***Say: "Why then did you kill Allah's prophets..."*** **(*2:91*).**

The conjunctive, "then", serves to relate this question to their claim, "We believe in that which was revealed to us". If this claim of yours is correct then why did you kill the prophets of Allah? And why did you disbelieve in Musa by taking the calf for a god? And why did you say, "We hear and disobey", when We took a promise from you and lifted the mountain over you?

Verse 93

Qur'an: ***...And they were made to imbibe*** **(the love of)** ***the calf into their hearts*** **(*2:93*).**

"al-Ishrab" (الإشراب = to make to imbibe, to make to drink). Instead of saying 'the love of the calf', the

verse says, “to imbibe the calf”, for emphasis, as though they had drunk the calf itself into their hearts. The sentence thus contains two metaphors – “the calf” for the love of the calf, and imbibing into hearts for loving.

Qur’an: ***Say: “Evil is that which your belief bids you…”*** **(*2:93*).**

It is a derisive expression ridiculing them for their killings of the prophets, their disbelief in Musa and their arrogance in committing sin after sin and then claiming that they were the true believers. The verse tauntingly asks them: Is this what your belief bids you?

Traditions

As-Sadiq (‘a) explained the verse, ***and when there came to them a Book from Allah verifying that which they have…*** **(*2:89*),** in this way: “The Jews found in their books that Muhammad (S), the Messenger of Allah, would migrate and settle between ‘Ayr and Uhud. So, they went out looking for that place. They passed by a mountain called Hadad[1]; and they said: ‘Hadad and Uhud are the same’. So they dispersed nearby; some of them settled at Tayma', and some others at Fadak and yet others at Khaybar. Those at Tayma’ once desired (to see) some of their brethren (at another place). A Bedouin from (the tribe of) Qays passed by them and they hired (his camels).

He told them: ‘I shall take you from between ‘Ayr and Uhud.’ They told him: ‘When you pass between the two, tell us.’ When they reached the land of Medina, he said: ‘That is ‘Ayr and this is Uhud.’ They descended from his camels and said to him: ‘We have now found (the place of) our desire; now we do not need your camels, you may go wherever you wish.’ Then they wrote to their brethren at Fadak and Khaybar: ‘We have found the place, come therefore to us.’ They wrote in reply: ‘Now we have settled in this place, and have acquired properties; and we are so near to you. Therefore, when it will happen (i.e., when the Prophet will come to Medina), we shall rush to you.’

Those Jews acquired properties in the land of Medina. When their wealth increased, its news came to the ears of Tubba’[2] and he attacked them. They fortified themselves and he laid siege to them. (And they used to take pity on the weekly soldiers of Tubba’ and throw dates and barley to them at night. This came to the notice of Tubba’ and he softened towards them.[3] He assured them of their safety and they came down to him. He told them: ‘I do like this place of yours and I am inclined to settle down here.’ They said: ‘It is not for you. It is the migration place of a prophet; and no one may settle down here until that happens.’

Thereupon he said: ‘Then I am leaving among you some of the members of my clan, so that when it happens, they shall help and assist him.’ Thus, he left behind the two tribes you see today, the Aws and the Khazraj. When these two (tribes) increased in number, they used to grab the properties of the Jews. At that time, the Jews used to warn them: ‘Oh! When Muhammad (S) is sent (by Allah) we shall certainly turn you out from our town and properties.’ But when Muhammad (S) was sent as Prophet, it was the

Helpers (the Aws and the Khazraj) who believed in him and the very Jews denied him! This is the meaning of the words of Allah,

…And aforetime they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved… **(*2:89*)*"***[4]

Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim and Abu Na'aym (in his *Dala'ilu 'n-nubuwwah*) have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "The Jews used to pray for victory against the Aws and the Khazraj by the right of the Messenger of Allah, before he was sent as prophet. However, when Allah raised him from the Arabs, the same Jews disbelieved in him and denied what they used to say about him. Mu'adh Ibn Jabal, Bishr Ibn Bara' Ibn Ma'rur and Dawud Ibn Salamah told them: 'O Jews! Fear Allah and accept Islam; because it was you who used to pray for victory against us by the right of Muhammad, while we were polytheists, and you used to tell us that he would (soon) be sent, describing to us his attributes.' Salam Ibn Mushkim, one of the tribe of Banu an-Nadir, said to them: 'He has not brought to us anything we know; and he is not the prophet we were telling you about.' Then Allah sent down (the verse):

"And when there came to them a Book from Allah…' **(*2:89*)*"***[5]

Abu Nu'aym has narrated in his *Dala'ilu 'n-Nubuwwah* from the chains of 'Ata' and ad-Dahhak, from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "The Jews of Banu Qurayzah and Banu an-Nadir, before Muhammad (S) was sent as prophet, used to pray to Allah for victory, invoking Him against the disbelievers and saying: 'O Allah! We seek Thy help, by the right of the untaught prophet, to let us triumph over them.' And they were given victory. But when there came to them that which they did recognize (i.e., Muhammad (S)), and actually they had no doubt whatsoever about him, they disbelieved in, and denied him.[6]

The author says: Similar traditions have been narrated by various other chains also.

A commentator, after pointing to the last mentioned tradition and others like them, says: "These traditions - weak as their narrators are and incompatible as they are with the narrated traditions - are anomalous in their meaning too, because they maintain that the prayer for victory was made 'by the person of the Prophet' or, as some traditions say, 'by the right of the Prophet'; and such a prayer is against the *Shari'ah;* and no one has any right on Allah. How could prayer be offered with the help of such a non-existent right?

Reply: This objection results from not understanding the meaning of "right" and oath. Oath is used to join and bind a proposition, order, request or exclamation to an honourable and sublime thing - if that proposition etc. is wrong, the honour and sublimity of the thing bound to it, is tarnished and damaged. When you say, "By my life, Zayd is standing", you have bound the honour of your life to the truth of your statement; if that statement be wrong, your life would lose its honour. When you say, "By my life, I shall do this work", or "I entreat you, by my life, to do this work", you have, in the same way, put the honour of your life at stake for that work; if you did not do it, or if the second party did not heed to your entreaty, your life would lose its honour, its dignity. Two things emerge from this explanation:

First: Oath is the strongest method of emphasizing a talk, as the scholars of literature have confirmed.

Second: The thing by which one swears, must be more honourable and more important than the proposition etc. which it is related to; because a proposition cannot be emphasized with the help of a less important thing. Allah has sworn, in His Book, by His own name and attributes.

For example, So, by your Lord,

We would most certainly question them all (***15:92***).

Also, He quotes others swearing by His name and attributes:

By Allah, our Lord … (***6:23***).

Then by Thy Might I will surely, make them live an evil life (***38:82***).

But He has also sworn by His Prophet, His angels and His books, as well as by His creatures like the heaven, the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the night, the day, the mountains, the rivers, the towns, the man, the tree, the fig and the olive. It could not be possible unless these things had a real dignity of their own bestowed on them by Allah; every such thing must have an attribute reflecting one of the divine attributes, or an activity related to the divine sublimity and every dignity and honour emanates from Him.

Now, what objection can be raised against a suppliant, if he prays to Allah for something entreating Him by one of the above-mentioned things - considering the fact that Allah Himself has sworn by those things and has given them a sublimity and dignity? Why an exception should be made in case of the Apostle of Allah only? Is it not an affront to the Prophet to remove him from this common way of showing respect? By my life, Muhammad, the Apostle of Allah (S) is not less honourable in the eyes of Allah than an Iraqi fig or a Syrian olive! These people forget that Allah Himself has sworn by His Prophet:

By your life! They were blindly wandering on in their intoxication (***15:72***).

Now we should have a look at the "right". Right, as opposed to wrong, means a factual thing, existing outside imagination, like the earth and the man; in short, every real and substantial thing, as opposed to illusory and imaginary ones. Monetary and other social rights come within this category because they are firmly established by the society.

The Qur'an has nullified all the rights claimed by man, except that which is laid down and confirmed by Allah - in creation as well as in legislation. Right in the legislative and social spheres is that which Allah Himself has established, like the monetary rights, the rights of the brothers and the rights of the parents etc.

It is necessary to mention here that no one can lay down a right against Allah; no one can make it

incumbent upon Allah to do or give something. But it is possible for Allah to make it incumbent upon Himself to do something, or to give someone something, all in the sphere of legislation. Then that "someone" shall have a right on Allah which Allah Himself has established. For example, Allah says:

***...Even* so (now) *it is a right on Us* (that) *We deliver the believers* (*10:103*).**

***And certainly Our word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the apostles* (*37:171*).**

***Most surely, they shall be assisted ones* (*37:172*).**

***And most surely, Our host alone shall be the victorious ones* (*37:173*).**

The assistance, promised here, is general and unconditional, not restricted by any proviso. Getting deliverance is the right of the believers on Allah, and getting assistance is, in the same way, the right of the apostles. By establishing this right on Himself for the apostles, Allah has enhanced their dignity and honour. And there is nothing to prevent a suppliant from entreating Allah to help and deliver him from his difficulties, by the right of His apostle or apostles. Allah Himself has laid down that right and He Himself swears by every honourable thing, showing us that such oaths and adjurations are in fact liked by Him.

In short, there is no hitch in entreating Allah by His Apostle or by the right of His Apostle. The same applies to entreating Him by His friends, or by the right of His friends. He has established a right for them on Himself that He will surely, assist them in the path of happiness, with every related assistance.

The claim that "no one has any right on Allah" is just nonsense. Of course, no one can lay down a right for himself on Allah; no one can make it incumbent on Allah to do something. But a suppliant does not pray to Allah by a right forced on Allah by someone else; he pleads to Him by a right which He Himself has established pledging His Own word; and His Promise is never broken.

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1. In the printed copy of at-Tafsir of al-'Ayyashi (vol. 1, p. 49) and what has been quoted from him in al-Bihar (vol. 15, p. 226), al-Burhan (vol.1, p. 128) and Majma'u al-bayan (vol. 1, p.158) the name has appeared as Hadad. But we could not find such a name in geographical dictionaries. Perhaps it is a corruption of Hadad which is a mountain overlooking Tayma'; (see Ma'jamu al-buldan, vol. 2, p. 229; al-Qamus, vol. 1, p. 287 and Taju al-'arus, vol. 2, p. 333) or it may be another reading of Hadad. (ed.).
2. التُبّع (at-Tubba') was the title of the kings of Yemen.
3. The sentences in parenthesis are not in al-Mizan. They have been added from the quotation of al-'Ayyashi, given in Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 15, p. 226. (m).
4. Al-'Ayyashi.
5. ad-Durru al-manthur.
6. ad-Durru al-manthur.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Appendix A: A Chronological List of The Fourteen Infallibles (‘A)

The Holy Prophet, His Daughter And The Twelve Holy Imams

Note: Where there are differences of opinion on the dates of birth or death, the most popular view has been quoted.

SL. No.	Designation	Agnomen (*Kunya*)	Name	Father’s name	Title (*Laqab*)	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Martyred by means of	Place of burial
1.	The Last Prophet of Allah	Abu ‘l Qasim	Muhammad (Ahmad) (Al-Mustafa)	‘Abdullah	Rasulu’llah, Nabiyyu’llah, An-Nabiyy, Khatamu’n- Nabiyyin	17th Rabi’ I, in the year of the Elephant. (25.8.570 AD)	28th Safar, 11 AH (25.5.632 AD)	Natural	Holy Medina, al-Munawwa-rah, Saudi Arabia
2.	One of the Fourteen Infallibles	Umm Abiha	Fatimah	Muhammad	az-Zahra’, as-Siddiqah, al-Batul, Sayyidatu’n- Nisa’.	20th Jumada II, in the fifth Year after the declaration of the Prophet-hood. (2.1.615 AD)	3rd Jumada II, 11 AH (26.8.632)	Injured	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
3.	1st Imam	Abu al-Hasan, Abu al-Hasanayn, Abu Turab.	‘Ali	Abu Talib	Amir al-Mu’minin, al-Wasiyy, al-Murtada, (Haydar).	13th Rajab, 10 Years before the declaration of the Prophethood. (25.5.600 AD)	Struck on 19th Ramadan (25th January); Died on 21st Ramadan 40AH (27.1.661 AD)	Sword – while he was engaged in prayers.	Holy an-Najaf al-Ashraf, Iraq. (al-Ghariyy)
4.	2nd Imam	Abu Muhammad	al-Hasan	‘Ali	Al-Mujtaba, as-Sibt (al-Akbar).	15th Ramadan, 3AH (1.3.625 AD)	7th Safar, 50 AH (6.3.670 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
5.	3rd Imam	Abu ‘Abdillah	al-Husayn	‘Ali	Sayyidu’sh-Shuhada, as-Sibt (al-Asghar).	3rd Sha’ban, 4 AH (8.1.626 AD)	10th Muharram, 61 AH (10.10.680 AD)	Sword – in the Battle of ‘Ashura	Holy Karbala’ (at-Taff), Iraq.
6.	4th Imam	Abu Muhammad	‘Ali	al-Husayn	Zaynu’l-Abidin, Sayyidu’s-Sajidin, as-Sajjad.	5th Sha’ban, 38 AH (6.1.659 AD)	25th Muharram, 94/95 AH (31.10.712 / 20.10.713 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia

SL. No.	Designation	Agnomen (*Kunya*)	Name	Father's name	Title (*Laqab*)	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Martyred by means of	Place of burial
7.	5th Imam	Abu Ja'far	Muhammad	'Ali	al-Baqir.	3rd Safar, 57 AH (16.12.676 AD)	7th Dhi'l-hijjah, 114 AH (28.1.733 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
8.	6th Imam	Abu 'Abdillah, Abu Musa.	Ja'far	Muhammad	as-Sadiq.	17th Rabi' I, 83 AH (20.4.702 AD)	25th Shawwal, 148 AH (14.12.765 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
9.	7th Imam	Abu al-Hasan (al-Awwal - The First), Abu Ibrahim	Musa	Ja'far	al-Kazim, al-'Abd as-Salih, al-'Alim.	7th Safar, 129 AH (28.10.746 AD)	25th Rajab, 183 AH (1.9.799 AD)	Poison	Holy al-Kazimiyyah, Iraq.
10.	8th Imam	Abu al-Hasan (al-Thani - The Second),	'Ali	Musa	Ar-Ridha'.	11th Dhi al-qi'dah, 148 AH (29.12.765 AD)	17th Safar, 203 AH (24.8.818 AD)	Poison	Holy Mashhad, (Tus – Kurasan), Iran.
11.	9th Imam	Abu Ja'far (ath-Thani – The Second)	Muhammad	'Ali	at-Taqi, al-Jawad.	10th Rajab, 195 AH (8.4.811 AD)	30th Dhi al-qi'dah, 220 AH (25.11.835 AD)	Poison	Holy al-Kazimiyyah, Iraq.
12.	10th Imam	Abu al-Hasan (ath-Thalith – The Third)	'Ali	Muhammad	an-Naqi, al-Hadi.	2nd Rajab, 212 AH (27.9.827 AD)	3rd Rajab, 254 AH (28.6.868 AD)	Poison	Holy Samarra' (Surra-man-ra'a), Iraq.
13.	11th Imam	Abu Muhammad	al-Hasan	'Ali	al-'Askari.	8th Rabi 'II, 232 AH (3.12.846 AD)	8th Rabi 'II, 260 AH (1.1.874 AD)	Poison	Holy Samarra' Iraq.
14.	12th Imam	Abu 'l Qasim	Muhammad	al-Hasan	al-Mahdi, al-Qa'im, al-Hujjah, al-Gha'ib, Sahibu 'z-Zaman, Sahibu al-Amr, al-Muntazar.	15th Sha'ban, 255 AH (29.7.869)	Still alive, but in occultation.	----	----

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SHARES

Appendix B: List Of Names and Numbers of The Surahs of The Holy Qur'an

In this book the references of the Qur'anic verses have been given by writing serial number of the relevant chapter, followed by a colon (:) that is followed by the number/s of the Verse/s. The names of the chapters have been omitted for the sake of brevity.

The names of the chapters with their serial numbers are given here for the guidance of the readers.

To find, for instance, the verse 5:67 in the Qur'an, the reader should open the fifth chapter, that its, *al-Ma'idah,* The Table, and then find the 67th verse.

S. No.	Arabic Names of the Chapters	Transliteration	Meaning
1.	فاتِحَةُ الكِتاب	***Fatihatu al-kitab***	**The Opening of The Book**
2.	البَقَرة	***al-Baqarah***	**The Cow**
3.	آل عِمران	***Al 'Imran***	**The House of Imran**
4.	النِّسـاء	***an-Nisa'***	**Women**
5.	المَـائِدة	***Al-Ma'idah***	**The Table**
6.	الأَنْعـام	***Al -An'am***	**Cattle**
7.	الأعراف	***al-A'raf***	**The Battlements**
8.	الأَنْفـال	***al-Anfal***	**The Spoils**
9.	التَّوْبَة	***At-Tawbah***	**Repentance**
10.	يُونُس	***Yunus***	**Jonah**
11.	هُود	***Hud***	**Hood**
12.	يُوسُف	***Yusuf***	**Joseph**

13.	الرَّعد	***ar-Ra'd***	**Thunder**
14.	اِبراهيم	***Ibrahim***	**Abraham**
15.	الحِجْر	***Al-Hijr***	**El-Hijr**
16.	النَّحل	***An-Nahl***	**The Bee**
17.	الإِسْرآء	***al-Isra'***	**The Night Journey**
18.	الكَهْف	***al-Kahf***	**The Cave**
19.	مَريَم	***Maryam***	**Mary**
20.	طه	***Ta Ha***	**Ta Ha**
21.	الأَنْبيآء	***al-Anbiya'***	**Prophets**
22.	الحَجّ	***al-Hajj***	**The Pilgrimage**
23.	المؤمِنون	***al-Mu'minun***	**The Believers**
24.	النّور	***an-Nur***	**Light**
25.	الفُرقان	***al-Furqan***	**Discrimination (Salvation)**
26.	الشُّعَراء	***ash-Shu'ara'***	**The Poets**
27.	النَّمْل	***an-Naml***	**The Ant**
28.	القَصَص	***al-Qasas***	**The Stories**
29.	العَنْكَبُوت	***al-'Ankabut***	**The Spider**
30.	الرُّوم	***Ar-Rum***	**The Greeks**
31.	لُقْمان	***Luqman***	**Lokman**
32.	السَّجْدة	***as-Sajdah***	**Prostration**

33.	الأحزاب	***al-Ahzab***	**The Confederates**
34.	سـَبَأ	***Saba'***	**Sheba**
35.	فاطِر (المَلائِكة)	***Fatir* (*or, al-Mala'ikah*)**	**The Originator (or The Angels)**
36.	يـس	***Ya Sin***	**Ya Sin**
37.	الصّـافّات	***as-Saffat***	**The Rangers**
38.	ص	***Sad***	**Sad**
39.	الزُّمَر	***az-Zumar***	**The Companies**
40.	المُؤْمِن	***al-Mu'min***	**The Believer**
41.	فُصِّلَت	***Fussilat***	**Distinguished**
42.	الشُّورى	***ash-Shura***	**Counsel**
43.	الزُّخْرُف	***az-Zukhruf***	**Ornaments**
44.	الدُّخان	***ad-Dukhan***	**Smoke**
45.	الجاثِية	***al-Jathiyah***	**Hobbling**
46.	الأحقاف	***al-Ahqaf***	**The Sand-Dunes**
47.	محَمّد (ص)	***Muhammad***	**Muhammad**
48.	الفَتْح	***al-Fath***	**Victory**
49.	الحُجُرات	***al Hujurat***	**Apartments**
50.	ق	***Qaf***	**Qaf**
51.	الذّارِيات	***adh-Dhariyat***	**The Scatterers**
52.	الطُّور	***at-Tur***	**The Mount**

53.	النَّجْم	***an-Najm***	**The Star**
54.	القَمَر	***al-Qamar***	**The Moon**
55.	الرَّحمن	***ar-Rahman***	**The All-merciful**
56.	الواقِعَة	***al-Waqi'ah***	**The Terror**
57.	الحَديد	***al-Hadid***	**Iron**
58.	المُجادَلة	***Al-Mujadalah***	**The Disputer**
59.	الحَشْر	***al-Hashr***	**The Mustering**
60.	المُمتَحَنة	***al-Mumtahanah***	**The Woman Tested**
61.	الصَّف	***as-Saff***	**The Ranks**
62.	الجُمُعة	***al-Jumu'ah***	**Congregation**
63.	المُنافِقُون	***al-Munafiqun***	**The Hypocrites**
64.	التَّغابُن	***at-Taghabun***	**Mutual Fraud**
65.	الطَّلاق	***at-Talaq***	**Divorce**
66.	التَّحْريم	***at-Tahrim***	**The Forbidding**
67.	المُلْك	***al-Mulk***	**The Kingdom**
68.	القَلَم	***al-Qalam***	**The Pen**
69.	الحَاقّة	***al-Haqqah***	**The Indubitable**
70.	المَعارِج	***al-Ma'arij***	**The Stairways**
71.	نُوح	***Nuh***	**Noah**
72.	الجِنّ	***Al-Jinn***	**The Jinn**

73.	المُزَّمّـِل	***al-Muzzammil***	**Enwrapped**
74.	المُدَّثـّرِ	***al-Muddaththir***	**Shrouded**
75.	القِيامَة	***al-Qiyamah***	**The Resurrection**
76.	الدَّهر (الإنسان)	***ad-Dahr* (*or, al-Insan*)**	**The Time (or, Man)**
77.	المُرسَلات	***al-Mursalat***	**The Loosed Ones**
78.	النَّبأ	***an-Naba'***	**The Tiding**
79.	النّازِعات	***an-Nazi'at***	**The Pluckers**
80.	عَبَس	***'Abas***	**He Frowned**
81.	التَّكْوير	***at-Takwir***	**The Darkening**
82.	الإنفِطار	***al-Infitar***	**The Splitting**
83.	المُطَـفِّفين	***al-Mutaffifin***	**The Stinters**
84.	الإنشِقاق	***al-Inshiqaq***	**The Rending**
85.	البُروج	***al-Buruj***	**The Constellations**
86.	الطّارق	***at-Tariq***	**The Night-star**
87.	الأعلى	***Al-A'la***	**The Most High**
88.	الغاشِيَة	***al-Ghashiyah***	**The Enveloper**
89.	الفَجْر	***Al-Fajr***	**The Dawn**
90.	البَـلَـد	***Al-Balad***	**The Land**
91.	الشـَّمْس	***ash-Shams***	**The Sun**
92.	اللَّيل	***Al-Layl***	**The Night**

93.	الضُّحى	***ad-Duha***	**The Forenoon**
94.	الإنشـراح	***al-Inshirah***	**The Expanding**
95.	التِّين	***At-Tin***	**The Fig**
96.	العَلَق	***al-A'laq***	**The Blood-clot**
97.	القَدر	***al-Qadr***	**Power**
98.	البَيِّنَة	***al-Bayyinah***	**The Clear Sign**
99.	الزِّلزال	***Az-Zilzal***	**The Earthquake**
100.	العَاديات	***al-'Adiyat***	**The Chargers**
101.	القارِعَة	***al-Qari'ah***	**The Clatterer**
102.	التَكاثُر	***at-Takathur***	**Rivalry**
103.	العَصْر	***Al-'Asr***	**Afternoon**
104.	الهُمَزَة	***al-Humazah***	**The Backbiter**
109.	الفيل	***Al-Fil***	**The Elephant**
106.	قُرَيْش	***Quraysh***	**Quraish**
107.	الماعُون	***al-Ma'un***	**Charity**
108.	الكَوْثَر	***al-Kawthar***	**Abundance**
109.	الكافِرون	***al-Kafirun***	**The Unbelievers**
110.	النَّصر	***An-Nasr***	**Help**
111.	تَبَّت	***Tabbat*** **(*or, Lahab*)**	**Perish (or, The Flame)**
112.	الإخْلاص (التَّوحيد)	***al Ikhlas*** **(*or, at-Tawhid*)**	**Sincere Religion (or, Divine Unity)**

113.	الفَلَق	***al-Falaq***	**Daybreak**
114.	النَّاس	***an-Nas***	**Men**

[1] [1]
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Appendix C: Authors Referred to in This Volume (Of Al -Mizan) And Other Volumes

Note: For reference to some of their work/s see Appendix D.

Aban Ibn Taghlib Ibn Rabah al-Bakri al-Jurayri (? - 141/758), the great Imamite traditionalist and commentator.

Aban Ibn 'Uthman Abu 'Abdillah, al-Ahmar (? - c. 200/815), the reliable Imamite traditionalist.

'Abdullah Ibn Ahmad Ibn Hanbal - Abu Muhammad ash-Shaybani al-Baghdadi (213/828-288/901), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

'Abdullah Ibn 'Amir Ibn Yazid - Abu 'Imran al-Yahsabi ad-Dimashqi (8/630 - 118/736), one of the seven reciters of the Holy Qur'an.

'Abdu 'r-Razzaq Ibn Hammam, Abu Bakr as-San'ani (126/744 - 211/827), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Abu 'Amr ibnu al-'Ala' - Zabban Ibn 'Ammar al-Mazini al-Basri (70/690 - 154/771), one of the seven reciters of the Holy Qur'an.

Abu 'Awanah - Ya'qub Ibn Ishaq Ibn Ibrahim an-Naysaburi ash-Shafi'i (230/845 - 316/928), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Abu al-Baqa' - Abdullah Ibn al-Husayn Ibn 'Abdillah al-'Ukbari al-Hanbali (538/1143 - 616/1219), the Sunni scholar.

Abu Dawud - Sulayman Ibn al-Ash'ath al-Azdi as-Sajistani (202/817 - 275/889), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Abu Dawud at-Tayalisi - Sulayman Ibn Dawud al-Qurashi al-Basri (133/750 - 204/819), the Sunni

traditionalist.

Abu Dharr al-Harawi - ‘Abd Ibn Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al-Ansari al-Maliki (355/966 - 434/1043), the Sunni scholar.

Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani - ‘Ali Ibn al-Husayn Ibn Muhammad al-Umawi (284/897 - 356/967), the famous scholar.

Abu al-Fida’ - Isma‘i1 Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Mahmud al-Ayyubi ash-Shafi’i (672/ 1273 - 732/1338), the famous Sunni historian.

Abu al-Futuh ar-Razi - al-Husayn Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Muhammad al-Khuza'i (? - c. 560/1165), the famous Imamite commentator.

Abu Hanifah - an-Nu’man Ibn Thabit al-Kufi (80/699 - 150/767), the Hanafite Imam.

Abu Hanfah al-Misri - al-Qadi, Ibn Hayyun, an-Nu’ man Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Mansur at-Tamimi (c. 270/884 - 363/974), the famous Shi’ite scholar.

Abu Hatim - Muhammad Ibn Idris Ibn al-Mundhir al-Hanzali ar-Razi (195/810 - 277/890), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Abu Hayyan al-Undulusi - Athiru 'd-Din, Ibn Hayyan, Muhammad Ibn Yusuf al-Gharnati ash-Shafi’i (654/1256 - 745/1344), the Sunni scholar.

Abu al-Hudhayl al-’AllAf - Muhammad Ibn al-Hudhayl al-Basri (135/753 - 235/850), the famous Mu‘tazilite scholar.

Abu al-Husayn al-Basri - Muhammad Ibn ‘Ali Ibn at-Tayyib al-Mu'tazili al-Hanafi (? - 436/1044), the famous Mu’tazilite scholar.

Abu Ishaq ath-Thaqafi - Ibrahim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Sa‘id al-Kufi (? - 283/896), the great Imamite traditionalist.

Abu Nasr as-Sijizzi - ‘Ubaydullah Ibn Sa‘id Ibn Hatim al-Wa’ili (? - 444/1052), the Sunni traditionalist.

Abu Nu'aym al-Isfahani - Ahmad Ibn ‘Abdullah Ibn Ahmad ash-Shafi’i (336/948 - 430/1038), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Abu al-Qasim al-‘Alawi - ‘Ali Ibn Ahmad al-Kufi (? - 352/963), the Imamite scholar.

Abu as-Salah al-Halabi - Taqi Ibn an-Najm Ibn ‘Ubaydillah (374/984 - 447/1055), the famous Imamite scholar.

Abu ash-Shaykh - Abu Muhammad, ‘Abdullah Ibn Muhammad al-Hibbani al-Isfahani (274/887 -

369/979), the Sunni traditionalist.

Abu ‘Ubayd – al–Qasim Ibn Sallam al–Harawi (157/774 – 224/838), the famous Sunni scholar.

Abu al–Walid at–Tayalisi – Hisham Ibn ‘Abdi'l–Malik al–Basri (133/750 – 227/741), the Sunni traditionalist.

Abu Ya’la – Ahmad Ibn ‘Ali Ibn al–Muthanna at–Tamimi al–Mawsili (210/825 – 307/919), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Abu Ya’la al–Ja'fari – Muhammad Ibn al–Hasan Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Hamzah al–Baghdadi (? – 463/1071), the famous Imamite scholar.

Ahmad – Abu ‘Abdillah, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Hanbal ash–Shaybani (164/780 – 241/855), the Hanbalite Imam.

Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn ‘Isa – Abu Ja’far al–Ash‘ari al–Qummi (? – during 2nd half of the 3rd/9th c.), the famous Imamite traditionalist.

Al–Ajurri – Abu Bakr, Muhammad Ibn al–Husayn Ibn ‘Abdillah al–Baghdadiash–Shafi’i (? – 360/970), the Sunni traditionalist.

‘Ali Ibn Harb – Abu al–Hasan at–Ta'i al–Mawsili (170/786 – 265/879), the Sunni historian and traditionalist.

al–’Allamah al–Hilli – Abu Mansur, Jamalu 'd–Din, al–Hasan Ibn Yusuf Ibn ‘Ali Ibn al–Mutahhar al–Asadi (648/1250 – 726/1325), the celebrated Imamite scholar.

al–Alusi – Abu ath–Thana’, Shihabu ‘d– Din, Mahmud Ibn ‘Abdillah al–Baghdadi ash–Shafi’i (1217/1802 – 1270/1854), the Sunni commentator.

al–Amidi – Abu al–Fath, ‘Abd al–Wahid Ibn Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al–Wahid at–Tamimi (? – c. 550/1155), the traditionalist.

al–Amin – as–Sayyid Muhsin Ibn ‘Abdi 'l–Karim al–Husayni al–'Amili (1282/1865 – 1371/1952), the famous Imamite scholar.

al–Amini – ash–Shaykh ‘Abd al–Husayn Ibn Ahmad at–Tabrizi an–Najafi (1320/1902 – 1390/1970), the famous Imamite scholar.

‘Amr Ibn ‘Ubayd – Abu ‘Uthman at–Taymi al–Basri (80/699 – 144/761), the Mu‘tazilite Imam.

al–Anbari – Abu Bakr, Muhammad Ibn al–Qasim Ibn Muhammad al–Baghdadi al–Hanbali (271/884 – 328/940), the Sunni scholar.

al-'Arusi - ash-Shaykh 'Abd 'Ali Ibn Jumu'ah al-Huwayzi (? - 11th/17th c.), the Imamite commentator.

al-Ash'ari, Abu al-Hasan - 'Ali Ibn Isma'il Ibn Abi Bishr al-Basri (260/874 or 270/883 - 324/936), the Ash'arite Imam.

'Asim Ibn Abi 'n-Najud (Bahdalah) al-Asadi al-Kufi' (? - 127/745), one of the seven reciters of the Holy Qur'an.

al-'Askari, Abu Ahmad - al-Hasan Ibn 'Abdillah Ibn Sa'id al-Basri (293/906 - 382/993), the famous scholar.

al-'Askari, Abu al-Hasan, 'Ali Ibn Sa'id Ibn 'Abdillah (? - 305/917), the Sunni traditionalist.

al-'Askari, Abu Hilal - al-Hasan Ibn 'Abdillah Ibn Sahl al-Basri (? - a.d. 395/1005), the famous scholar.

'Ata' Ibn Muslim Ibn Maysarah al-Khurasani (50/670 - 135/752), the commentator and traditionalist.

al-'Atiqi - Abu al-Hasan, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al-Baghdadi (367/977 - 441/1049), the Sunni traditionalist.

al-'Ayyashi - Abu 'n-Nadr, Muhammad Ibn Mas'ud al-Sulami as-Samarqandi (? - 2nd half of the 3rd/9th c.), the Imamite commentator and tranditionalist.

al-Azhari - Abu Mansur, Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn al-Azhar al-Harawi (282/895 - 370/981), the famous linguist.

al-Baghawi - Abu al-Qasim, 'Abdullah Ibn Muhammad Ibn 'Abdi al-'Aziz, Ibn bint Mani' al-Baghdadi ash-Shafi'i (214/829 - 317/929), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Baha'u 'd-Din al-'Amili - Muhammad Ibn al-Husayn Ibn 'Abdi 's-Samad al-Harithi, ash-Shaykhu al-Baha'i (950/1543 - 1030/1621), the celebrated Imamite scholar.

al-Bahrani - as-Sayyid Hashim Ibn Sulayman Ibn Isma'i1 al-Husayni (? - 1107/1696), the famous Imamite scholar.

al-Baladhuri - Ahmad Ibn Yahya Ibn Jabir (? - 279/892), the famous historian.

al-Balaghi - Muhammad Jawad Ibn Hasan Ibn Talib ar-Raba'i an-Najafi (1282/1865 - 1352/1933), the famous Imamite scholar.

al-Balkhi - see al-Ka'bi.

al Baqillani - Abu Bakr, Muhammad Ibn at-Tayyib Ibn Muhammad al- Basri, al-Baghdadi al-Ash'ari al-Maliki (338/950 - 403/1013), the famous Ash'arite scholar.

al-Barqani - Abu Bakr, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al-Khwarazmi ash-Shafi'i (336/948 - 425/1034), the Sunni scholar.

al-Barqi - Abu Ja'far, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Khalid al-Qummi (? - 274/888), the Imamite traditionalist.

al-Bayadi - Zaynu 'd-Din, Abu Muhammad, 'Ali Ibn Yunus an-Nabati al- 'Amili (791/1389 - 877/1472), the famous Imamite scholar.

al-Baydawi - Nasiru 'd-Din, Abu Said, 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar Ibn Muhammad

al-Ash'ari ash-Shafi'i (?685/1286), the famous Sunni commentator and scholar.

al-Bayhaqi - Abu Bakr, Ahmad Ibn al-Husayn an-Naysaburi (384/994 - 458/1066), the Shafi'ite scholar.

al-Bazzar - Abu Bishr, Harun Ibn Hatim al-Kufi (? - 249/863), the Sunni historian and traditionalist.

al-Bazzaz - Abu Bakr, Ahmad Ibn 'Amr Ibn 'Abdi'l-Khaliq al-Basri (210/825 - 292/905), the Sunni traditionalist.

al-Bazzi - Abu al-Hasan, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn 'Abdillah al-Makki (170/786 - 243/857), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur'an.

al-Biruni Abu Rayhan, Muhammad Ibn Ahmad al-Khwarazmi (362/973 - 440/1048), the famous Shi'ite scholar in astronomy, chronology, history, mathematics, medicine, philosophy and physics.

al-Bistami - Nawruz 'Ali Ibn Muhammad Baqir al-Khurasani (? - 1309/1892), the Imamite scholar.

al-Bukhari - Abu 'Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn Isma'il (194/810 - 256/870), the celebrated Sunni traditionalist.

al-Burusawi - Abu al-Fida', Isma'il Haqqi Ibn Mustafa al-Hanafi (1063/1653 - 1137/1725), the Sunni Sufi commentator.

ad-Dahhak Ibn Muzahim - Abu al-Qasim al-Hilali al-Balkhi (? - 105/723), the Sunni *tabi 'i* traditionalist and commentator.

Da'laj Ibn Ahmad Ibn Da'laj - Abu Ishaq, as-Sijizzi al-Baghdadi (260/874 - 351/962), the Sunni traditionalist.

ad-Damad - as-Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Ibn Shamsi 'd-Din, Muhammad al-Husayni al-Istarabadi, al-Mird-Damad (c. 960/1553 - 1041/1631), the famous Imamite scholar and philosopher.

ad-Dani - Abu 'Amr, 'Uthman Ibn Sa'id Ibn 'Uthman al-Andulusi (371/981- 444/1053), the famous Sunni scholar and commentator.

ad-Darimi – Abu Muhammad, ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Abdi 'r-Rahman as-Samarqandi (181/797 – 255/869), the Sunni traditionalist.

ad-Darir al-Hiri – Abu ‘Abdi 'r-Rahman, Isma’i1 Ibn Ahmad Ibn ‘Abdillah an-Naysaburi ash-Shafi‘i (361/972 – 430/1039), the Sunni traditionalist.

ad-Dar-qutni –Abu al-Hasan, ‘Ali Ibn ‘Umar al-Baghdadi ash-Shafi’i (306/919 – 385/995), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

ad-Daylami – Abu Mansur, Shahr-dar Ibn Shiruyah al-Hamadani ash-Shafi’i (483/1090 – 558/1163), the Sunni traditionalist.

ad-Daylami – Abu Muhammad, al-Hasan Ibn Abi'l-Hasan (fl. 8th/15 c.), the Imamite scholar.

ad-Daylami – Abu Shuja', Shiruyah Ibn Shahr-dar al- Hamadan ash- Shafi’i (445/1053 – 509/1115), the Sunni traditionalist.

adh-Dhahabi – Shamsu 'd-Din, Abu ‘Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn ‘Uthman ad-Dimashqi ash-Shafi’i (673/1274 – 748/1348), the famous Sunni scholar.

ad-Diya' al-Maqdisi – Diya’u d-Din, Abu ‘Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdi 'l-Wahid as-Sa‘di al-Hanbali (569/1173 – 643/1245), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

ad-Dulabi – Abu Bishr, Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Hammad al-Ansari ar-Razi al-Hanafi (224/839 – 310/923), the famous Hanafite traditionalist.

ad-Duri – Abu ‘Umar, Hafs Ibn ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abdi 'l-’Aziz al-Azdi (150/767 – 246/860), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur’an.

al-Fadil al-Jawad – Abu ‘Abdillah, Shamsu 'd-Din, Muhammad Jawad Ibn Sa’d (-i 'llah) Ibn Jawad al-Kazimi (? – 1065/1655), the Imamite scholar.

al-Fadil al-Miqdad – Abu ‘Abdillah, al-Miqdad Ibn ‘Abdillah Ibn Muhammad as-Suyuri al-Asadi al-Hilli (c . 740/1340 – 828/1423), the famous Imamite scholar.

al-Fadl Ibn Shadhan – Abu Muhammad al-Azdi an-Naysaburi (c. 195/811 – 1260/873), the great Imamite scholar.

Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin – Fakhru 'd-Din, Abu Talib, Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan (al-’Allamah al-Hilli) al-Asadi (682/1283 – 771/1370), the famous Imamite scholar.

al-Fariyabi – see al-Firyabi.

al-Fattal – Abu ‘Ali, Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Ahmad Ibn ‘Ali an-Naysaburi (? – 514/1120),

the famous Imamite scholar.

al-Fayd al-Kashani - Muhammad Muhsin (1010/1599 - 1091/1690), the famous Imamite scholar.

al-Firuzabadi - Majdu 'd-Din, Muhammad Ibn Ya'qub ash-Shafi'i (729/1329 - 811/1415), the famous Sunni scholar.

al-Firyabi - Abu Bakr, Ja'far Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan (207/822 - 301/913), the Sunni scholar.

Furat Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Furat al-Kufi (? - c. 300/913), the Imamite commentator and traditionalist.

al-Ganji - Abu 'Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ibn Muhammad ash-Shafi'i (? - 658/1260), the Sunni scholar.

al-Ghazali - Abu Hamid, Muhammad, Ibn Muhammad at-Tusi (450/1058-505/1111), the famous Shafi'ite scholar.

Hafs Ibn Sulayman Ibn al-Mughirah - Abu 'Umar al-Asadi al-Kufi (90/709 - 180/796), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur'an.

al-Hakim - Abu 'Abdillah, Ibn al-Bayyi', Muhammad Ibn 'Abdillah ad-Dabbi an-Naysaburi ash-Shafi'i (321/933 - 405/1014), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

al-Hakim al-Hasakani - 'Ubaydullah Ibn Ahmad an-Naysaburi al-Hanafi (? - a.d. 490/1097), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

al-Hakim at-Tirmidhi - Abu 'Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn 'Ali Ibn al-Hasan (? - c. 320/932), the Sunni Sufi scholar.

(as-Sayyid) Hamid Husayn Ibn Muhammad Quli al-Musawi al-Kanturi (1246/1830 - 1306/1888), the famous Imamite scholar.

Hammad Ibn 'Isa - Aba Muhammad al-Juhani al-Kufi (c. 124/742 - 209/ 824), the famous Imamite traditionalist.

al-Hammuyi - Abu Ishaq, Ibrahim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr al-Juwayni ash-Shafi'i (644/1246 - 742/1322), the Sunni scholar.

Hamzah Ibn Habib Ibn 'Umarah at-Taymi az-Zayyat al-Kufi (80/700 - 156/ 773), one of the seven reciters of the Holy Qur'an.

Hannad ibnu's- Sariyy Ibn Mus'ab at-Tamimi al-Kufi (152/769 - 243/857), the Sunni traditionalist.

al-Hasan Ibn Mahbub Ibn Wahb - Aba 'Ali as-Sarrad (az-Zarrad) al-Bajali al-Kufi (149/766 - 224/839), the famous Imamite traditionalist.

al-Hasan Ibn Muhammad Ibn Sama'ah - Abu Muhammad al-Kindi, as-Sayrafi al-Kufi (? - 263/877), the reliable Imamite traditionalist.

al-Hasan Ibn Sufyan Ibn 'Amir - Abu al-'Abbas ash-Shaybani an-Nasawi ash-Shafi'i (213/828 - 303/916), the Sunni traditionalist.

Hasan Ibn Sulayman Ibn Khalid al-Hilli (? - a.d. 757/1356), the Imamite scholar.

al-Haythami - Naru 'd-Din, Aba Bakr, 'Ali Ibn Abi Bakr Ibn Sulayman al-Misri ash-Shafi'i (735/1335 - 807/1405), the Sunni scholar.

Hibatullah Ibn Salamah - Abu al-Qasim al-Baghdadi (? - 410/1019), the Sunni commentator.

al-Himyari - Abu al-'Abbas, 'Abdullah Ibn Ja'far Ibn al-Husayn al-Qummi (? - a.d. 297/910), the reliable Imamite traditionalist.

al-Hiri - Abu Sa'id, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Sa'id an-Naysaburi ash-Shafi'i (288/901 - 353/964), the Sunni commentator and traditionalist.

Hisham Ibn al-Hakam - Abu Muhammad ash-Shaybani al-Kufi (c.105/723 - 189/805), the celebrated Imamite traditionalist and scholar.

al-Humaydi - Abu Bakr, 'Abdullah Ibn az-Zubayr al-Asadi al-Makki (? - 219/834), the Sunni traditionalist.

Humran Ibn A'yan - Abu al-Hasan ash-Shaybani al-Kufi (? - c. 130/748), the famous Imamite traditionalist and reciter of the Holy Qur'an.

al-Hurr al-'Amili - Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan (1033/1625 - 1104/1693), the famous Imamite traditionalist.

al-Husayn Ibn Sa'id Ibn Hammad al-Ahwazi (? - c. 250/864), the reliable Imamite traditionalist.

Ibn 'Abdi 'l-Barr - Abu 'Umar, Yusuf Ibn 'Abdillah al-Qurtubi al-Maliki (368/978 - 463/1071), the famous Sunni scholar.

Ibn 'Abdi 'l-Hakam - Abu 'Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn 'Abdillah al-Misri al-Maliki (182/798 - 268/882), the Sunni scholar.

Ibn 'Abd Rabbah - Abu 'Umar, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al-Qurtubi (246/ 860 - 328/940), the famous Sunni man of letters.

Ibn Abi 'Aqil - Abu Muhammad, al-Hasan Ibn 'Ali al-Hadhdha' al- 'Umani (fl. 4th/ 10th c.), the Imamite scholar.

Ibn Abi Dawud - Abu Bakr, 'Abdullah Ibn Sulayman Ibn al-Ash'ath al- Azdi as-Sajistani (230/844 -

316/929), the Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn Abi 'd-Dunya – Abu Bakr, ‘Abdulla-h Ibn Muhammad al-Umawi al-Baghdadi (208/823 – 281/894), the Sunni historian and traditionalist.

Ibn Abi Hatim – Abu Muhammad, ‘Abdu 'r-Rahman Ibn Muhammad al-Hanzali ar-Razi (240/854 – 327/938), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn Abi Jumhur – Shamsu 'd-Din, Muhammad Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Ibrahim al-Ahsa'i (? – c. 880/1475), the Imamite scholar.

Ibn Abi Layla –'Abdu 'r-Rahman Ibn Yasar al-Ansari al-Kufi (18/639 – 82/701), the famous tabi’i traditionalist.

Ibn Abi Nasr al-Bazanti – Abu Ja'far, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn ‘Amr al-Kufi (? – 221/836), the great Imamite traditionalist.

Ibn Abi Shaybah – Abu Bakr, ‘Abdullah Ibn Muhammad al-’Absi al-Kufi (159/776 – 235/849), the Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn Abi Shaybah – Abu al-Hasan, ‘Uthman Ibn Muhammad al- ‘Absi al- Kufi (150/767 – 239/853), the Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn Abi Shaybah – Abu Ja'far, Muhammad Ibn ‘Uthman al-'Absi al-Kufi (c. 205/821 – 297/910), the Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn Abi ‘Umayr – Abu Muhammad, Muhammad Ibn Abi ‘Umayr (Ziyad) Ibn ‘Isa al-Azdi al-Baghdadi (? – 217/832), the famous Imamite traditionalist.

Ibn Abi Usamah – Abu Muhammad, al-Harith Ibn Muhammad Ibn Abi Usamah at-Tamimi al-Baghdadi (186/802 – 282/895), the Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn ‘Adiyy – Abu Ahmad, ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Adiyy al-Jurjani ash-Shafi’i (277/890 – 365/976), the Sunni traditionalist.

Ibnu'l-Anbari – see al-Anbari.

Ibn al-‘Arabi – al-Qadi, Abu Bakr, Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdillah Ibn Muhammad al-Undulusi al-Ash'ari al-Maliki (468/1076 – 543/1148), the Sunni scholar.

Ibn al-‘Arabi al-Hatimi – Muhyi 'd-Din, Abu Bakr, Muhammad Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Muhammad at-Ta’i al-Undulusi (560/1165 – 638/1240), the famous Sufi Imam.

Ibn ‘Asakir – Abu al-Qasim, ‘Ali Ibn al-Hasan Ibn Hibatillah ad-Dimashqi ash-Shafi’i (499/1105 –

571/1176), the famous Sunni historian and traditionalist.

Ibn Ashtah – Abu Bakr, Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdillah al–Isfahani (?–360/ 971), the Sunni commentator.

Ibn al–’Assar – Abu'l–Hasan, ‘Ali Ibn ‘Abdi'r–Rahim Ibn al–Hasan as–Sulami al–Baghdadi (508/1114 – 576/1180), the Sunni scholar.

Ibn A‘tham – Abu Muhammad, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn ‘Ali al–Kufi (? – 314/927), the historian.

Ibn al–Athir – Abu al–Hasan, ‘Izu 'd–Din, ‘Ali Ibn Muhammad al–Jazari ash–Shafi’i (555/1160 – 630/1233), the famous Sunni historian and traditionalist.

Ibn al–Athir – Abu's–Sa’adat, Majdu 'd–Din, al–Mubarak Ibn Muhammad al–Jazari ash–Shafi’i (544/1149 – 606/1210), the famous Sunni scholar.

Ibn ‘Atiyyah ad–Dimashqi – Abu Muhammad, ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Atiyyah (? – 383/993), the Sunni commentator.

Ibn ‘Atiyyah al–Gharnati – Abu Muhammad, ‘Abd al–Haqq Ibn Ghalib al–Muharibi al–Maliki (481/1088 – 542/1148), the Sunni scholar.

Ibn ‘Ayyash al–Jawhari – Abu ‘Abdillah, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn ‘Ubaydillah (? – 401/1011), the Imamite scholar.

Ibn Babawayh – see as–Saduq.

Ibn Babawayh, Abu al–Hasan – ‘Ali Ibn al–Husayn Ibn Musa al–Qummi (c. 260/874 – 329/941), (the father of as–Saduq), the famous Imamite traditionalist.

Ibn al–Barraj – al–Qadi, Sa’du 'd–Din, ‘Abdul–’Aziz Ibn Nihrir Ibn ‘Abdil–’Aziz at–Tarabulusi (c. 399/1008 – 481/1088), the famous Imamite scholar.

Ibn Battah – Abu ‘Abdillah, ‘Ubaydullah Ibn Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Hamdan al–'Ukbari al–Baghdadi al–Hanbali (304/917 – 387/997), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn al–Bitriq – Abu'l–Husayn, Yahya Ibn al–Hasan Ibn al–Husayn al–Asadi al–Hilli (523/1129 – 600/1204), the Imamite scholar.

Ibnu 'd– Daylami – see ad–Daylami, Abu Mansur.

Ibn Dhakwan – Abu ‘Amr, ‘Abdullah Ibn Ahmad Ibn Bashir al–Fihri ad 399 Dimashqi (173/789 – 242/857), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur’an.

Ibnu 'd–Durays – Abu ‘Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn Ayyub Ibn Yahya al–Bajali ar–Razi (200/815 – 294/906), the Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn Faddal – Abu al–Hasan, ‘Ali Ibn al–Hasan Ibn ‘Ali al–Kufi (c. 206/821 – c. 280/893), the reliable Imamite traditionalist.

Ibn Faddal – Abu al–Husayn, Ahmad Ibn al–Hasan Ibn ‘Ali al–Kufi (? –– 260/874), the reliable Imamite traditionalist.

Ibn Faddal – Abu Muhammad, al–Hasan Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Faddal al–Kufi (? – 224/839), the reliable Imamite traditionalist.

Ibn Fahad – Abu al–’Abbas, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al–Asadi al–Hilli (756/1355 – 841/1437), the Imamite scholar.

Ibn Hajar al–’Asqalani – Shihabu 'd–Din, Abu al–Fadl, Ahmad Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Muhammad ash–Shafi’i (773/1372 – 852/1449), the famous Sunni historian and traditionalist.

Ibn Hajar al–Haytami – Abu al–’Abbas, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al–Ansari ash–Shafi’i (909/1503 – 973/1566), the Sunni scholar.

Ibn Hamzah – Abu Ja'far, Muhammad Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Hamzah at–Tusi al–Ha'iri (?– a.d. 560/1165), the Imamite scholar.

Ibn Hanbal – see Ahmad.

Ibn Hasnun – Abu Ahmad, ‘Abdullah Ibn al–Husayn as– Samarri al–Misri (295/908 – 386/996), the Sunni commentator.

Ibn al–Hassar – ‘Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim al–Khazraji al–Fasi al–Maliki (? – 611/1214), the Sunni scholar.

Ibn Hibban – Abu Hatim, Muhammad Ibn Hibban at–Tamfmi al–Busti ash– Shafi’i (270/884 – 354/965), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn Hisham – Abu Muhammad, ‘Abd al–Malik Ibn Hisham al–Basri (? – 213/828), the famous Sunni historian.

Ibn Idris – Abu Ja'far, Muhammad Ibn Mansur Ibn Ahmad al–’Ajli al–Hilli (543/1148 – 598/1202), the famous Imamite scholar.

Ibn Ishaq – Abu Bakr, Muhammad Ibn Ishaq Ibn Yasar al–Muttalibi al–Madani (c. 85/704 – 151/768), the famous historian and traditionalist.

Ibn Jammaz – Abu ' r–Rabi’, Sulayman Ibn Muslim az– Zuhri al–Madani (?– a.d. 170/787), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur’an.

Ibn Jarir al-Imami - Abu Ja' far, Muhammad Ibn Jarir Ibn Rustam alAmuli at-Tabari (fl. 4th/ 10th c.), the Imamite scholar.

Ibn al-Jawzi - Abu al- Faraj, 'Abdu 'r-Rahman Ibn 'Ali Ibn Muhammad al-Baghdadi' al-Hanbali (508/1114 - 597/1202), the famous Hanbalite scholar.

Ibn Jinni -Abu al-Fath, 'Uthman Ibn Jinni al-Mawsili al-Baghdadi (c. 328/ 940 - 392/1002), the famous scholar.

Ibn al-Junayd - Abu 'Ali, Muhammad Ibn Ahmad ibn al-Junayd, al-Katib al-Iskafi al-Baghdadi (? - 381/991), the famous Imamite scholar.

Ibn Jurayj - Abu al-Walid, 'Abd al-Malik Ibn 'Abdi 'l-'Aziz al-Makki (80/699 - 150/767), the famous commentator and traditionalist.

Ibn Kathir - 'Imadu'd-Din, Abu al-Fida', Isma'il Ibn 'Umar ad-Dimashqiash-Shafi'i (701/1302 - 774/1373), the famous Sunni scholar.

Ibn Kathir al-Makki - 'Abdullah Ibn Kathir ad-Dari (45/665 - 120/738), one of the seven reciters of the Holy Qur'an.

Ibn Khalawayh - Abu 'Abdillah, al-Husayn Ibn Ahmad al-Hamadani al-Halabi (? - 370/980), the famous Imamite scholar.

Ibn Khaldun - Abu Zayd, 'Abdu 'r-Rahman Ibn Muhammad al-Ishbili (732/1332 - 808/1406), the famous Sunni scholar.

Ibn al-Khara 'iti -see al-Khara 'iti.

Ibn Khuzaymah - Abu Bakr, Muhammad Ibn Ishaq Ibn Khuzaymah as-Sulami an-Naysaburi ash-Shafi'i (223/838 - 311/924), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn al-Maghazili - Abu al-Hasan, 'Ali Ibn Muhammad al-Jullabi al-Wasiti ash-Shafi'i (? - 483/1090), the Sunni scholar.

Ibn Majah - Abu 'Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn Yazid ar-Raba'i al-Qazwini (209/824 - 273/887), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn Mandah, Abu 'Abdillah (I) - Muhammad Ibn Yahya al-'Abdi al-Isfahani al-Hanbali (220/835 - 301/914), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn Mandah, Abu 'Abdillah (II) - Muhammad Ibn Ishaq Ibn Muhammad Ibn Yahya al-Hanbali (310/922 - 395/1005), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn Mandah, Abu Zakariyya – Yahya Ibn ‘Abdi ˈl–Wahhab Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ishaq al–Hanbali (434/1043 – 511/1118), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn Mani‘ – Abu Jaˈfar, Ahmad Ibn Mani‘ al–Baghawi al–Baghdadi (160/777 – 244/859), the Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn Manzur – Abu al–Fadl, Jamalu ˈd–Din, Muhammad Ibn Mukarram al–Ifriqi (630/1232 – 711/1311), the famous linguist.

Ibn Marduwayh – Abu Bakr, Ahmad Ibn Musa al–Isfahani (323/935 – 410/ 1019), the Sunni commentator and traditionalist.

Ibn Maysarah – Abu al–Walid, Hisham Ibn ‘Ammar Ibn Nusayr as–Sulami ad–Dimashqi (153/770 – 245/859), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur’an and traditionalist.

Ibn Maytham – Kamalu ˈd–Din, Maytham Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Maytham al–Bahrani (636/1238 – 699/1299), the famous Imamite scholar.

Ibn Miqsam – Abu Bakr, Muhammad Ibn al–Hasan Ibn Ya’qub al–’Attar al–Baghdadi (265/878 – 354/965), the Sunni commentator.

Ibn Miskuyah – Abu ‘Ali, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ya’qub (c. 325/937 – 421/1030), the famous scholar and historian.

Ibn al–Mubarak – Abu ‘Abdi ˈr–Rahman, ‘Abdullah Ibn al–Mubarak Ibn Wadih al–Hanzali al–Marwazi (118/736 – 181/797), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn al–Munadi – Abu al–Husayn, Ahmad Ibn Jaˈfar Ibn Muhammad al–Baghdadi al–Hanbali (256/871 – 336/947), the Sunni scholar.

Ibn al–Mundhir – Abu Bakr, Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim an–Naysaburi al–Makki (242/858 – 319/931), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn al–Mutahhar – Radiyyu ˈd–Din, ‘Ali Ibn Yusuf Ibn ‘Ali al–Asadi al–Hilli (635/1238 – 710/1310), the Imamite scholar.

Ibnu ˈn–Najjar – Muhibbu ˈd–Din, Abu ‘Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn Mahmud Ibn al–Hasan al–Baghdadi ash–Shafi’i (578/1183 – 643/1245), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn Qani’ – Abu al–Husayn, ‘Abd al–Baqi Ibn Qani’ Ibn Marzuq al–Umawi al–Baghdadi (265/879 – 351/962), the famous traditionalist.

Ibn al–Qayyim – Abu ‘Abdillah, Shamsu ˈd–Din, Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr, Ibn Qayyim al–Jawziyyah ad–Dimashqi (691/1292 – 751/1350), the student of Ibn Taymiyyah, Taqiyyu ˈd–Din.

Ibn Qulawayh – Abu al-Qasim, Ja'far Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ja'far Ibn Musa al-Qummi (c. 285/898 – 368/979), the famous Imamite scholar.

Ibn Qutaybah – Abu Muhammad, 'Abdillah Ibn Muslim ad-Dinawari (213/828 – 276/889), the famous Sunni scholar.

Ibn Rahwayh – Abu Ya'qub, Ishaq Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Makhlad al-Hanzali al-Marwazi (161/778 – 238/853), the Sunni traditionalist.

Ibnu 'r-Razi – Abu Muhammad, Ja'far Ibn Ahmad al-Qummi (fl. 4th/10th c.), the Imamite traditionalist.

Ibnu 's-Sabbagh – Nuru 'd-Din, 'Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad as-Safaqisi al-Maliki (784/1383 – 855/1451), the Sunni scholar.

Ibn Sa'd – Abu 'Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn Sa'd al-Baghdadi, Katibul-Waqidi (168/784 – 230/845), the famous Sunni historian.

Ibn Sa'id al-Hilli – Abu Zakariyya, Yahya Ibn Ahmad Ibn Yahya al-Hudhali (601/1205 – 690/1291), the famous Imamite scholar.

Ibn Sayyidi 'n- Nas, Fathu 'd-Din – Abu al-Fath, Muhammad Ibn Muhammad al-Ya'muri, al-Ishbili, ash-Shafi'i (671/1273 – 734/1334), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn Shahin – Abu Hafs, 'Umar Ibn Ahmad Ibn 'Uthman al-Baghdadi (297/909 – 385/995), the Sunni scholar.

Ibn Shahrashub – Abu Ja'far, Muhammad Ibn 'Ali as-Sarawi al-Mazandarani (489/1096 – 588/1192), the famous Imamite scholar.

Ibnu 'sh-Shaykh – Abu 'Ali, al-Hasan Ibn (Shaykhu 't-Ta'ifah) Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan at-Tusi (? – c. 515/1121), the Imamite scholar.

Ibn Shu'bah – Abu Muhammad, al-Hasan Ibn 'Ali Ibn Shu'bah al-Harrani (? – 4th/11th c.), the Imamite traditionalist.

Ibnu 's-Sikkit – Abu Yusuf, Ya'qub Ibn Ishaq al-Baghdadi (186/802 – 244/858), the famous Imamite scholar.

Ibn as-Sunni – Abu Bakr, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ishaq ad-Dinawari (284/897 – 364/974), the Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn Talhah – Kamalu 'd-Din, Abu Salim, Muhammad Ibn Talhah Ibn Muhammad al-'Adawi ash-Shafi'i (582/1186 – 652/1254), the Sunni scholar.

Ibn Tawus – Ghiyathu 'd-Din, Abu al-Muzaffar, ‘Abd al-Karim Ibn Ahmad Ibn Musa Ibn Ja'far al-Hasani al-Hilli (648/1250 – 693/1294), the great Imamite scholar.

Ibn Tawus – Jamalu'd-Din, Abu al-Fada'il, Ahmad Ibn Musa Ibn Ja'far al-Hasani al-Hilli (c . 592/1196 – 673/1274), the great Imamite scholar.

Ibn Tawus – Radiyyu 'd-Din, Abu al-Qasim, Ali Ibn Musa Ibn Ja'far al-Hasani al-Hilli (589/1193 – 664/1266), the famous Imamite scholar.

Ibn Taymiyyah – Majdu 'd-Din, Abu al-Barakat, ‘Abdu 's-Salam Ibn ‘Abdi-llah al-Harrani al-Hanbali (590/1194 – 653/1255), the famous Hanbalite scholar.

Ibn Taymiyyah – Taqiyyu 'd-Din, Abu al-’Abbas, Ahmad Ibn ‘Abdi 'l-Halim Ibn ‘Abdi 's-Salim al-Harrani al-Hanbali (661/1263 – 728/1328), the famous Hanbalite scholar.

Ibn 'Uqdah – Abu al-’Abbas, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Sa‘id al-Kufi (250/864 – 332/944), the famous Shi‘ite traditionalist.

Ibn ‘Uyaynah – Abu Muhammad, Sufyan Ibn ‘Uyaynah Ibn Maymun al-Hilali al-Kufi (107/725 – 198/814), the famous traditionalist.

Ibn Wadih – see al-Ya’qubi.

Ibn Wahb al-Misri – Abu Muhammad, ‘Abdullah Ibn Wahb Ibn Muslim al-Fihri al-Maliki (125/743 – 197/813), the famous Malikite scholar.

Ibn Zayd – ‘Abdu 'r-Rahman Ibn Zayd Ibn Aslam al-'Adawi al-Madani (? – 182/798), the Sunni traditionalist.

Ibn Zuhrah – ‘Izzu 'd-Din, Abu al-Makarim, Hamzah Ibn ‘Ali al-Husayni al-Halabi (511/1117 – 585/1189), the great Imamite scholar.

Idris Ibn ‘Abdi 'l-Karim – Abu al-Hasan al-Haddad al-Baghdadi (199/815 – 292/905), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur’an.

al-Iji al-Qadi ‘Adudu 'd-Din, ‘Abdu 'r-Rahman Ibn Ahmad Ibn ‘Abdi 'l-Ghaffarash-Shirazi al-Ash‘ari ash-Shafi’i (708/1308 – 756/1355), the famous Ash‘arite scholar.

‘Ikrimah Ibn ‘Abdillah, Abu ‘Abdillah al-Barbari (25/645 – 105/723), the Kharijite *tabi’i* scholar.

‘Imadu'd-Din at-Tabari – Muhammad Ibn Abi'l-Qasim, ‘Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn ‘Ali al-Amuli (? – c. 525/1131), the Imamite traditionalist.

Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni – Diya 'u 'd-Din, Abu al-Ma’ali, ‘Abdu'l-Malik Ibn ‘Abdillah Ibn ‘Abdi 'l-

Malik an–Naysaburi al–Ash'ari ash–Shafi'i (419/1028 – 478/1085), the famous Ash'arite scholar.

al–Irbili – Baha 'u 'd–Din, 'Ali Ibn 'Isa Ibn Abi 'l– Fath (625/1228 – 692/1293), the famous Imamite scholar.

'Isa Ibn Wardan, Abu al–Harith al–Hadhdha' al–Madani (? – c. 160/777), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur'an.

al–Isfahani – see ar–Raghib.

al–Isfahani – Abu Muslim, Muhammad Ibn Bahr (254/868 – 322/934), the famous Mu'tazilite scholar and commentator.

al–Isfahani al–Madini – Abu Musa, Muhammad Ibn 'Umar Ibn Ahmad ash–Shafi'i (501/1108 – 581/1185), the famous Sunni scholar.

al–Isfahani al–Malanji – Abu Mas'ud, Sulayman Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Muhammad (397/1007 – 486/1093), the Sunni traditionalist.

al–Isfahani at–Taymi – Qawamu'd–Din, Abu'l–Qasim, Isma'il Ibn Muhammad Ibn al–Fadl al–Qurashi ash–Shafi'i (457/1065 – 535/1141), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Ishaq Ibn Ibrahim Ibn 'Uthman – Abu Ya'qub al–Marwazi al–Baghdadi (? – 286/899), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur'an.

al–Istarabadi – Muhammad Ibn 'Ali Ibn Ibrahim (? – 1028/1619), the Imamite scholar.

Jabir Ibn Yazid Ibn al–Harith – Abu 'Abdillah al–Ju'fi al–Kufi (? – 128/745), the Imamite traditionalist.

al–Jahiz – Abu 'Uthman, 'Amr Ibn Bahr al–Basri (163/780 – 255/869), the famous Mu'tazilite man of letters.

al–Jassas – Abu Bakr, Ahmad Ibn 'Ali ar–Razi al–Hanafi (305/917 – 370/980), the Hanafite scholar.

al–Jawhari – Abu Ishaq, Ibrahim Ibn Sa'id al–Baghdadi al–Hanbali (? 247/861), the Sunni traditionalist.

al–Jawhari – Abu Nasr, Isma'il Ibn Hammad an–Naysaburi (? – 393/ 1003), the famous linguist.

al–Jaza'iri – ash–Shakh Ahmad Ibn Isma'il Ibn 'Abdi 'n–Nabi an–Najafi (? – 1151/1738), the famous Imamite scholar.

al–Jaza'iri – Shamsu 'd–Din, Abu al–Khayr, Muhammad Ibn Muhammad al–Umari ash–Shafi'i (751/1350 – 833/1429), the famous Sunni traditionalist and reciter of the Holy Qur'an.

al–Jubba'i – Abu 'Ali, Muhammad Ibn 'Abdi 'l–Wahhab al–Basri (235/ 849 – 303/916), the famous Mu'tazilite scholar.

al-Jubba'i – Abu Hashim, 'Abdu's-Salam Ibn Muhammad al-Basri (247/ 861 – 321/933), the famous Mu'tazilite scholar.

al-Ka'bi al-Balkhi – Abu al-Qasim, 'Abdullah Ibn Ahmad Ibn Mahmud al-Mu'tazili al-Hanafi (273/886 – 319/931), the famous Mu'tazilite scholar.

al-Kalbi – Abu al-Mundhir, Hisham Ibn Muhammad al-Kufi (? – 204/ 819), the famous Imamite historian and traditionalist.

al-Kalbi – Abu 'n-Nadr, Muhammad Ibn as-Sa'ib al-Kufi (? – 146/763), the famous Imamite historian and traditionalist.

al-Karajiki – Abu al-Fath, Muhammad Ibn 'Ali Ibn 'Uthman (c. 369/950 – 449/1057), the famous Imamite scholar.

al-Kashani – Fathullah Ibn Shukrillah (? – 988/1580), the Imamite scholar and commentator.

Khalaf Ibn Hisham – Abu Muhammad al-Bazzar al-Asadi al-Baghdadi (150/ 767 – 229/844), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur'an.

Khallad Ibn Khalid – Abu 'Isa, as-Sayrafi ash-Shaybani al-Kufi (? – 220/835), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur'an.

al-Khara'iti – Abu Bakr, Muhammad Ibn Ja'far as-Samarri (240/854 – 327/ 938), the Sunni traditionalist.

al-Kharkushi – Abu Sa'id, 'Abdu'l-Malik Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim an-Naysaburi (? – 407/1016), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

al-Khatib al-Baghdadi – Abu Bakr, Ahmad Ibn 'Ali Ibn Thabit ash-Shafi'i (392/1002 – 463/1072), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

al-Khatib al-Khwarazmi – Abu'l-Mu'ayyad, al-Muwaffaq Ibn Ahmad al-Hanafi. (484/1091 – 568/1172), the famous Sunni scholar.

al-Khattabi – Abu Sulayman, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al-Busti (319/931 – 388/998), the Sunni scholar.

Khaythamah Ibn Sulayman – Abu al-Hasan al-Qurashi at-Tarabulusi (250/ 864 – 343/955), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

al-Khazin – 'Alau 'd-Din, 'Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim al-Baghdadi ash-Shafi'i (678/1280 – 741/1341), the Sunni commentator.

al-Kisa'i – Abu al-Hasan, 'Ali Ibn Hamzah Ibn 'Abdillah al-Asadi al-Kufi (119/737 – 189/805), the famous scholar and reciter of the Qur'an.

al-Kishshi – Abu ‘Amr, Muhammad Ibn ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abdi 'l-’Aziz (? – c. 340/951), the famous Imamite traditionalist.

al-Kulayni – Abu Ja'far, Muhammad Ibn Ya’qub ar-Razi (? – 328/9 = 940/1), the celebrated Imamite traditionalist.

al-Lalika'i – Abu al-Qasim, Hibatullah Ibn al-Hasan Ibn al-Mansur at-Tabari ash-Shafi’i (? – 418/1027), the Shafi’ite scholar.

Layth Ibn Khalid – Abu al-Harith. al-Baghdadi (? – 240/854), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur’an.

al-Mada'ini – Abu al-Hasan, ‘Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdillah al-Basri (135/752 – 225/840), the famous historian.

al-Mahamili – Abu ‘Abdillah, al-Husayn Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Muhammad ad-Dabbi al-Baghdadi (235/849 – 330/941), the famous traditionalist.

al-Majlisi (I) – Muhammad Taqi Ibn Maqsud ‘Ali (1003/1595 –1070/1660), the famous Imamite scholar.

al-Majlisi (II) – Muhammad Baqir Ibn Muhammad Taqi, al-’Allamah al-Majlisi (1037/1628 – 1110/1699), the celebrated Imamite scholar.

Malik Ibn Anas – Abu ‘Abdillah al-Asbahi al-Madani (93/712 – 179/795), the Malikite Imam.

al-Maqrizi – Taqqiyu 'd-Din, Abu al-’Abbas, Ahmad Ibn ‘Ali Ibn ‘Abdi 'l-Qadir al-Misri, al-Hanafi (769/1367 – 845/1441), the famous historian.

al-Marwazi – Abu ‘Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn Nasr (202/817 – 294/906), the Sunni traditionalist.

al-Marzubani – Abu Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn ‘Imran Ibn Musa al-Baghdadi (297/910 – 384/994), the famous Imamite scholar.

al-Mawardi – Abu al-Hasan, ‘Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn Habib al-Basri ash-Shafi’i (364/974 – 450/1058), the Sunni scholar.

Mu’awiyah Ibn ‘Ammar – Abu al-Qasim ad-Duhni al-Kufi (100/974 – 175/791), the famous Imamite traditionalist.

al-Mubarrad – Abu al-’Abbas, Muhammad Ibn Yazid Ibn ‘Abdi'l-Akbar al-Azdi al-Basri (210/826 – 286/899), the famous linguist and historian.

al-Mufid – Abu ‘Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn an-Nu’man, Ibnu'l-Mu’allim al-Mufid al-’Ukbari al-Baghdadi (336/948 – 413/ 1022), the celebrated Imamite scholar.

Muhammad ‘Abduh (ash-Shaykh) Ibn Hasan Khayrillah (1266/1850 – 1323/1905), the famous Egyptian

scholar.

Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan ash-Shaybani (? - 2nd half of the 7th/13th c.).

Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Ash'ath - Abu al-Hasan al-Kufi al-Misri (? - fl. 313/925), the Imamite traditionalist.

Muhammad Ibn Muslim - Abu Ja'far ath-Thaqafi al-Kufi (c . 80/723 - 150/767), the celebrated Imamite scholar and traditionalist.

Muhammad Ibn Nasr - Abu 'Abdillah al-Marwazi (202/817 - 294/906), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

al-Muhaqqiq al-Ardabili - ash-Shaykh Ahmad Ibn Muhammad an-Najafi (c. 910/1505 - 993/1585), the great Imamite scholar.

al-Muhaqqiq al-Hilli - Najmu 'd-Din, Abu al-Qasim, Ja'far Ibn al-Hasan Ibn Yahya Ibn al-Hasan Ibn Sa'id al-Hudhali (602/1206 - 676/1277), the celebrated Imamite scholar.

al-Muhaqqiq al-Karaki - Nuru 'd-Din, 'Ali Ibn 'Abdi 'l-'Ali al-'Amili (c. 868/1463 - 940/1534), the famous Imamite scholar.

al-Muhaqqiq al-Khwansari - al-Husayn Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Husyan (1016/1608 - 1098/1687), the famous Imamite scholar.

al-Muhaqqiq as-Sabzawari - Muhammad Baqir Ibn Muhammad Mu'min (c. 1000/1592 - 1090/1679), the famous Imamite scholar.

al-Muhibb at-Tabari - Muhibbu 'd-Din, Abu al-'Abbas, Ahmad Ibn 'Abdillah Ibn Muhammad al-Makki ash-Shafi'i (615/1218 - 694/1295), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

al-Muhsin al-Fayd - see al-Fayd

Mujahid Ibn Jabr - Abu al-Hajjaj al-Makki (21/642 - 104/722), the famous commentator.

al-Mundhiri - Zakiyyu 'd-Din, Abu Muhammad, 'Abdu'l-'Azim Ibn 'Abdi 'l-Qawi al-Misri ash-Shafi'i (581/1185 - 656/1258), the famous traditionalist.

Muqatil Ibn Hayyan - Abu Bistam an-Nabati al-Balkhi (? - c. 150/767), the Sunni commentator.

Muqatil Ibn Sulayman - Abu al-Hasan al-Azdi al-Balkhi (? - 150/767), the famous Sunni commentator.

al-Murtada - ash-Sharif, Abu al-Qasim,'Ali Ibn al-Husayn, 'Alam al-Huda, al-Musawi (355/966 - 436/1044), the celebrated Imamite scholar.

al-Murtada az-Zabidi - Abu al-Fayd, Muhammad Ibn Muhammad al-Husayni (1145/1732 - 1205/1791),

the famous linguist.

Musa Ibn ‘Uqbah – Abu Muhammad al-Qurashi al-Asadi (? – 141/758), the Sunni historian.

Musaddad Ibn Musarhad Ibn Musarbal – Abu al-Hasan al-Asadi al-Basri (? – 228/843), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

Muslim – Abu al-Husayn, Muslim Ibn al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri an-Naysaburi (204/820 – 261/1875), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

al-Muttaqi al-Hindi – ‘Ala'u 'd-Din, ‘Ali Ibn Husami 'd-Din al-Burhanfuri (885/1480 – 975/1567), the Sunni scholar.

Nafi‘ Ibn ‘Abdi 'r-Rahman Ibn Abi Nu‘aym al-Laythi al-Madani (? – 169/785), one of the seven reciters of the Holy Qur’an.

an-Nahhas – Abu Ja'far, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Isma’i1 (? – 338/ 950), the Sunni scholar.

an-Najashi – Abu al-Abbas, Ahmad Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Ahmad Ibn al-’Abbas al-Asadi al-Baghdadi (372/982 – 450/1058), the famous Imamite scholar.

an-Najjad – Abu Bakr, Ahmad Ibn Salman Ibn al-Hasan al-Baghdadi al-Hanbali (253/867 – 348/960), the Sunni traditionalist.

an-Naqqash – Abu Bakr, Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan Ibn Muhammad al-Mawsili as-Shafi’i (266/880 – 351/962), the Sunni scholar.

an-Nasafi – Abu al-Barakat, ‘Abdullah Ibn Ahmad Ibn Mahmud al-Hanafi (? – 710/1310), the Sunni commentator.

an-Nasa'i – Abu ‘Abdi 'r-Rahman, Ahmad Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Shu‘ayb (215/830 – 303/915), the famous Shafi’ite traditionalist.

Nasiru 'd-Din at-Tusi – Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan (597/1201 – 672/1274), the celebrated Imamite scholar.

(as-Sayyid) Nasir Husayn Ibn Hamid Husayn al-Musawi al-Kanturi (1284/1867 – 1361/1943), the famous Imamite scholar.

Nasr Ibn Muzahim – Abu al-Fadl, al-Minqari al-Kufi (c . 120/738 – 212/827), the famous Shi‘ite historian.

an-Nawawi – Muhyi 'd-Din, Abu Zakariyya, Yahya Ibn Sharaf ad-Dimashqi ash-Shafi’i (631/1233 – 676/1277), the famous Sunni scholar.

an-Nawbakhti – Abu Muhammad, al-Hasan Ibn Musa Ibn al-Hasan al-Baghdadi (? – c. 310/922), the

famous Imamite scholar.

an-Nawbakhti - Abu Sahl, Isma'il Ibn 'Ali Ibn Ishaq al-Baghdadi (237/851 - 311/923), the famous Imamite scholar.

an-Naysaburi al-A'raj - Nizamu 'd-Din, al-Hasan Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Husayn al-Qummi (? - a.d. 850/1446), the Sunni commentator.

an-Nazzam - Abu Ishaq, Ibrahim Ibn Sayyar al-Basri (c. 160/776 - 231/845), the famous Mu'tazilite scholar.

Nu'aym Ibn Hammad - Abu 'Abdillah al-Marwazi (? - 229/844), the Sunni traditionalist.

an-Nu'mani - Abu 'Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Ja'far, Ibn Abi Zaynab al-Katib (? - c. 360/971), the Imamite scholar.

an-Nuri - al-Mirza Husayn Ibn Muhammad Taqi at-Tabarsi (1254/1838 - 1320/1875), the famous Imamite traditionalist.

al-Qadi 'Abdi 'l-Jabbar Ibn Ahmad Ibn 'Abd al-Jabbar al-Hamadani al-Mu'tazili ash-Shafi'i (320/932 - 415/1025), the famous Mu'tazilite scholar.

al-Qadi 'Iyad Ibn Musa Ibn 'Iyad - Abu al-Fadl, al-Yahsabi as-Sabti al-Maliki (476/1083 - 544/1149), the famous Malikite scholar.

Qalum - Abu Musa, 'Isa Ibn Mina' Ibn Wardan al-Madani (220/738 - 220/835), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur'an.

al-Quda'i - Abu 'Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn Salamah Ibn Ja'far al-Misri ash-Shafi'i (? - 454/1062), the Sunni scholar.

Qatadah Ibn Di'amah - Abu al-Khattab as-Sadusi al-Basri (61/680 - 118/730, the famous commentator and traditionalist.

al-Qummi - Abu al-Hasan, 'Ali Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Hashim (? - fl. 307/920), the Imamite traditonalist.

Qunbul - Abu 'Umar, Muhammad Ibn 'Abdi 'r-Rahman Ibn Muhammad al-Makhzumi al-Makki (195/810 - 291/904), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur'an.

al-Qunduzi - Sulayman Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Muhammad al-Hanafi (1220/1805 - 1294/1877), the Sunni scholar.

al-Qurtubi - Abu 'Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Abi Bakr al-Ansari al-Maliki (? - 671/1273), the Sunni commentator.

al-Qushayri - Abu al-Qasim, ‘Abdu'l-Karim Ibn Hawazim an-Naysaburi al-Ash‘ari ash-Shafi’i (376/986 - 465/1072), the Sunni Sufi scholar.

ar-Radi - Abu al-Hasan, Muhammad Ibn al-Husayn, ash-Sharif ar-Radi al-Musawi (359/970 - 406/1015), the famous Imamite scholar.

ar-Raghib - Abu al-Qasim, al-Husayn Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-MuFaddal al-Isfahani (? - 502/1108), the Hanafite scholar.

Rashid Rida Muhammad Rashid Rida Ibn ‘Ali Rida at-Tarabulusi al-Misri (1282/1865 - 1354/1935), the Sunni scholar.

ar-Rawandi - Qutbu 'd-Din, Sa‘id Ibn Hibatillah al-Kashani (? – 573/1187), the famous Imamite scholar.

Rawh Ibn ‘Abdi 'l-Mu'min - Abu al-Hasan al-Hudhali al-Basri (? – 234/848), the famous recite of the Holy Qur’an.

Razin Ibn Mu’awiyah Ibn ‘Ammar - Abu al-Hasan al-’Abdari as-Saraqasti al-Maliki (? - 535/1140), the Sunni traditionalist.

ar-Rummani - Abu al-Hasan, ‘Ali Ibn ‘Isa al-Baghdadi (296/908 - 384/994), the famous Mu‘tazilite scholar and commentator.

Ruways - Abu ‘Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn al-Mutawakkil al-Lu'lu'i al-Basri (? - 238/853), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur’an.

Sadr al-Muta’allihin - Sadru 'd-Din, Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Yahya al-Qawami ash-Shirazi (979/1571 - 1050/1640), the celebrate Imamite philosopher.

as-Saduq - Abu Ja'far, Muhammad Ibn ‘Ali Ibn al-Husayn, Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi (c. 306/919 - 381/991), the celebrated Imamite traditionalist.

as-Saffar - Abu Ja'far, Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan Ibn Farrukh al-Qummi (? - 290/903), the Imamite traditionalist.

as-Safwani - Abu ‘Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn ‘Abdillah al-Quda’i (? - a.d. 352/963), the Imamite scholar.

Safwan Ibn Yahya - Abu Muhammad al-Bajali al-Kufi, Bayya’u's-Sabin (? - 210/825), the famous Imamite traditionalist.

Sahib al-Ma’alim - Abu Mansur, al-Hasan Ibn Zaynu 'd-Din al-’Amili (959/1552 - 1011/1602), the famous Imamite scholar.

Sa‘id Ibn Jubayr – Abu ‘Abdillah al-Asadi al-Kufi (45/665 – 95/714), the famous *tabi‘ i* scholar.

Sa‘id Ibn al-Mansur – Ibn Shu‘bah, Abu ‘Uthman al-Marwazi (c. 152/969 – 227/842), the Sunni commentator and traditionalist.

Sa‘id Ibn al-Musayyab Ibn Hazn, Abu Muhammad al-Makhzumi al-Madani (13/634 – 94/713), the famous tabi‘i scholar.

Sallar – Abu Ya‘la, Sallar (Salar) Ibn ‘Abdi 'l-’Aziz ad-Daylami (? – 448/1056), the famous Imamite scholar.

as-Sam‘ani – Abu Sa‘d, ‘Abd al-Karim Ibn Muhammad ash-Shafi’i (506/1113 – 562/1166), the famous Sunni historian and traditionalist.

as-Samman – Abu Sa‘d, Isma‘i1 Ibn ‘Ali Ibn al-Husayn ar-Razi (363/974–447/1055), the famous Imamite scholar.

Sammuyah – Abu Bishr, Isma‘i1 Ibn ‘Abdillah Ibn Mas‘ud al-'Abdi al-Isfahani (? – 267/880), the Sunni traditionalist.

ash-Sha’bi – Abu ‘Amr, ‘Amir Ibn Sharahil al-Himyari (19/649 – 103/721), the famous *tabi’i* traditionalist.

ash-Shafi’i – Abu ‘Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn Idris (150/767 – 204/820), the Shafi’ite Imam.

ash-Shahid al-Awwal – Shamsu 'd-Din, Muhammad Ibn Makki Ibn Muhammad al-Jazzini al-’Amili (734/1333 – 786/1384), the celebrated Imamite scholar.

ash-Shahid ath-Thani – Zaynu d-Din Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Ahmad al-Jaba‘i al-’Amili (911/1505 – 966/1559), the celebrated Imamite scholar.

Sharafu 'd-Din – as-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Husayn Ibn Yusuf al-Musawi al-’Amili (1290/1873 – 1377/1957), the famous Imamite scholar.

Sharafu 'd-Din al-Istarabadi – as-Sayyid ‘Ali al-Husayni al-Gharawi (an-Najafi) (? – 2nd half of 10th/16th c.), the Imamite scholar.

ash-Sharif al-Jurjani – ‘Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn ‘Ali al-Ash‘ari al-Hanafi (740/1340 – 816/1413), the famous Ash‘arite scholar.

ash-Shashi – Abu Sa‘id, al-Haytham Ibn Kulayb Ibn Shurayh (? – 335/946), the Sunni traditionalist.

ash-Sharif al-Murtada – see al-Murtada.

ash-Sharif ar-Radi – see ar-Radi.

ash-Shawkani – Muhammad Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Muhammad al-Yamani (1173/1760 – 1250/1834), the Sunni scholar.

ash-Shaykh – Abu Ja‘far, Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan Ibn ‘Ali, Shaykhu 't-Ta'ifah, at-Tusi (385/995 – 460/1067), the celebrated Imamite scholar.

ash-Shiblanji – Mu’min Ibn Hasan Ibn Mu’min al-Misri ash-Shafi’i (1252/1836 – 1322/1904), the Sunni scholar.

ash-Shirazi – Abu Bakr, Ahmad Ibn ‘Abdi 'l-Rahman Ibn Ahmad (? – 407/1017), the famous Sunni scholar.

Shu‘bah Ibn ‘Ayyash Ibn Salim – Abu Bakr al-Azdi al-Khayyat al-Kufi (95/714 – 193/809), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur’an.

Shubbar – as-Sayyid ‘Abdullah Ibn Muhammad Rida al-Husayni (1188/ 1774 – 1242/1827), the famous Imamite traditionalist.

Sibt Ibn al-Jawzi – Shamsu 'd-Din, Abu al-Muzzafar, Yusuf Ibn Qiza‘ughli Ibn ‘Abdillah al-Hanafi (581/1185 – 654/1256), the famous Sunni scholar.

as-Silafi – Abu Tahir, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al-Isfahani (475/1082 – 576/1180), the Sunni scholar.

Simak Ibn Harb Ibn Aws – Abu al-Mughirah adh-Dhuhli al-Kufi (? – 123/741), the *tabi‘i* traditionalist.

as-Subki, Taju 'd-Din – Abu Nasr, ‘Abd al-Wahhab Ibn ‘Ali Ibn ‘Abdi 'l-Kafi al-Misri ash-Shafi’i (727/1327 – 771/1370), the famous Sunni scholar.

as-Subki, Taqiyyu 'd-Din – Abu al-Hasan, ‘Ali Ibn ‘Abdi 'l-Kafi al-Ansari ash-Shafi’i (683/1284 – 756/1355), the famous Sunni scholar.

as-Suddi (al-Kabir) – Isma‘il Ibn ‘Abdi'r-Rahman al-Kufi (? – 128/745), the commentator.

Sulaym Ibn Qays al-Hilali (? – c. 90/709), the Imamite *tabi’i* traditionalist.

Sunayd Ibn Dawud – Abu ‘Ali al-Muhtasib al-Missisi (? – 226/841), the Sunni commentator and traditionalist.

as-Susi – Abu Shu‘ayb, Salih Ibn Ziyad ar-Raqqi (173/790 – 261/874), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur’an.

as-Suyuti – Jalalu 'd-Din, ‘Abdu 'r-Rahman Ibn Abi Bakr Ibn Muhammad ash Shafi’i (849/1445 – 911/1505), the famous Shafi’ite scholar.

at-Tabarani – Abu al-Qasim, Sulayman Ibn Ahmad Ibn Ayyub (260/873 – 360/971), the famous Sunni

traditionalist.

at–Tabrisi – Abu ‘Ali, al–Fadl Ibn al–Hasan Ibn al–Fadl (? – 548/1153), the Imamite commentator.

at–Tabrisi – Abu al–Fadl, ‘Ali Ibn al–Hasan Ibn al–Fadl (6th/12th c.), the Imamite scholar.

at–Tabrisi – Abu Mansur, Ahmad Ibn ‘Ali (? – 620/1223), the Imamite traditionalist.

at–Tabrisi – Abu Nasr, al–Hasan Ibn al–Fadl Ibn al–Hasan (? – 6th/12th c.), the Imamite traditionalist.

at–Taftazani – Sa’du 'd–Din, Mas‘ud Ibn ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abdillah al–Ash'ari ash–Shafi’i (712/1312 – 793/1390), the famous Sunni scholar.

at–Tahawi – Abu Ja'far, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Salamah al–Misri al–Hanafi (239/853 – 321/933), the Hanafite scholar.

Tantawi Ibn Jawhari al–Misri (1287/1870 – 1358/1940), the Sunni Egyptian commentator.

at–Tayalisi – see Abu Dawud at–Tayalisi.

at–Tayyibi – Sharafu 'd–Din, al–Husayn Ibn Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdillah (? – 743/1342), the famous Sunni scholar.

ath–Tha’labi – Abu Ishaq, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim (? – 427/1035), the Sunni commentator.

ath–Thawri – Abu ‘Abdillah, Sufyan Ibn Sa‘id Ibn Masruq al–Kufi (97/716 – 161/778), the famous traditionalist.

ath–Thumali – Abu Hamzah, Thabit Ibn Dinar al–Azdi al–Kufi (? – 150/767), the famous Imamite traditionalist.

at–Tirmidhi – Abu ‘Isa, Muhammad Ibn ‘Isa as–Sulami (209/824 – 279/ 892), the famous Sunni traditionalist.

at–Turayhi – Fakhru 'd–Din Ibn Muhammad Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Turayh an–Najafi (979/1571 –1087/1676), the great Imamite scholar.

at–Tusi – see ash–Shaykh.

al–’Uqayli – Abu Ja'far, Muhammad Ibn ‘Amr Ibn Musa al–Makki (? – 322/934), the Sunni traditionalist.

al–Wahidi – Abu al–Hasan, ‘Ali Ibn Ahmad Ibn Muhammad an–Naysaburi ash–Shafi’i (? – 468/1076), the Sunni commentator.

Waki‘ – Abu Bakr, Muhammad Ibn Khalaf Ibn Hayyan ad–Dabbi (? – 306/918), the Sunni traditionalist.

Waki‘ Ibn al-Jarrah – Abu Sufyan ar-Ru'asi al-Kufi (129/746 – 197/812), the Sunni commentator and traditionalist.

al-Waqidi – Abu ‘Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn ‘Umar as-Sahmi al-Madani (130/747 – 207/823), the famous historian.

Warram Ibn Abi Firas al-Hilli (? – 605/1208), the Imamite scholar.

Warsh – ‘Uthman Ibn Sa‘id Ibn ‘Adiyy al-Misri (110/728 – 197/812), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur’an.

Wasil Ibn ‘Ata' – Abu Hudhayfah al-Ghazzal al-Basri (80/699 – 131/748), the Mu‘tazilite Imam.

Yahya al-Bahrani (?)

Yahya Ibn Sallam Ibn Abi Tha‘labah at-Taymi al-Basri (124/742 – 200/815), the Sunni commentator and traditionalist.

Ya’qub Ibn Ishaq Ibn Zayd – Abu Muhammad al-Hadrami al-Basri (117/735 – 205/821), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur’an.

al-Ya’qubi, Ibn Wadih – Ahmad Ibn Ishaq (? – a.d. 292/905), the famous historian.

Yazid Ibn al-Qa’ga‘ – Abu Ja'far al-Makhzumi al-Madani (? – 132/750), the famous reciter of the Holy Qur’an.

al-Yazidi – Abu Muhammad, Yahya Ibn al-Mubarak Ibn al-Mughirah al-‘Adawi al-Basri (138/755 – 202/818), the famous linguist and reciter of the Holy Qur’an.

Yunus Ibn ‘Abdu 'r-Rahman – Abu Muhammad al-Yaqtini al-Baghdadi (c. 125/742 – 208/823-824), the famous Imamite scholar and traditionalist.

az-Zajjaj – Abu Ishaq, Ibrahim Ibn as-Sari Ibn Sahl al-Baghdadi (241/855 – 311/923), the famous linguist.

az-Zajjaji – Abu al-Qasim, ‘Abdu 'r-Rahman Ibn Ishaq an-Nahawandi (? – 337/949), the famous scholar.

az-Zamakhshari – Abu al-Qasim, Jarullah, Mahmud Ibn ‘Umar Ibn Muhammad al-Mu‘ tazili al-Hanafi (467/1075 – 538/1144), the Sunni scholar.

az-Zarkashi – Badru 'd-Din, Abu ‘Abdillah, Muhammad Ibn Bahadur Ibn ‘Abdillah al-Misri ash-Shafi’i (745/1344 – 794/1392), the famous Sunni scholar.

az-Zubayr Ibn Bakkar Ibn ‘Abdillah al-Qurashi az-Zubayri (172/788 – 256/870), the famous Sunni

historian.

Zurarah Ibn A'yan – Abu al–Hasan ash–Shaybani al–Kufi (c. 60/680 – 150/767), the celebrated Imamite scholar and traditionalist.

az–Zurqani – 'Abdu ' l–Baqi Ibn Yusuf Ibn Ahmad al–Maliki (1020/1611 – 1099/1688), the famous Malikite scholar.

[1] [1]
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Appendix D: Works Referred to in this Volume (Of Al –Mizan) and Other Volumes

Note: For reference to the full name of the authors and other information, see Appendix C.

Ahkam al–Qur'an – Ibn al–'Arabi, al–Qadi, Abu Bakr.

Ahkam al–Qur'an – al–Jassas.

al Akhlaq – Abu 'l – Qasim al–'Alawi.

Ala 'u 'r–Rahman (*fi tafsiri 'l–Qur'an*) – al–Balaghi.

al–Amali (*al–Majalis*) – Ibnu 'sh–Shaykh.

al–Amali (*al–Majalis*) – al–Mufid.

al–Amali (*al–Majalis*) – as–Saduq.

al–Amali (*al–Majalis*) – ash–Shaykh at–Tusi.

Aman al–akhtar – Ibn Tawus, Radiyyu 'd–Din.

Anwaru 't–tanzil (*wa asraru 't–ta'wil*) (*Tafsir*) – al–Baydawi.

Asbabu 'n–nuzul – al–Wahidi.

al–Asfa (*Tafsir*) – al–Fayd al–Kashani.

al–Ash'athiyyat – Muhhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn al–Ash'ath.

al-Asma' wa 's-sifat – al-Bayhaqi.

al-Athar al-baqiyah 'ani 'l-quruni 'l- khaliyah – al-Biruni.

Ayat al-ahkam – al-Istarabadi.

al-Bahr al-muhit – Abu Hayyan al-Undulusi.

Basa'iru d-darajat – as-Saffar.

al-Bayan (*fi akhbar sahibi 'z-zaman*) – al-Ganji.

Bihar al-anwar – al-Majlisi (II).

Bisharat al-Mustafa (*li shi'ati 'l-Murtada*) – 'Imadu 'd-Din at-Tabari.

al-Burhan (*f i Tafsiri 'l-Qur'an*) – al-Bahrani.

Da'a'im al-Islam – Abu Hanifah al-Misri.

ad-Da'awat (*Sulwat al-hazin*) – ar-Rawandi.

Dala'ilu 'n-nubuwwah – al-Bayhaqi.

Dhakha'ir al-'uqba (*fi manaqibi dhawi 'l-qurba*) – al-Muhibb at-Tabari.

Dhakhirat al-ma'ad – al-Bistami.

ad-Durr al-manthur (*f i tafsiri kitabi 'llahi 'l-ma'thur*) – as-Suyuti.

Fadilat al-Husayn – ?

Fara'idu 's-simtayn – al-Hammuyi.

Fath al-qadir – ash-Shawkani.

Fiqh al-Qur'an – ar-Rawandi.

al-Fusul al-muhimmah (*if manaqibi 'l-a'immah*) – Ibnu 's-Sabbagh.

al-Ghadir – al-Amini.

Ghara'ib al-Qur'an (*Tafsir*) – an-Naysaburi, al-A'raj.

al-Gharat – Abu Ishaq ath-Thaqafi.

Ghawaliy al-la'ali – Ibn Abi Jumhur.

Ghayat al-maram – al-Bahrani.

al-Ghaybah – an-Nu'mani.

al-Ghaybah – ash-Shaykh at-Tusi.

Ghurar al-hikam (*wa durar al-kalim*) – al-Amidi.

Hilyat al-awliya' – Abu Nu'aym al-Isfahani.

al-Huda ila dini 'l-Mustafa – al-Balaghi.

al-Ihtijaj – at-Tabrisi, Abu Mansur.

al-Ihya' (*Ihya' 'ulumu d-Din*) – al-Ghazali, Abu Hamid.

al-Ikhtisas – al-Mufid.

'Ilalu 'sh-shara'i' – as-Saduq.

I'lam al-wara (*bi a'lami 'l-huda*) – at-Tabrisi, Abu 'Ali.

al-Igbal – Ibn Tawas, Radiyyu 'd-Din.

al-Irshad – al-Mufid.

Irshad al-qulub – ad-Daylami, Abu Muhammad.

al-Isti'ab (*f i ma'rifati 'l-ashab*) – Ibn 'Abdi'l-Barr.

al-Istibsar (*fi-ma khtalafa mina 'l-akhbar*) – ash-Shaykh at-Tusi.

Ithbat al-wasiyyah – al-Mas'udi.

al-Itqan (*f i 'ulumi 'l-Qur'an*) – as-Suyuti.

al -Ja'fariyyat (see al-Ash'athiyyat).

Jamal al-usbu' – Ibn Tawus, Radiyyu 'd-Din.

al-Jami' li ahkami 'l-Qur'an – al-Qurtubi.

Jami'u l-usul – Ibn al-Athir, Abu 's-Sa'adat.

al-Jami'u s-saghir – as-Suyuti.

Jam' al-jawami' – as-Suyuti.

al-Jawahir (*Tafsir*) – Tantawi Ibn Jawhari.

Jawami' al-jami' – at-Tabrisi, Abu 'Ali.

al-Kafi – al-Kulayni.

Kamalu 'd-Din (*wa tamamu 'n-ni'mah*) – as-Saduq.

al-Kamil (*fi 't-tarikh*) – Ibn al-Athir, Abu al-Hasan.

Kamilu 'z-ziyarah – Ibn Qulawayh.

Kanz al-fawa'id – al-Karajiki.

Kanz al- 'irfan (*f i fighi 'l-Qur'an*) – al-Fadil al-Miqdad.

Kanz al- 'ummal (*f i sunani 'l-aqwali wa 'l-af'al*) – al-Muttaqi al-Hindi.

Kashf al-ghummah (*f i ma'rifat 'l-a'immah*) – al-Irbili.

Kashf al-mahajjah (*li thamarati 'l-muhjah*) – Ibn Tawus, Radiyyu 'd-Din.

al-Kashshaf – az-Zamakhshari.

al-Khara'ij wa 'l-jara'ih – ar-Rawandi.

al-Khasa'is al-'alawiyyah – an-Nasa'i.

al-Khisal – as-Saduq.

Kifayatu 't-talib (*f i manaqib Ali Ibn Abi Talib*) – al-Ganji.

Lisan al-'Arab – Ibn Manzur.

Lubabu 't-ta'wil (*fi ma'ani 't-tanzil*) – al-Khazin.

Lubb al-lubab – ar-Rawandi.

Ma'ani 'l-akhbar – as-Saduq.

Madariku 't-tanzil – an-Nasafi, Abu al-Barakat.

al-Mahajjat al-bayda' (*fi iha'I 'l-ihya'*) – al-Fayd al-Kashani.

al-Mahasin (*wa 'l-adab*) – al-Barqi.

Majma' al-bahrayn – at-Turayhi.

Majma‘ al-bayan – at-Tabrisi, Abu ‘Ali.

Majma‘u ‘z-zawa’id (*wa manba‘ al-fawa'id*) – al-Haythami, Nuru 'd-Din.

Majmu’at Warram (*Nuzhatu 'n-nazir wa tanbih al-khatir*) – Warram Ibn Abi Firas.

Makarim al-akhlaq – at-Tabrisi, Abu Nasr.

al-Manaqib – al-Khatib al-Khwarazmi.

Manaqib Ali Ibn Abi Talib – Ibn al-Maghazili.

al-Manaqib (*Manaqib al Abi Talib*) – Ibn Shahrashub.

al-Manar (*Tafsir*) – ash-Shaykh Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rashid Rida.

Manhaju 's-sadiqin (*Tafsir*) – al-Kashani.

Man la yahduruh al-faqih (*Faqihu man la yahduruh al-faqih*) – as-Saduq.

al-Masahif – Ibn Ashtah.

Masalik al-afham (*fi ayati 'l-ahkam*) – al-Fadil al-Jawad.

Matalibu 's-sa'ul (*f i manaqib ali 'r-rasul*) – Ibn Talhah.

al-Mawa'iz (*wa 'z-zawajir*) – al-‘Askari, Abu Ahmad.

Misbahu 'z-za'ir – Ibn Tawus, Radiyyu 'd-Din.

Mishkat al-anwar – at-Tabrisi, Abu al-Fadl.

al-Mufradat – ar-Raghib.

Muhkam al-Qur’an wa mutashabihahu – Ibn Shahrashub.

Muntakhab (*Mukhtasar*) *basa'iri d-darajat* – Hasan Ibn Sulayman.

Munyat al-murid – ash-Shahid ath-Thani.

al-Muqni‘ah – al-Mufid.

al-Musnad – Abu Dawud at-Tayalisi.

al-Musnad – Ahmad (Ibn Hanbal).

al-Mustadrak (*‘ala 's-sahihayn*) – al-Hakim.

al-Muwatta' – Malik Ibn Anas.

Nahj al-balaghah – ar-Radi (ash-Sharif).

Nahj al-Bayan (*'an kashfi ma'ani 'l-Qur'an*) – Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan ash-Shaybani.

an-Nasikh wa 'l-mansukh – an-Nahhas.

an-Nawadir – Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn 'Isa.

an-Nawadir – ar-Rawandi.

an-Nihayah (*fi gharibi 'l-hadih*) – Ibn al-Athir, Abu 's-Sa'adat.

an-Nubuwwah – as-Saduq.

Nur al-absar (*fi manaqib ahli 'l-bayti 'l-athar*) – ash-Shiblanji.

Nuru 'th-Thaqalayn – al-'Arusi.

Qalaidu 'd-durar – al-Jaza'iri.

al-Qamus al-muhit – al-Firuzabadi.

Qisas al-anbiya' – ar-Rawandi.

Qisas al-anbiya' (*'Arais al-majalis*) – ath-Tha'labi.

Qurb al-isnad – al-Himyari.

Rawdat al-Kafi – see al-Kafi.

Rawdat al-wa'izin – al-Fattal.

Rawh al-jinan wa ruh al-janan (*Tafsir*) – Abu al-Futuh ar-Razi.

Ruh al-Bayan – al-Burusawi.

Ruh al-ma'ani – al-Alusi.

Sa'adu 's-su'ud – Ibn Tawus, Radiyyu 'd-Din.

as-Safi (*Tafsir*) – al-Fayd al-Kashani.

as-Sahifah as-Sajjadiyyah – al-Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a).

as-Sahih – see as-Sunan – at-Tirmidhi.

as-Sahih – al-Bukhari.

as-Sahih (*al-Jami'u 's-sahih*) – Muslim.

as-Sara'ir – Ibn Idris.

ash-Shafi – al-Murtada (ash-Sharif).

Shawahidu 't-tanzil (*li qawa'idi 't-tna'wil*) – al-Hakim al-Hasakani.

ash-Shihab (*Shihab al-akhbar*) – al-Quda'i.

ash-Shihab (*fi 'l-hikami wa 'l-adab*) – Yahya al-Bahrani.

Shu'ab al- Iman – al-Bayhaqi.

as-Sihah – al-Jawhari.

as-Sirah (*an-Nabawiyyah*) – Ibn Hisham.

as-Sirat al-mustaqim (*ila mustahiqqi 't-taqdim*) – al-Bayadi.

as-Sunan – Abu Dawud.

as-Sunan (*al-kubra*) – al-Bayhaqi.

as-Sunan – ad-Darimi.

as-Sunan – ad-Dar-qutni.

as-Sunan – Ibn Majah.

as-Sunan (*al-Mujtana*) – an-Nasa'i.

as-Sunan (*al-Jami'u 's-Sahih*) – at-Tirmidhi.

at-Tabaqat (*al-Kabir*) – Ibn Sa'd.

Tadhkirat Khawasi 'l-'ummah (*bi dhikri manaqibi 'l-a'immah*) – Sibt Ibn al-Jawzi.

at-Tafsir – al-'Ayyashi.

at-Tafsir – Furat Ibn Ibrahim.

at-Tafsir – Ibn Kathir.

at-Tafsir – an-Nu'mani.

at-Tafsir – al-Qummi.

at-Tahdhib = *Tahdhib al-ahkam* – ash-Shaykh at-Tusi.

Taju 'l 'arus (*fi sharhi 'l-qamus*) – al-Murtada az-Zabidi.

Talkhisu 'sh-shafi – ash-Shaykh at-Tusi.

at-Tara'if – Ibn Tawus, Radiyyu 'd-Din.

at-Targhib (*wa 't-tarhib*) – al-Isfahani at-Taymi.

at-Targhib (*wa 't-tarhib*) – al-Mundhiri.

at-Ta'rif – as-Safwani.

at-Tarikh (*al-Bidayah wa 'n-nihayah*) – Ibn Kathir.

at-Tawhid – as-Saduq.

Ta'wil al-ayati 'l-bahirah (*az-zahirah*) (*fi 'l-'itrati 't-tahirah*) – Sharafu'd-Din al-Istarabadi.

Tibb al-a'immah – 'Abdullah and al-Husayn Ibn Bistam Ibn Sabur az-Zayyat.

at-Tibyan (*fi Tafsiri 'l-Qur'an*) – ash-Shaykh at-Tusi.

Tuhaf al- 'uqul – Ibn Shu'bah.

al- 'Udad al-qawiyyah – Ibn al-Mutahhar.

'Uddat ad-da'i – Ibn Fahd.

al-Umm – ash-Shafi'i.

Usd al-ghabah (*fi ma'rifati 's-sahabah*) – Ibn al-Athir, Abu al-Hassan.

'Uyun al-akhbar (*'Uyunu akhbari 'r-Rida* (*'a*)) – as-Saduq.

al-Wafi – al-Fayd al-Kashani.

Yanabi' al-mawaddah – al-Qunduzi.

al-Yaqin (*f i imrati Amiri 'l-mu'minin*) – Ibn Tawus, Radiyyu 'd-Din.

Zad al-ma'ad – Ibn al-Qayyim.

Zawa'id al-musnad – 'Abdullah Ibn Ahmad Ibn Hanbal.

Zubdat al-Bayan (*f i ahkami 'l-Qur'an*) - al-Muhaqqiq al-Ardabili.

az-Zuhd - al-Husayn Ibn Sa'id.

Zuhdu 'n-nabi - Ibnu 'r-Razi

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Al-Mizan - An Exegesis Of The Qur'an - Volume 2

Al-Mizan - An Exegesis Of The Qur'an - Volume 2

Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i

Translated by
Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi

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Sub Title:

Suratul Baqarah (2), from Verse 94 to Verse 182

Author(s):

Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i [2]

Publisher(s):

World Organization for Islamic Services (WOFIS) [3]

This is the second volume of this renowned commentary on the Holy Qur'an written by Allamah Tabataba'i, one of its greatest modern commentators, and translated by Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi.

This volume contains the exegesis of Surah Al-Baqarah from verse 94 to verse 182.

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Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi [7]

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In addition, sections and subheadings have been introduced to improve navigation and make the content more searchable in an online environment. As a result, the digital version diverges from the printed volume.

Users wishing to see the translation as it was published should refer to printed copies available in

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Miscellaneous information:

Al-Mizan - An Exegesis Of The Qur'an - Volume 2 Surah Al-Baqarah (2) from verse 94 to verse 182 By Allamah as-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i Translated by: Allamah Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi Published by: W.O.F.I.S., World Organization for Islamic Services First edition 1982/1402 Translated from the Arabic al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Qur'an Beirut, 1393/1973 (3rd ed.) Published by: P. O. Box No. 11365 - 1545 Tehran – IRAN http://www.wofis.com

Person Tags:

Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i [2]

Foreword

1. Al-'Allamah as-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i (1321/1904 - 1402/1981) - may Allah have mercy upon him - was a famous scholar, thinker and the most celebrated contemporary Islamic philosopher. We have introduced him briefly in the first volume of the English translation of al-Mizan which will be published, by the help of Allah, in the near future.

2. Al-'Allamah at-Tabataba'i is well-known for a number of his works of which the most important is his great exegesis **al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Qur'an** which is rightly counted as the fundamental pillar of scholarly work which the 'Allamah has achieved in the Islamic world.

3. We felt the necessity of publishing an exegesis of the Holy Qur'an in English. After a thorough consultation, we came to choose al-Mizan because we found that it contained in itself, to a considerable extent, the points which should necessarily be expounded in a perfect exegesis of the Holy Qur'an and the points which appeal to the mind of the contemporary Muslim reader. Therefore, we proposed to al-Ustadh al-'Allamah as-Sayyid Sa'id Akhtar ar-Radawi to undertake this task because we were familiar with his intellectual ability to understand the Arabic text of al-Mizan and his literary capability in expression and translation. So, we relied on him for this work and consider him responsible for the English translation as al-'Allamah at-Tabataba'i was responsible for the Arabic text of al-Mizan and its discussions.

4. We have proceeded to publish the translation of the second volume of the Arabic al-Mizan earlier as it was ready for printing, whereas the first volume is not ready yet for the reasons which we do not wish to state here. So, we saw no reason in delaying its printing. We have included two appendixes: one for the authors cited in all the volumes of al-Mizan, and the other for the books cited therein. These two appendixes have been attached to the first volume of the English translation. Apart from this, the reader

will find two appendixes in all the volumes of the translation of al-Mizan.

* * * * *

We implore upon Allah to affect our work purely for His pleasure, and to help us to complete this work which we have started. May Allah guide us in this step which we have taken and in the future steps, for He is the best Master and the best Helper.

World Organization for Islamic Services

(Board of Writing, Translation and Publication)

6/4/1402

1/2/1982

Tehran - IRAN

[1] [1]
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Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 94 - 99

قل إِن كَانَت لكم ٱلدَّار ٱلأَخِرَة عِندَ ٱللَّهِ خَالِصَةً مِّن دونِ ٱلنَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّواْ ٱلمَوتَ إِن كنتم صَـٰدِقِينَ

Say: "If the future abode with Allah is purely for you to the exclusion of the people then invoke death if you are truthful" **(*2:94*).**

وَلَن يَتَمَنَّوه أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمَت أَيدِيهِم وَٱللَّه عَلِيم بِٱلظَّـٰلِمِينَ

And they will never invoke it on account of what their hands have sent before, and Allah knows the unjust ones **(*2:95*).**

وَلَتَجِدَنّهم أَحرَصَ ٱلنَّاسِ عَلَىٰ حَيَوٰةٍ وَمِنَ ٱلَّذِينَ أَشرَكواْ يَوَدّ أَحَدهم لَو يعَمَّر أَلفَ سَنَةٍ وَمَا هوَ بِمزَحزِحِهِ مِنَ ٱلعَذَابِ أَن يعَمَّرَ وَٱللَّه بَصِير بِمَا يَعمَلونَ

And you will most certainly find them the greediest of men for life, and **(greedier)** ***than even those who are polytheists; every one of them loves that he should be granted a life of a thousand***

years, and his being granted a long life will in no way remove him further off from the chastisement, and Allah sees what they do (***2:96***).

قل مَن كَانَ عَدوًّا لِّجِبرِيلَ فَإِنَّه نَزَّلَه عَلَىٰ قَلبِكَ بِإِذنِ ٱللَّهِ مصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَينَ يَدَيهِ وَهدًى وَبشرَىٰ لِلمؤمِنِينَ

Say: "Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel – for surely he revealed it to your heart by Allah's Command, verifying that which is before it, and guidance and good news for the believers (***2:97***).

مَن كَانَ عَدوًّا لِّلَّهِ وَمَلَـٰٓئِكَتِهِ وَرسلِهِ وَجِبرِيلَ وَمِيكَـٰلَ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَدوٌّ لِّلكَـٰفِرِينَ

Whoever is the enemy of Allah and His angels and His apostles and Gabriel and Michael – so surely Allah is the enemy of the unbelievers" (***2:98***).

وَلَقَد أَنزَلنَآ إِلَيكَ ءَايَـٰتٍۭ بَيِّنَـٰتٍ وَمَا يَكفر بِهَآ إِلَّا ٱلفَـٰسِقونَ

And certainly We have revealed to you clear signs, and none disbelieve in them except the transgressors (***2:99***).

Commentary

Verse 94

Qur'an: ***Say: "If the future abode…"*** (***2:94***).

The Jews claimed:

"Fire shall not touch us but for a few days" (***2:80***).

When they were told to believe in what Allah had revealed, they declared:

"We believe in that which was revealed to us" (***2:91***).

All this implied that only they would be saved on the Day of Resurrection to the exclusion of all the others; that their deliverance and happiness in the next world would be unmarred by any unpleasant experience as the Fire shall not touch them but for a few days – equal in number to the day they worshipped the calf. To remove that self-delusion and conceit, Allah put a challenge to them, to show them their true face, to make them realize that their claims were without any substance. He (Allah) told His Apostle to say to them: ***"If the future abode…is for you…"*** (***2:94***). The "future abode" points to the felicity and happiness of that abode; the owner of a house arranges and manages it in the best possible

way, and decorates it according to his taste and liking "with Allah", that is, firmly established with Allah, by His order and His permission; the phrase has the same import here as in the verse:

Surely the religion with Allah is Islam (***3:19***).

"purely", that is, unmixed with punishment or humiliation – utmost that you think possible is a punishment of just a few days. "to the exclusion of the people", because you presume that all religions, except your own, are false. If you really think so, "then invoke death if you are truthful".

This challenge is similar to the one given in verse:

Say: "O you who are Jews, if you think that you are the friends of Allah to the exclusion of other people, then invoke death if you are truthful" (***62:6***).

The argument is very clear about which nobody can have any doubt whatsoever. Any man (nay! even an animal having a limited perception and sensitivity), if given total freedom to choose between comfort and discomfort, will at once opt for the comfort, without any hesitation, without any contemplation. Put before him a life polluted with trouble and turmoil and another clean and pure, and tell him to take hold of any one; naturally, and without any doubt, he will grab at the pure one. If for any reason he is prevented from the life of his choice, he will always dream of it, and will remain looking for any opportunity to lay his hands upon it.

If the Jews are truthful in their claim that the other world's pure happiness belongs to them to the exclusion of others, then they must yearn for it with their hearts, words and deeds.

"And they will never invoke it on account of what their hands have sent before", for example, the killings of the prophets, the disbelief in Musa ('a) and breaking of the covenants, "and Allah knows the unjust ones".

Verse 95

Qur'an: ...***On account of what their hands have sent before...*** (***2:95***).

It is a metaphorical reference to the "deeds". Most of the external deeds are done by hands; then the finished product is sent to the one who wants it or may benefit from it.

The sentence has two allegorical allusions: it counts every deed as having been done by hands; and it ascribes the action of "sending" to the hands while in fact it is the man who sends his deeds before.

Actions of a man, and especially those done regularly, are a clear mirror of his unconscious and sub-conscious personality. Evil deeds expose the evil nature of the doer – and such a nature does not like meeting its Lord or staying in the abode of His friends.

Verse 96

Qur'an: ***And you will most certainly find them the greediest of men for life...*** (***2:96***).

It is an explanation of the divine word, "And they will never invoke it..." They do not yearn for death because they are greediest of all men for the life of this world. It is this greed and avid craving to remain in this world which prevents them from looking forward to the next abode. The word, "life", is used in this verse as a common noun – it is to show how insignificant and trifling this life is; Allah has said:

And this life of the world is nothing but a sport and a play, and as for the next abode, that most surely is life – did they but know (***29:64***).

Qur'an: ***And*** (**greedier**) ***that even those who are polytheists...*** (***2:96***).

Apparently, the conjunctive, "and", joins this clause to the word, "men", that is, you will find them greedier than even the polytheists for life.

Qur'an: ***And his being granted a long life will in no way remove him further off from the chastisement*** (***2:96***).

The verse's literal translation: and it is not a remover of him from the chastisement his being granted a long life. *"ma"* (ما = not, no, particle of negation); the pronoun "it" is that of *sha'n*1 and *qissah* (ضَمير الشّأن و القصّة) "his being granted a long life" is the subject preceded by the predicate, that is, "is not a remover of him..."

The sentence may also be syntactically analysed in another way: the pronoun, "it", may refer to the love each of them had of being granted a life of a thousand years. It would accordingly mean that that love of theirs would not ward off the Divine Chastisement from them; in this case, the clause, "his being granted a long life" will be a description of that love.

Anyhow, what the verse says is this: They shall never invoke the death, and I swear that you will most certainly find them the greediest of men for this base and insignificant life which prevents them from the happy and good life of the next abode; you will find them greedier than even the polytheists for this life, although the latter do not believe in the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment, and consequently their love for this life should be unparalleled; every one of them loves that he should be granted the longest life, but even the longest life cannot remove him further off from the Divine Chastisement, because life, no matter how long it is, is limited and has to come to an end.

Qur'an: ***Every one of them loves that he should be granted a life of a thousand years...*** (***2:96***).

that is, the longest life. "a thousand" is used to denote numerousness. In Arabic, it is the highest de–nomination which is described by a single word. Higher denominations are shown by repetition and combination, for example, ten thousand, a hundred thousand, a thousand thousand (i.e., a million).

Qur'an: ***...And Allah sees what you do*** (***2:96***).

"al-Basir" (البَصير) is one of the beautiful names of Allah; it signifies that although He does not have a body or an eye, He is fully cognizant of all things which we perceive with our eyes. It shows a facet of the name, *al-'Alim* (العَلِيْم = the Knowing).

Verse 97

Qur'an: ***Say: "Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel – for surely, he revealed it to your heart by Allah's Command*** (***2:97***).

Apparently, the verse was revealed as a reply to something the Jews had said – they arrogantly refused to believe in what was revealed to the Apostle of Allah (S), on the pretext that they were enemies of Gabriel who had the charge of bringing the revelation to Muhammad (S). Allah replied to them in two verses – concerning the Qur'an and Gabriel both. Also, the traditions giving the background of the verses confirm it. The verses contain four replies to their arrogance in denial of the Qur'an.

First: Gabriel has revealed the Qur'an to your heart by Allah's Command, not by his own wish. Therefore, even if they feel enmity towards Gabriel, it should not prevent them from believing in a revelation sent down by Allah's Command.

Second: The Qur'an verifies the Divine Book which was revealed before it and which they have in their hands. How can they believe in a book and deny another which verifies it?

Third: The Qur'an is a guidance for those who believe in it.

Fourth: It is also good news for the believers. How can a sane person turn his face away from guidance and good news, even if it is brought to him by a supposed enemy of his?

So far as their professed enmity towards Gabriel was concerned, they were replied as follows:

Gabriel is one of the angels of Allah; he has no authority except to follow and obey the Divine Command – just like Michael and other angels. They are honoured servants of Allah; they do not disobey His command, and they do as they are told. Likewise, the apostles of Allah have no authority except by Allah and from Allah. To have enmity towards them, to harbour hatred for them is enmity and hatred towards Allah Himself. Therefore, whoever is the enemy of Allah and His angels and His apostles and Gabriel and Michael, so surely Allah is his enemy.

All these replies are clearly given in these two verses.

Qur'an: ***For surely, he revealed it to your heart by Allah's Command*** (***2:97***).

Apparently, it should have been "to my heart"; instead, it says, "to your heart". The pronoun has been

changed from the first to the second person to draw attention to an important factor: So far as the revelation of the Qur'an is concerned, neither Gabriel has any choice or authority of his own in bringing it down (he is subject to the Divine command, which he faith-fully carries out) nor the Apostle of Allah (S) has any choice or authority of his own in receiving it and conveying it to his *ummah;* his heart is the receptacle of revelation, on which he has no control at all and which he is bound to convey to his people.

The Jews have been mentioned in these verses sometimes in the second person, and sometimes in the third. Their admonition and condemnation have continued for a long time; and the Speaker wants to show that they do not deserve the honour of being addressed by Him. That is why He frequently changes the styles, again and again going from the second to the third person pronouns. The audience gets the impression that the Speaker does not like to speak to them – because of their heedlessness and depravity, but at the same time does not like to leave them as they are without pronouncing His judgment against them.

Verse 98

Qur'an: ***The enemy of the unbelievers*** **(*2:98*).**

Instead of saying, "their enemy", the verse uses the word, "enemy of the unbelievers"; it serves to show also the reason of that enmity. Allah is their enemy, because they are unbelievers, and Allah is the enemy of the unbelievers.

Verse 99

Qur'an: ***And none disbelieve in them except the transgressors*** **(*2:99*).**

It explains the cause of their disbelief; they disbelieve because they are transgressors. Or, may be the definite article "the", in "the transgressors" refers to the group mentioned in the beginning of the chapter:

But He does not cause to err by it **(any)** ***except the transgressors,*** **(*2:26*).**

Who break the covenant of Allah after its confirmation… **(*2:27*).**

As for Gabriel and how he brought the revelation to the heart of the Apostle of Allah (S), we shall explain it, God willing, in another place; the same applies to Michael and other angels.

Traditions

Ibn 'Abbas explained the reason of the revelation of the verse, ***Say: "Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel…"*****(*2:97*)*,*** in these words: "When the Prophet came to Medina, Ibn Suriya and some Jews of Fadak asked him (some questions). They said: 'O Muhammad! How do you sleep? Because we have been told about the sleep of the Prophet who would come in the last days?' He said: 'My eyes sleep

while my heart is awake.' They said: 'You are right, O Muhammad! Now tell us about the child whether it is from the man or from the woman?' He said: 'As for the bones, the nerves and the veins, they are from the man; and as for the flesh, the blood, the nails and the hairs, they are from the woman.'

They said: 'You are right, O Muhammad! Then why is it that sometimes the child resembles his paternal uncles, without having a least likeness of his maternal uncles? And sometimes he resembles his maternal uncles without having any likeness at all to his paternal uncles?' He replied: 'He resembles to that parent's (side) whose fluid dominates the other's.' They said: 'You spoke the truth, O Muhammad! Now, tell us about your Lord, what is He?' Then Allah revealed (the Chapter 112):

***"Say: He, Allah, is One"* (*112:1*).**

***"Allah is He on Whom all depend"* (*112:2*).**

***"He begets not, nor is He begotten"* (*112:3*).**

***"And none is like Him"* (*112:4*).**

Then Ibn Suriya said: 'One (more) thing; if you tell (us) about it, I shall believe in you and follow you. Which angel is it that brings to you that which Allah reveals to you?' He said: 'Gabriel.' (Ibn Suriya) said: 'He is our enemy; he brings the (order of) fighting, hard-ship and war. And Michael brings comfort and happiness. Had it been Michael who came to you (with revelation) we would have believed in you.'"

The author says: Very many traditions (nearly *mutawatir* in number) have been narrated by both Sunni and Shi'ah narrators, that (when) the Apostle of Allah (S) (slept) his eyes used to sleep but his heart kept awake. Sleep did not make him unaware of himself; when asleep, he was well aware that he was asleep; when he dreamt, he knew that he was dreaming. Not too often, this happens to some other good persons too when their souls are clean and they keep in touch with the Divine sublimity. When the soul rises to that level, it can never be oblivious of the various changes occurring to itself in its worldly life, nor can it forget its relation to its Lord.

At this stage, it may look at the world and its life taking the whole spectrum at one glance, as a man looks at a tree and perceives it all at once. In this detached manner, it observes that all human beings are asleep - not only those who are manifestly asleep, but those too who are thought to be awake. Almost all men have taken shelter under sensual perception; have bound themselves to the fetters of materialism. They are in fact asleep, even when they think they are awake. 'Ali ('a) has said: "The people are asleep; when they die, they will wake up..."

This topic will be further explained in other place; other sentences of this tradition too will be explained later

1. Sha'n (ضَميرُ الشّأن) is a personal pronoun (third person, masculine) which is used to begin a sentence. That of feminine gender is called the pronoun of qissah (ضَمير القصّة). The nearest thing to it in the English grammar is the indefinite demonstrative pronoun. (tr.)

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 100 - 101

أَوَكُلَّمَا عَـٰهَدُواْ عَهدًا نَّبَذَه فَرِيقٌ مِّنهم بَل أَكثَرهم لَا يؤمِنون

What! whenever they make a covenant, a party of them cast it aside? Nay, most of them do not believe (2:100).

وَلَمَّا جَآءَهم رَسولٌ مِّن عِندِ ٱللَّهِ مصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهم نَبَذَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنَ ٱلَّذِينَ أوتواْ ٱلكِتَـٰبَ كِتَـٰبَ ٱللَّهِ وَرَآءَ ظهورِهِم كَأَنَّهم لَا يَعلَمونَ

And when there came to them an Apostle from Allah verifying that which they have, a party of those who were given the Book threw the Book of Allah behind their backs as if they knew nothing (2:101).

Commentary

Verse 100

Qur'an: ***Cast it aside (2:100).***

"an-Nabdh" (النَبْذ) to throw away, to renounce).

Verse 101

Qur'an: ***And when there came to them an Apostle from Allah... (2:101).***

The word, "an Apostle", definitely means the Apostle of Allah, Muhammad (S); it does not refer to any other apostle who might have come "verifying that which they have", because "when there came" does not mean "whenever there came"; in other words, it does not signify a recurring incidence, but an event that happened once only.

The verse points to the Jews' adverse attitude towards the truth: they were so steeped in falsehood that they concealed the foretellings of the Torah about the Prophet of Islam, and refused to believe in the Qur'an which verified that which they hold in their hands.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 102 – 103

وَٱتَّبَعواْ مَا تَتلواْ ٱلشَّيَـٰطِين عَلَىٰ ملكِ سلَيمَـٰنَ وَمَا كفَرَ سلَيمَـٰن وَلَـٰكِنَّ ٱلشَّيَـٰطِينَ كَفَرواْ يعَلِّمونَ ٱلنَّاسَ ٱلسِّحرَ وَمَآ أنزِلَ عَلَى ٱلمَلَكَينِ بِبَابِلَ هَـٰروتَ وَمَـٰروتَۚ وَمَا يعَلِّمَانِ مِن۪ أَحَدٍ حَتَّىٰ يَقولَآ إِنَّمَا نَحن فِتنَةٌ۪ فَلَا تَكفر۪ فَيَتَعَلَّمونَ مِنهمَا مَا يفَرِّقونَ بِهِ بَينَ ٱلمَر۪ء وَزَو۪جِهِ ۚ وَمَا هم بِضَآرِّينَ بِهِ مِن۪ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذ۪نِ ٱللَّهِۚ وَيَتَعَلَّمونَ مَا يَضرّهم۪ وَلَا يَنفَعهم۪ۚ وَلَقَد۪ عَلِمواْ لَمَنِ ٱشتَرَىٰه مَا لَه فِى ٱلأَخِرَةِ مِن۪ خَلَـٰقٍۚ وَلَبِئسَ مَا شَرَو۪اْ بِهِ أَنفسَهم۪ۚ لَو۪ كَانواْ يَعلَمونَ

And they followed what the satans chanted (***of sorcery***) ***against the kingdom of Sulayman; and Sulayman was not an unbeliever, but the satans disbelieved; they taught men sorcery and what was sent down to the two angels at Babylon, Harut and Marut. Yet these two taught no one until they had said: "Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not be a disbeliever." Even then men learned from these two, that by which they might cause a separation between a man and his wife; and they cannot hurt with it any one except with Allah's permission; and they learned what harmed them and did not profit them; and certainly they knew that he who bought it should have no share*** (**of good**) ***in the hereafter, and vile was the price for which they sold their souls; had they but known*** (**this**) (***2:102***).

وَلَو۪ أَنَّهم۪ ءَامَنواْ وَٱتَّقَو۪اْ لَمَثوبَةٌ۪ مِّن۪ عِندِ ٱللَّهِ خَيرٌ۪ لَّو۪ كَانواْ يَعلَمونَ

And if they had believed and guarded themselves (**against evil**), ***reward from Allah would certainly have been better; had they but known*** (**this**) (***2:103***).

Commentary

Verse 102

Qur'an: ***And they followed what the satans chanted…*** (***2:102***).

The exegetes have disputed among themselves about each and every aspect of this verse; so much so that the resulting picture of the differences is almost unparalleled in the whole Qur'an. A list of the differences is given below:

"They followed": Does the pronoun, "they", refer to the Jews of the Sulayman's time, or to those at the time of the Prophet, or to all?

"chanted": The Arabic word is *"tatlu"* (تَتْلُوْا) which may be translated as "chanted", "recited", "told a lie about", "faked" or "followed and acted according to". In which sense the word is used here? Every meaning has some supporters.

"satans": Does it refer to the satans of *jinn?* Or to those among the human beings? Or to both?

"about": The Arabic participle is "'*ala* " (عَلى = against, on, about, upon). Does the phrase mean, about the kingdom of Sulayman? Or, during the reign of Sulayman? Or, against his kingdom? Or, on his reign?

***"The satans disbelieved"* (*2: 102*)**: Some say, they disbelieved because they published the sorcery among the people. Others say, they disbelieved because they ascribed the sorcery to Sulayman. Still others say, the disbelief, as mentioned here, actually means sorcery.

***"They taught men sorcery"* (*2: 102*)**: It means they instructed them as a teacher instructs his students. No! it means that they buried the chants under Sulayman's chair, and then directed the men to it who brought it out and learnt it.

***"And what was sent down"* (*2: 102*)**: The word translated here as "what" is *"ma"* (مَا) which is a relative pronoun ("what"); also, it is a particle of negation ("not"). "And" is mostly used as a conjunctive; but not infrequently, it is also used to begin a new sentence. A group says that *"ma"* means "what", and the conjunctive joins it to "what the satans chanted" (the Jews followed what was sent down). Another party is of the opinion that the conjunctive joins it to "sorcery" (the satans taught them sorcery and that which was sent down). A third group thinks that *"ma"* means "not", and the word "and" begins a new sentence (And sorcery was not sent down to the two angels, contrary to what the Jews claimed).

***"Sent down"* (*2: 102*)**: Was it sent down from the heavens? Or from the highlands?

***"The two angels"* (*2: 102*)**: They were the angels from the heaven. No! They were two good men, or men who feigned to be good. No! It is not *"al-malakayn"* (المَلَكَيْنِ = two angels); it is *"al-malikayn"* (المَلِكَيْنِ = two kings).

***"Babylon"* (*2: 102*)**: It is the famous ancient city of Iraq. No! It is a city in Damawand (Iran); Wrong! It is the land between Nasibayn (Turkey) and Ra'sul 'Ayn.

***"These two taught no one"* (*2: 102*)**: Teaching is used in its common meaning of instruction. No! It means, these two apprised no one.

"Do not be a disbeliever" (***2:102***): By learning sorcery? Or, by practising it? Or, by both?

"The men learned from these two" (***2:102***): The "two" refers to the two angels. No! It means, they learned from the two subjects, sorcery and disbelief. Wrong! They learned the practice of sorcery, in place of the advice given by the angels.

"That by which they might cause a separation between a man and his wife" (***2:102***): Some exegetes say that they caused love or hate between the couple with the help of their sorcery. Others think that they misled one of the spouses to disbelief and polytheism, and the apostasy caused the separation mentioned here. A third group say that they created hatred and enmity between the couple with their calumny and slander.

This, in short, gives a glimpse of the differences of opinions concerning the explanations of the words and clauses of the verse. There are still more differences about the event referred to – whether it narrates an actual happening or is just a parable; and so on and so forth. Compute the differences mentioned above and you will get nearly one million and two hundred sixty thousand possible explanations ($4 \times 3^9 \times 2^4$)!!

It seems an astounding quality of the Qur'an, that a verse that is subjected to so many divergent interpretations, still maintains its highest standard of eloquence; that in spite of all these vagaries of the exegetes, its meaning is not disjointed, nor its beauty marred.

A similar treatment has been meted out to the verse:

Is he then who has with him clear proof from his Lord, and a witness from him recites it and before it (***is***) ***the Book of Musa, a guide and a mercy*** (***11:17***)***.***

However, it appears from the context that this verse deals with a hitherto unmentioned affair of the Jews, that is, their wide-spread use of sorcery. They based this practice on one or two stories, which were very popular among them.

The Jews were addicted to making alterations and interpolations in, and omissions from, their Divine books, let alone the historical narrations. They used to change their books and records fitting them to the prevalent moods of their times. A story narrated by them was not to be relied upon. But this Qur'anic admonition is based on their own belief, because it was they who used to narrate these stories.

The verse proves that the practice of sorcery was prevalent among the Jews, and that they ascribed it to Sulayman ('a). They presumed that Sulayman ('a) got the kingdom and subjugated the *jinn,* the human beings, the animals and the birds – all with the help of sorcery; and all the supernatural miraculous events related to him depended on witchcraft. And they claimed that some of the enchantments in their hands had come down to them from him. The remaining portion was attributed to the two angels at Babylon, named Harut and Marut.

The Qur'an refutes the stories, saying that the prophet Sulayman ('a) never indulged in witchcraft and sorcery. How could he, when sorcery was nothing but disbelief in Allah? Sulayman ('a) could not be an unbeliever as he was a sinless, innocent prophet. All this is clearly seen from the words of Allah:

***"And Sulayman was not an unbeliever, but the satans disbelieved, they taught men sorcery"* (*2: 102*).**

***"And certainly they knew that he who bought it should have no share* (*of good*) *in the hereafter"* (*2: 102*).**

Sulayman's position was too distinguished, his rank too high, and his name too sacred to be associated with disbelief and sorcery. He was the prophet whose outstanding position has been eulogized in several places in the chapters of Meccan period, long before this Chapter of the Cow was revealed. See, for example, the chapters of the Cattle (6th), the Prophets (21st), the Ant (27th) and Sad (38th).

You shall find therein that Sulayman ('a) was an excellent servant of Allah, a prophet and an apostle; Allah gave him the knowledge and the wisdom; and granted him a kingdom which was not fit for any one after him. Obviously, Sulayman could not indulge in sorcery; it was just a mythical story invented by the satans, which they dictated to their human friends; and it was the satans who disbelieved because they misguided the men by teaching them sorcery.

As for the story of the two angels at Babylon, the Qur'anic stand is as follows:

The two angels, Harut and Marut, were certainly given some sorcery as a means of test and trial for the human beings – and no objection could be raised against that; after all, Allah has taught the human nature the ways of evil too in order that He may test them with it. Likewise, sorcery was sent down to the two angels; but they did not teach it to anyone until they had said to him: Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not become a disbeliever by using it for wrongful purposes; you must use it only to nullify the effect of witchcraft, to expose the viles of the sorcerers and things like that. But the men learned from them that by which they might destroy the domestic peace and turn the love between husband and wife – the best of the things ingrained in human nature – into hatred, causing a separation between them. Also they learned what harmed them and did not benefit them.

The verse therefore may be explained as follows:

And they (i.e., the Jews coming after the reign of Sulayman – every generation passing on the legacy to the later one) followed what the satans from among the *jinn* faked and lied about the kingdom of Sulayman. *"Tatlu"* (تَتْلُوْا = translated here as recited or chanted) actually has the connotation of "lied about" or "faked about", because it is followed by the preposition "*'ala"* (عَلَىٰ = on) which has changed its semantic value. Why do we say that the satans were from the *jinn?* The following two verses read together provide the answer to this question:

And of the satans there were those who dived for him and did other work beside that, and We kept guard over them (***21:82***).

And when he fell down, the jinn came to know plainly that if they had known the unseen, they would not have tarried in abasing torment (***34:14***).

The first verse shows that the satans were reduced to subjection by Sulayman (‘a) who kept them away from mischief by assigning to them very heavy task; and the second verse refers to the same slavish group as the *jinn.*

Qur’an: ***And Sulayman was not an unbeliever*** (***2:102***).

“and” is used here in the meaning of “while”. Sulayman did not indulge in sorcery; therefore, it was not he who disbelieved; rather it was the satans who disbelieved, because they misled the people by teaching them sorcery.

Qur’an: ***And what was sent down*** (***2:102***).

The Jews followed that which was sent down – through inspiration – to the two angels at Babylon, Harut and Marut. Yet these two did not teach any one any thing of the sorcery, without warning him not to practice it. They admonished every one who wanted to learn sorcery: Surely we are only a trial for you. What we teach you is but a means of test for you. Beware! Don’t become an unbeliever by practising sorcery.

Qur’an: ***Even then men learned from these two*** (***2:102***).

That is, from the two angels, Harut and Marut. “that by which they might cause a separation”, that is, the sorcery which caused separation “between a man and his wife”.

Qur’an: ***And they cannot hurt with it any one except with Allah’s permission*** (***2:102***).

It is a parenthetic sentence, to remove a possible misunderstanding: One could assume, on hearing that the sorcerers caused separation between a husband and his wife, that the sorcerers were powerful enough to disturb the divinely ordained arrangement of the world; that they could undo the Divine Decree and change the system created by Allah. This sentence clears the air and emphasizes the fact that sorcery draws its strength from the Divine Decree; it cannot affect any thing but with the permission of Allah. Therefore, the sorcerers act within the framework of the system designed by Allah.

This sentence was placed where it is because only the preceding sentence ***that by which they might cause a separation…*** (***2:102***) mentions the effect of sorcery. Therefore, it was explained that whatever effect it had was based on the permission of Allah. The following clause ***and they learned what harmed them and did not profit them*** (***2:102***) is not concerned with this aspect of sorcery, and the above-mentioned clarifying parenthetic sentence, if placed after it, would have looked out of place.

Qur'an: ***And certainly they knew that he who bought it should have no share*** **(of good)** ***in the hereafter*** **(*2:102*).**

They knew it because their reason and intellect told them that the sorcery was the most wicked source of disorder in the society. Also, they were made aware of it by Musa ('a) when he had said:

And the magician shall not be successful wheresoever he may come from **(*20:69*).**

Qur'an: ***And vile was the price for which they sold their souls; had they but known*** **(*this*) (*2:102*).**

They knew that sorcery was bad for them and ruinous for their future abode; yet it was as though they did not know it – because they did not act according to their knowledge. If a knowledge fails to lead the knower to the straight path, then it is not knowledge; it is ignorance. Allah says:

Have you then seen him who takes his low desire for his god, and Allah has made him err in spite of **(his)** ***knowledge…*** **(*45:23*).**

Therefore, it was completely in order to wish for them knowledge and guidance, even if they had had the knowledge before.

Verse 103

Qur'an: ***And if they had believed and guarded themselves…:*** **(*2:103*).**

If they had followed the dictates of belief and piety, instead of following the satans' yarns and practising sorcery which is nothing short of disbelief, they would have got its reward from Allah. This verse indicates that the disbelief emanating from sorcery is a disbelief within the sphere of action, like that which results from withholding *zakat;* it is not a disbelief within the sphere of faith. Had the sorcery been a disbelief within the sphere of faith, Allah would have only said, "And if they believed", without adding "and guarded themselves (against evil)".

The Jews had believed, no doubt; but they did not guard themselves against evil and did not desist from the things forbidden by Allah; therefore, Allah did not attach any importance, any value, to their belief, and they were called the disbelievers.

Qur'an: ***reward from Allah would certainly have been better; had they but known*** **(this) (*2:103*).**

That is, better than the rewards and profits they seek through sorcery and amass through disbelief.

Traditions

Imam al Baqir ('a) said, *inter alia,* explaining the words of Allah,

And they followed what the satans chanted **(of sorcery)** ***against the kingdom of Sulayman…***

(***2: 102***).

"When Sulayman died, Iblis invented sorcery and wrote it in a book; then folding it, wrote on its back: 'This is the valuable treasure of knowledge which Asif ibn Barkhiya produced for the king Sulayman ibn Dawud. Whoever wanted such and such thing, should do so and so.' Then he buried it under his throne. Thereafter, he unearthed it for the Jews and recited it (before them). The disbelievers said: 'Sulayman had not gained supremacy over us but because of this.' And the believers said: 'Nay! He was a servant of Allah and His prophet.' Thus Allah, Great is His remembrance! said: ***And they followed what the satans chanted*** (**of sorcery**) ***against the kingdom of Sulayman"*** (***2: 102***). 1

The author says: This tradition says that it was the Satan, that is, Iblis, who invented sorcery and wrote and recited it. There is no discrepancy between this statement and the verse under discussion which ascribes these things to the satans from among the *jinn.* Even their deeds are ultimately attributed to the Iblis, because he is the source of all evil; it is he who instigates his friends to wickedness and evil. Such usage is common in the traditions.

It appears from this tradition that the verb, *"tatlu"* in this verse is derived from *"at tilawah"* (**التِّلاوَة** = to recite, to chant). It not in conflict with the interpretation given by us in the Commentary that it gives the meaning of "lied about" or "faked about"; because, as we said there, this connotation emerges from the preposition, "'*ala*" which has changed its semantic value. The sentence, therefore, may be interpreted as follows: The satans chanted the sorcery, reciting it, and faking it, lying about the kingdom of Sulayman.

Etymologically, *tala, yatlu, tilawatan* (**تَلا ، يَتلوا ، تِلاوَةً**) returns to *waliya, yali, wilayatan* (وَلِي ، يَلِي ، ولايَةً) which has the semantic value of being near to, governing and following; one owns a thing gradually, one part following the other – reciting is called *at–tilawah* simply because in recitation one word follows the other.

A fuller discourse of this subject will be given under the verse:

Verily, your guardian is only Allah and His Apostle and those who believe, those who establish prayer and pay zakat while they bow down (***5:58***).

ar–Ridha'('a) said, *inter alia,* in his discussion with al–Ma'mun: "And as for Harut and Marut, they were two angels; they taught sorcery to the people in order that they could protect themselves from the enchantments of the sorcerers, and could nullify their devices. And they did not teach any one any (en–chantment) until they had said to him:

'Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not be a disbeliever.' (***2: 102***)

But a group became disbelievers by practising what they were warned against; and they caused a separation between a man and his wife with their practice (of sorcery). Allah has said: *and they cannot hurt with it any one except with Allah's permission."* 2

On Some Spurious Traditions

Ibn Jarir has narrated from Ibn ‘‘Abbas that he said: “When–ever Sulayman wanted to enter the toilet or to attend to some of his affairs, he gave his ring to al–Jaradah, his wife. When Allah decided to test Sulayman in the way He tested him, one day Sulayman gave his ring (as usual) to al–Jaradah. Then Satan came to her in the likeness of Sulayman and said: ‘Give me my ring.’ So he took it and put it on. As soon as he did so, the satans (from the *jinn* and the human beings) came under his control. Then came Sulayman and said to her: ‘Give me my ring.’ She said: ‘You are a liar; you are not Sulayman.’ So Sulayman knew that it was a trial to test him.

The satans got a free hand, and wrote, in those very days, some books containing enchantments and disbelief, and buried them under the chair of Sulayman. Thereafter they unearthed them and recited them before the people. And they said: ‘It was because of these books that Sulayman dominated over the people.’ Thus the people avoided Sulayman and accused him of disbelief. (It continued) until Allah sent Muhammad (S) and revealed to him:

and Sulayman was not an unbeliever, but the satans disbelieved.”[3](***2: 102***)

The author says: This story is found in other traditions too. It is a long story forming a part of a multitude purporting to show the supposed sins and mistakes of the prophets.

Said ibn Jarir and al–Khatib (in his *at–Tarikh*) have quoted Nafi’ as saying: “I went on a journey with Ibn ‘Umar. When the night was coming to its end, he said: ‘O Nafi’! Look at the red star,[4] has it risen?’ Twice or thrice I said: ‘No.’ Then I said: ‘It has risen.’ He said: ‘No welcome to it!’ I said: ‘Praise the Lord! (It is but) a star, subjugated, obedient (and) submissive!’ He said: ‘I have not told you except that which I heard the Apostle of Allah (S) saying. He said: “The angels (once) said: ‘O Lord! How doest Thou bear with the mistakes and sins of the children of Adam?’ (Allah) said: ‘I have put them to trial and given them some dispensation.’ They said: ‘If we were in their place, we would not have disobeyed Thee.’

He said: ‘Then select (for trial) two angels from among yourselves.’ They spared no effort in the selection and (finally) selected Harut and Marut. They came down (to the earth); and Allah created in them the lust.” (At this juncture, Nafi’ said: ‘And what is lust?’ He said: ‘Sexual urge.’) “Then there came a woman, az–Zuhrah (i.e., Venus) by name, and both felt attracted towards her, each concealing his feeling from his companion. Then one of them asked the other: ‘Do you feel in your heart what I do in mine?’ The other said: ‘Yes!’ Thereupon, they asked her for themselves. She said: ‘I will not give you power (over myself) until you teach me the name by which you ascend to, and descend from, the heaven.’ They refused to do so. Then they asked her again; and again she refused. At last they did (teach her the name). When she flew (to the heaven), Allah effaced her into a star and cut her wings. Then the (two angels) sought pardon from Allah; and He gave them an option, saying: ‘If it is your wish, I shall let you return to the position you held before, and then you shall be punished on the Day of Resurrection.

Or, if you wish, I shall chastise you in this world, and when the Day of Resurrection comes you shall be reinstated to your previously held position.' So one of them said to the other: 'The punishment of this world will come to an end and will be short-lived.' Therefore, they opted for this world's chastisement against the punishment of the next world. And Allah revealed to them to go to Babylon. They went there and the earth swallowed them up; they are hanging upside-down between the heaven and the earth, undergoing punishment up to the Day of Resurrection." '"[5]

The author says: Something like this has been narrated in some Shi'ah books too from al-Baqir ('a). as-Suyuti, the Sunni traditionalist, has narrated more than twenty traditions of the same theme about Harut, Marut and the Venus; some of those traditions have been confirmed as having "correct" chains of narrators; and the chains end on various companions, like Ibn 'Abbas, Ibn Mas'ud, 'Ali, Abud-Darda', 'Umar, 'A'ishah and Ibn 'Umar.

These are fictitious stories, which collectively ascribe to the angels of Allah the worst type of polytheism and the most heinous sins, that is, idol-worship, murder, fornication and liquor-drinking. Could the angels indulge in such sins, when they are known to be the honoured servants of Allah who are purified from all sins and mistakes? And they accuse the planet Venus to be a woman of loose character, who was transformed into a luminary body - have you ever heard of such a punishment!! - while it is known to be a heavenly body, free from any defect in its creation or any flaw in its system; a planet by which Allah swears in the Qur'an:

***But nay! I swear by the stars* (*81:15*).**

***That run their course* (and) *hide themselves...* (*81:16*).**

Moreover, the astronomy has today unveiled its reality, and found out in detail the elements it is made of, as well as their quantity and combination - in short, all matters related to it.

This story, like that given earlier (about Sulayman and his ring), is in complete agreement with the legends popular among the Jews. They remind one of the Greek mythology related to the stars and the planets.

A discerning reader will agree that these traditions, like those slandering and defaming the prophets and apostles, are but a few samples of the intrigues and machinations of the Jews.

Their prevalence in the Muslims' books of traditions is a living proof of the hold they held on the Muslims' minds in the early days of Islam. The Jews toyed with the Muslim traditions in any way they liked; and the Muslim traditionalists were their willing partners in these interpolations.

But Allah has kept His Book under His Own protection. The enemies of truth cannot play with it. Whenever one of their satans tries to steal a hearing he is chased away by a visible flame. Allah has said:

Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most certainly be its guardian (***15:9***)***;***

and most surely it is a Mighty Book: (***41:41***)

Falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it; a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One (***41:42***)***;***

And We reveal of the Qur'an that which is a healing and mercy to the believers, and it adds only to the perdition of the unjust (***17:82***)***.***

The promise given in these verses is unconditional. Every interpolation, every alteration is repulsed by the Qur'an. The Book of Allah unmasks the true face of the interpolators, adding to their perdition. Also, the Apostle of Allah (S) has said: "Whatever is in conformity with the Book of Allah, take it; and whatever is against it, leave it." The *ummah* has been given this frame of reference; it is this yardstick with which all the traditions attributed to the Prophet and his *Ahl Al-Bayt* are to be measured. The Qur'an removes every falsehood and exposes every deception. Allah says:

Nay! We cast the truth against falsehood, so that it breaks its head, and lo! it vanishes (***21:18***)***.***

And Allah desired to manifest the truth of what was true by His words... (***8:7***)***.***

That He may manifest the truth of what was true and show the falsehood of what was false, even though the guilty ones disliked (***8:8***)**.**

Allah confirms the truth and erases the falsehood by showing the true faces of both.

Some people, and especially those with materialistic out-look, who are overawed by the western civilization, have used the above-mentioned historical fact as a pretext to throw away all the traditions attributed to the Prophet. They looked at some traditionalists and al-Haruriyyah and found that they accepted every tradition - without any scrutiny whatsoever. They reacted to it by going to the other extreme and rejecting every tradition - without any scrutiny whatsoever.

It needs not much intelligence to realize that the total acceptance of the traditions is as bad as its total rejection.

Its unconditional acceptance nullifies the standard laid down for the purpose of differentiating between the truth and the falsehood; and encourages one to ascribe lies to the Prophet. Likewise, its indiscriminate rejection casts aside the said standard and leads one to the rejection of the Book of Allah itself - the Mighty Book that falsehood does not come to it from before it nor from behind it. Allah has said in this Book:

And whatever the Apostle gives you, take it; and from whatever he forbids you, keep back (***59:7***)***.***

And We did not send any apostle but that he should be obeyed by Allah's permission (***4:64***)***.***

If the sayings of the Prophet had no authority, or if his words – reported to his contemporaries who were absent from his gathering or to the generations coming after his time – had no validity then nothing of the religion could survive at all.

Man by his instinct relies and accepts the reports brought by others – he cannot survive without it. As for the alterations and interpolations, it is not a disease peculiar to the traditions of the Prophet. The society depends on the reported news and information; and the motives to tell lies, to make changes and alterations to suit one's purpose, to twist the words and to quote them out of context, are much stronger in the case of the worldly affairs. So, what do we do? Do we reject all reports and information? No! We scrutinize every report with the help of some well–established and relevant standard; what passes the test, is accepted as truth; and that which fails is thrown aside as falsehood; and if no clear result emerges from the test, if we are unable to decide whether the report was true or not, we reserve our judgment – as our nature tells us to do in such cases.

The above procedure is applied regarding the subjects we have some expertise about. As for a subject outside our specialty, the common practice is to refer it to the specialists in that field and accept their judgment.

This is, in short, the dictate of human nature for the smooth running of the society. The self–same system is adhered to in religion for distinguishing truth from falsehood. The litmus–paper of this test is the Book of Allah – if a tradition conforms to it, its truth is confirmed; if it clearly goes against it, its false–hood is known; and if no definite stand may be taken because of some ambiguities, then the judgment is reserved. This system has been explained in the *mutawatir* traditions of the Prophet and the Imams (of the *Ahl Al–Bayt* (*'a*)). It applies to all the traditions that are not concerned with jurisprudence; as for those dealing with the law and jurisprudence, they are governed by the Principles of Jurisprudence.

A Philosophical Discourse On Sorcery And Witchcraft

It is a common knowledge that many unusual events do take place which are outside the frame of the established natural system. It is difficult to find someone who has not seen, or heard about, some abnormal or seemingly supernatural events. But we find after scrutiny that most of them are not enigmatic and mysterious at all; rather they arise from normal and natural causes. Often, they result from practice and training, for example, eating poison, lifting heavy load, walking or dancing on tight–rope etc. Some are based on natural causes that are not known to the general public, for example, a man walks into flaming fire without coming to any harm, (he applies some chemicals like talc to his body); or sends a sheet of blank paper and the addressee understands the message it contains. (He writes with an invisible ink which becomes visible if heated by fire or treated with some chemicals.) A third set depends on the sleight of hand like jugglery. All these seemingly abnormal feats actually emanate from the normal causes, although the causes remain hidden from a common man's eyes; they may even be beyond his ability.

Yet there are other strange happenings that cannot be attributed to any normal physical cause. For example, giving information of the unseen, and particularly foretelling the future events; the charms for love and hate, the spells harmfully or beneficially affecting man's virility; hypnotism; mesmerism; spiritualism; telekinesis and so on. It is known that such events do take place from time to time; we have seen some demonstrations ourselves; and similar reports were brought to us by reliable sources. Today there are many people in India, Iran and the western countries, who demonstrate such extraordinary feats – and their authenticity is beyond doubt.

It appears from close investigation of their methods and regimen that these feats spring from the will-power of the doer, and from his unshakable confidence in effectiveness of his work. The will-power emanates from the confidence, which in its turn arises from the knowledge. Sometimes the will acts independently and sometimes it needs some help: for example, writing a certain charm with a certain ink in a certain place at a certain time (for the amulets of love or hate); or fixing a mirror before a certain child (in the seances of spiritualism); or chanting a certain incantation a certain number of times, and so on and so forth. When the conditions are fulfilled, the will is strengthened to bring the desired effect into being. When the knowledge becomes one with the knower, it influences his senses to such an extent that he sees the end product, that is, the desired effect, with his eyes.

You may verify this statement yourself. Just tell yourself that a certain person is present before you and that you are looking at him; then put your imagination to work to bring his form before your eyes; this should be raised to such a high level of certainty that you become oblivious of all contrary thoughts and ideas. And then you will actually see him standing before you – as you had imagined. Many is a doctor who, acting on this principle, restored to health his incurable patients – simply by creating in them the confidence that they would soon get their health back.

Taking this principle a step further, if someone's will-power is extraordinarily strong, it might create an impression on other's psyche too – as it had created on his own self in the foregoing example. That impression might, or might not, depend on fulfilment of some conditions, as indicated earlier.

From the above discourse, we may deduce the following three principles:

First: The appearance of such extraordinary events depends on the firm "knowledge" and strong conviction of the doer. But it is irrelevant whether that "knowledge" is true to the fact or not. That explains why the conjurations of the priests of the sun-god and the moon-goddess etc. seemed to work – although they believed that the heavenly bodies had souls, which they claimed to bring under their control by their magic. Probably the same applies to the angels and satans whose names are "discovered" and invoked by many practitioners of the magic art. The same is true for spiritualism and its séance and spirit communication – and the spiritualists' belief that the spirits attend their sittings. Utmost that may be claimed regarding those sessions, is that the spirit appears in their imagination or, let us say, before their senses – and this "perception" emanates from their firm belief in their art. But it can never be said that the spirit actually presents itself at those sittings – otherwise all the participants in the

sitting should have perceived its presence, because every one of them has the same senses as the medium has.

By accepting this principle, we may solve many problems related to the séance and spirit communication. For example:

1 – Sometimes the spirit of a living man is called to present itself at a séance, and supposedly it comes there. But at that very moment, that man is busy attending to his affairs, and he never feels his spirit leaving him even for an instant. The question is: As a man has only one spirit, how was it possible that his spirit presented itself to that séance without his being aware of it?

2 – The spirit is an immaterial essence which has no relation whatsoever with space and time. How can it present itself at a certain place at a certain time?

3 – Why is it that often a single spirit appears before different mediums in different forms?

4 – Why is it that sometimes when the spirits are called to a séance, they tell lies and give wrong answers? And why do the various spirits sometimes contradict each other?

All these problems will be solved if the principle is accepted that it is not any spirit that presents itself to the séance; it is only the firm belief and conviction of the spiritualist and his medium that is at work, making the medium see, hear and feel the spirit. It is all a play of his imagination and will; and nothing more.

Second: Some of the people, holding the strong and effective will-power, rely on their own power and their own being, in bringing about the desired effect, the intended super-natural events. Such events are bound to be limited in strength, confined in their scope – in their own imagination as well as in reality.

On the other side, there are some persons, like the prophets and the friends of Allah who, in spite of their most effective will-power, totally rely on their Lord. They truly worship Him and have full trust in Him. They do not wish any thing but from their Lord, and by His permission. Theirs is a pure and clear will, untainted by any personal feeling of their own. It does not depend except on Allah. This is a Divine Will – not limited in any way, nor restricted in any manner.

The super-natural events that are brought into being by the first group may be of many kinds: If they are based on enquiry of, or help from, *a jinn* or a spirit etc., then it is called *"al-kihanah"* (اَلكِهَانَةُ = divination, sooth-saying, fortune-telling); and if it comes about by means of a charm, amulet, talisman or other such instruments or potions, then it is called magic.

The super-natural events shown by the prophets and friends of Allah are also of many kinds: If it is produced as a challenge, in order to prove the truth of the claim of prophethood, then it is called miracle; and if it is not offered as a challenge, then it is named *"al-karamah* (اَلكَرَامَةُ) which literally means nobility, mark of honour; and in Islamic terminology is used for a miraculous event shown without a

challenge; and if it happens as a result of the prayer to Allah, then it is called, "answer to the prayer."

Third: As the whole thing depends on the will-power of the doer, its strength varies according to the strength (or weakness) of the will. That is why some of them may nullify the others, as, for example, the miracle annihilates the sorcery.

Also, a weak agent fails to impose his will on a stronger psyche, as is often seen at the sessions of mesmerism, hypnotism and seances.

We shall further explain this subject somewhere else.

An Academic Description Of Various Kinds Of Magic

There are many fields of study dealing with various awe-striking feats and extraordinary deeds; and it is very difficult to classify them so as not to leave anything out. However, we give here a list of the more commonly used branches of this art:

a) ***as-Simiya'***: It deals with the ways of combining the will-power with particular physical and material forces for manipulating the natural order and, thus, producing extraordinary effects. Under this head comes the manipulation of thought, also known as the eye-enchantment.

It is the most deserving candidate for the title of magic.

b) ***al-Limiya'***: It teaches how one may establish a connection between his psyche and the higher and stronger spirits, in order that one may bring them under one's control, for example, the spirits of the stars, or the *jinn,* etc. It is also called the knowledge of subjugation of the spirits.

c) ***al-Himiya'***: It explains how the powers of the higher spiritual world may be combined with the base elements of this world to produce awe-inspiring effects. It is also called talisman. The stars and their configuration have some relation to the material happenings of this world, in the same way as the elements and compounds and their physical qualities affect those phenomena. Supposedly if the heavenly forms, pertaining to a certain event, for example, A's life or B's death, could be combined with the relevant material forms, the desired effect would take place without fail.

d) ***ar-Rimiya'***: It trains one how to control and manipulate the qualities of various things, to produce seemingly super-natural effects. It is also called *"ash-Sha'badhah"* (اَلشَّعْبَذَة = sleight of hand, jugglery, magic).

These four fields of knowledge, together with the fifth, called *"al-Kimiya'"* (اَلكِيمياء = alchemy, the forerunner of chemistry, primarily the attempt to transmute base metals into gold or silver) formed what the ancients called the five secrets, mysterious branches of knowledge.

Ash-Shaykh al-Baha'i has said: "The best book written on these subjects was the one I saw in Harat,

'Kulah-e sar' (the head's cap) by name. Its name was an acronym, made of the first letters of the five subjects, that is, *al-Kimiya', al Limiya', al-Himiya', as-Simiya'* and *ar-Rimiya'".*

The standard books of these subjects are the epitome of the books of Minds, *Rasa'il,* al-Khusraw Shahi, *adh-Dhakhirah,* al-Iskandariyyah, *as-Sirr al-maktum* (by ar-Razi), *at-Taskhirat* (by as-Sakkaki) and *A'mal al-kawakib as-Sab'ah* (by al-Hakim Tamtam al-Hindi).

Supplementary to the above are the following subjects:

e) The knowledge of numbers (numerology): It shows the relation of numbers and letters with the desired effect. The relevant letters or numbers are filled in a magic square or triangle etc. in a particular sequence.

f) ***al-Khafiyah:*** (اَلخَافِيَة = the hidden knowledge): It breaks down the name of the desired effect or other relevant names, and finds out the names of the angels or the satans managing the said effect; and then composes the invocations made of those names.

The books written by ash-Shaykh Abul-'Abbas al-Buni and as-Sayyid Husayn al-Akhlati are the standard works of the above two subjects.

Then there are various modern arts covering this field, which have gained wide currency nowadays; for example, mesmerism, hypnotism and spirit communication. As described earlier, these are based on the impression created on the imagination by the will-power. There are numerous well-known books and magazines dealing with these subjects.

We have given all this detail here, so that it may be ascertained which of them could be classified as magic or sorcery.

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1. at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi, al-Qummi
2. 'Uyun al-akhbar
3. ad-Durr al-Manthur
4. The red star refers to the Mars, but as will be seen later, Ibn 'Umar is supposed to talk about the Venus. Obviously, the man who forged this "tradition" did not know the difference between the Mars and the Venus. (tr.)
5. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 104 - 105

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لَا تَقُولُواْ رَٰعِنَا وَقُولُواْ ٱنظُرۡنَا وَٱسۡمَعُواْ وَلِلۡكَـٰفِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

O you who believe! do not say, "Have regard for us", and say, "Wait for us"; and listen; and for the unbelievers there is a painful chastisement (***2:104***).

مَّا يَوَدُّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِنۡ أَهۡلِ ٱلۡكِتَـٰبِ وَلَا ٱلۡمُشۡرِكِينَ أَن يُنَزَّلَ عَلَيۡكُم مِّنۡ خَيۡرٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمۡ وَٱللَّهُ يَخۡتَصُّ بِرَحۡمَتِهِۦ مَن يَشَآءُ وَٱللَّهُ ذُو ٱلۡفَضۡلِ ٱلۡعَظِيمِ

Those who disbelieve from among the People of the Book do not like, nor do the polytheists, that any good should be sent down to you from your Lord; and Allah chooses especially whom He pleases for His mercy, and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace (***2:105***).

Commentary

Verse 104

Qur'an: ***O you who believe!*** (***2:104***).

It is the first place in the Qur'an where the believers have been addressed in this way, "O you who believe!" This mode of address has been used in some eighty-five places in the Qur'an.[1]

Addressing the believers as "O you who believe!", or describing them as "those who believe", is a special distinction accorded to this *ummah.* Otherwise, the previous nations are variously described as "the people" (e.g., ***"the People of Nuh,*** and, ***"the People of Hud"; 'He said: 'O my people! have you considered if I have a clear proof from my Lord…'"*** [**11: 88**]); and ***"the dwellers"*** (*e.g.,* ***"the dwellers of Madyan", "the dwellers of the Rass"***); and ***"the children"*** (*e.g.,* ***"the Children of Israel", "O Children of Israel!"***). The epithet, "those who believe", is, therefore, a mark of honour awarded to the believers of this *ummah.*

It appears from deep meditation of the Qur'an that the import of the words, "those who believe", is somewhat different from that of the words, "the believers". (For an example of the latter, see the verse: ***and turn to Allah all of you, O believers!*** [**24:31**]).

Allah says in the Qur'an:

Those who bear the throne and those around it celebrate the praise of their Lord and believe in

Him and ask forgiveness for those who believe: "Our Lord! Thou embracest all things in mercy and knowledge, therefore grant forgiveness to those who turn **(to Thee)** ***and follow Thy way, and save them from the punishment of the hell*** **(*40:7*)*.***

Our Lord! and make them enter the gardens of perpetuity which Thou hast promised to them and those who do good of their fathers and their wives and their offsprings, surely Thou are the Mighty, the Wise" **(*40:8*)**.

It shows that the angels and the bearers of the throne ask forgiveness for "those who believe"; then the same group has been referred to as "those who turn (to Thee) and follow Thy way". ("turn" actually means, return.) The prayer continues to "make them (i.e., those who believe) enter the garden" and then joins to them the doers of good from among "their fathers and their wives and their offspring." If the epithet, "those who believe", were to include all those who believed in the Apostle of Allah (S) irrespective of the quality of their belief, then it would have covered their fathers, wives and children as well (who do good); and there would have been no need to mention them separately; all would have equally benefited from the prayer for those who believe.

Also, have a look at the verse:

And **(as for)** ***those who believe and their offspring follow them in faith, We will unite with them their offspring and We will not diminish to them aught of their work; every man is responsible for what he has wrought*** **(*52:21*)*.***

If the offspring who followed them in faith, were included in the epithet, "those who believe", there would be no sense in saying that the offspring would be united with them. Even if we were to say that the verse refers to the generation after generation of the believers, that every succeeding generation will be united to the preceding one (provided both believed in the Apostle of Allah (S)), the meaning would not seem very proper in the context. If that were the import of the verse, then why this "uniting"? Also, what purpose would be served by the sentence, "and We will not diminish to them aught of their work"? Such an interpretation may prove correct for one generation only, that is, the last one before the Day of Resurrection – that they would be united with the preceding generation. But nobody has suggested this meaning as it goes clearly against the context. What such an interpretation would boil down to is as follows:

All the believers are united, one of them being from another; all of them are of one rank; none has any excellence over the others; nor has an earlier believer any superiority over the later ones; their main qualification is the true belief, and all of them are equal in it. Such a meaning would not fit the wording of the verse which clearly shows that the preceding believers have a sort of superiority over their offspring, who would be raised to the rank of their progenitor as a token of honour to the latter.

The phrase, "and their offspring follow them in faith", proves that the preceding word, "those who believe" refers to a particular group of the believers – the foremost and the first of the Emigrants and the

Helpers who followed the Apostle in the hour of straitness. The epithet, those who believe, is a title of honour bestowed on that distinguished group.

Other two verses too point to this fact:

(**It is**) ***For the poor who fled…*** (***59:8***).

And those who made their abode in the city and in the faith before them… (***59:9***).

…And those who came after them say: "Our Lord! forgive us and those of our brethren who had precedence of us in faith, and do not create any spite in our hearts towards those who believe; our Lord! surely Thou art Kind, Merciful" (***59:10***).

This verse uses two phrases, "who had precedence of us in faith", and "those who believe". If the import of both were the same, a pronoun would have looked better in place of the second phrase. By not using a pronoun, Allah has made it clear that each phrase has its own significance.

Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah; and those with him are severe against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves, you will see them bowing down, prostrating themselves, seeking grace from Allah and pleasure; …Allah has promised those among them who believe and do good, forgiveness and a great reward (***48:29***).

All this shows that the phrase, "those who believe", is a title of honour, reserved for the first and foremost of the believers. Most probably, the opposite phrase, "those who disbelieve", has the contrasting significance, and refers to the polytheists of Mecca and others who were the first and foremost of those who disbelieved in the Apostle of Allah (S). For example,

Surely those who disbelieve alike is to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe (***2:6***).

Objection: This interpretation means that when the Qur'an says, "O you who believe!", it addresses a special group that was present in the Prophet's time, to the exclusion of all other believers. But all the Muslims agree that such verses are general in their import and that what is said therein applies to all the believers, whether they were present in the Prophet's days or not; and that this mode of address includes all the believers – in reality, not metaphorically.

Reply: Yes! It is a title of honour, reserved for a selected few. But it does not mean that what is said in those verses is in any way restricted to those few. Whatever order or prohibition is given in such verses is general and applies to all the believers. The matter of legislation – whether a given order is general or exclusive – is quite different from that of a speech – whether it is addressed to all the believers or to a few of them. Also, it makes no difference whether a verse ordaining a law is addressed to the believers (***O you who believe!***) or to the Prophet in person (***O Prophet!; O Apostle!***), or is revealed without any address at all. The ordained law in all these cases is applicable to all the Muslims, and covers all the

believers; although the verse may be addressed to the Prophet or to those who believe as a mark of respect to him or them.

Nevertheless, one should not indiscriminately interpret the phrase, "O you who believe!" and "those who believe", as referring to the first and foremost believers of the Prophet's time; rather one should look at the context, before deciding the true connotation of these phrases in a given verse. For example, look at the verse:

Surely **(as for)** ***those who believe then disbelieve, again believe and disbelieve, then increase in disbelief, Allah will not forgive them nor guide them in the*** **(right)** ***path*** **(*4:137*).**

and the verse which quotes Nuh ('a) as saying:

And I am not going to drive away those who believe; surely they shall meet their Lord **(*11:29*).**

Obviously, the phrase, those who believe, used in the above verses cannot refer to the above-mentioned group.

Qur'an: ***"Do not say, "Have regard for us", and say, "Wait for us"; and listen*** **(*2:104*).**

That is, use the phrase, Wait for us, instead of saying, Have regard for us. And if you failed to comply with this command, it would be tantamount to disbelief, and for the disbelievers there is a painful chastisement. It is a very strong admonition against saying, *"ra'ina"* (**راعِنا** = Have regard for us). This phrase has also been mentioned in another verse, which gives an indication of its connotation:

Of those who are Jews **(there are those who)** ***alter words from their places and say: "We have heard and we disobey"; and: "Hear, may you not be made to hear!" and "ra'ina"*****, *distorting*** **(the word)** ***with their tongues and taunting about religion*** **(*4:46*).**

Obviously, the Jews used the phrase, *"Ra'ina"* for something similar to the phrase, "Hear, may you not be made to hear!" And that is why such a mode of addressing the Prophet was prohibited. This explanation agrees with what the tradition says: When the Prophet talked with the Muslims, they used to tell him: *"Ra'ina* (have *regard for us*) O Apostle of Allah!" – that is, wait for us, so that we may properly understand what you are saying.[2] But this word carried a connotation of abuse in the Jews' language. The Jews seized upon this opportunity, addressing the Prophet with this phrase, pretending to show respect to him while their intention was nothing short of abuse. And in their usage it meant, "Hear, may you not be made to hear". Thereupon, Allah revealed:

Of those who are Jews **(there are those who)** ***alter words from their places and say: "We have heard and we disobey"; and: "Hear, may you not be made to hear!" and: "ra'ina", distorting*** **(the word)** ***with their tongues and taunting about religion; and if they had said*** **(instead):** ***"We have heard and we obey", and "hearken", and "onzurna"*** **(wait for us),** ***it would have been better for them and more upright*** **(*4:46*).**

The believers too were told not to use this phrase and say instead, *"onzurna";* the Qur'an guided them: "do not say, 'Have regard for us', and say, 'Wait for us'".

Qur'an: ***And for the unbelievers there is a painful chastisement*** **(*2:104*).**

That is, for those who disobey this rule. It is one of the occasions when disobedience of a law of religion has been termed as disbelief.

Verse 105

Qur'an: ***Those who disbelieve from among the People of the Book…*** **(*2:105*).**

Obviously, the phrase, "the People of the Book", refers here exclusively to the Jews, because the preceding verses too dealt with them. If so, then the phrase would serve as a pointer to the cause why they did not like that any good should be sent down to the believers from their Lord. The Jews were given a Book before and they were not happy when the Qur'an was sent down to the Muslims, as it deprived them of their distinction as being the People of the Book. They showed avarice about a thing they did not own; they wanted to stand against Allah when He bestowed His mercy and grace on His servants; "and Allah chooses especially whom He pleases for His mercy; and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace".

On the other hand, the phrase, as used in this verse, may include all the People of the Book – the Jews and the Christians both. If so, then the verse would serve to widen the scope of the admonition; it would be a generalization after exclusiveness. Both groups shared many characteristics – and especially their enmity to Islam. Some verses coming afterwards strengthen this interpretation. For example:

And they say: "None shall enter the garden except he who is a Jew or a Christian" **(*2:111*).**

And the Jews say, "The Christians do not follow anything **(good)", *and the Christians say," The Jews do not follow any-thing*** **(good)"… (*2:113*).**

Traditions

Abu Nu'aym has narrated in *Hilyat al-awliya'* from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "The Apostle of Allah (S) said: 'Allah has not revealed any verse (beginning) with, "O you who believe!" but that 'Ali is its head and leader.'"[3]

The author says: This tradition supports what we shall be quoting in various places that a certain verse was revealed about 'Ali ('a) or *Ahl Al-Bayt;* for example:

You are the best of the nations raised for **(the benefit of)** ***men*** **(*3:110*).**

…That you may be witnesses over the people… **(*2:143*).**

…And be with the true ones (9:119).

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1. Eighty-eight, to be exact. Vide al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras, (by Muhammad Fu'ad 'Abdul al-Baqi). (tr.).
2. It is more or less equivalent to the English idiom "I beg your pardon". But with a slight change of accent it may come to mean, stupid or cattle tenderer. (tr.).
3. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 106 - 107

مَا نَنسَخۡ مِنۡ ءَايَةٍ أَوۡ ننسِهَا نَأۡتِ بِخَيۡرٍ مِّنۡهَآ أَوۡ مِثۡلِهَآ أَلَمۡ تَعۡلَمۡ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Whatever signs We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it. Do you not know that Allah has power over all things? (2:106).

أَلَمۡ تَعۡلَمۡ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَهُۥ مُلۡكُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ

Do you not know that Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that besides Allah you have no guardian or helper? (2:107).

Commentary

The verses deal with the subject of abrogation. The word, abrogation, when used as a term of Islamic *fiqh,* means as follows: To show that the time of an order has come to its end; that it is no more valid, is no longer in force. This definition is based on the above verse; and is one of the manifestations of its connotations.

Verse 106

Qur'an: ***Whatever signs We abrogate… (2:106).***

"an-Naskh" (النَّسْخ) is removal, to remove, to annul. The Arabs say: *Nasakhati 'sh-shamsu 'z-zilla* (نَسَخَتِ الشَّمْس الظِّلَّ = the sun removed the shadow). Allah says:

And We did not send before you any apostle or prophet, but when he desired, the Satan made a suggestion respecting his desire; but Allah annuls that which the Satan casts, then does Allah establish His signs; and Allah is Knowing, Wise (***22:52***).

Also, they say: *Nasakht al-kitab* (نَسَخْت الكِتابَ = I copied the book); it is as though the writing was removed and its place changed. That is why another verse uses the word *"at-tabdil"* (التَّبْديل = to change) in place of abrogation:

And when We change (**one**) ***sign for*** (**another**) ***sign, and Allah knows best what He reveals, they say: "You are a forger". Nay, most of them do not know*** (***16:101***).

Abrogation, however, does not entail obliteration of a verse, turning it into a non-being. Its only effect is the cancellation of the order which the verse had promulgated. It should be noted that the Qur'anic verse has been described as a "sign", that is, a mark that points to another thing - a verse is a sign pointing to a Divine Command.

The second verse,

"Do you not know that Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth..." (***2:107***).

gives the reason as to why Allah abrogates some Qur'anic verses. All these factors indicate that abrogation removes a verse as far as its quality as a sign, as a symbol, is concerned. When abrogated, the verse remains in existence as before, but loses its quality as a sign - no longer does it point to an order, as the order is now cancelled. The next phrase, "or cause to be forgotten", clearly supports the foregoing explanation. *"al-Insa'"* (أَلإِنْسَاء) is to make one forget, to erase out of memory, to eradicate from knowledge. By putting the two phrases side by side, the Qur'an makes it clear that abrogation entails erasure of a verse's effect, while *"al-insa'"* causes eradication of the verse itself from the memory.

Symbolism - the quality of being a sign of something - varies with various signs having various aspects and directions. The Qur'anic verses are the signs of Allah because the *jinn* and the men are jointly and severally unable to bring its like; the rules ordained by Allah are His signs inasmuch as they create piety in man and bring him nearer to his Lord; every created thing is His sign, because it, by its existence, proves the existence of its Creator, and by the qualities of its being, leads to His attributes and names; the prophets and the friends of Allah are His signs inasmuch as they, with their words and deeds, call the humanity to Allah, and so on and so forth. Consequently, a sign may be great or small, strong or weak; that is why Allah says:

Certainly, he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord (***53:18***).

Also, a sign may contain only one aspect of symbolism, and another may comprise of various such aspects. The former, when abrogated, is obliterated in its entirety, is completely destroyed. But in the case of the latter, it is possible to abrogate only one aspect of its symbolism, leaving the other ones

intact; for example, a Qur'anic verse could be abrogated as far as its law was concerned, and yet continue as a Divine Sign because of its eloquence and miraculous qualities.

This generalized meaning of abrogation has been inferred from the reasoning given in the second verse: "Do you not know that Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth..." There are only two objections possible against the factuality of abrogation; or, as the reports say, these were the two arguments advanced by the Jews against it.

First: A sign given by Allah contains an actual benefit which cannot be obtained from any other thing. If that sign is abrogated, its inherent benefit would be lost; nothing could take its place to preserve that benefit. Allah is not like His creatures, nor is His knowledge like theirs. His knowledge does not change with the changes in external factors. It is not that one day He knew one thing and issued an order according to that knowledge; then next day the knowledge changed and He became aware of another factor which He did not know before, and therefore He had to cancel the previous order, replacing it with a fresh one. Such inconsistency is not worthy of Divine Sublimity. Of course, it is all right for us mortals, because we cannot comprehend all the aspects of an affair; and as a result of this incomplete knowledge, our decisions are frequently changed and amended. But we should not compare Divine Knowledge without limited and defective perception.

Here it is necessary to point out that such an objection arises from a notion that the power of Allah is neither comprehensive and all-encompassing nor unrestricted and unconditional.

Second: Accepted that the Divine Power is all-encompassing and limitless. But once a thing is created it goes beyond the sphere of that power and cannot be changed. Even in our case, we have power to do or not to do a certain work - so long as we have not done it; but once we have done it, it becomes an essential being and goes beyond the limits of our power.

This argument is based on the rejection of the all-encompassing ownership of Allah; it presupposes that once Allah has managed a certain affair in a certain way, He cannot change that arrangement in another way. This Jewish belief is portrayed in the verse:

And the Jews say: "The hand of Allah is tied up" (***5:64***).

Allah replies to the first objection with the question: "Do you not know that Allah has power over all things?" He certainly has power over all things. Therefore, He may replace a sign with an equally good or even a better sign. The second objection is dealt with by the next question: "Do you not know that Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that besides Allah you have no guardian or helper?" Allah is the Owner of the heavens and the earth; He can do whatever He likes with His property. No one besides Him owns anything; otherwise, that owner could interfere in the management of Allah or put restriction on His authority and control.

None else owns anything - neither in his own rights nor even when Allah gives to him a partial

ownership. When we transfer the ownership of a property to another person, the transferee gets all the rights which we had in that property, and our rights are rendered null and void. But when Allah gives a property into someone's possession, Allah's ownership of the property is not disturbed in any way – it does not come to an end, is not even diminished. He continues to be the real Owner and Controller of the property which He has given to others. His is the unrestricted ownership and unconditional management.

If we look at what He has put under our ownership – without our having any independent authority over it – then He is our Guardian. And if we look at the apparent independence enjoyed by us, with His grace – although it is a poverty in the shape of plenty, a dependence disguised as independence – then too we cannot manage our affairs without His help; and He is our Helper.

The above explanation is based on the sequence and style of the two verses. First, there is the exclusivity of the declaration: "Allah's is the kingdom..." Then there is the sequence: "Do you not know that Allah has power over all things? Do you not know that Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth...?" The two sentences have not been joined with any conjunctive, a sure indication that each is independent of the other, and that the first sentence deals with one objection and the second with another. The last sentence, "and that besides Allah you have no guardian or helper", gives a finishing touch to the above replies: Even if you are oblivious of Allah's all–encompassing power and ownership, and are looking at this nominal ownership of yours, you will know that it is not a permanent or independent ownership; you cannot manage it independently; you need a guardian to look after your interests – and Allah is that guardian. He can and does manage your affairs and your property as He likes.

On the other hand, if your eyes are so fixed on this possession as to make you forget your dependence; if you think that you are the independent and absolute owner of your property, even then you will have to admit that you cannot manage your own affairs, cannot obtain the results you want, without the help and assistance of a super power. And Allah is your real Helper; it is He who manages your affairs and your property for you. From whatever angle you look at this matter, Allah's power over all things and His ownership of every thing remain unchallenged and undisputed.

"And that besides Allah you have no guardian or helper" (***2:107; 9:116; 29:22; 33:17***).

Apparently it should have been 'besides Him.' Then why did the Qur'an use the noun instead of the pronoun? It was to indicate that the foregoing sentences contain the complete replies, and this sentence is not their integral part; rather it is an independent declaration to strengthen those replies.

This discourse leads us to the following conclusions:

First: Abrogation is not a thing confined to only the religious laws; it holds its place in the sphere of creation too.

Second: Abrogation cannot take place without two sides:

(i) The abrogated thing or verse,

(ii) the abrogative, that is, the thing or verse that abrogates.

Third: The abrogative contains all the benefits and the perfection that was found in the abrogated thing.

Fourth: Although the abrogative differs from the abrogated in its form, both have one thing in common – the perfection and the benefit. When a prophet dies and another is sent in his place – and both of them are the signs of Allah, one abrogating the other – it takes place in total conformity with the natural system. Life, death, sustenance and other such things often replace each other, the succeeding factors abrogating the preceding ones. It all depends on the varying needs of the society's welfare, on ever-changing level of the man's perfection.

Likewise, when a religious law is replaced by another, the abrogating one has the same power as the abrogated one had, to lead to the spiritual and temporal well-being of the individual and the society; each perfectly suitable for the time it was, or is, in force; each more beneficial in the context of its time. For example, the order to "forgive" in the beginning of the call when the Muslims had neither the manpower nor the armaments, and the command to "fight" when Islam had gained some strength, when the Muslims had gathered enough force and the disbelievers and the polytheists were frightened of them. However, seldom is an abrogated verse devoid of some phrase showing that it was a transitory order which would be abrogated in due course. For example: The verse:

But pardon and forgive **(them)** ***until Allah should bring about His command*** **(*2:109*).**

which was abrogated by the verse of fighting; and:

…Confine them until death takes them away or Allah makes some way for them **(*4:15*).**

which was abrogated by the verse of flogging. The phrases, "until Allah should bring about His command", and, "or Allah makes some way for them", give clear indication that the order given therein was temporary and transitory which would soon be abrogated.

Fifth: The relation between the abrogative and the abrogated is quite different from that which is found between a general statement and a particular, between an unconditional clause and a conditional, or between an unspecified proposition and a specified.

What removes the apparent contradiction between the abrogative and the abrogated, is the society's and the individual's good and well-being which is found in both of them. But the apparent contradiction between a general statement and a particular, between an unconditional clause and a conditional, or between an unspecified proposition and a specified, emanates from the strong (or weak) manifestation of the intended meaning. The true intention of the speaker is reflected much more strongly and clearly in

a particularized statement, a conditional clause and a specified proposition; and that strength and clarity removes the above-mentioned apparent contradiction - by explaining the general in the light of the particular, the unconditional with the help of the conditional and the unspecified in the frame of the specified. These things are the subject of the Principles of Jurisprudence. The same applies to the decisive and the ambiguous verses, as we shall explain under the verse:

...Of it there are some verses decisive, they, are the basis of the Book, and others are ambiguous... (***3:7***).

Qur'an: ***Or cause to be forgotten*** (***2:106***).

"Nunsiha" (**ننْسِهَا**) is derived from *"al-insa'"* (to cause to be forgotten; to erase from memory or knowledge), as we have described earlier. It is a general and unconditional statement. It is not restricted to the Apostle of Allah (S); nay, it does not include him at all. Allah had said about him:

We will make you recite so you shall not forget (***87:6***).

Except what Allah pleases (***87:7***).

It is a Meccan verse, while the verse of abrogation is of Medina period. Obviously the Apostle could not forget anything after the promise of Allah, "so you shall not forget".

Question: This claim is untenable because the promise has the proviso, "except what Allah pleases". It means that the Apostle (S) could forget what Allah was pleased to make him forget.

Reply: Such exceptional clauses serve only to emphasize the power of Allah; they do not necessarily mean that the thing mentioned in that clause would actually take place. Look for example at the verse:

...They shall be in the garden, abiding in it as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord pleases... (***11:108***).

It just shows that Allah does have power to change the arrangement made; but all the Muslims agree that the people of the paradise will never be taken out of it. The same is the import of the exceptional clause, "except what Allah pleases", in this verse.

Moreover, if the said clause were to prove that the Prophet (S) could actually forget the things taught by Allah, depending on the pleasure of Allah, there would be no sense in putting him under obligation by promising him, "you shall not forget". Any human being who remembers any thing, or forgets it, does so by the pleasure of Allah. The same is true about the animals who remember and forget by His pleasure and decree. And the Prophet too, before this promised grace of Allah, remembered by the pleasure of Allah, and forgot by the pleasure of Allah. What new grace was added here if the promise meant only a quality which the Prophet had already had? If that promise were to make any sense, it would have to mean that the Prophet could never forget anything, although Allah had full power to make him forget.

Some people have recited the word as *"nansa'aha"* (**نَنْسَأْهَا**), derived from *"an-nas'"* (**اَلنَّسْأ** = to delay). According to this recitation, the meaning would be as follows: Whatever signs We abrogate by nullifying it, or put it off by delaying its appearance, We bring one better than it or like it, and the Divine management in advancing something or putting it off, does not diminish its perfection or benefit.

The fact that the Divine Management always brings out a thing's perfection and benefit, is inferred from the clause, "We bring one better than it or like it". The goodness emanates from the perfection of a thing or benefit of a laid down rule.

The abrogated thing or rule was surely good; and the abrogating thing or rule too is at least as good, if not better. So, every Divine Management is the ideal of goodness, perfection and benefit.

Traditions

Innumerable traditions have been narrated by both sects, from the Prophet (S), his companions, and the Imams of his *Ahl Al-Bayt,* that there are abrogated and abrogating verses in the Qur'an.

The Commander of the faithful ('Ali (a')) said, after enumerating various abrogated and abrogating verses: "And the word of Allah:

***And I did not create the jinn and the human beings except that they should worship Me* (*51:56*).**

Was abrogated by His word:

***and they shall continue to differ,* (*11:118*)**

***except those on whom your Lord has mercy; and for this did He create them* (*11:119*).**

That is, for the mercy did He create them."[1]

The author says: In this tradition the Imam has used the word, abrogation, in a wider sense than its terminological meaning. The latter verse mentions a reality which restricts the reality described by the former. The first verse affirms the Divine Worship as the purpose of creation. While doing a work, Allah keeps a purpose in view; and He cannot be defeated in His purpose. On the other hand, he has decreed that they should choose their own path, and consequently some of them progress on the right path, while others go astray. Those who by their own choice choose the path of guidance are covered by the mercy of Allah, and it is for this mercy that He has created them. In this way, the second verse affirms another purpose for the creation: The mercy which accompanies the worship and guidance.

This goal is reached by only a selected few, while the first verse had affirmed a goal for all the *jinn* and the men, and that is the Divine Worship. Some people are created for some others, and those others for yet others; this chain continues till it reaches the group which sincerely worships Allah. Looking from this point of view, it is easy to understand why all the *jinn* and men have been said to be created for the

worship. We plant a garden and nurse the trees for their fruits. The real purpose is the fruits, but the trees and their branches and leaves are planted, protected and looked after because they are the means to get the fruits. And it will be quite right to say that the garden's purpose was its fruits.

In the same way, the second verse "abrogates" the generality of the first verse, focusing its sight on the true worshippers who are the recipients of the mercy of Allah.

The same book narrates from the same Imam that he said: "And the word of Allah:

And there is not one of you but shall come down to it; this is a decided decree of your Lord (***19:71***).

Was abrogated by His word:

Surely (**as for**) ***those whom the good has already gone forth from Us, they shall be kept far off from it*** (***21:101***).

They will not hear its faintest sound, and they shall abide in that which their souls long for (***21:102***).

The great fearful event shall not grieve them (***21:103***).

The author says: It must be noted that the relation between these two verses is not that found between a general declaration and a particular one. The first verse says that it is a decided and unavoidable decree of Allah; and such a decree cannot be rendered null and void, it cannot be cancelled. What the "abrogation" mentioned in this tradition means will be explained, God willing, in the exegesis of the verse 21:101, mentioned above.

al-Baqir ('a) said: "Among the (various types of) abrogation is "*al-bada'*"[2] (أَلبَدآء) contained in the word of Allah:

Allah effaces what He pleases and establishes (**likewise**), ***and with Him is the basis of the Book*** (***13:39***).

And (demonstrated in) the saving of the People of Yunus."[3]

The author says: Its reason is clear.

Some traditions of the Imams of the *Ahl Al-Bayt* ('a) count the death of an Imam and his being succeeded by another Imam as an example of the abrogation.

The author says: We have already explained this matter. The number of the traditions containing this theme reaches to nearly *mutawatir.*

‘Abd ibn Hamid, Abu Dawud (in his *an-Nasikh wa ‘l-mansukh*) and Ibn Jarir have narrated from Qatadah that he said: “(During the lifetime of the Prophet) a verse used to abrogate (another) verse; and the Prophet of Allah used to recite a verse, and a chapter, and as much as Allah wished of a chapter, then it was raised (i.e. erased) and Allah caused His Prophet to forget it. So, Allah said narrating it to His Prophet:

Whatever signs We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it (2:106).

He says: There is (some) ease in it, some allowance in it, some order in it, (and) some prohibition in it.”[4]

The author says: The same book quotes numerous traditions on the theme of “causing to be forgotten”; but all of them have to be discarded because they go against the teaching of the Book of Allah, as we have explained in the meaning of this word.

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1. at-Tafsir, an-Nu’mani.
2. al Bada’ (اَلبَدَآءُ) is a terminology of Shi’ite theology. It means that Allah makes known His plan to His chosen servants only to that extent which is beneficial to the mankind or which is necessary to make a test meaningful. When the time comes when the angel, Prophet or Imam concerned thinks that the plan of work is coming to its end, a new development extends the plan or brings it to an unexpected end. The saving of the People of Yunus and the intended sacrifice of Isma’il are among its examples. (tr.).
3. al ‘Ayyashi.
4. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 108 - 115

أَم تريدونَ أَن تَسـَٔالواْ رَسولَكم كَمَا سئِلَ موسَىٰ مِن قَبل وَمَن يَتَبَدَّلِ ٱلكفرَ بِٱلإِيمَـٰنِ فَقَد ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ ٱلسَّبِيلِ

Or, do you wish to put questions to your Apostle, as Musa was questioned before? And whoever adopts unbelief instead of faith, he indeed has lost the right way (2:108).

وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنۡ أَهلِ ٱلكِتَـٰبِ لَو يَردّونَكم مِّن بَعدِ إِيمَـٰنِكم كفَّارًا حَسَدًا مِّن عِندِ أَنفسِهِم مِّن

بَعدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهم ٱلحَقّ فَٱعفواْ وَٱصفَحواْ حَتَّىٰ يَأۡتِىَ ٱللَّه بِأَمرِهِ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Many of the People of the Book wish that they could turn you back into unbelievers after your faith, out of envy on their part, (**even**) ***after the truth has become manifest to them. But pardon and forgive*** (**them**) ***until Allah should bring about His command. Surely Allah has power over all things*** (***2:109***).

وَأَقِيموا۟ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتوا۟ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ ۚ وَمَا تقَدِّموا۟ لِأَنفسِكم مِّن خَيرٍ تَجِدوه عِندَ ٱللَّهِ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ بِمَا تَعمَلونَ بَصِيرٌ ۝

And keep up prayer and pay the zakat, and whatever good you send before for yourselves you shall find it with Allah; surely Allah sees what you do (***2:110***).

وَقَالوا۟ لَن يَدخلَ ٱلجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَن كَانَ هودًا أَو نَصَـٰرَىٰ تِلكَ أَمَانِيّهم ۗ قل هَاتوا۟ برهَـٰنَكم إِن كنتم صَـٰدِقِينَ

And they say: "None shall enter the garden except he who is a Jew or a Christian". These are their vain desires. Say: "Bring your proof if you are truthful" (***2:111***).

بَلَىٰ مَن أَسلَمَ وَجهَه لِلَّهِ وَهوَ محسِنٌ فَلَه أَجره عِندَ رَبِّهِ وَلَا خَوفٌ عَلَيهِم وَلَا هم يَحزَنونَ

Yes! whoever submits his self entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good, he has his reward with his Lord, and there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve (***2:112***).

وَقَالَتِ ٱليَهود لَيسَتِ ٱلنَّصَـٰرَىٰ عَلَىٰ شَىءٍ وَقَالَتِ ٱلنَّصَـٰرَىٰ لَيسَتِ ٱليَهود عَلَىٰ شَىءٍ وَهم يَتلونَ ٱلكِتَـٰبَ
كَذَٰلِكَ قَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ لَا يَعلَمونَ مِثلَ قَولِهِم فَٱللَّه يَحكم بَينَهم يَومَ ٱلقِيَـٰمَةِ فِيمَا كَانوا۟ فِيهِ يَختَلِفونَ

And the Jews say: "The Christians do not follow anything (**good**)**,** ***and the Christians say: "The Jews do not follow anything*** (**good**)**",*** ***while they recite the Book. Even thus say those who have no knowledge, like to what they say; so Allah shall judge between them on the Day of Resurrection in what they differ*** (***2:113***).

وَمَن أَظلَم مِمَّن مَّنَعَ مَسَـٰجِدَ ٱللَّهِ أَن يذكَرَ فِيهَا ٱسمه وَسَعَىٰ فِى خَرَابِهَآ أُو۟لَـٰئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهم

أَن يَدخلوهَآ إِلَّا خَآئِفِينَ لَهم فِى ٱلدّنيَا خِزىٌ وَلَهم فِى ٱلأَخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

And who is more unjust than he who prevents (**men from**) ***the mosques of Allah, that His name shall not be remembered in them, and strives to ruin them?*** (**As for**) ***those, it was not for them that they should have entered them except in fear; they shall meet with disgrace in this world,***

and they shall have great chastisement in the hereafter (***2:114***).

وَلِلَّهِ ٱلۡمَشۡرِقُ وَٱلۡمَغۡرِبُۚ فَأَيۡنَمَا تُوَلُّواْ فَثَمَّ وَجۡهُ ٱللَّهِۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٞ

And Allah's is the East and the West; therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah's face; surely Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing (***2:115***).

Commentary

Verse 108

Qur'an: ***Or, do you wish to put questions to your Apostle…*** (***2:108***).

It appears from this sentence that some of the Muslims – although believing in the Prophet (S) – had put some questions to him not unlike the questions put to Musa ('a) by the Jews. That is why they have been placed here in line with the Jews for admonition.

The tradition too supports this interpretation.

Qur'an: ***The right way*** (***2:108***).

That is, the straight path.

Verse 109

Qur'an: ***Many of the People of the Book wish…*** (***2:109***).

Reportedly it refers to Huyayy ibn al-Akhtab and other Jews who were with him.

Qur'an: ***But pardon and forgive*** (**them**) (***2:109***).

According to the exegetes this order was abrogated by the verse of fighting.

Qur'an: ***Until Allah should bring about His command*** (***2:109***)

As indicated above, this clause alludes to a command that was to be revealed in not too distant a time about the Jews. The case is similar to the verse:

(**As for**) ***Those, it was not for them that they should have entered them except in fear*** (***2:115***).

When read together with the verse: ***the idolaters are nothing but unclean, so they shall not approach the Sacred Mosque after this*** (**very**) ***year…*** (***9:29***). The clause, "except in fear", had hinted to the intended ban that was promulgated later.

We shall explain the meaning of *"al–amr"* (اَلأَمْر = command) under the verse:

And they ask you about the soul. Say: "The soul is from the command of My Lord" (***17:85***).

Verse 111

Qur'an: ***And they say: "None shall enter the garden except he who is a Jew or a Christian"*** (***2:111***).

The verse explicitly joins the Christians with the Jews; from now on the sins and crimes of both will be enumerated together.

Verse 112

Qur'an: ***Yes! whoever submits his self entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good, he has his reward with his Lord*** (***2:112***).

It reiterates for the third time the basic principle that the spiritual felicity does not depend on name or nomenclature, that no one can get honour with Allah except by true faith in, and total surrender to, Him. The first declaration was in the verse:

Surely those who believe and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabeans, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward… (***2:62***).

the second one was in the verse:

Yea! Whoever earns evil… (***2:81***).

And (**as for**) ***those who believe and do good deeds, these are the dwellers of the garden…*** (***2:82***).

The third is this verse under discussion.

A comparison of this verse with the previous two shows that the true belief entails submitting one's self entirely to Allah; and *"al– ihsan"* (اَلإِحْسَان = to do good) is synonymous to the good deeds.

Verse 113

Qur'an: ***While they recite the Book*** (***2:113***).

that is, while they follow the Book revealed to them. They should not say such things because they have the Book with them and it clearly shows them where the truth is.

This explanation is supported by the next sentence, "Even thus say those who have no knowledge, like to what they say". The word, "those who have no knowledge", refers to the unbelievers (other than the People of the Book) and the polytheists of Arabia. They used to say, "The Muslims do not follow anything good", or "The People of the Book do not follow anything good".

Verse 114

Qur'an: ***And who is more unjust than he who prevents*** (***2:114***).

Apparently, it refers to the unbelievers and polytheists of Mecca. These two verses were revealed not long after the Apostle of Allah (S) emigrated to Medina.

Qur'an: ***it was not for them that they should have entered them except in fear:*** (***2:114***)

The verb, "was", shows that the sentence describes a past event. It perfectly fits the pagans of Mecca and their misdeeds.

The traditions say that "he who prevents" refers to the unbelievers of Mecca, it was they who prevented the Muslims from praying in the Sacred Mosque (*Masjid al-Haram*) and in other mosques within the precinct of the Ka'bah.

Verse 115

Qur'an: ***And Allah's is the East and the West*** (***2:115***).

The east and the west – any direction, whatsoever – really belong to Allah. His is the true mastership that cannot be altered or transferred; it is not like the possession known to us in our society's framework. Allah's ownership permeates the possessed thing itself as well as its benefits and effects, unlike our ownership that covers only the benefits and effects, and not the thing itself.

A property, possession, *per se,* cannot stand except with its owner. Therefore, the east and the west, nay, all the directions whatsoever, exist because of Allah – the Owner. Allah preserves and manages the directions, and encompasses them. Anyone turning to any of the directions, turns in reality to Allah.

The east and the west are relative terms. They cover almost all the directions, except the two imaginary points of the true north and the true south. That is why Allah left the clause, "whither you turn", unconditional, and did not say, 'whither you turn of these two directions'. To whatever direction one turns one's face, it is bound to be either east or west. The sentence, "And Allah's is the East and the West", therefore, implies that all the directions belong to Allah.

The east and the west were selected for special mention because man fixes the directions with the help of rising and setting of the sun and other heavenly bodies.

Qur'an: ***Therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah's face*** (***2:115***)

It puts the cause in place of the effect. What the sentence implies is as follows: To whichever direction you turn, it is allowed to you, because Allah's face is in that direction too.

The concluding clause, "surely Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing", supports this interpretation.

"al-Wasi'" (اَلوَاسع = translated here as "ample-giving") literally means extensive, abounding, far-reaching. It implies that Allah's ownership is extensive and all-pervading and every direction belongs to Him. He is All-knowing too; therefore, He knows what your aim and intention is, no matter whichever direction you turn your face to. He is not like human beings or other creatures - if we want to see some physical object, we have to turn to a particular direction in order to bring it into focus. But Allah is not confined to a particular direction; turn to any direction, you are turning to Allah, and Allah knows it.

The verse gives a latitude about the *qiblah,* as far as its directions is concerned, but not apropos its location as may be inferred from the clause, "And Allah's is the East and the West", inasmuch as it mentions the directions only.

Traditions

Muhammad ibn al-Husayn said: "It was written to al-'Abdu 's-Salih: 'A man prays in a cloudy day in an open space and he does not know the (direction of) *qiblah,* he prays; and when he has finished his prayer, the sun appears and (he finds that) he had prayed against *qiblah.* Should he regard his prayer (as valid) or should he repeat it?' He wrote: 'He should repeat it if the time (of prayer) is not over. Does he not know that Allah says - and His word is true: ***therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah's face?'"***[1]

Imam al-Baqir ('a) said about the word of Allah:

And Allah's is the East and the West... (2:115).

"Allah has revealed this verse especially for the voluntary prayer;

Therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah's face; surely Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing (2:115).

And the Apostle of Allah prayed on his camel by making gestures (for the actions of the prayer) wherever it turned to, when he proceeded to Khaybar, and also when he returned from Mecca - and the Ka'bah was behind his back."[2]

The author says: al-'Ayyashi has narrated another tradition of nearly the same meaning through Zurarah from Imam as-Sadiq ('a); and so have done al-Qummi and ash-Shaykh from Imam Ab al-Hasan ('a) and as-Saduq from Imam as-Sadiq ('a).

If you study the traditions of the Imams of the *Ahl Al-Bayt,* related to the exegesis of the Qur'anic verses - the general and the particular; the unconditional and the conditional - you will see that often they infer one rule from the general verse, and another rule from the same when read together with the particular one. For example, the general verse implies a voluntary rule; but read with the particular one it promulgates an obligatory law. The same applies to the cases of disliked and forbidden things. And so on.

The above is a key factor in understanding the traditions narrated from the Imams; and on it depends the knowledge of a multitude of their traditions.

You may infer from it two important principles of the Qur'anic knowledge:

First: Every Qur'anic clause or sentence, taken alone, describes an established reality or rule; when it is joined to another revealed qualifying clause, it indicates another reality or rule; add to it another qualification or condition and you get a third set of confirmed reality or law; and so on. For example, look at the verse:

Say: "Allah; then leave them sporting in their vain discourses" (***6:91***).

It indicates four separate meanings depending on the word we stop at: First, "Say: Allah"; second, "Say: Allah; then leave them"; third, "Say: Allah; then leave them in their vain discourses"; fourth, "Say: Allah, then leave them sporting in their vain discourses". Many such examples may be found in the Qur'an.

Second: If two stories or two themes are joined in one sentence or clause, both of them must be having a common base.

These two esoteric principles of exegesis open the way to many Qur'anic secrets – and Allah is the true Guide.

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1. at–Tahdhib.
2. al–'Ayyashi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 116 – 117

وَقَالوا۟ ٱتَّخَذَ ٱللَّه وَلَدًا سبحَـٰنَه ۖ بَل لَّه ۖ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمَـٰوَٰتِ وَٱلأَرۡضِ كلٌّ ۖ لَّه ۖقَـٰنِتونَ

And they say: "Allah has taken to himself a son". Glory be to Him; rather, whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His; all are obedient to Him (***2:116***).

بَدِيع ٱلسَّمَـٰوَٰتِ وَٱلأَرۡضِ وَإِذَا قَضَىٰٓ أَمرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقول لَه ۖ كن فَيَكون

The Originator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees an affair, He only says to it, "Be", and it is (***2:117***).

Commentary

Verse 116

Qur'an: ***And they say: "Allah has taken to himself a son"*** (***2:116***).

Obviously, the pronoun "they" refers to the Jews and the Christians; the former said that 'Uzayr was the son of God; the latter claimed the same thing for Jesus Christ. The verse takes the admonition of the People of the Book a step further.

The People of the Book initially used the phrase, son of God, for their prophets etc. as a mark of respect for them – in the same way as they used the words, sons of God and His chosen people, for themselves. Gradually, the metaphorical sense gave way to the real one, and 'Uzayr and Jesus Christ were believed to be the sons of God in the real sense of the word.

Allah refuted their claim in these two verses. They contain two proofs against them.

The first proof is given in the words: "whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His; all are obedient to Him." How does one beget a son? A physical being removes some of his parts from himself and develops and nurtures it into another member of the species, similar to himself. Now, nothing can be similar to Allah; He is far above such things; whatever is in the heavens and in the earth belongs to Him, is His property; every thing is made existent by Him, is managed by Him; it is by nature obedient to Him, subservient to Him. Things being as they are how can any thing be similar to Allah? Does God belong to a species? How can He beget someone of the same "species"?

The second proof is given in the second verse: "The Originator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees an affair, He only says to it, **'Be',** and it is." *"al-Badi'"* (**اَلبَدِيْع** = translated here as the Originator) is used for the one who invents and originates a thing without any previous model, without any existing blue-print. Only Allah is the Originator in the true sense of the word. He originates every thing; no creature of His resembles any fellow creature. His creation is not like others' production inasmuch as He does not make any thing by imitation; He does not create gradually, nor with the help of the secondary causes; when He decides an affair, He only says to it, "Be", and it is – without any need of any previous model or gradual development. How can such an Originator be said to take to himself a son? After all, begetting a son entails gradual development.

These are the two incontestable proofs which expose the fallacy of the belief that God has begotten a son. The verses also prove the following two facts:

First: The command to obey Allah and to worship Him is all-pervading; it is binding to all that is in the

heavens and in the earth.

Second: The actions of Allah are not gradual. It follows that every thing that comes into being gradually, must have another non-gradual existence which emanates from the Divine Command. Allah says:

His command, when He intends any-thing, is only that He says to it, 'Be", and it is (36:82).

And Our command is but one, as the twinkling of an eye (54:50).

A detailed discussion of this Qur'anic reality will be given, God willing, under the verse 36:82, quoted just above.

Qur'an: ***Glory be to Him (2:116).***

"subhan" (سبْحَانَ) is an infinitive verb, synonymous to *"at-tasbih"* (اَلتَّسْبِيْح = glorification of God). It is always used as a first member of genitive construction - the second member always being the name, 'Allah' (or a pro-noun referring to Him). Grammatically it is in accusative case pointing to a deleted verb. Originally it was, *sabbahtuhu tasbihan* (سَبَّحْتـه تَسْبِيْحاً = I glorified Him as He should be glorified); but the verb was deleted and the infinitive verb was joined to the pronoun 'Him' in genitive construction, to stand in place of the verb.

By using this phrase here, Allah has taught the believers the manner of declaring His glory whenever something unworthy of His sacred name is ascribed to Him.

Qur'an: ***All are obedient to Him (2:116).***

"al-Qunut" (اَلقـنوْت) = to worship; self-abasement).

Verse 117

Qur'an: ***The Originator of the heavens... (2:117).***

Originating implies that the thing so created is not like any other thing.

Qur'an: ***And it is (2:117).***

The sentence branches out from the word, "Be". The preceding clause is not a conditional one; that is why this verb is not in apocopate form, that is, its last vowel has not been cut off.

Traditions

Sudayr as-Sayrafi said: "I heard Humran ibn A'yan asking Abu Ja'far ('a) about the word of Allah:

The Originator of the heavens and the earth (2:117).

Abu Ja'far ('a) said: 'Verily Allah, Mighty and Great is He!, originated all things by His (Own) Knowledge, without there being any previous model. So, He originated the heavens and the earth, and there were no heavens or earth before them. Do you not listen to His word,

And His throne was on the water?'" (***12:7***). [1]

The author says: The tradition points to yet another fine point. It shows that "the water", mentioned in this verse, is something different from the water known to us. The Imam has quoted this verse to prove that Allah's creation is based on originality. And the Divine authority and power, before the creation of these heavens and this earth, was firm on the water. Obviously, the water mentioned here was not the water of this earth, or like this earthly water. We shall explain it further under the verse:

And His throne was on the water (***12:7***).

An Academic And Philosophical Discourse On The Originality Of The Creation

The experience as well as the philosophical argument proves that any two things are different from each other in their respective particulars even if they are united in their common and general characteristics. Even if the two are so alike as to make it difficult for the senses to discern any dissimilarity between them, when seen or tested with the help of scientific instruments clear differences come before the eyes. It means that every creation is unique and original; no two things are made of one model.

Now we should look at this matter from the philosophical point of view. Let us take any two things and see why they are distinct from each other. If the basis of distinction is not a thing within their own selves, then it must be an outside factor. In that case, their selves must be absolute and indivisible entities. But an absolute and indivisible entity cannot be duplicated nor repeated. In other words, the two distinct entities would become one and the same. And it is a contradiction in terms.

Therefore, we have to admit that every being is different in its own self from all other beings. It follows that every thing is unique; and does not have any similarity or likeness to any other thing. And it is Allah who has given every thing its uniqueness, distinction and originality, as He is the Originator of the heavens and of the earth.

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1. al-Kafi; Basa'iru 'd-darajat

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 118 – 119

وَقَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ لَا يَعلَمونَ لَوۡلَا يكَلِّمنَا ٱللَّه أَوۡ تَأۡتِينَآ ءَايَةٌۗ كَذَٰلِكَ قَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبلِهِم مِّثلَ قَوۡلِهِمۡۘ تَشَٰبَهَتۡ قلوبهمۗ قَدۡ بَيَّنَّا ٱلۡأَيَٰتِ لِقَوۡمٍۗ يوقِنونَ

And those who have no knowledge say: "Why does not Allah speak to us or a sign come to us?" Even thus said those before them, the like of what they say; their hearts are all alike. Indeed We have made the signs clear for a people who are sure (***2:118***).

إِنَّآ أَرۡسَلنَٰكَ بِٱلحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَا تسـأَل عَنۡ أَصحَٰبِ ٱلجَحِيمِ

Surely, We have sent you with the truth as a bearer of good news and as a warner, and you shall not be questioned as to the companions of the flaming fire (***2:119***).

Commentary

Verse 118

Qur'an: ***And those who have no knowledge say*** (***2:118***).

It refers to the polytheists and the unbelievers other than the People of the Book. It is set in contrast with the verse 113:

And the Jews say, "The Christians do not follow anything (**good**)**", *and the Christians say, "The Jews do not follow anything*** (**good**)**', *while they recite the Book. Even thus say those who have no knowledge, like to what they say*** (***2:113***).

In this verse, the People of the Book were joined to the polytheists and unbelievers of Arabia; and the verse under discussion joins those polytheists and unbelievers to the People of the Book: "And those who have no knowledge say: 'Why does not Allah speak to us or a sign come to us?' Even thus said those before them (i.e., the People of the Book, including the Jews) the like of what they say", because the Jews had disputed with their prophet, Musa ('a) and demanded from him the like of what these pagans say.

The People of the Book and the pagans of Arabia are alike in their way of thinking; the former say the like of what the latter say, and vice versa: *their hearts are all alike.*

Qur'an: ***Indeed We have made the signs clear for a people who are sure*** (***2:118***).

It is the rebuttal of the demand of those who have no knowledge. The signs they are demanding have already come to them, already been made clear to them. But they cannot benefit from them because only those who are sure of those signs may get their benefit. As for these people who have no knowledge, their hearts are submerged into ignorance, sick with the disease of prejudice and envy. That is why they have lost the ability to benefit from the signs sent by Allah.

The above explanation makes it clear why they have been described as “those who have no knowledge”.

After exposing the falsity of their demand, Allah directs His speech to the Apostle, declaring in clear terms that he has surely been sent by Allah “with the truth as a bearer of good news and as a warner”. The verse was meant to bring comfort to the Prophet’s heart and to make him realize that these adversaries were the people of the Fire, and they would not come to the path of guidance.

Verse 119

Qur’an: ***and you shall not be questioned as the companions of the flaming fire*** (***2:119***).

Its import is similar to that of the verse:

Surely those who disbelieve alike is to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe (***2:6***).

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 120 - 123

وَلَن تَرۡضَىٰ عَنكَ ٱلۡيَهُودُ وَلَا ٱلنَّصَٰرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمۡۗ قُلۡ إِنَّ هُدَى ٱللَّهِ هُوَ ٱلۡهُدَىٰۗ وَلَئِنِ ٱتَّبَعۡتَ أَهۡوَآءَهُم بَعۡدَ ٱلَّذِي
جَآءَكَ مِنَ ٱلۡعِلۡمِۙ مَا لَكَ مِنَ ٱللَّهِ مِن وَلِيّٖ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ

And the Jews will not be pleased with you, nor the Christians until you follow their religion. Say; “Surely Allah’s guidance, that is the (***true***) ***guidance”. And if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, you shall have no guardian from Allah, nor any helper*** (***2:120***).

ٱلَّذِينَ ءَاتَيۡنَٰهُمُ ٱلۡكِتَٰبَ يَتۡلُونَهُۥ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِۦٓ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ يُؤۡمِنُونَ بِهِۦۚ وَمَن يَكۡفُرۡ بِهِۦ فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلۡخَٰسِرُونَ

Those to whom We have given the Book read it as it aught to be read. These (***it is who***) ***believe in***

it; and whoever disbelieves in it, these it is that are the losers (***2:121***).

يَـٰبَنِىٓ إِسرَٰٓءِيلَ ٱذكُروا۟ نِعمَتِىَ ٱلَّتِىٓ أَنعَمتُ عَلَيكُم وَأَنِّى فَضَّلتُكُم عَلَى ٱلعَـٰلَمِينَ

O Children of Israel, call to mind My bounty which I bestowed on you and that I made you excel the nations (***2:122***).

وَٱتَّقُوا۟ يَومًا لَّا تَجزِى نَفسٌ عَن نَّفسٍ شَيـًٔا وَلَا يُقبَلُ مِنهَا عَدلٌ وَلَا تَنفَعُهَا شَفَـٰعَةٌ وَلَا هُم يُنصَرُونَ

And be on your guard against a day when no soul shall avail another in the least neither shall any compensation be accepted from it, nor shall intercession profit it nor shall they be helped (***2:123***).

Commentary

Verse 120

Qur'an: ***And the Jews will not be pleased with you, nor the Christians…*** (***2:120***).

The Speaker turns again to the two groups, after a cursory glance at the others. These two verses give the sum and substance of the foregoing talk. After all those admonitions and reprimands of the Jews and the Christians, Allah turns to His Apostle and says: They will never be pleased with you until you follow their religion which they have invented according to their desires, composed of their own opinions. Then He orders him to confute their views and tell them: "Surely Allah's guidance, that is the (true) guidance". Why should a man follow the other for guidance? And the only guidance is the guidance of Allah; that is the truth which must be followed. There is no guidance in any thing else; and certainly not in your religion. And what is that religion? Just an amalgam of your desires glorified as religion.

"Allah's guidance" stands for the Qur'an – revealed by Allah and, therefore, attributed to Him. The sentence, "Surely Allah's guidance is the (true) guidance", restricts the guidance to that of Allah. Conversely, it means' that their religion is devoid of guidance; in other words, it is just a set of their desires.

It follows that what the Prophet has got is knowledge, and what they hold in their hands is ignorance. Therefore, Allah says to the Prophet: "And if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, you shall have no guardian from Allah, nor any helper."

One cannot help admiring this verse: How logical, solid and well-grounded is the argument it offers; how many fine points of eloquence it holds, in spite of its brevity; how lovely is the language and how clear is the style!!

Verse 121

Qur'an: ***Those to whom We have given the Book…*** **(*2:121*).**

The restriction of the clause, "These (it is who) believe in it", gives rise to the belief that this verse is a reply to an unspoken question. The preceding words, "And the Jews will not be pleased with you, nor the Christians…", gave an indication that there was no hope of their believing in the Prophet. If so, then how any of them could be expected to believe? Was it not in vain to invite them to Islam? This verse clears the air, and says: Those to whom We have given the Book (i.e., the Torah or the Injil) and who read it as it aught to be read, these it is who truly believe in their Book and as such they shall believe in you.[1] Or that, they believe in a revealed book; and therefore shall believe in any other book revealed by Allah. Or that, these it is who shall believe in the Qur'an.

(According to some of the above interpretations, the pro-noun, 'it', in the phrase, "believe in it", would stand for more than one noun by turns.)

The phrase, "Those to whom We have given the Book", refers to a group of the Jews and the Christians, who did not follow their desires, who wanted to follow the truth. "the Book" refers to the Torah and the Injil.

Another possible explanation: "the Book" might be referring to the Qur'an, and, "Those to whom We have given the Book", to the believers. In that case the meaning would be as follows: Those to whom We have given the Qur'an and who read it as it should be read, these it is who believe in the Qur'an, and not the Jews and the Christians who follow their desires.

The restriction, in this case, would give a converted proposition.

Verses 122 - 123

Qur'an: ***O Children of Israel!…*** **(*2:122*).**

Qur'an: ***…Nor shall they be helped*** **(*2:123*).**

These two verses are almost similar to the verses 2:47 and 2:48. Here the present talk with the Children of Israel comes to its end. The Qur'an, by repeating the prologue in the epilogue neatly ties the two ends together.

Traditions

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said, explaining the word of Allah, ***Those to whom We have given the Book read it as it aught to be read*** **(*2:121*).** "They recite its verses slowly, and understand it, and act according to its orders, and hope for its promise, and are afraid of its threat, and take lesson from its stories, and

obey its commandments, and desist from what it prohibits. By God, it does not mean memorizing its verses, and studying its letters, and reciting its chapters, and learning its one-tenths and one-fifths. They remembered its words and neglected its boundaries. And what it means is meditating on its verses and acting according to its orders. Allah, the High, has said:

(It is) ***a Book We have sent down to you abounding in good, so that they may ponder over its verses"*** **(*38:29*).**[2]

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said about the word of Allah, *read it as it aught to be read,* that: "(It is) stopping at (the description of) the Garden and the Fire."[3]

The author says: What the Imam means is the meditation on the Qur'an.

The same Imam said about the verse, ***Those to whom We have given the Book...*** **(*2:121*)**, that: "They are the Imams."[4]

The author says: This explanation is based on the principle of the "flow of the Qur'an" and gives the best example of those to whom Allah has given the Book.

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1. Because their books foretell of the Apostle's coming. (tr.).
2. Irshad al-qulub, ad-Daylami.
3. al-'Ayyashi.
4. al-Kafi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verse 124

وَإِذِ ٱبۡتَلَىٰٓ إِبۡرَٰهِـۧمَ رَبُّهُۥ بِكَلِمَٰتٖ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّۖ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامٗاۖ قَالَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِيۖ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهۡدِي ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ

And (remember) when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, then he fulfilled them: He said: "Surely I am going to make you an Imam for men." (Ibrahim) said: "And of my offspring?" He said:" My covenant will not include the unjust" (2:124).

Commentary

Beginning with this verse, the Qur'an throws light on some aspects of the life of Ibrahim ('a); these verses prepare the minds for the ones promulgating the change of *al-qiblah* (**اَلقِبْلَة** = direction of prayer) as well as the rules of the *hajj.* These stories also explain the reality of the pure Islamic religion – with its different grades and levels – looking at its fundamental beliefs, moral teachings and some rules of the *shari'ah;* among other things they show how Allah bestowed on him *al-Imamah* (**اَلإِمَامَة** = leadership) of the people, how he built the Ka'bah, and how he prayed to Allah to send an Apostle among them.

Qur'an: ***And*** **(remember)** ***when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, then he fulfilled them*** **(*2:124*).**

It refers to the occasion when Ibrahim ('a) was given the *Imamah.* It had happened during the end period of his life; it was the time when he had become very old, after Isma'il and Ishaq both had been born, and he had brought Isma'il and his mother to reside in Mecca, as some other exegetes also have taken note of this fact. This timing is clearly pointed at by his words, "And of my offspring?", when Allah told him: "I am going to make you an Imam for men." Obviously, he did not know, nor did he even expect, that he would get any offspring, until the angels brought to him the good tidings of Isma'il and Ishaq. Even when the angels told him that he was to get children, he responded to those tidings in such words as could apparently be construed to have sprung from despair and pessimism. Allah says:

And inform them of the guests of Ibrahim **(*15:51*).**

When they entered upon him, they said: "Peace" He said: "Surely we are afraid of you." **(*15:52*).**

They said: "Be not afraid, surely we give you the good news of a boy, possessing knowledge **(*15:53*).**

"He said:" Do you give me good news **(of a son)** ***when old age has come upon me? – of what then do you give me good news!"*** **(*15:54*).**

They said: "We give you good news with truth; therefore, be not of the despairing" **(*15: 55*).**

The same was the reaction of his wife when she was given that good news, as Allah says:

And his wife was standing **(*by*)*, so she laughed; then We gave her the good news of Ishaq, and after Ishaq, of*** **(a son's son)** ***Ya'qub*** **(*11:71*).**

She said: "O woe to me! Shall I bear a son when I am an **(extremely)** ***old*** **(woman)** ***and this my husband an*** **(extremely)** ***old*** **(man)? *Most surely this is an amazing thing"*** **(*11:72*).**

They said: "Do you wonder at the decree of Allah? The mercy of Allah and His blessings be on you, O people of the house, surely He is Praised, Glorious" **(*11:73*).**

As you see, the talks of both Ibrahim and his wife show that by that time they had lost all hope of getting any child. That is why the angels replied to them in those words to give them hope and make them happy. Clearly neither he nor his wife knew before that time that they would be given any offspring. But on this occasion, we see that as soon as Allah told him, "I am going to make you an Imam for men", he pleaded, "And of my offspring?" This prayer brings before our eyes the image of a man who is sure of having an offspring. How can a man, and particularly one like Ibrahim, the friend of Allah (who very well knew the nuances of the language), speak before his Lord about a thing he knew nothing about? If he had uttered these words before getting any children, it would have been necessary for him to add some proviso, like "if Thou givest me any offspring". This event, therefore, must have taken place in the end period of Ibrahim's life some time after he had been given the good news.

Moreover, the words, "And (remember) when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, then he fulfilled them. He said: 'Surely I am going to make you an Imam for men'", show that his *Imamah* was bestowed to him after Allah had tried him with certain trials. These consisted of various sufferings and tests which Ibrahim ('a) underwent in his life. And according to the Qur'an, the clearest and hardest of all was the trial of the sacrifice of Isma'il. Allah says:

***And when he reached* (the age of) *working with him, he said: "O my son! surely I am seeing in dream that I am sacrificing you; consider then what you see." He said: "O my father! do what you are commanded; if Allah please, you will surely find me of the patient ones"* (*37:102*).**

***So when they both submitted and he threw him down upon his forehead* (*37:103*).**

***And We called out to him* (saying): *"O Ibrahim!* (*37:104*).**

***You have indeed proved the vision true; surely thus We reward the doers of good* (*37:105*).**

***Most surely this is a manifest trial"* (*37:106*).**

This manifest trial had taken place in the extreme old age of Ibrahim, because even the birth of Isma'il had taken place when Ibrahim had become very old, as Allah quotes him as saying:

***"Praise be to Allah, Who gave me in old age Isma'il and Ishaq; most surely my Lord is the Hearer of prayer"* (*14:39*).**

And the *imamah* was given to him after these trials.

Now we come back to the verse under discussion:

"And (remember) when his Lord tried Ibrahim": *"al-Ibtila'"* (اَلإِبْتِلآء) and *"al-bala'"* (البَلآء) both have the same meaning: to try, to put to test. You give someone an order, or put him in a difficult situation, in order to find out his inner strength, his spiritual sublimity; thus you bring out his hidden qualities like obedience, bravery, generosity, chastity, knowledge, faithfulness (or their opposite traits); it is only then

that you may say, “I have tested him”, “I have put him to trial”. One cannot be tested except through action; it is the action which brings out the hidden qualities of a man, and not the word; words may lie but not the actions. Allah says:

Surely We have tried them as We tried the owners of the garden… (***68:17***).

…Surely Allah will try you with a stream… (***2:249***).

Now Allah says that He tried Ibrahim with certain words. This sentence looks at the “words” inasmuch as they are related to actions – they are the vehicles to carry the commands of the speaker to the listerner. For example, Allah says:

…And speak to men good (**words**)**…** (***2:83***).

That is, behave with them properly.

“With certain words, then he fulfilled them”: *“al-Kalimat”* (**اَلكَلِمات**) is plural of *al-kalimah* (**اَلكَلِمَة** = word). Of course, the word, “word”, has sometimes been used in the Qur’an for a substance, a corporeal being (instead of a talk or speech) as Allah says:

…A Word from Him whose name is the Messiah, ‘Isa son of Maryam… (***3:45***).

But this usage is based on the fact that ‘Isa, like Adam, was created by a word from Allah as the Qur’an says:

Surely the likeness of ‘Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: “Be”, and he was (***3:59***).

Otherwise, whenever the Qur’an attributes the “word” to Allah, it means speech and saying. For example:

And there is none to change the words of Allah (***6:34***).

There is no changing the words of Allah (***10:64***).

And Allah desired to manifest the truth of what was true by His words (***8:7***).

Surely those against whom the word of your Lord has proved true will not believe (***10:96***).

But the word of punishment proved true against the unbelievers (***39:71***).

And thus did the word of your Lord prove true against those who disbelieved that they are the inmates of the Fire (***40:6***).

And had not a word gone forth from your Lord till an appointed time, certainly affair would have

been decided between them (***42:14***).

And the word of Allah, that is the highest (***9:41***).

He said: "The truth then (***it***) ***is and the truth do I speak"*** (***38:84***).

Our word for a thing when We intend it, is only that We say to it: "Be", and it is (***16:40***).

These and similar verses use "word" in the meaning of "talk" because the talk conveys to the hearer the proposition which the speaker intends to communicate, or the command which he wants him to obey. It is for this reason that sometimes the Qur'an describes the "word" as being complete! It is as though a "word" emanating from the speaker remains incomplete until it is implemented, and then it becomes complete, is proved true. Allah says:

And the word of your Lord has been accomplished (**completed**) ***truly and justly; there is none to change His words*** (***6:115***).

And the good word of your Lord was fulfilled (**completed**) ***in the Children of Israel*** (***7:137***).

The above explanation does not go against the fact that Allah's word is Allah's action. His word and His action are not two different things, they are one and the same. Realities and facts have their own rules, and literary demands and semantic values are governed by other rules. Whatever realities Allah wishes to disclose to one of His prophets or other servants, and whatever command He wants to impose on someone, it is His talk and speech, inasmuch as it fulfils the same purpose which a talk or speech does – it conveys information, and proposition as well as His order and prohibition. Not frequently, the word, "word", is used for ideas, intentions and actions if they have the same import as "word" has. We say: "I will surely do this because I have already said so, and have given my word." In fact, you have never before uttered a single word about it; all that your "given word" actually means is that you do have a firm intention to do it, without any wavering will, without listening to any intercessor.

The Arab poet, 'Antarah, said: "And (it was) my word (to my soul) whenever it was in turmoil or excitement: Be at ease; you will either earn the accolade or will go to (final) rest." Obviously, he had not talked with his soul or spirit; what he means by "word" is that he had made up his mind to fight bravely, and to face the enemy without retreating from his stand; because if he was victorious, his people would sing his praise, and if he was killed, he would get the rest and tranquillity.

In this light it is easy to see that the phrase, "when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words", refers to the difficult situations he had to face, and the Divine covenants he had entered into, for example, his conflict with his people regarding the stars and the idols, his test by fire and emigration, his supreme trial of sacrificing his son, and other such things. Allah has not specified which tests those "certain words" refer to, because this information had no–thing to do with the theme of the verse. But one thing is certain: As it was only after the fulfilment of those words that Allah said to him, "Surely I am going to

make you an Imam for men", the words must have been such as to prove his capability for the status of the *Imamah.*

This much about the "words". Now comes the next phrase: "then he fulfilled them". If the pronoun "he" refers to Ibrahim ('a), then it would mean that he fulfilled the task which was expected of him, he obediently did what he was told to do. If on the other hand the pronoun refers to the Lord (as it obviously does) then it would mean that his Lord helped him to do what was expected of him.

Somebody has said that the phrase, "certain words", refers to the Divine Speech, "Surely I am going to make you an Imam for men... My covenant will not include the unjust." But it is an explanation which does not carry any weight, because nowhere in the Qur'an the word "words" has been used for "sentences".

Qur'an: ***"Surely I am going to make you an Imam for men"*** **(*2:124*).**

That is, I am going to make you a leader for men; they will adhere to you and follow in your footsteps, in words and deeds. *al-Imam* (**اَلإِمَام** = leader) is the one whom the people follow. That is why many exegetes have said that *al-Imamah* (**اَلإِمَامَةُ** = leadership) in this verse means prophethood, because a prophet is followed and obeyed by his *ummah* in their religion; Allah has said:

And We did not send any apostle but that he should be obeyed by Allah's permission **(*4:64*).**

But this interpretation has no leg to stand upon. Because:

First: The word *Imaman* (**إِمَاماً** = Imam, leader) is the second accusative of the causative *ja'iluka* (**جَاعِلُكَ** = literally, maker of you; translated here as "going to make you"), which is a nomen agentis; and a nomen agentis is never used in place of a past tense; if used in place of a verb it always gives the meaning of present or future tense. When Allah used these words in His talk with Ibrahim ('a), He in effect gave him a promise to make him an Imam in future – in other words, to give him a status which he did not have at that time. And Ibrahim ('a) was already a prophet: Remember that this talk itself was a revelation sent to him in his capacity as a prophet. He was a prophet long before he was given the status of the *Imamah.* Therefore, the *Imamah* in this verse cannot mean prophethood. (This reply is given by another exegete.)

Second: We have described earlier that Ibrahim ('a) was given the *Imamah* in his later days after setting the good news that he would be given offspring, Ishaq and Isma'il; and the angels had given him that news while they were on their way to destroy the *ummah* of Lilt; and Ibrahim at that time was a prophet and an apostle. He was a prophet and apostle before he got the *Imamah;* therefore, his *Imamah* was different from his prophethood and apostleship.

Why are such interpretations offered by exegetes from time to time? The reason lies in the banality – because of repeated use during all these centuries – which has degraded the sublime meanings of the

Qur'anic words in people's minds.

The word, *Imamah,* has been debased in similar way. Some people say that it means prophethood, precedence, being in authority; others interpret it as *al-khilafah* (**اَلخِلافَة =** successorship), *al-wisayah* (**اَلوصَايَة =** regency) or headship in spiritual and temporal affairs. But all this is wrong. "Prophethood" means receiving news from Allah; "messengership" means conveying that message to people; "authority" implies that others have to follow one's example and obey one's orders. Now this authority is a concomitant of prophethood and messengership; *khilafah* and *wisayah* both mean successorship to a prophet; likewise, headship in spiritual and temporal affairs is a sort of the above-mentioned authority; and all of it is different from the correct meaning of the *Imamah.* The *imamah* implies that a man has an intrinsic quality because of which people should follow him faithfully, making their words and deeds to conform with his words and deeds; but none of the above-mentioned interpretations brings out this meaning. Ibrahim ('a) was already a prophet whose obedience was obligatory for all men. What would be the sense in telling him that Allah was going to make him a prophet for men? Or, to make his obedience compulsory in all that he said and did? Or, a head of his *ummah* to order or forbid in matters of religion? Or, a successor? Or, *a khalifah* in the earth to decide between the people by the order of Allah?

The difference between the *Imamah* and all the above-mentioned words is not only verbal; it is the realities behind those words that differ from one another. When a man is given prophethood, it becomes obligatory for the people to obey him. Therefore, it would be wrong to say to that prophet, "I am going to make your obedience compulsory for men although I have already made it compulsory". Nor will it be correct to convey the same idea in other words, because the same problem will arise again. When Allah gives someone some status, he does not get merely a new title or name; bounties of Allah are not empty words; there are real things behind those words. Therefore, the *imamah* has its own reality, different from other words' realities.

We find in the Qur'an that whenever it mentions *Imamah* it puts guidance side by side - it looks as though Allah was using the latter to explain the former. Allah says in the story of Ibrahim:

And We gave him Ishaq and Ya'qub as a further gift; and We made **(them)** ***all righteous ones*** **(*21:72*).**

And We made them Imams, to guide **(people)** ***by Our command...*** **(*21:73*).**

And He says in another place:

And We made of them Imams to guide by Our command as they were patient, and they were certain of Our signs **(*32:24*).**

Here the *imamah is* explained, or rather defined, in terms of guidance, and then further qualified with the proviso, "by Our command". Clearly, the *Imamah* does not mean any type of guidance; it is a guidance

which emanates from the command of Allah. And the reality of that command is described in these words:

His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it: "Be", and it is. (***36:82***).

Therefore glory be to Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of every thing… (***36:83***).

And Our command is but one, as the twinkling of an eye (***54:50***).

We shall explain, when writing about these verses, that the Divine Command (which the former verse also calls "the Kingdom") is the sublime side of the creation, with which they face towards Allah; it is pure, free from fetters of time and space, and untouched by change and variation. It is also the real meaning of the word "Be", because the Divine Command "Be", is nothing other than the actual existence of the thing concerned. This "command" is in contrast to *al-khalq* (اَلخَلْق = creation) which is the other side of the things – it is subject to changes and variations; it grows by and by and deteriorates in the same way; it works within the framework of time and space. (We shall fully explain this theme in its proper place, Allah willing.)

To sum it up, *Imam is* a leader who guides by a Divine Command which is closely associated with him. The *Imamah,* in its esoteric sense, is *al-wilayah* (اَلوِلايَة = guardianship, authority) over the people in their actions and activities; and its guidance entails conveying them to the final destination by the command of Allah. It is different from that guidance which only shows the way – and which is usually done by the prophets and messengers of Allah as well as by other believers who guide the people towards Allah with sincere exhortation and good advice. This second type of guidance is mentioned in the following verses:

And We did not send any apostle but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them clearly; then Allah makes whom He pleases err and He guides whom He pleases… (***14:4***).

And he who believed (***i.e.,*** **the believer from the family of Pharaoh**) ***said: "O my people! follow me, I will guide you to the right course"*** (***40:38***).

Why should not then a company from every party from among them go forth that they may acquire (**proper**) ***understanding in religion, and that they may warn their people when they come back to them, so that they may be cautious?*** (***9:122***)

(We shall further explain it later on.)

Then Allah describes the reason why He gave them the *Imamah,* in these words:

As they were patient, and they were certain of Our signs (***32:24***).

The criteria, therefore, are patience and absolute certainty. They were steadfast and patient in the cause of Allah. Patience, in this verse, is unconditional; therefore it means remaining patient and steadfast in all

matters and all conditions with which Allah may choose to test the submission and servitude of a servant. And they possessed highest degree of certainty. Going through the stories of Ibrahim (‘a), we find the following words of Allah in the Qur’an:

***And thus did We show Ibrahim the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and so that he might be of those who are sure* (*6:75*).**

The verse clearly indicates that showing of the kingdom to Ibrahim was the prelude to the bestowal of absolute certainty on him. It proves that certainty is an inseparable concomitant of looking at the kingdom. This is also the theme of the following verses:

***Nay! if you had known with a knowledge of certainty* (*102:5*).**

***you should most certainly have seen the hell* (*102:6*).**

***Nay! rather, what they used to do has become* (like) *rust upon their hearts* (*83:14*).**

***Nay! most surely they shall on that day be shut out away from their Lord…* (*83:15*).**

***Nay! most surely the record of the righteous shall be in the ‘Illiyyin* (*83:18*).**

***And what will make you know what ‘illiyyin is?* (*83:19*).**

***It is a written book* (*83:20*).**

***See it those who are near* (to Allah) (*83:21*).**

These verses prove that the “near ones” are those who are not shut out away from their Lord; on their hearts there are no rust or coverings of sin, ignorance and doubt; they are the ones who have absolute certainty about Allah, and they see the *‘illiyyin* as they see the hell.

In short, it is essential for an Imam to be a man of absolute certainty, who sees the world of the “kingdom” of Allah which is based on the “words” of Allah. And we have explained earlier that the kingdom is the command of Allah, which, in its turn, is the esoteric side of the universe.

Now let us have a fresh look at the verse 21:73 (and 32:24) quoted earlier. “And We made them Imams, to guide (people) by Our command:” it very clearly proves that whatever is the subject of guidance (i.e., the hearts and the deeds), the Imam has its inner reality; he is constantly in touch with its another side – the side of the command, which is never hidden from him. It is known that the hearts and the deeds, like any other thing, have two sides, one of the “command” and the other of the “creation”; therefore, the reality of the deeds of the men – both good and bad – is always within the vision of the Imam, always under his observation; and he has authority over both ways – the one of happiness and bliss and the other of unhappiness and distress. Also, Allah has said:

(**Remember**) ***The day when We will call every people with their Imam*** (***17:71***).

(We shall explain when writing about this verse that the "Imam" here means the true leader, and not the scroll of deeds, as some people think.) Therefore, the Imam is the one who shall lead the people to Allah ***On the day when hidden things shall be tried*** (***86:9***), as he leads them to Him in the manifest and esoteric lives of this world. The last quoted verse also shows that there cannot be a single period, a single moment, without an Imam, because Allah says, "every people". (The detailed proof of this statement will be given under that verse.)

The *Imamah is* such an exalted and sublime position that it cannot be given except to one who is extremely virtuous by his own self. If someone's soul is polluted, even in a minute degree, by any injustice or sin, then he needs someone else to guide him back to the right way. And Allah has said:

Is he then who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed, or he who himself does not go right unless he is guided? (***10:35***).

Here Allah puts two groups opposite to each other: one is that which guides to the truth; and the other, that which does not go right unless guided by someone else, in other words, the one which needs a helping hand to be guided aright. This contrast means that the one who guides to the truth, is rightly guided by himself; conversely, the one rightly guided by another person cannot guide to the truth.

It follows from the above discourse that:

First: The Imam must be *al-ma'sum* (اَلمَعْصوْم = sinless; protected from error and sin). Otherwise, he would not be rightly guided by himself, as explained above. Also, the following verse proves their *al-'ismah* (اَلعِصْمَة = sinlessness):

And We made them Imams to guide (**people**) ***by Our command, and We revealed to them the doing of good*** (**deeds**) ***and the establishing of prayer and the giving of*** **zakat,** ***and Us*** (**alone**) ***did they worship*** (***21:73***).

According to this verse, all the deeds of the Imam are good, he is guided to them, not by any other person, but on his own by Divine help. The phrase translated above as "the doing of good (deeds)" is *fi'la 'l-khayrat* (فِعْلَ الخَيْرات = to do good deeds); it is *al-masdar* (اَلمَصْدَر = roughly translated as infinitive verb), used as the first construct of a genitive construction; and such *a masdar* proves that the action has surely taken place. Let us explain it in another way: If Allah would have said, 'We revealed to them: Do good deeds', it would not have shown that they actually obeyed the command and did good; but when He says, *We revealed to them the doing of good,* it means that whatever they did was good and it was by Divine inspiration and heavenly help.

Second: Conversely, whoever is not *ma'sum,* can never be an Imam, a guide to the truth.

Now, it is clear that the adjective, "the unjust", (in the Divine declaration, "My covenant will not include

the unjust") covers everyone who might have done any injustice, for example, polytheism, idol-worship or any other sin, in any period of his life, even if he may have repented and been good afterwards.

One of our teachers (may Allah have mercy on him!) was asked as to how this verse could prove that the Imam must be *ma'sum.* He replied:

Logically, we may divide mankind into four groups:

(1) One who remains unjust throughout his life;

(2) One who was never unjust in any period of his life;

(3) One who was unjust in the beginning, but became just later on; and

(4) One who was just in the beginning, but became unjust afterwards, Ibrahim was too sublime in position to ask for the *Imamah* for the first or the fourth group.

This leaves two groups (the second and the third) which could be included in his prayer. And Allah rejected one of them - the one who was unjust in the beginning but became just later on. Now, there remains only one group who could be given the *Imamah* - the one who was never unjust in any period of his life; that is, who was *ma'sum.* [1]

To sum it up, the verse shows that:

First: *Imamah is* a Divinely-made status.

Second: The Imam must be *ma'sum,* by Divine *'ismah;* in other words, he must be protected by Allah from sins and errors.

Third: The earth cannot remain without a rightful Imam, as long as there is a man on it.

Fourth: It is essential for an Imam to be supported by the Divine help.

Fifth: The deeds of the people are not hidden from the Imam.

Sixth: The Imam must have knowledge of all that is needed by the people for their good in this world and the next.

Seventh: It is impossible for any other person to surpass the Imam in any virtue.

These seven are among the basic factors of the *Imamah,* and this verse, read with other relevant verses, leads us to them, and Allah is our Guide.

Objection: As the *Imamah* means to guide by the command of Allah, and as that guiding to the truth is concomitant with the Imam's being rightly guided by Allah as has been inferred from the verse:

Is he then who guides to truth more worthy to be followed… (***10:35***).

Then all the prophets should certainly be called Imams. Obviously, prophethood of a prophet comes into being only when he is rightly guided by Allah through revelation; a prophet is not guided by any other person through teaching or advice etc. Therefore, bestowal of prophethood would be synonymous with that of the *Imamah.* And the objection you had put against the interpretation of the *Imamah* with prophethood would be turned *in toto* against your explanation.

Reply: What we have inferred from the foregoing description is that if one guides to Allah by His command, he must be guided aright not by any other person but by Allah Himself. But the Qur'anic verses have not shown that its contrary proposition is also true, that is, it has not been proved that whoever is rightly guided by Allah should also be a guide to Allah. Therefore, it is not necessary that every prophet should be called an Imam. In one place, Allah declares about various prophets that they were rightly guided by Him, and yet does not join it with the statement that they guided their people to the truth.

He says:

And We gave to him (***i.e.,*** **Ibrahim**) ***Ishaq and Ya'qub; each did We guide, and Nuh did We guide before, and of his descendants, Dawud and Sulayman and Ayyub and Yusuf and Harun; and thus do We reward those who do good*** (***6:84***).

And Zakariyya and Yahya and 'Isa and Ryas; every one was of the righteous (**ones**) (***6:85***).

And Isma'il and Ilyasa' and Yunus and Lut; and every one We did exalt over the worlds (***6:86***).

And from among their fathers and their descendants and their brethren; and We chose them and guided them to the straight path. (***6:87***).

This is Allah's guidance, He guides thereby whom He pleases of His servants; and if they had set up others (**with Him**), ***certainly what they did would have become ineffectual for them.*** (***6:88***).

These are they to whom We gave the book and the wisdom and the prophethood; therefore if these disbelieve in it, We have (**already**) ***entrusted with it a people who are not disbelievers in it.*** (***6:89***).

These are they whom Allah guided, therefore follow their guidance. Say: "I do not ask you for any reward for it; it is but a reminder to the worlds" (***6:90***). 2

The context of the above verses shows that this Divine Guidance is an unalterable firm decree; it will continue in this *ummah* even after the Messenger of Allah (S), and will remain confined within the progeny of Ibrahim ('a), as the verses 43:26 – 28 prove:

And when Ibrahim said to his father and his people: "Surely, I am clear of what you worship; (***43:26***).

(***I*** **worship**) ***but*** (**only**) ***Him Who created me, for surely He will guide me"*** (***43:27***).

And He made it a word to continue in his posterity, so that they may return (**to God**) (***43:28***).

When Ibrahim ('a) declared to his people that he was clear of what they worshipped and that he worshipped only Him Who had created him, he had already achieved that guidance which contemplation and logical reasoning can produce. Then he told them of his expectation that Allah would surely guide him. This subsequent guidance was obviously different from the earlier one; it was a guidance by the command of Allah. Thereafter, Allah says that He made this Divine Guidance "a word to continue" in Ibrahim's posterity. This is one of those verses in which "word" has been used not for speech but for a substance – it refers to the guidance as "a word". The same is the interpretation of "word of piety" in the verse:

And made them keep the word of piety, and well were they entitled to it and worthy of it (***48:26***).

The above explanation makes it clear that the *Imamah* after Ibrahim ('a), is confined to his descendants. The sentences, "(Ibrahim) said: 'And of my offspring?' He said: 'My covenant will not include unjust'", point to this fact. Obviously, Ibrahim ('a) had asked for the *imamah* not for all but only for some of his descendants, and he was told that it would not be given to the unjust of his descendants. Needless to say, that not all of his descendants were unjust; therefore, this reply disqualifies only one group and not all. In other words, it grants the request for a selected group of his offspring and further sanctifies it as a covenant, and on that basis it says that the covenant of Allah will not include the unjust ones.

Qur'an: ***"My covenant will not include the unjust"*** (***2:124***).

This expression shows how far removed are the unjust from the circle of the Divine Covenant 3; therefore, it is an example of *isti'arah bi 'l-kinayah.*

Traditions

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "Verily Allah (to Whom belong Might and Majesty) accepted Ibrahim as a servant before making him a prophet; and verily Allah made him a prophet before appointing him as a messenger; and verily Allah appointed him as a messenger before taking him as a friend; and verily Allah took him as a friend before making him an Imam. When He combined for him all (the above-mentioned) things, ***He said, 'Surely I am going to make you an Imam for men*** (***2:124***)***'"*** The Imam further said: "It was because of the greatness of it (i.e., *Imamah*) in the eyes of Ibrahim ('a) that he said:

'And of my offspring?' He said: 'My covenant will not include the unjust" (***2:124***).

The Imam explained: "A fool will not be Imam of a pious."[4]

The author says: The same meaning has been narrated from the same Imam through another chain of narrators, and from al-Baqir ('a) through yet other chain; and al-Mufid has narrated it from Imam as-Sadiq ('a).

The Imam has said that Allah accepted Ibrahim as a servant before making him a prophet. This theme is inferred from the Qur'anic verse:

***And certainly We gave to Ibrahim his rectitude before, and We knew him fully well* (*21:51*).**

***When he said to his father and his people: "What are these images to which you* (as devotees) *cleave?"* (*21:52*).**

***They said: "We found our fathers worshipping them"* (*21:53*).**

***He said: "Certainly you have been* (both) *you and your fathers, in manifest error"* (*21:54*).**

***They said: "Have you brought to us the truth, or are you one of the triflers?"* (*21:55*).**

***He said: "Nay! your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Who brought them into existence, and I am of those who bear witness to this"* (*21:56*).**

This story shows how Allah took Ibrahim ('a) as a servant in the beginning of his spiritual journey.

It is one thing that someone is a slave or servant of Allah, and a quite different thing that he is taken or accepted by Allah as His slave. Being a slave of Allah is a concomitant of existence and creation; anyone who is created and has perceiving faculties is inescapably a slave of Allah; this servitude does not depend on Divine acceptance. Man, for example, owes his existence to his Lord, is created and made by Him; he may behave in his personal life according to this servitude's dictates by surrendering himself to his Lord the Almighty, or he may act rebelliously, but his submission or rebellion does not alter the fact that he is a born slave of Allah. Allah says in the Qur'an:

***There is no one in the heavens and the earth but will come to the Beneficent Allah as a servant* (*19:93*).**

But if he does not act as a slave should do, if he behaves in the earth with arrogance and rebellion, then he does not deserve to be called a slave or servant of Allah, because he does not fulfill the conditions of servitude. A servant surrenders himself to his Lord, and leaves all his affairs in his Master's hands. Therefore, only he deserves to be called a servant of Allah who is His slave in his person as well as in his action - only such a man can truly be called a slave of Allah. Allah says:

***And the servants of the Beneficent God are they who walk on the earth in humbleness...* (*25:63*).**

Accordingly, when Allah accepts a man as His servant, He takes masterly interest in that servant's affairs; in other words, Allah becomes his *waliyy* and guardian, and takes all his affairs in His Own hands. Such a servitude is the key to *al-wilayah* (اَلوِلاَيَة = guardianship). The following verse points to this reality:

"Surely my guardian is Allah, Who revealed the Book, and He takes in hand **(the affairs of)** ***the good"*** **(*7:196*).**

The adjective "good", refers to those who are worthy of Divine guardianship and friendship. Allah has referred to the Prophet in several places in the Qur'an as His servant, for example,

...Who revealed the Book to His servant... **(*18:1*).**

...Who sends down clear signs upon His servant... **(*57:9*).**

...When the servant of Allah stood up calling upon Him... **(*72:19*).**

In short, to say that Allah accepted someone as His servant, is another way of saying that Allah took him under His *wilayah* and guardianship.

The Imam said: "... and verily Allah made him a prophet before appointing him as a messenger". The difference between a prophet and a messenger, as shown by the traditions narrated from the Imams of the *Ahl Al-Bayt, is* as follows:

A prophet sees in his dream what Allah intends to reveal to him; and a messenger sees the angel and talks to him.

The same gradual progress is seen in the history of Ibrahim ('a). Allah says:

And mention Ibrahim in the Book; surely he was a truthful **(man),** ***a prophet*** **(*19:41*).**

When he said to his father: "O my father! why do you worship what neither hears nor sees, nor does it avail you in the least" **(*19:42*).**

The verse shows that he was a prophet when he said this to his father. It was a confirmation of what he had told his people as soon as he arrived among them:

"***Surely I am clear of what you worship*** **(*43:26*).**

(I worship) ***but*** **(only)** ***Him Who created me, for surely He will guide me"*** **(*43:27*).**

Then we read the following verse which says:

And certainly Our messengers **(*i.e.,* angels)** ***came to Ibrahim with good news. They said: "Peace." "Peace," said he*** **(*11:69*).**

This event, in which Ibrahim saw the angels and talked to them, had taken place in his old age long after he had left his father and his nation.

The Imam said: "And verily Allah appointed him as a messenger before taking him as a friend." It is inferred from the words of Allah:

***And who is better in religion than he who… follows the faith of Ibrahim, the upright one? And Allah took Ibrahim as a friend* (*4:125*).**

Apparently it shows that Allah took him as a friend because of the same upright faith and religion which he had promulgated by the command of his Lord; the theme of this verse is to describe the distinction and excellence of that upright religion which so much raised the status of Ibrahim that he was taken as a friend of Allah.

al-Khalil (**اَلخَلِيْل**) is more exclusive than *as-Sadiq* (**اَلصَّدِيْق**), although both are generally translated as "friend". When a friend is sincere and truthful (*as-Sadiq*) in his dealings with the other friend, he is called *as-Sadiq;* thereafter, if he turns away from all else, confining his needs and requirements to that friend only, he is called *al-khalil,* because *al-khullah* (**اَلخلَّة**) means need and requirement.

The meaning of the Imam's sentence, "and verily Allah took him as a friend before making him an Imam," may be understood from the foregoing commentary. The words of the Imam: "A fool will not be Imam of a pious," point to the following verses:

***And who forsakes the religion of Ibrahim but he who makes himself a fool, and most certainly We chose him in this world, and in the hereafter he is most surely among the righteous.* (*2:130*).**

***When his Lord said to him, Submit* (yourself), *he said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds."* (*2:131*).**

In this verse Allah says that whoever turns away from the religion of Ibrahim – in other words, whoever is unjust – is a fool; then he contrasts this foolishness with Divine selection – a selection which has been explained in the next sentences as "Islam" or submission to God. (Ponder on the clause, ***When his Lord said to him, Submit yourself***). Then we see that *al-Islam* (**اَلإِسْلام** = submission) and *at-taqwa* (**اَلتَّقْوى** = piety, fear of Allah) have been made one, or applicable to one meaning, in the verse:

***O you who believe! fear Allah as is due to Him, and do not die but as Muslims* (*3:102*).**

(Think deeply on it.)

al-Mufid has narrated from Durust and Hisham from the Imams (of the *Ahl Al-Bayt*): "Ibrahim was a prophet, and he was not an Imam until Allah, Blessed and High is He, said (to him):

***"Surely I am going to make you an Imam for men"* (*2:124*).**

(Ibrahim) said:

"And of my offspring?" **(*2:124*).**

Then Allah, Blessed and High is He, said:

"My *covenant will not include the unjust"* (*2:124*).

Whoever had (ever) worshipped an idol or a sculpture or an image, cannot be an Imam."

The author says: Its meaning is clear from the above explanations. It is narrated in *al-Amali of* at-Tusi (with complete chain of narrators) and in *al-Manaqib* of Ibn al-Maghazili (as *a marfu'* tradition) from Ibn Mas'ud from the Prophet that he said (explaining the words of Allah to Ibrahim in this verse): "Whoever prostrated before an idol, leaving me, I will not make him an Imam." Then the Prophet said: "And that prayer was fulfilled in me and my brother Ali; neither of us ever prostrated before any idol."

Waki' and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated from Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) that the Prophet (S) said (in explanation of the words of Allah, ***My covenant will not include the unjust***): "There is no obedience except in good."[5]

'Abd ibn Hamid narrated from 'Imran ibn Husayn that he said: "I heard the Prophet saying: 'There is no obedience of a creature in disobedience of Allah (i.e., a man should not be obeyed if he tells you to disobey Allah).'"[6]

The author says: The meanings of those traditions are easily understood from the earlier explanations.

al-'Ayyashi has narrated in his *Tafsir,* through several chains, from Safwan the camel-driver, that he said: "We were at Mecca; and the talk gradually reached the words of Allah,

***And* (remember) *when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, then he fulfilled them"* (*2:124*).**

(The Imam) said: "That is, he completed them with Muhammad and 'Ali and the Imams from the descendants of 'Ali, as Allah says:

***Offspring, one from the other"* (*3:34*).**

The author says: This tradition takes the "word" in the meaning *of* the *Imamah;* a similar explanation is given to "word" in the verses:

***...For surely He will guide me* (*43:27*).**

***And He made it a word to continue in his posterity...* (*43:28*).**

According to this tradition, the verse would mean as follows: And remember when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, that is, his own *imamah,* and that of Ishaq and his progeny; then He completed it with

the *imamah* of Muhammad and of the Imams from his family members, who were from the progeny of Isma'il; then Allah made it known to Ibrahim telling him:

"Surely I am going to make you an Imam for men" (***2: 124***).

Ibrahim said:

"And of my offspring?" (***2: 124***)

Allah said:

"My *covenant will not include the unjust"* (***2: 124***).

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1. It is a simplified version of the argument given by al-Qadi Nurullah Tustari (ash-Shahid ath-Thalith) in his Ihgaq al-haqq. (Vide the new ed. with footnotes by Ayatullah Sayyid Shahabuddin Mar'ashi Najafi, Matba'ah Islamiyyah, Tehran, vol. II, pp. 367-369.) (tr.).
2. This reply does not seem to meet the objection. The verse clearly says that these prophets were guided by Allah. Also, it is accepted that all the prophets, including those mentioned in this verse, guided their people aright, and that they did so by the command of Allah. Thus, all the characteristics of the Imamah were found in every prophet who called his people to the right path. (tr.)
3. Its literal translation: My covenant will not reach the unjust. Note that Allah did not say: The unjust will not reach My covenant, because it would have implied that it was within the power of man - albeit a just one - to reach the status of the Imamah. The present sentence does not leave room for any such misunderstanding; it clearly shows that getting the imamah is not within human jurisdiction, it is exclusively in the hand of Allah and He gives to whom He pleases. (tr.)
4. al-Kafi.
5. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
6. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 125 - 129

وَإِذۡ جَعَلۡنَا ٱلۡبَيۡتَ مَثَابَةٗ لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمۡنٗا وَٱتَّخِذُواْ مِن مَّقَامِ إِبۡرَٰهِـۧمَ مُصَلّٗىۖ وَعَهِدۡنَآ إِلَىٰٓ إِبۡرَٰهِـۧمَ وَإِسۡمَٰعِيلَ أَن طَهِّرَا
بَيۡتِيَ لِلطَّآئِفِينَ وَٱلۡعَٰكِفِينَ وَٱلرُّكَّعِ ٱلسُّجُودِ

And **(remember)** ***when We made the House a rendezvous for men and a*** **(place of)** ***security, and take*** **(for yourselves)** ***a place of prayer on the standing-place of Ibrahim. And We enjoined Ibrahim and Isma'il*** **(saying):** ***"Purify*** **(*you* two) My** ***House for those who make circuit and those***

who abide **(in it for devotion)** ***and those who bow down*** **(and)** ***those who prostrate themselves"*** **(*2:125*).**

وَإِذۡ قَالَ إِبرَٰهِـۧمُ رَبِّ ٱجۡعَلۡ هَٰذَا بَلَدًا ءَامِنًا وَٱرۡزُقۡ أَهۡلَهُۥ مِنَ ٱلثَّمَرَٰتِ مَنۡ ءَامَنَ مِنۡهُم بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلۡيَوۡمِ ٱلۡأٓخِرِ
قَالَ وَمَن كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُۥ قَلِيلاً ثُمَّ أَضۡطَرُّهُۥٓ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ ٱلنَّارِ وَبِئۡسَ ٱلۡمَصِيرُ

And **(remember)** ***when Ibrahim said. "My Lord! make it a secure town and provide its people with fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the last day" He said: "And whoever disbelieves, I will grant him enjoyment for a short while, then I will drive him to the chastisement of the Fire; and it is an evil destination"*** **(*2:126*).**

وَإِذۡ يَرۡفَعُ إِبرَٰهِـۧمُ ٱلۡقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ ٱلۡبَيۡتِ وَإِسۡمَٰعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلۡ مِنَّآ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلۡعَلِيمُ

And **(remember)** ***when Ibrahim and Isma'il were raising the foundations of the House: "Our Lord! accept from us; surely Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing*** **(*2:127*).**

رَبَّنَا وَٱجۡعَلۡنَا مُسۡلِمَيۡنِ لَكَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِنَآ أُمَّةً مُّسۡلِمَةً لَّكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبۡ عَلَيۡنَآ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ ٱلتَّوَّابُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ

Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and **(raise)** ***from our offspring a group submitting to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion and turn to us*** **(mercifully),** ***surely Thou art the Oft-returning*** **(with mercy),** ***the Merciful*** **(*2:128*).**

رَبَّنَا وَٱبۡعَثۡ فِيهِمۡ رَسُولاً مِّنۡهُمۡ يَتۡلُواْ عَلَيۡهِمۡ ءَايَٰتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ ٱلۡكِتَٰبَ وَٱلۡحِكۡمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمۡ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ ٱلۡعَزِيزُ
ٱلۡحَكِيمُ

Our Lord! and raise up in them an Apostle from among themselves who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them; surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise" **(*2:129*).**

Commentary

Verse 125

Qur'an: ***And*** **(remember)** ***when We made the House a rendezvous for men and a*** **(place of)** ***security*** **(*2:125*).**

It refers to the legislation of the *hajj* and the sanctuary offered by the House. *"al-Mathabah"* **اَلمَثَابَةُ** =

rendezvous; a place to which one returns) is derived from *thaba, yathubu* (ثَابَ ، يَثُوبَ = he returned, he will return).

Qur'an: ***And take*** **(for yourselves)** ***a place of prayer on the standing-place of Ibrahim*** **(*2:125*).**

The conjunctive "and" joins this order with the preceding sentence turning that also into order.

In that case the complete sentence would have the following connotation: And when We told the people, return to, and do the *hajj* of the House and take (for yourself) a place of prayer... Other alternative, suggested by some exegetes, is to imply a deleted word "We said". Accordingly, the meaning would be: and We said, take (for yourselves) a place of prayer...

al-Musalla (اَلمصَلّى) is deverbal noun of place, derived from *as-salah* (اَلصَّلوة = to pray, to invoke); the sentence means: take (for yourselves) a place of prayer and invocation at the place where Ibrahim ('a) had stood.

Apparently, the preceding sentence is a sort of introduction, pointing to the reason why prayer in that place was prescribed; that is why this sentence does not put emphasis on "prayer" - in other words, it does not say, and pray in the standing-place of Ibrahim; it literally says, and take on the standing-place of Ibrahim ('a) a place of prayer.

Qur'an: ***And We enjoined Ibrahim and Isma'il*** **(saying):** ***"Purify*** **(you two)** ***My House..."*** **(*2:125*)**

al-'Ahd (اَلعَهْد = to enjoin, to obligate). The order to purify the House may mean to keep it exclusively reserved for the worship by those who go around it making circuits, those who abide in it for devotion, and those who pray in it. In this sense, it would be an *isti'arah bi 'l-kinaya,* and would imply: keep My House exclusively reserved for My worship. Alternatively, the order may be to keep it clean; to be on guard lest it is dirtied by careless people.

ar-Rukka' (اَلركَّع) and *as-sujud* (اَلسجود) are plurals of *ar-raki'* (اَلرَّاكِع = one who bows down) and *as-sajid* (اَلسَّاجِد = one who prostrates, one who does *sajdah*) respectively, the phrase refers to those who pray.

Verse 126

Qur'an: ***And*** **(remember)** ***when Ibrahim said. "My Lord! make it a secure town..."*** **(*2:126*)**

In this way Ibrahim ('a) called on his Lord to bestow security and safety as well as sustenance on the residents of Mecca; and the prayer was granted. Far be it from Allah to quote in His speech an unaccepted prayer without hinting at its rejection; if He were to do so, His talk would amount to a vain ridicule - far beneath the sublime dignity of His truthful speech. He says:

...And the truth do I speak **(*38:83*).**

***Most surely it is a decisive word* (*86: 13*).**

***...And it is no a jest* (*86: 14*).**

The Qur'an has quoted numerous prayers which this great prophet had pleaded before his Lord for; for example, his prayer for himself in the beginning of his life; his prayer at the time of his emigration to Syria; his invocation to keep his good name alive; his prayer for himself, for his progeny and parents, and for the believing men and women; his invocation, after building the House, for the residents of Mecca; his prayer and pleading for a Prophet to be sent from among his progeny. His prayers and the favours he asked from Allah are a canvas which graphically shows his hopes and expectations, creates before our eyes a clear picture of his endeavours and efforts in the way of Allah, and provides a glimpse of his sublime spiritual virtues. In short, these prayers show his status before Allah and his nearness to Him. One may write a detailed history of his life, basing it on his stories and the laudatory phrases used for him in the Qur'an; and we shall write something on these lines in Chapter 6 (The Cattle).

Qur'an: *such of them as believe* (*2: 126*).

Ibrahim (a. s.) asked his Lord to give the residents of Mecca security and provide them with fruits. At the same time he realized that not all of the residents would be believers, that some of them would be unbelievers; also he understood that his prayer for their sustenance was general – it covered the believers as well as the unbelievers; and he was aware that he had already declared himself to be separate from the unbelievers and their idols (as Allah says about him:

***But when it became clear to him that he, that is, his father, was an enemy of Allah, he declared himself to be clear of him* (*9: 114*).**

Here Allah bears witness that Ibrahim ('a) had declared his separation from every enemy of Allah, not excepting even his father). In this background, as soon as he realized that his prayer included both the believers and the unbelievers, he added the proviso, "such of them as believe...", although he was well aware that, according to the social structure of this world, sustenance could not be given only to the believing group, to the exclusion of the unbelievers; yet he qualified his prayer. Even so, Allah knows better how He should decide about His creatures and what He should decree concerning them. Therefore, Ibrahim's prayer was granted for the believers, and was extended to cover the unbelievers also. The reply given to Ibrahim ('a) implies that Allah would give them sustenance according to the system He has created in this world; in other words, believers and unbelievers both would be given their livelihood, because restricting it to the believers would entail unnecessarily breaking the usual and established system.

Ibrahim ('a) could have said: and provide the believers of this town with fruits; but he did not, because what he wanted to ask was an attraction, a dignity, for the town which would be centred around the Sacred House of Allah. That House was built in a valley devoid of every agricultural produce; and if it were not provided with fruits and foodstuff, nobody would settle in it, and the place would remain

uninhabited.

Qur'an: ***"And whoever disbelieves, I will grant him enjoyment for a short while*** **(*2:126*).**

The word translated, "I will grant him enjoyment", has been read *umti'uhu* (امْتِعه) and *umatti'uhu* (امَتِّعه) from the verbal noun's paradigms *al-if'al* (اَلإفعْال) and *at-taf-'il* (اَلتَّفْعِيل) respectively. Meaning of both readings is the same.

Qur'an: ***Then I will drive him to the chastisement…"*** **(*2:126*).**

It further shows the great dignity of the House and is meant to give even more pleasure to Ibrahim ('a). The import of the verse is as follows: I have granted your prayer (to increase this House's honour by giving sustenance to its believing residents) and have decided to include even the unbelievers in that livelihood; but the unbelievers should not be deluded by that; they should not think that the sustenance comes to them because they have got any honour in the eyes of Allah; it is actually in honour of this town, because I have accepted your prayer and given you more than you had asked. As for the unbeliever, I will surely drive him to the chastisement of the Fire and it is an evil destination.

Verse 127

Qur'an: ***And*** **(remember)** ***when Ibrahim and Isma'il were raising the foundations of the House:*** **(*2:127*).**

al-Qawa'id (اَلقَوَاعِد) is plural of *al-ga'idah* (اَلقَاعِدَة) which literally means that part of building which "sits" in the earth'; hence it has been translated as foundation, upon which the rest of the building is raised. "Raising the foundations" is an allegorical expression, it counts the walls (which were raised upon foundations) as a part of the foundation; another allegorical aspect is to ascribe the rise to the foundations alone without mentioning the walls, although it were the walls which were raised. The words "of the House", point to the intended allegory.

Qur'an: "***Our Lord! accept from us; surely Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing*** **(*2:127*).**

The prayer comes direct from Ibrahim and Isma'il, without any introductory clause like "They said" or "They prayed"; such a clause is not even implied here. When we read the words, "when Ibrahim and Isma'il were raising the foundations of the House", the scene is flashed before our eyes; it is as though we see them busy building the walls, and then we dramatically hear their voices and their prayer directly from them – there is no need of any intermediary to report to us what they said or did.

Such dramatic presentation is often used in the Qur'an, and it is among its most beautiful styles – and all its styles are beautiful. It presents the story in the most effective way, bringing it within the purview of our senses. It is a style which surpasses all manners of narration and reporting.

Ibrahim and Isma'il did not mention the thing or action which they prayed to Allah to accept, that is, they

did not say, accept from us this construction' of Thy House. It shows their humbleness and humility before their Lord; they thought that it was a very insignificant work on their part and was not worthy of their Lord. This omission of the object has given the following connotation to their prayer: Our Lord! accept from us this insignificant deed, although it is not worthy of Thy name; surely Thou art hearing our prayers, knowing our intentions.

Verse 128

Qur'an: ***Our Lord! And make us both submissive to thee and*** **(raise)** ***from our offspring a group submitting to Thee*** **(*2:128*).**

The words translated here as submissive and submitting are *muslim* (مسْلِم) and its feminine *muslimah* (مسْلِمَة), respectively. Obviously, the definition of Islam, with which we are familiar, and which comes to our minds as soon as we hear the word, Islam, is just the elementary grade of servitude; it distinguishes a professed convert from the one who openly rejects the faith. This elementary Islam means professing the matters of faith and doing necessary deeds, no matter whether it is done with true belief or hypocritically. Now, Ibrahim ('a) was a prophet, a messenger and one of the five *ul al-'azm* apostles, who gave us the upright faith. It is unthinkable that such a great prophet had not attained, at the time when he was praying, this most elementary grade of Islam.

Likewise, his son, Isma'il ('a), was a messenger of Allah and had been offered as sacrifice in His way. Can it be said that they had got that much Islam but were unaware of it? Or that, although they were aware of having attained to that Islam but wanted to continue on it? Just look at the context of the prayer: Those who prayed were so near to Allah; they were praying while building His Sacred House; they knew whom they were praying to, and who He was and how great His splendour is. Could they, in that position, ask for such a trivial grade from the Lord Almighty? Moreover, this grade of Islam is among those things which are within the power of man himself; and that is why man can be ordered to accept it; as Allah says:

When his Lord said to him: "Be a Muslim", he said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds" **(*2:131*).**

Obviously, such a quality or action cannot be attributed to Allah; likewise, it is meaningless to ask from Allah to do a work which has been placed within the power of the man himself. (Of course, it may be done if there is some special condition which makes Divine interference justifiable.)

Therefore, the Islam they had asked for was not that Islam whose definition we are familiar with. Islam has many grades, as may be see in the verse quoted above:

When his Lord said to him **(*i.e.,* Ibrahim):** ***"Be a Muslim", he said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds"*** **(*2:131*).**

Ibrahim (‘a) was ordered to be a Muslim at a time when he was already a Muslim. Clearly, the Islam which he was told to attain was other than the Islam he had already attained. There are many such examples in the Qur’an.

This sublime grade of Islam – which we shall explain in detail later on – means total servitude, unconditional surrender of all a servant has got to his Master. No doubt it is within a man’s power to prepare the conditions facilitating its attainment. Yet, when we look at an average man and the usual condition of his heart and mind, such a high standard seems beyond his power to attain. In other words, it is not possible for him – in the conditions surrounding him – to get to that sublime Islam. From this point of view, that Islam is not different from other positions of *al–wilayah* (**اَلوِلاَيَة =** friendship of Allah) and its lofty stages, or from other grades of perfection – all of them are beyond the reach of an average man, because he cannot fulfil their necessary conditions. In this sense, it is possible to count that Islam as a Divine gift which is beyond a man’s power to attain by himself. Consequently, it is perfectly right for a man to pray to Allah to bestow on him that sublime quality and make him a Muslim of that high rank.

Moreover, there is another deeper connotation: It is only actions which are attributed to man and emanate from his free will and power; as for his attributes and deep–rooted traits (which are etched on his psyche by repeated actions), they are in fact beyond his power. Therefore, they may be – or let us say, should be – attributed to Allah, especially if they are good and virtuous attributes which should better be attributed to Allah rather than to man. This observation is based on the style used in the Qur’an. For example:

“My *Lord! make me keep up prayer, and from my off–spring* (too)” (*14:40*).

***“…And join me with the good ones”* (*26:83*).**

“My *Lord! grant me that I should be grateful for Thy bounty which Thou has bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I should do good such as Thou art pleased with, and make me enter, by Thy mercy, into Thy servants, the good ones”* (*27:19*).

“Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and (raise) ***from our offspring a group submitting to Thee* (*2:128*).**

It is now clear that the Islam which Ibrahim and Isma’il had asked for was something different from the Islam to which the following verse refers:

***The dwellers of the desert say: “We believe.” Say: “You do not believe but say: ‘We submit* (we accept Islam)’; *and faith has not yet entered into your hearts”* (*49:14*).**

The Islam they prayed for was of a high rank and sublime grade which we shall explain later on.

Qur’an: *And show us our ways of devotion and turn to us* (mercifully), *surely Thou art the Oft–returning* (with mercy), *the Merciful* (*2:128*).

This also points to the sublime meaning of Islam, just referred to *al–manasik* (**اَلمَناسِك** = translated here as ways of devotion) is plural of *al–mansak* (**اَلمَنسَك**) which means "worship" or "act of worship", as Allah says:

***And to every nation We appointed* (acts of) *worship…* (*22:34*).**

It is *a masdar* used as the first construct of a genitive case. We have explained earlier that *a masdar* used in this way proves the existence of that work or action. Therefore, the phrase, "our ways of devotion", refers to those acts of worship which they were doing or had already done; it does not refer to any action which they intended to do in future.

In this context, the phrase "show us" does not mean "teach us" or "help us to do"; rather it means "strengthen us by showing us the realities of our acts of worship", as we pointed out earlier while writing the verse:

***And We revealed to them the doing of good* (deeds) *and the establishing of prayer and the giving of zakat* (*21:73*).**

And later on we shall explain that the revelation mentioned in this verse means to strengthen the doer of that deed; it does not mean teaching them their responsibilities and obligations. Probably, it is to this reality that the following verses refer:

***And remember Our servants, Ibrahim and Ishaq and Ya'qub, men of strength and insight* (*38:45*).**

***Surely We purified them by a pure quality, the remembering of the* (final) *abode* (*38:46*).**

The above explanation makes it clear that this prayer was for an Islam and an insight into worship completely different from ordinary meanings of these terms. The same is the case with their prayer, *tub 'alayna* (**تبْ عَلَيْنا** = usually translated as, forgive us);

Ibrahim and Isma'il both were prophets, protected by Allah from every error and sin; they could not make any mistake or error; they did not need Allah's forgiveness and pardon as we do when we commit sins, (that is why we have translated it in literal way: *turn to us* mercifully).

Question: It is all right to interpret Islam, showing the ways of devotion and forgiveness in the way you have done maintaining the dignity of Ibrahim and Isma'il (peace be on them both). But it is not necessary to apply the same meanings when these words are used for their offspring. Ibrahim ('a) did not include his offspring with himself and Isma'il, except in the prayer for Islam, and that also in a separate sentence. They did not say: Make us and a group of our offspring submissive to Thee; instead they prayed for themselves, and after that separately pleaded for their offspring, saying, "and (raise) from our offspring a group submitting to Thee".

There should be no difficulty in believing that what they had in mind was Islam in its general meaning

covering all its ranks and grades – even the most elementary one. Even this elementary grade of Islam gives good results and is instrumental in creating good environment in the society. It would not be wrong if Ibrahim (‘a) asked his Lord for this Islam; even the Prophet invited people to just that type of Islam – if they testified that there was none to be worshipped except Allah and Muhammad (S) was His Messenger, they were accepted as Muslims, their lives were protected, marriage with them was allowed and they became entitled to inherit from their Muslim relatives.

Therefore, it should be perfectly right to say that the two sentences refer to two separate ranks of Islam: “Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee”, would mean the highest rank of Islam in conformity with the prestige of Ibrahim and Isma’il; “and (raise) from our offspring a group submitting to Thee”, would refer to the elementary grade of Islam befitting a nation which included hypocrites and people of weak faith as well as those with firm belief – and all are called Muslims.

Reply: Position of legislation for the guidance of people is totally different from the position of praying to Allah, and each has its own rules; what is valid on one plane is not necessarily good on the other. The Prophet prescribed a minimum standard for his *ummah,* that is, to utter the two testimonies of the Oneness of Allah, and his own prophethood; it was done with a view to widen the circle of Islam and to protect the healthy religious system – that manifest Islam protected the essence of Islam as a shell protects the kernel.

But the plane of invocation and prayer to Allah is much higher than that. At this level, appearances loose their value; it is the reality that matters here; the objective here is actuality and truth, and the desire is for nearness to Allah. At this level, the prophets are not influenced by appearance. It was not because of any worldly love of his offspring that Ibrahim (‘a) prayed for his progeny. Had it been so, he would have prayed first of all for his father and would not have declared his separation from him as soon as he came to know that he was an enemy of Allah. Also, if he would have been concerned with appearances, he would not have prayed in the following words:

And disgrace me not on the day when they are raised (***26:87***).

The day on which neither property will avail, nor sons (***26:88***).

Except him who comes to Allah with a heart submissive (***26:89***).

Nor would have he said:

And make for me a truthful tongue among the posterity (***26:84***).

Instead he would have said, make for me a remembering tongue among the posterity.

Keeping all this in view, it is easy to understand that when he asked from his Lord to raise a Muslim group from among his offspring, he did not mean the elementary rank of Islam; he wanted for them the reality of Islam. The Qur’anic words, “a group submitting to Thee”, support this interpretation. If he

wanted only the appearance of Islam and not its essence, it was enough to say, “a group submitting”, there was no need to add, “to Thee”. (Ponder on this point.)

Verse 129

Qur’an: ***Our Lord! and raise up in them an Apostle from among themselves…*** **(*2:129*)**

He was praying for the Prophet; and the Prophet used to say: “I am the prayer of Ibrahim”.

Traditions

al-Kattani said: “I asked Abu Abdillah (‘a) about a man who forgot to pray two *rak’ahs* near the standing-place of Ibrahim, in *at-tawaf* (اَلطَّوَاف = circuit, circumambulation) of the *hajj* and ‘*umrah.* He (‘a) said: ‘If he is still in the town (Mecca), he should pray the two *rak’ahs* near the standing-place of Ibrahim, because verily Allah says: *and take* (for yourselves) *a place of prayer on the standing-place of Ibrahim;* and if he has departed (from it) then I will not order him to return.’”[1]

The author says: Almost similar traditions have been narrated by ash-Shaykh in *at-Tahdhib* and by al-’Ayyashi in his *at-Tafsir* with several *asnad* (*i.e.,* chains of narrators). Particulars of this rule (i.e., prayer should be offered near or behind the standing-place - as is narrated in some traditions that: “No-one should pray the two *rak’ahs* of *at-tawaf* except behind the standing-place...”) are inferred from the word *min* (مِنْ = from; here translated as *on*) used in the order, ***and take… a place of prayer on*** **(or, from)** ***the standing-place…***

Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said explaining the words of Allah: ***Purify*** **(you two)** ***My House…:*** “Keep the polytheists away from it.”[2]

Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said: “Verily Allah, Mighty and Great is He! says in His Book:

‘Purify **(you two) My** ***House for those who make circuit and those who abide*** **(in it for devotion)** ***and those who bow down*** **(and)** ***those who prostrate themselves.’*** **(*2:125*).**

Therefore, it is proper for a servant not to enter Mecca except that he is clean, (and) has washed away his sweat and dirt and has purified himself.”

The author says: This meaning has been narrated in other traditions also. The idea, that if the place of arrival is clean then the one who arrives should make himself clean, may be inferred from other verses too. See, for example, the verse:

And the good things are for good ones and the good ones are for good things **(*24:26*).**

Ibn ‘Abbas said: “When Ibrahim brought Isma’il and Hajar, he settled them at Mecca; and a time passed; and the people of (the tribe of) Jurhum came to settle there and Isma’il married a woman from that tribe;

and Hajar died; and Ibrahim asked permission of Sarah (to visit Isma'il); so she allowed him but imposed a condition on him that he would not come down (from his riding animal). Thus Ibrahim arrived (at Mecca) and Hajar had died, so he went to the house of Isma'il; and he asked his wife: 'Where is your husband?' She told him: 'He is not here, he has gone hunting.' And Isma'il used to go outside al-Haram (**اَلحَرَم** = the boundary) to hunt and then return. Ibrahim said to her: 'Do you have anything to entertain a guest?' She said: 'I have nothing and there is nobody with me.' Then Ibrahim said to her: 'When your husband comes, tell him (my) *salam* and tell him to change the threshold of his door.' And Ibrahim went away. Then Isma'il came and felt the scent of his father.

So he asked his wife: 'Had anyone come to you?' She said: 'An old man had come to me with such and such features (describing him scornfully).' (Isma'il) said: 'Then what did he say to you?' She said: 'He said to me to give you (his) *salam* and to tell you to change the threshold of your door.' So, Isma'il divorced her and married another (woman). Thereafter, Ibrahim remained (at his place) as long as Allah wished him to remain (there). Then he asked permission of Sarah to visit Isma'il; and she allowed him, but (again) imposed the (same) condition that he should not come down (from his riding animal). Then Ibrahim came until he reached the door of Isma'il. And he asked his wife: 'Where is your husband?' She said: 'He has gone for hunting and, Allah willing, he will come back just now; you come down, may Allah have mercy upon you!' He asked her: 'Do you have anything to entertain a guest?' She said: 'Yes.' Then she brought milk and meat. (Ibrahim) thereupon prayed and blessed her. Had she brought on that day bread, wheat, barley or date, (Mecca) would have become the most plentiful of all the world in wheat, barley or date.

Then she said to him: '(Please) come down so that I may wash your head.' But he did not come down. So she brought (the stone which thereafter was known as) the standing-place (of Ibrahim) and put it on his (right) side, and he put his foot on it, and his footmark was impressed on it; (in this way) she washed the right side of his head; then she shifted the stone to his left side and washed the left side of his head, and (again) his footmark was imprinted on it. Thereupon (Ibrahim) said to her: 'When your husband comes, give him (my) *salam* and tell him that the threshold of his door is now in order.' When Isma'il ('a) came back, he felt the scent of his father, and asked his wife: 'Had anyone come to you?' She replied: 'Yes, a venerable (old) man, of loveliest features and most pleasant fragrance; he said to me this and this and I told him this and this; and I washed his head and this is the imprint of his feet on (his) standing-place.' (Hearing this), Isma'il said to her: 'That was Ibrahim.'"[3]

The author says: al-Qummi has narrated in his *at-Tafsir a* nearly similar tradition.

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "Verily, Ibrahim settled in a valley of Syria. When he got his son Isma'il from Hajar, Sarah was extremely grieved because she herself had no child. And she used to hurt Ibrahim and make him unhappy with respect to Hajar. So Ibrahim complained to Allah about it, and Allah sent a revelation to him: 'The likeness of woman is like the curved rib; if you leave it (as it is), you will benefit from it, but if you (try to) make it straight, you will break it.' Thereafter, (Allah) ordered him to remove

Isma'il and his mother (from that place). He said: 'O Lord! to which place?' (Allah) said: 'To My holy place, and My sanctuary, and the part of the earth which I created first (of all the earth); and it is Mecca.' Then Allah sent Jibril down to him with *al-Buraq*4; and (Jibril) made Hajar, Isma'il and Ibrahim ride on it. And whenever Ibrahim passed a good place with trees, cultivation and date-palms, he used to say: 'O Jibril! here? here?' And Jibril used to reply: 'No, go on, go on.' (It continued) until they reached Mecca and (Jibril) made them alight in the place where the House is. And Ibrahim had given Sarah a promise that he would not come down until he came back to her. When they alighted in that place, there was a tree there; Hajar spread on that tree a sheet she had with her, and thus they found a shade under it. When Ibrahim arranged their affairs and settled them there, he wished to leave them to return to Sarah. Hajar said to him: 'O Ibrahim! Are you leaving us in a place where there is neither human being to keep company nor water nor cultivation?' Ibrahim said: 'Allah, Who has ordered me to settle you in this place, will suffice you.' Then he took leave of them. When he reached Kada' (a mountain in Dhu Tuwa), Ibrahim turned around and said:

"O our Lord! surely I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley uncultivable near Thy Sacred House, our Lord!, that they may establish prayer; therefore make the hearts of some people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits, haply they may be grateful" (***14:37***).

Then he went away, and Hajar remained (there). When the sun rose high, Isma'il became thirsty; Hajar stood at the running-place5, and she ascended the Safa, and mirage glittered before her in the valley and she thought that it was water; so she descended to the valley and ran (to it). When she reached Marwah, she could not see Isma'il, therefore, she returned until she reached Safa and again she looked (around, with the same effect); until she did likewise seven times. When she was on Marwah, in the seventh round, she looked at Isma'il and lo! water had appeared from under his feet.

She returned and gathered sand around the water - the water was flowing and she "reined" (زَمَّتْ = *zammat*) it with (the sand) which she put around it, and that is why it was called *zamzam.* And the (tribe of) Jurhum had come down at *Dh al-majaz* and *Arafat.* When water appeared at Mecca, the birds and wild animals gathered around it; the Jurhum saw this gathering of the birds and animals at that place and followed them until they found a woman and a child settled there - they were sitting in the shade of the tree and the water had appeared for them.

They said to Hajar: 'Who are you? And what is the matter with you and this child?' She said: 'I am the mother of the son of Ibrahim, the friend of Allah, and this is his son; Allah has ordered him to settle us here.' They asked her: 'Would you allow us to remain near you?' She told them: 'Until Ibrahim comes.' When Ibrahim came to visit them the third day, Hajar said: 'O friend of Allah! there are some people of Jurhum here; they request you to allow them to settle near us; so will you allow them?' Ibrahim said: 'Yes.' Then Hajar allowed them and they settled near them, and erected their tents. In this way Hajar and Isma'il got on friendly terms with them. When Ibrahim came to see them the second time, he looked at the large number of people around them, and he was extremely happy.

When Isma'il grew up – and each one of the Jurhum had presented one or two goats to Isma'il – so Hajar and Isma'il supported themselves with them. When Isma'il came of age, Allah ordered Ibrahim to build the House... When Allah ordered Ibrahim to build the House, he did not know where to build it; so Allah sent Jibril and he drew a line at the site of the House... So, Ibrahim built the House and shifted Isma'il from Dhu Tuwa.

And he raised (the House) nine hands in height. Then (Jibril) led him to the place of the (Black) Stone, and Ibrahim took it out and fixed it in the place where it is at present. When he built it, he made two doors for it, one in the east and the other in the west; and the door that was in the west is (now) called al-Mustajar. Then he put on it tree (trunks) and *al-adhkhar* (اَلأَذْخَرْ = a sweet-smelling grass) (as roof). And Hajar put on the door a sheet she had with her and under which they used to sit. When he built and completed it, Ibrahim and Isma'il performed their *hajj.* Jibril came to them on the day of *at-tarwiyah,* that is, 8th *Dh al-hijjah,* and said: 'O Ibrahim! stand up and quench your thirst from water' (because there was no water in Mina or 'Arafat); that is why it was named the day of *at-tarwiyah* (اَلتَّروِيَة = to quench thirst). Then (Jibril) took him out to Mina and he stayed there in the night, and Jibril did with Ibrahim what he had done with Adam. Thus, when Ibrahim completed the construction of the House, he said:

'My *Lord! make it a secure town and provide its people with fruits, such of them as believe in Allah…'" (2: 126).*

The Imam explained the fruits as the fruits of the hearts, that is, make people love them, so that they may befriend them and return to them (year after year).6

The author says: This is the gist of this story, and it covers many of the traditions narrated about this subject. Some other traditions say that there had happened many miraculous things in the history of the House. For example, some traditions say that the House in the very beginning was a dome of light; it had descended on Adam and settled in the place where in later days Ibrahim built the Ka'bah; and that dome remained in the place till the deluge of Nuh; when the earth was submerged in water, Allah took that dome up; and its site was not submerged, that is why the Ka'bah is called the Ancient House.

Other traditions say that Allah sent the foundation of the House down from the Garden.

Yet others say that the Black Stone came down from the Garden – and it was whiter than snow – then it turned black when it was touched by the unbelievers.

Also it is narrated from Imam al-Baqir or Imam as-Sadiq ('a) that he said: "Verily Allah ordered Ibrahim to build the Ka'bah and to raise its walls and to show the people their ways of devotion (i.e., *hajj*). Thereupon, Ibrahim and Isma'il built the House, every day (the height of) a knee until it reached the place of the Black Stone." And Imam al-Baqir ('a) said: "Then the (mountain) Abu Qubays called to him: 'I have something in trust for you;' and it gave him the (Black) Stone, and he put it in its place."7

ath-Thawri says: "I asked Abu Ja'far ('a) about the Stone. He said: 'Three stones came down from the

Garden: the Black Stone which was put in place by Ibrahim, and the Standing-place of Ibrahim, and the stone of the Israelites.'"[8]

And a tradition says that the Black Stone was an angel.

The author says: There are very many such traditions narrated by both the Shi'ah and the Sunni narrators; and although these traditions are *ahad* and do not reach, in words or meanings, the standard required for *a mutawatir* narration, still they are not unique in the field of religious descriptions, nor is there any reason to discard them altogether.

As for the narration that the dome was sent down to Adam or that Ibrahim rode *al-Buraq* for his journey to Mecca and other such miraculous happenings which have a super-natural character, there is no reason to say that they were impossible. Moreover, Allah had given His prophets many such miracles and super-natural signs, and the Qur'an mentions many such events.

So far as the coming down of the foundations of the House, the Black Stone and the Standing Stone (which is said to be fixed in the structure now known as the Standing-place of Ibrahim) and other such things are concerned, there are many such examples found in the Qur'an and *hadith.* Many vegetables and fruits etc. are said to be from the Garden, or from the Fire and its out-burst. Of the same genre are the traditions of "substance" saying that the substance of the good people is from the Garden and that of the evil ones is from the Fire; or that they are from *al-'illiyyin* (اَلعِلّيِين = lofty place; the Book of the deeds of the virtuous) and *as-sijjin* (اَلسِّجِين = prison; the Book of the deeds of the evil ones), respectively.

Of similar nature are the traditions to the effect that the Garden of *al-barzakh* (the period between death and the Day of Judgment) is in some specified place on this earth, and the Fire of *al-barzakh* in some other place in it; and that the grave is either a section of the Garden's or a pit of the Fire's. There are many such informations which one is sure to come upon while studying the traditions. And, as we said earlier, they are so huge in number that the whole lot cannot be discarded, nor is it possible to question its authenticity. They are parts of the Divine realities expounded by the Qur'an and followed by the traditions. The fact is that all the things seen in this material world have been sent down by Allah; whatsoever is good and lovely, or is a means to or a receptacle of good, has come down from the Garden and will return to it; and whatsoever is bad and evil, or is a means to or a receptacle of evil, has come down from the Fire and will return to it. Allah says:

***And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure* (*15:21*).**

It shows that everything exists with Allah, and it is an existence without any limit or measure; when it is sent down - a gradual descent - then it becomes subject to limits and measures. This verse describes the descent of all things in general. But there are also in the Qur'an specific examples of this descent. Allah says:

…And He has sent down for you eight of the cattle in pairs… (***39:6***).

…And We have sent down the iron… (***57:25***).

And in the heaven is your sustenance, and what you are promised (***51:22***).

We shall further explain the meanings of these verses in their proper places, Allah willing. They however prove that every thing descends to this world from Allah. Other verses show that they are also to return to him, as He says:

And that to your Lord is the end goal (***53:42***).

Surely to your Lord is the return (***96:8***).

…To Him is the eventual coming (***40:3***).

…Now surely to Allah do all affairs eventually come (***42:53***).

There are many verses in the Qur'an of the same connotation.

Also, Allah has made it clear that every thing – and all things presently are in middle of their journey – follows a course demanded by its origin, and that origin has some effect on its success and failure, its good and evil, as the Qur'an says:

Say: "Every one acts according to his own manner…" (***17:84***).

And every one has a direction to which he should turn… (***2:148***).

We shall explain all these verses in their places; here they have been quoted just to complete the picture, and make the subject of our discussion clearer. What these verses prove is this: There is reason to believe that the traditions which say about a material thing that it came down from the Garden or from the Fire (when that thing has some connection with the next life's happiness or unhappiness) are on the whole correct, because they are, generally speaking, in conformity with the Qur'anic principles – although it does not mean that each and every such tradition is correct or trustworthy. Ponder on this point.

Someone has said: "The Divine words:

And (***remember***) ***when Ibrahim and Isma'il were raising the foundations of the House…*** (***2:127***).

manifestly show that the two prophets built this House for the worship of Allah in that country of the idol-worshippers. But the story-tellers and those exegetes who followed them have embroidered what Allah had said. They have added a lot of fanciful details, as, for example, that the House was from the very beginning and Adam did its *hajj;* that it was taken to the heaven during Nuh's flood; that the Black Stone

was one of the stones of the Garden. Their main purpose was to present the religion in an attractive garment, adorning it with fascinating narratives. Such myths may impress the masses; but the people who have knowledge and wisdom know that spiritual excellence depends on Divine bestowal – it is Allah Who makes one thing to excel the others.

The Ka'bah has excellence because it is the House of Allah, that is, attributed to Him; the Black Stone is excellent because people have been ordered to kiss it – in this respect it represents the hand of Allah. It has no bearing on its excellence whether originally it was a ruby or a pearl or some other rock; nor do such tales add to its real glory. In reality it makes no difference in the eyes of Allah whether a stone is black or white. The Ka'bah has got its distinction and honour because Allah has called it His House, and has appointed it as the centre for various acts of worship which cannot be performed in any other place – its glory does not lie in the fact that its stones are more valuable than other stones, or that its site is the most attractive of all, or that it was sent down from the lofty heavens.

Likewise, the excellence of the prophets is not based on any distinctive feature of their bodies nor on the quality of their apparel. They got excellence because Allah chose them especially, and selected them for His prophethood which is a spiritual thing; otherwise many people in the world were far superior to them in their adornments and enjoyed greater worldly bounties."

He continues to say: "These traditions are untrustworthy because they contradict each other and some are self-contradictory; they are unauthentic because their chains of narrators are not correct; they are unacceptable because they go against the apparent meaning of the Qur'an."

He further says: "These traditions are Israelite myths, propagated among the Muslims by unbelieving Jews to make Islam look ridiculous, in order to keep the People of the Book away from it."

The author says: There is a grain of truth in some things he has said: But he has gone far beyond the limit in disputation, and consequently has lost his bearings and arrived at a hypothesis much more atrocious and repugnant, Let us have a critical look at his arguments:

Objection: "These traditions are untrustworthy and unacceptable because they contradict each other and are against the Qur'an."

Reply: The fact that some of them contradict the others could be a matter of worry if we were to accept them one by one as separate independent units. But when we accept the whole in their collective capacity (i.e., when we say that the whole lot should not be discarded because, taken all together, they do not tell us anything that is against reason or against the Qur'an or accepted traditions), then it is of no importance if there are some minor discrepancies between individual traditions. But one point must be made clear here: What we have said just now, concerns the traditions narrated from the infallible sources like the Prophet and his sinless family members. So far as other exegetes among the Companions and their disciples are concerned, they, in this respect, are just like any other people; for us it makes no difference whether their talk is free from contradiction or riddled with it.

In short, there is no justification to discard a tradition, or a group of traditions, unless it goes against the Qur'an or other authentic traditions, or the marks of forgery and lie are stamped on it. (However, when it comes to the basic religious knowledge and fundamental beliefs, the only thing accepted as proof is the Book of Allah and the authentic traditions of the Prophet and his sinless progeny; nothing else counts in this area.)

It is now clear that there are some things which must be accepted, that is, the Qur'an and the authentic traditions; and there are others which must be rejected, that is, all that goes against the Qur'an and the authentic traditions. Then there is a third group: the traditions concerning which there is neither any proof compelling us to reject it, nor forcing us to accept it. These are the traditions which are neither impossible in reason nor unacceptable according to the Qur'an and authentic traditions – and there is no reason why they should be discarded altogether.

Objection: These traditions are unauthentic according to their chains of narrators.

Reply: The above given explanation also dispels this doubt, because weakness of the chains of narrators does not oblige us to reject the whole group, unless it is against the reason, the Qur'an or the authentic traditions.

Objection: They are against the words of Allah;

And **(remember)** ***when Ibrahim and Isma'il were raising the foundation of the House…*** **(*2:127*).**

Reply: I wish I knew how this verse proves that the Black Stone was not from the Garden! Or, that the dome did not come down to that place in Adam's time (and there was, therefore, no question of its being taken up at the time of the flood)! The only thing the verse says is that this construction, made of stone and mud, was built by Ibrahim. What has this got to do – either for or against – the traditions mentioned earlier. The only difficulty with those traditions is that the objector does not like them. And this dislike is based, not on the principles of religion, but on his biased views. He does not believe that the prophets had any spiritual realities within them; he does not think that the exoteric side of religion is based on its esoteric aspect; he unconsciously is so much over-awed by today's natural sciences that he tries to find a material cause not only for material happenings but even for spiritual things – if they have even a slight connection with matter. For him, the matter rules over all happenings, not excepting the sociological principles.

This man should have pondered on this point: The natural sciences deal with the matter; its properties and its various compounds; they look at the relationship of a natural effect with its cause. Likewise, the various sociological disciplines study the social relationships among various event taking place in society.

But the natural and sociological sciences have no concern at all with the realities which are beyond the sphere of matter, outside its field of action; they have no jurisdiction even over immaterial connections

existing between a material thing and an event taking place in the visible world. The natural sciences and disciplines have no authority or right to confirm or reject these immaterial realities. It is within the jurisdiction of natural science to say that construction of a house depends on things like mud, stone and mason; it may explain how black stones may take the shape of a room.

Likewise, sociological disciplines may describe the factors which led to the building of the Ka'bah – it may explain a part of Ibrahim's biography, Hajar's life, Isma'il's story, history of Tahamah, arrival of the tribe of Jurhum and things like that. But these sciences and disciplines have no right to discuss what was the relation between a certain stone on one hand and the Garden or the Fire on the other; nor have these branches of knowledge any right to express any affirmative or negative opinion about such narratives.

And you have seen that the Qur'an clearly says that even material and physical things have been sent down from the treasure which is with Allah, and that they would ultimately return to Him – either to the Garden or to the Fire. Also, the Qur'an says that the deeds and actions – which are but physical movements and positions – ascend to Allah and arrive at His presence:

To Him do ascend the good words, and the good deed lifts them up (***35:10***).

Again it says:

To Him reaches the piety on your part (***22:37***).

And piety is but action or a characteristic acquired through repeated actions. It is essential for a student of religion to meditate on these verses and to understand that the religious realities do not have any relationship with material or sociological matters *per se;* they depend on the facts which are beyond the reach of material disciplines.

Objection: The excellence of the prophets, and the things attributed to them like the Ka'bah or the Black Stone, is not based on a material quality; it is a spiritual excellence bestowed by the Divine Grace.

Reply: What he says is right. But he should understand what is the real meaning of what he says. What is that spiritual reality which creates excellence? Is it a mentally posited abstract idea created by social needs, like the designations and offices found in every nation, for example, presidency, leadership of the party, the high price of gold and silver, respect of the parents, sanctity of the laws of the land? All these are subjective and imaginative abstract forms which the societies have laid down to meet their own needs; but they have no existence outside the imagination, beyond subjective consideration. Such honours and distinctions cannot be found outside the social life which created them to fulfil its needs; and Allah is too sublime for such needs to reach His presence. Therefore, such social distinctions have no relevance to an excellence given by Allah to any of His creatures.

If the objector thinks that the excellence of the prophets is just like the above-mentioned imaginary and

unreal honours, then why should a house or a stone be denied a similar excellence? And if he believes that an excellence given by Allah is the real one, as is found in light *vis-à-vis* darkness, in knowledge *vis-à-vis* ignorance, and in wisdom *vis-à-vis* idiocy, then of course it would be a real and actual excellence. In that case, the quiddity of the existence of a prophet would be different from the quiddity of other human beings - even if our senses are unable to grasp it. And such real excellence and distinction is in keeping with the sublimity and sanctity of the Divine actions and wisdom. Allah says:

And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in sport. (***44:38***).

We did not create them both but with the truth, but most of them do not know (***44:39***).

Such a distinction is real, spiritual, metaphysical and beyond the reach of physical nature. And if such real excellence may be given to the prophets, why can it not be bestowed on some other things, like the Ka'bah and the Black Stone etc.? And, may be, it is this real immaterial excellence which has been described in such words that the people could easily understand.

Would that I knew what would such people do about those Qur'anic verses which say that the people of the Garden will be given cups, ornaments and dresses of gold and silver. These two metals have no inherent excellence except that their price remains high because of their scarcity. If so, then why should they be used for exalting the people of the Garden? What wealth will they represent in the Garden? After all, the economics of this world will not be valid there!

These and other such Divine words and exoteric expressions are the curtains which hide the esoteric realities; they are the veils covering Divine secrets. And if such expressions are accept able for the realities of the next world, they can as easily be used for some facts of this one.

az-Zubayri says: "I said to Abu 'Abdillah ('a): 'Tell me about the *ummah* of Muhammad (S), who are they?' He said: 'The *ummah* of Muhammad (S) are the Children of Hashim in particular.' I said: 'And what is the proof that the *ummah* of Muhammad are his family members you have mentioned, to the exclusion of the others?' He said: '(It is) the words of Allah:

And (**remember**) ***when Ibrahim and Isma'il were raising the foundations of the House: "Our Lord! accept from us; surely Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing*** (***2:127***).

Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and (**raise**) ***from our offspring a group*** (**ummah**) ***submitting to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion and turn to us*** (**mercifully**), ***surely Thou art the Oft-returning*** (**with mercy**), ***the Merciful"*** (***2:128***).

When Allah answered the prayer of Ibrahim and Isma'il and did (promise to) raise from their offspring a submissive *ummah* and raised up in them an Apostle from among themselves, that is, from among that *ummah* itself, to recite to them His communications, and to teach them the Book and the wisdom, Ibrahim beseeched Allah for another bounty; and asked for that *ummah* purity from polytheism and idol-

worship in order that the affair of that Apostle might remain firm and strong among them and they might not need to follow anyone other than themselves. That is why Ibrahim said:

"And save me and my sons from worshipping idols" (***14:35***).

"My Lord! Surely they have led many men astray; then whoever follows me, he is surely of me, and whoever disobeys me, Thou surely art Forgiving, Merciful" (***14:36***).

It proves that the Imams, and the submissive *ummah* in which Muhammad (S) was raised, cannot be except from the offspring of Ibrahim ('a), because he had said: ***"save me and my sons from worshipping idols""***.[9]

The author says: The argument of the Imam is absolutely clear. Ibrahim ('a) had asked this submissive *ummah* to be from his offspring in particular; and the next sentence,

"Our Lord! and raise up in them an Apostle from among themselves…" (***2:129***).

Shows that the same submissive group is the *ummah* of Muhammad (S) – and the word, *ummah,* as used here, does not refer to the people whom Muhammad (S) was sent to; nor to those who answered his call and believed in his prophethood, because that *ummah* is not confined to the offspring of Ibrahim and Isma'il; the word in the present context refers to a particular submissive *ummah* from the offspring of Ibrahim ('a). Thereafter, Ibrahim ('a) prayed to his Lord to protect him and his sons from idol–worship, to keep them away from polytheism and error – and this Divine protection is *'ismah* (infallibility; sinlessness). Also, we know that there were a lot of people among the offspring of Ibrahim and Isma'il – the Arabs of the Mudar, or particularly the Quraysh – who had gone astray and worshipped idols. It proves that when Ibrahim ('a) prayed for his "sons" to be protected from idol–worship, he did not mean all his sons; he was praying only for his infallible offspring, that is, the Prophet and his purified progeny. These, then, are the *ummah* of Muhammad (S) in the prayer of Ibrahim ('a). Probably, it was for this fine distinction that Ibrahim ('a) changed the word, "offspring", to "sons"; this view is strengthened by the phrases following this prayer,

"Then whoever follows me, he is surely of me, and whoever disobeys me, Thou surely art Forgiving, Merciful" (***14:36***).

Note the opening word, "then", which shows that what follows is based on what has preceded; thereafter, he confirms that those who would follow him would be from him, a part of him; but then he stops and does not say anything about the opposite group, as though he does not recognize them, they are strangers to him. (Think it over.)

The Imam said that Ibrahim ('a) "asked for that *ummah* purity from polytheism and idol–worship". Actually, he had asked protection only from worshipping the idols; but then he mentioned why he had asked for that protection: surely the idols have led many men astray. In this way, the original prayer for

protection from idol-worship became an all-encompassing prayer for protection from all types of straying and error, ranging from idol-worship to small sins - because every sin is a sort of polytheism, as we have already explained under the verse:

The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours… (***1:7***).

The Imam said: "It proves that the Imams, and the sub-missive *ummah* in which Muhammad (S) was raised, cannot be except from the offspring of Ibrahim ('a)." That is the Imams are the submissive *ummah,* and they are from the off-spring of Ibrahim ('a), as explained above.

Objection: You say that the word, *ummah,* in this verse refers to a small group of the Muslims, and not to the whole nation; you use the same interpretation in some other verses, for example,

You are the best nation raised up for (**the benefit of**) ***men…*** (***3:110***).

But this obliges us to interpret the word in a metaphorical way - without any justifiable reason. Moreover, the Qur'an addresses itself to the whole *ummah* who believed in the Prophet; it is a self-evident fact which does not need any proof.

Reply: It was long after the revelation of the Qur'an and the spread of Islam that the phrase, *ummah* of Muhammad, was popularly used for "all those who believe in his prophethood". It is a later usage.

The original meaning of this word is "people", "nation", "group", as Allah says:

And blessing on you and the people (***umam*** = plural of ***ummah***) ***from among those who are with you; and there shall be people*** (***umam***)***…*** (***11:48***).

This word is sometimes used even for one person;

Surely Ibrahim was a "people" (**devoutly**) ***obedient to Allah*** (***16:120***).

Therefore, it is the context or the intention of the speaker which decides how big or small a circle this word describes in a sentence. Now the words,

Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and (**raise**) ***from our offspring a group submitting to Thee*** (***2:128***).

Were spoken in prayer, and as explained earlier, they could refer to only a selected group out of the multitude who believe in the Prophet. Likewise, the verse,

You are the best nation raised up for (**the benefit of**) ***men*** (***3:110***).

Was revealed to show the favour of Allah on the people thus addressed; its import is to increase their prestige and enhance their dignity. Surely, these words could be addressed to the whole *ummah* who

call themselves Muslims. How could it apply to the Pharaohs and Dajjals of this *ummah* who did not leave any vestige of the religion without destroying, and who did not come across any religious virtue without crushing it? (We shall explain it in detail when writing on this verse.) In short, this verse is like the talk of Allah with the Children of Israel:

***And that I made you excel the nations* (*2:47*).**

We should not forget that a man like Qarun was one of them, and surely this talk does not include him. Likewise, the complaint of the Prophet,

***"O my Lord! surely my people treated this Qur'an as a forsaken thing"* (*25:30*).**

Cannot cover all his *ummah* – there are among them the lovers of the Qur'an,

***The men whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of Allah* (*24:37*).**

On the other hand, there is the following verse, which is addressed to the whole *ummah,* and covers all those who believed in the Prophet and even those to whom he was sent:

***This is a people that have passed away; they shall have what they earned and you shall have what you earn, and you shall not be called upon to answer for what they did* (*2:134*).**

An Academic Discourse

Ponder on the story of Ibrahim ('a); study his life; see how he took his son and wife to the land where now Mecca stands, and settled them there; how their lives progressed until finally the "sacrifice" of Isma'il took place and, in the last moment, he was ransomed by Allah; read how they together built the Ka'bah. You will find that it is a complete cycle of devotional journey. It shows how a servant proceeds from his "self" to his Lord, from a far away station to the centre of "Divine Nearness"; how the journey is accomplished avoiding the vanities of this world, shunning its protection, keeping away from its desires – prestige, wealth, women and children – freeing oneself from the intrigues of satans, not letting them pollute the purity of intention, and turning with total surrender and progressing with complete devotion to the Lord, the Great, the High.

These apparently unrelated events are in fact of an unbroken series. They are historical narratives, but they describe the stages of the spiritual journey of a servant from self to the Lord. They teach us the discipline of that journey, instruct us in the rules and manners of seeking nearness to Allah, of reaching His presence. The more you meditate on his story, the deeper will be your spiritual understanding – you will come to know the demands of Divine love and sincere devotion.

Allah ordered His friend, Ibrahim, to promulgate the *hajj* for the people, and He says:

And proclaim among men the hajj; they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel,

coming from every remote path… **(*22:27*).**

We do not know the details of the laws of the *hajj* as promulgated by Ibrahim (‘a). But we know that the *hajj* continued as an event of great religious importance even among the Arabs of the days of ignorance. Then Allah sent the Prophet and he gave us the rules of the *hajj* as we know them. One thing is certain: He did not go against the rules laid down by Ibrahim (‘a); what he did was to complete and perfect them. This fact may be inferred from the words of Allah:

Say: “Surely, **(as for)** ***me, my Lord has guided me to the straight path;*** **(to)** ***a most right religion, the faith of Ibrahim, the upright one”…*** **(*6:161*).**

He has prescribed for you of the religion what He enjoined upon Nuh and that which We have revealed unto you, and that which We enjoined upon Ibrahim and Musa and **‘Isa*…*** **(*42:13*).**

In any case, all the devotional acts of the *hajj* – the *ihram,* staying at ‘Arafat, staying overnight at Mash’ar, sacrificing an animal, throwing pebbles at the pillars, running between the Safa and the Marwah, going around Ka’bah, praying near the Standing-place – all these acts commemorate the events that had happened to Ibrahim, and represent the stands taken by him and his family; and how admirable stands they were – the pure and sublime Divine stands to which they were led by Divine mercy and urged on by the humility of servitude.

The prescribed acts of worship – on their promulgator be the best of *salams!* – are the symbols of the stands of the perfect ones, the prophets, *vis-à-vis* their Lord; every act of worship is a photo which shows to us a stage in their spiritual journey to the station of nearness to Allah, as Allah says:

Certainly **(there)** ***is for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent example…*** **(*33: 21*).**

This is a basic reality. And there is much evidence pointing to this theme in the traditions which have come down to us regarding the philosophy of various acts of worship and the esoteric aspects of their legislation and prescription, as any diligent scholar may find out.

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1. al-Kafi.
2. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
3. Majma’ al-bayan.
4. al-Buraq is the name of the animal which was also sent to the Prophet (S) to ride during al-Mi’raj (اَلمِعْراج = Ascension). (tr.).
5. The place between Safa and Marwah where the hajis (pilgrims to Mecca) run seven times. (tr.).
6. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
7. al-Kafi.
8. al-’Ayyashi.
9. al-’Ayyashi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 130 - 134

وَمَن يَرۡغَب عَن مِّلَّةِ إِبرَٰهِـمَ إِلَّا مَن سَفِهَ نَفسَه وَلَقَدِ ٱصطَفَينَٰه فِى ٱلدُّنيَا وَإِنَّه ۥ فِى ٱلۡأَخِرَةِ لَمِنَ ٱلصَّٰلِحِ

And who turns away from the religion of Ibrahim but he who makes himself a fool; and most certainly We chose him in this world, and in the hereafter, he is most surely among the good ones (***2:130***).

إِذۡ قَالَ لَه ۥ رَبُّه ۥ أَسلِم قَالَ أَسلَمت لِرَبِّ ٱلۡعَٰلَمِينَ

When his Lord said to him, Submit (**yourself**) ***he said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds"*** (***2:131***).

وَوَصَّىٰ بِهَآ إِبرَٰهِـم بَنِيهِ وَيَعقوب يَٰبَنِىَّ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ ٱصطَفَىٰ لَكم ٱلدِّينَ فَلَا تَموتنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتم مُّسلِمونَ

And the same did Ibrahim enjoin on his sons and (***so*** **did**) ***Ya'qub: "O my sons! surely Allah has chosen for you*** (***this***) ***faith, therefore die not unless you are Muslims"*** (***2:132***).

أَم كنتم شُهَدَآءَ إِذۡ حَضَرَ يَعقوبَ ٱلمَوۡت إِذۡ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعبدونَ مِنۢ بَعدِى قَالواْ نَعبد إِلَٰهَكَ وَإِلَٰهَ ءَابَآئِكَ إِبرَٰهِـمَ وَإِسمَٰعِيلَ وَإِسحَٰقَ إِلَٰهًا وَٰحِدًا وَنَحن لَه ۥ مسلِمونَ

Or, were you witnesses when death approached Ya'qub, when he said to his sons: "What will you worship after me?" They said: "We will worship your God and the God of your fathers, Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ishaq, one God only, and to Him do we submit" (***2:133***).

تِلكَ أُمَّةٌ قَد خَلَت لَهَا مَا كَسَبَت وَلَكم مَّا كَسَبتم وَلَا تسـَٔلونَ عَمَّا كَانواْ يَعمَلونَ

This is a people that have passed away; they shall have what they earned and you shall have what you earn, and you shall not be called upon to answer for what they did (***2:134***).

Commentary

Verse 130

Qur'an: ***And who turns away from the religion of Ibrahim but he who makes himself a fool*** **(*2:130*).**

"ar-Raghbah" (اَلرَّغْبَة) followed by the preposition *'an* (عَنْ = away from; off) means "to turn away", "to dislike"; when followed by *fi* (فِيْ = in), it denotes "to incline towards", "to desire". The verb, *safiha* (سَفِهَ = made a fool; became a fool) is used both as transitive and intransitive. Some exegetes have taken this word here as a transitive verb - according to them, the word *nafsahu* (نَفْسَهَ = himself; his self) is its object; others have taken the verb in the intransitive sense and in that case *nafsahu* will be *at-tamyiz* (اَلتَّمْيِيز = a specification), not an object. In any case, the meaning will remain the same: Whoever turns away from the religion of Ibrahim is a fool; he does not recognize what is beneficial to him from that which is harmful. From this verse we may infer what we have been told in the *hadith:* "Surely wisdom is that by which the Beneficent (God) is worshipped."

Qur'an: ***And most certainly We chose him in this world*** **(*2:130*).**

"al-Istifa'" (اَلإصْطِفاء) means to choose, to separate best parts of a thing from other parts (if they were mixed together). Looking at the positions of *al-wilayah* (اَلولايَة = love of Allah), this choosing, this selection fits the sincerity of servitude. A person so chosen behaves in all his affairs as a sincere slave and servant, totally surrendering himself to his Lord. In other words, religion is embodied in all his affairs. After all, what is religion if not total servitude to Allah in all matters whether of this world or of the hereafter, accepting gladly whatever the Lord decides for His servant in any given situation, as He says:

Surely the religion with Allah is Islam **(*3:19*).**

Clearly it shows that the position of "selection" is not different from that of "Islam", that is, surrender. As a further proof, look at the next verse: "When his Lord said to him, Submit (yourself) he said: 'I submit my-self to the Lord of the worlds'". Obviously, the adverb "when" is related to the preceding verb "We chose him". It means that Ibrahim was chosen when his Lord said to him to submit and he responded by submitting himself to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. In other words, the following verse:

When his Lord said to him, Submit, he said. "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds" **(*2:131*).**

Is like an explanation of the words, "most surely We chose him".

In these verses pronouns have been changed from the first person to the third, and again from the second to the third. After saying, "We chose him", it would have been more usual to say: "When We said to him"; but Allah says, "When his Lord said to him, Submit (yourself)"; then in reply, Ibrahim ('a) should have said: "I submit myself to Thee"; instead he said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds". The reason is a follows:

“When his Lord said to him”: It points to the fact that the talk was a secret between Ibrahim and his Lord, at a level where there was no one else to listen to that confidential conversation. Had Allah said, “When We said to him”, it would have implied that the hearers of this verse were present at that sublime station and could be addressed to by Allah – after all, the audience has a direct relationship with the speaker. Therefore, Allah referred to Himself in the third person, cutting the connection between Himself and the hearers of the verse, showing that at the level where He spoke with Ibrahim, no one else was present; the conversation between Allah and Ibrahim was a confidential matter veiled in secrecy. In short, it was a talk between two close friends which others were excluded from.

“I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds”. As mentioned above, the preceding phrase shows that Allah bestowed His grace exclusively on Ibrahim and enhanced his rank by this friendly confidential conversation. But Ibrahim knew how to speak in Divine presence; he was a servant of Allah; he should not forget the dictates of humility; it was a sign of his excellence, of his humbleness, that he did not start talking with Allah in a friendly way, did not consider himself as worthy of that exclusive proximity, of that sublime friendship. He continued to see in himself a humble and powerless servant who is sustained by his Master’s grace. That is why he submitted to the Lord to Whom all the worlds surrender, and said: “I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds”.

“al-Islam” (**اَلإِسْلام**), *“at-taslim”* (**اَلتَّسْلِيم**) and *“al-istislam* (**اَلإِسْتِسْلام**), all are from the same root *s-l-m* (س-ل-م) and have the same meaning, that is, to submit, to surrender. These verbs are used when a man or a thing submits to another thing, in such a way that the first never disobeys the second, never goes against it. Allah says:

Yes! Whoever submits himself entirely to Allah… (***2:112***).

Surely I have turned my face, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth… (***6:79***).

It is with the face that one turns towards someone. So far as Allah is concerned, the whole being, the whole existence, of the thing turns to Him. When a man surrenders to Allah, he obeys and accepts whatever comes to him from Allah – the creative matters like the measure and the decree, as well as the legislative ones like order and prohibition.

As men differ in degrees of their submission to Divine Decrees or legislations, so does their Islam.

The first stage of Islam is to accept and obey the exoteric commandments, orders and prohibitions, by reciting *ash-shahadatayn* (**اَلشَّهَادَتَيْنِ** = the two testimonies, that is, testifying to the Oneness of God and Messengership of Muhammad, (S), no matter whether the belief has entered into the heart or not. Allah says:

The dwellers of the desert say: “We believe”. Say: “You do not believe but say, ‘We submit’; and faith has not yet entered into your hearts”… (***49:14***).

This Islam is followed by the first stage of *al-Iman* (اَلإِيْمَان = faith, belief); and that is the sincere belief in the above-menioned *shahadatayn*; such a believer faithfully obeys most of the rules of the shari'ah.

This first stage of *al-Iman* is followed by the second stage of Islam. It is the sincere acceptance of all true beliefs in detail, with its necessary concomitant, that is, good deeds – although occasional slips are not impossible. Allah says praising the pious ones:

***Those who believed in Our signs and were submissive* (*43:69*).**

Also, He says:

***O you who believe! enter into submission one and all* (*2:208*).**

These verses show that there is an Islam which comes after *al-Iman;* obviously this Islam is other than the previously mentioned one.

This Islam is followed by the second stage of *al-Iman;* and it is the believing, with full details and reasoning, in the realities of the religion. Allah says:

***The believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Messenger then they doubt not and struggle hard with their wealth and their lives in the way of Allah; they are the truthful ones* (*49:15*).**

Again, He says:

***O you who believe! shall I lead you to a merchandise which may deliver you from a painful chastisement?* (*61:10*).**

***You shall believe in Allah and His Messenger, and struggle hard in Allah's way with your properties and your lives* (*61:11*).**

This verse directs the believers to believe; obviously the second *Iman* is other than the first one.

This second stage of *al-Iman* paves the way for the third stage of Islam. When the soul is sufficiently imbued with the above-mentioned *Iman,* and acquires its characteristics, then man's all animalistic and beastly faculties are subdued to the sublime powers of his intellect and spirituality. He keeps all his desires - pulling him to the material attractions and transient trinkets of this world - under firm control. Thereupon, he reaches a stage where he worships Allah as though he was seeing Him - and if he was not seeing Allah, then Allah was seeing him. There is nothing in his hidden life and inner-self, that is not submissive to Allah's orders and prohibitions; he is never annoyed with any decree or measure of Allah. Allah says:

But no! by your Lord! they do not believe until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them, and then do not find any straitness in their selves as to

what you have decided, and submit with total submission (***4:65***).

This Islam is followed by the third stage of *al-Iman.* Allah says:

Successful indeed are the believers (***23:1***).

Who are humble in their prayers (***23:2***).

And who keep aloof from what is vain… (***23:3***).

It is this stage that the words of Allah refer to: "When his Lord said to him, Submit (yourself), he said: 'I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds.'"

Sometimes the second and the third stages are counted as one. The sublime virtues, for example, being pleased with Divine Decree, submitting to the commands of Allah, forbearance and patience for the love of Allah, self-denial, piety, and love and hate for the sake of Allah are concomitants of this stage of *al-Iman.*

The fourth stage of Islam follows the third stage of *al-Iman.* In the above-mentioned stage of *al-Iman* the condition of a man *vis-à-vis* his Lord is like that of a slave with his master when a slave faithfully follows the dictates of his bondage - when he totally surrenders to the will of his master and accepts his likes and dislikes. Obviously, there is no comparison between the ownership and authority a master has over his slave and the ownership and authority the Lord of the worlds has over His creatures. His is the real possession, the real ownership; nothing else has any independent existence - neither in person or characteristics nor in actions.

Sometimes, when a man reaches the third stage of surrender and submission, the Divine Grace takes him under its wing; he is shown the reality, and sees with his heart's eyes that the Kingdom belongs to Allah, nothing else owns anything at all - except when Allah bestows it to someone; there is no Lord other than He.

This realization, this unveiling of reality, is a Divine Gift, a bestowal by Allah, to whom He pleases; a man cannot reach this sublime stage by his own will or effort. Probably it is to this Islam that the prayer of Ibrahim and Isma'il refers:

Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and (**raise**) ***from our off-spring a group submissive to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion…*** (***2:128***).

Compare this to the verse: "When his Lord said to him, Submit (yourself), he said: 'I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds'". Obviously the latter is a legislative, not a creative, order. Ibrahim was Muslim by his own will and choice, responding to the Divine Invitation, obeying the orders of Allah. It was an order he received in his early life. Now the former verse shows him, in the twilight of his life, praying with his son, Isma'il, for Islam and for being shown their ways of devotion. Undoubtedly, he was asking for something

which was not in his hand; or was praying to be kept firm on something which was not in his power. In short, the Islam, which Ibrahim and Isma'il prayed for, was of this fourth and sublime stage.

This Islam is followed by the fourth stage of *al-Iman.* It happens when the above-mentioned conditions permeates the believer's whole being, and submerges all his conditions and actions. Allah says:

Now surely the friends of Allah - they have no fear nor do they grieve (***10:62***).

Those who believed and were pious (***10:63***).

The believers mentioned here must be having the certainty that nothing is independent of Allah, and no "cause" has any causative power except by His permission. It is this certainty which insulates them from grief when a tragedy strikes them, and protects them from fear if a danger looms ahead. It is only because of this factor that they have been praised in these terms.

This *Iman* comes after the above-mentioned Divine Gift of Islam. Ponder on this point.

Qur'an: ***And in the hereafter he is most surely among the good ones*** (***2:130***).

"as-Salah" (اَلصَّلاح) literally means: capability, ability. In the Divine Speech, this word and its derivatives, have been used sometimes for the man himself, and, at other times, for his actions and deeds. Allah says:

...He should do good deeds... (***18:110***).

Also, He says:

And marry those among you who are single and those who are good (***i.e.,*** **fit**) ***among your male slaves and your female slaves...*** (***24:32***).

No clear explanation is found in the Book of Allah as to what constitutes goodness of deeds. But the Book attributes to it some effects, which may be helpful in understanding its meaning. For example:

1. A good deed is good for the pleasure of Allah:

And those who are patient, seeking the pleasure of their Lord... (***13:22***).

And you do not spend but to seek Allah's pleasure... (***2:272***).

2. It is good for the reward of Allah:

Allah's reward is better for him who believes and does good... (***28:80***).

3. It lifts up the good words which ascend to Allah:

To Him do ascend the good words; and the good deed lifts them up… (***35:10***).

These descriptions show that, so far as actions are concerned, a "good deed" means an action that is fit to receive honour from God, is capable of lifting the good words to Allah. Allah says:

…But to Him reaches the piety on your part… (***22:37***).

All do We aid – these as well as those – out of the bounty of your Lord; and the bounty of your Lord is not confined (***17:20***).

As for the persons, the following verses show what constitutes their goodness:

And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger, these are with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favours from among the prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the good ones; and excellent are these as companions! (***4:69***).

And We caused them to enter into Our mercy; surely they were of the good ones (***21:86***).

Again Allah quotes Sulayman ('a) as saying:

…And make me enter, by Thy mercy, into Thy servants, the good ones (***27:19***).

Also, He says:

And (**as for**) ***Lut, We gave him wisdom and knowledge…*** (***21:74***).

And We took him into Our mercy; surely he was of the good ones (***21:75***).

The mercy referred to in these verses is not the general Divine Mercy which encompasses everything; nor does it mean that mercy which is ordained for the pious believers, as Allah says:

…And My mercy encompasses all things; so I will ordain it (***especially***) ***for those who are pious…*** (***7:156***).

The great personalities mentioned in the verses earlier referred to were "the good ones", and they were a selected group from among the pious believers; they were "fit" for the exclusive mercy mentioned in those verses. We know that some of the mercies of Allah are reserved for some especial groups to the exclusion of others. Allah says:

And Allah chooses especially whom He pleases for His mercy (***2:105***).

Also, this expression does not refer to the general honour of *al-wilayah* in other words, it does not say that Allah man-aged or manages their affairs for them. Of course, the good ones had that honour too; certainly they were among the honoured *al-awliya'* (**أَلأَوْلِياء** = friends of Allah), as we have explained in the exegesis of the following verse

Guide us to the straight path (***1:5***).

but this *wilayah* is an attribute which is also shared by the prophets, the truthful ones and the martyrs. If they had only this honour to their credit they could not be counted as a separate group distinguished from the other three.

So, what is the distinctive feature of the "goodness"? The answer is that Allah takes a "good one" into His especial mercy and grants him comprehensive protection from chastisement. These two effects are mentioned in the Qur'an:

Then as to those who believed and did good, their Lord will make them enter into His mercy (***i.e.,*** **into the Garden**) (***45:30***).

They shall call therein (***i.e.,*** **in the Garden**) ***every fruit in security*** (***44:55***).

Now ponder on the following verses:

And We took him into Our mercy (***21:75***).

And We made (**them**) ***all good ones*** (***21:72***).

Note how Allah attributes these actions to Himself, not to the people concerned. Also look at the fact that according to the Divine declarations, reward is always given in lieu of actions and efforts. Keeping all this in view, you will realize that the "personal goodness" is an especial honour which cannot be earned as a reward of good deeds or by one's own will. Probably, it is to this reality that the verse refers:

They have therein what they wish and with Us is more yet (***50:35***).

Possibly, the first clause (***They have therein what they wish***) refers to the reward of their deeds; and the second one (***and with Us is more yet***) concerns what they shall be given not in lieu of action, but purely by Divine Mercy. We shall elaborate it, Allah willing, in the exegesis of this verse.

Now look at the life of Ibrahim ('a). He was a prophet, a messenger of God, one of the *ulu 'l azm* prophets and an Imam; many of the prophets and messengers coming after him were his followers; and he was of the good ones, as the words of Allah clearly say:

And We made (**them**) ***all good ones*** (***21:72***).

This verse also shows that he was made, in this very world, one of the good ones. Consider also the fact that many prophets of lesser rank were made, in this very world, among the good ones. Then why does he pray to Allah to join him to the good ones?

It is clear from this prayer that there was a group of the "good ones" who had gone ahead of him, and now he was praying to Allah to join him to them. Allah granted him his prayer "in the hereafter", as is

mentioned in the Qur'an in three places – one of which is the verse under discussion:

And most certainly We chose him in this world, and in the hereafter he is most surely among the good ones (***2: 130***).

Other two verses are:

…And We gave him his reward in this world, and in the hereafter he is most surely among the good ones (***29:27***).

And We gave him good in this world, and in the hereafter he will most surely be among the good (***16: 122***).

If you ponder on the foregoing details, you will know that "goodness" has many ranks, one above the other. Therefore you should not be astonished if you are told that Ibrahim ('a) had asked to be joined to Muhammad (S) and his purified progeny ('a), and that Allah granted him his prayer in the here–after, not in this world. Ibrahim ('a) had prayed to Allah to join him with the good ones, while Muhammad (S) unambiguously claims this honour for himself:

Surely my guardian is Allah, Who revealed the Book, and He takes in hand **(the affairs of)** ***the good ones*** (***7: 196***).

It is obvious that Muhammad (S) claims the *wilayah* for himself. In other words, the Prophet, according to his claim mentioned in the verse, had already got the "goodness"; and Ibrahim ('a) was praying to be joined to a group of "good ones" who had already been given that rank, and that group was Muhammad (S) and his progeny.

Verse 132

Qur'an: ***And the same did Ibrahim enjoin on his sons*** (***2: 132***).

that is, the same religion.

Qur'an: ***…Therefore die not unless you are Muslims"*** (***2: 132***).

Death is something beyond one's control; and *"at–taklif"* (اَلتَّكْلِيْف = commandments of the *shari'ah*) covers only those things which are under one's control. Then why did Ibrahim and Ya'qub (peace be on them!) tell their progeny not to die unless they were Muslims? The fact is that this admonition concerned a matter which was fully under their power. The real meaning is like this:

Beware lest the death comes to you and you are not Muslims; always remain Muslims; keep on Islam, so that whenever death comes to you, you are Muslims.

The verse gives a hint that the religion means Islam, as Allah says:

***Surely the religion with Allah is Islam* (*3: 19*).**

Verse 133

Qur'an: ***"We will worship your God and the God of your fathers, Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ishaq"* (*2: 133*).**

The verse uses the word "father" for the grandfather, the uncle and the father – and it has been used without any reason of *"at-taghlib"* (اَلتَّغْلِيْب) that is, all groups are equal in number; there were not more "fathers" than the grandfather and the uncle to justify the use of this word for the whole group. It proves that the word "father" may correctly be used for uncle, as we shall show, Allah willing, that Ibrahim ('a) addressed his uncle Azar, as "father".

Qur'an: ***"One God only"* (*2: 133*).**

This sums up the preceding detailed description, "your God and the God of your fathers..."; it serves to remove any possible misunderstanding that his God was other than the God of his fathers – as the idol-worshippers thought that there were many gods.

Qur'an: ***"And to Him do we submit"* (*2: 133*).**

It refers to the subject of their talk, that is, worship. They made it clear that their worship of Allah would be totally in accordance with the dictates of Islam. The reply shows that the religion of Ibrahim was Islam. Accordingly, the religion which was inherited by his offspring, for example, Ishaq, Ya'qub and Isma'il, and which continued in the Children of Israel and Isma'il, was Islam, and nothing else. It was this religion which Ibrahim ('a) brought from his Lord; and nobody had any right to turn away from it or to call to any other religion.

Traditions

Sama'ah narrates from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) that he said: "The position of *Iman* (faith) *vis-à-vis* Islam is like that of the Sacred Ka'bah *vis-à-vis* the Sanctuary; sometimes one may be in the Sanctuary without being in the Ka'bah, but he cannot be in the Ka'bah without being in the Sanctuary."[1]

Also he narrates from the same Imam that he said: "Islam is to bear witness that there is no god except Allah, and to accept the truth of the Messenger of Allah; it is by this that the bloods are spared (i.e., lives are protected) and marriages and inheritance are validated; and the multitude of people are on its apparent (meaning); and the *Iman* (i.e., faith and belief) is the guidance, and (it is) that characteristic of Islam which is firmly placed in the hearts."[2]

The author says: There are other traditions of the same meaning; and they explain the above-mentioned first stage of the Islam and *Iman.*

al-Barqi has narrated from 'Ali ('a) that he said: "Islam is submission and submission is conviction."[3]

Kahil said that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "If a people worshipped Allah - the One, there is no partner to Him - and established prayer, and paid the *zakat* and did the *hajj* of the House, and kept the fast of the month of *Ramadan,* and then said about-something done by Allah or done by the Messenger of Allah, 'Why did he not do it in another way?', or (even if) they felt (like) it in their hearts, they would become polytheists because of it..."[4]

The author says: The foregoing two traditions refer to the third stages of the Islam and *Iman.*

Ad-Daylami narrates in his *al-Irshad* - and he gives two *sanads* for this *hadith* which is one of the traditions of Ascension - that Allah said: "O Ahmad! Do you know which way of living is happier and which life more durable?" (The Messenger of Allah) said: "No, O Allah!" (He) said: "As for the happy way of living, it is that in which the (living) person is not tired of remembering Me, and does not forget My bounties, and does not ignore My rights (on him); he seeks My pleasure day and night.

And as for the ever-lasting life, it is (realized) when (the person) works for his (spiritual) benefit until the world looses its significance for him, and looks small in his eyes; and the hereafter becomes great for him; and he gives preference to My pleasure over his own desire, and seeks My pleasures, and thinks the right of My bounty (as) great (on him); and keeps in mind what I have done for him (i.e., for his benefit); and watches Me day and night whenever he is tempted to commit any wrong or sin; and keeps his heart clean from all that I dislike; and hates Satan and his whisperings, and does not let Satan establish a hold over, or a passage to, his heart.

When he acts (like) this, then I put (My) love into his heart until I make his heart, as well as his leisure and engagement, and his thought and speech, a part of (My) favours which I have bestowed on those of My creatures who love Me; and I open his heart's eye and ear, so that he hears with his heart, and looks with his heart to My Majesty and Greatness; and I make the world straitened for him; and make him hate it with all its pleasures; and I caution him of the world and all that it contains, as a shepherd protects his sheep from dangerous pasture lands. When it happens, then he flees from people, and transfers from the house of termination to the abode of eternity, and from the house of Satan to the seat of the Beneficent (God), O Ahmad! and I adorn him with dignity and majesty. So, this is the good way of living and the eternal life; and it is the station of those who are pleased (with Me).

So, whoever acts for My pleasure, I give him three characteristics: I teach him gratitude which is not polluted by ignorance, and remembrance that is not adulterated with forgetfulness, and love - so that he does not prefer the love of creatures to My love. Then when he loves Me, I love him, and I open the eye of his heart to My Majesty, and do not keep My (very) special creatures hidden from him. And I converse with him secretly in the dark of night and the light of day, until he ceases talking with the creatures and sitting with them; and I make him hear My talk and the speech of My angels; and I make My secret known to him - which I have kept hidden from (all) My creation. And I dress him in modesty, until all the

creation is awed of him. And he walks on the earth (and all his sins are) forgiven.

And I make his heart hearing and seeing; and do not hide from him anything of the Garden or the Fire; and I make known to him what terror and affliction are going to happen to the people on the Day of Resurrection, and the things I will question the rich and the poor, as well as the learned and the ignorant, about. And I will make him sleep (in peace) in his grave, and I will send Munkar and Nakir to him for questioning him; and he will not see the sorrow of death, nor the fright of the prelude (of the next world). Then I will erect his weighing scale for him, and will unroll his book (of deeds), then I will put his books in his right hand, and he shall read it unfolded; then I will not keep any interpreter between Me and him. So these are the attributes of the lovers. O Ahmad! make your concern one concern, and make your tongue one tongue, and make your body (i.e., your person) alive that is never oblivious (of Me). Whoever is oblivious of Me, I do not care in which valley he perishes."[5]

Al-Majlisi quotes the following tradition from *al-Kafi, Ma'ani al-akhbar* and *an Nawadir* of ar-Rawandi, with various chains of narrators, from Imam as-Sadiq and al-Kazim ('a) - and the text given here is from *al-Kafi* - that the Imam said: "The Messenger of Allah met Harithah ibn Malik ibn an-Nu'man al-Ansari, and said to him: 'How are you? O Harithah ibn Malik an-Nu'mani!' He said: 'A believer in reality, O Messenger of Allah!' The Messenger of Allah then said to him: 'There is a reality for everything; so what is the reality of your word?' He said: 'O Messenger of Allah! I turned myself away from the world, so I kept my night awake (in worship) and my days thirsty (in fast); and (it is) as though I am looking at the throne of my Lord which has been set up for (taking) the (people's) account; and as though I see the people of the Garden visiting one another in the Garden, and as if I hear the howling of the people of the Fire in the Fire.' Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah (S) said: 'A servant that Allah has enlightened his heart. You have seen, so be firm.'"[6]

The author says: The two traditions describe the fourth stage of the Islam and *Iman* mentioned above. There are many traditions explaining particulars of these two; and, Allah willing, we shall quote some of them in various places of this book; and they are supported by the Qur'anic verses.

Also it should be kept in mind that for each stage of the Islam and *Iman,* there is an opposite stage of *al-kufr* (اَلكفْر = disbelief) and *ash-shirk* (اَلشِّرك = polytheism). And it is known that the higher and subtler the meaning of the Islam and *Iman,* the more difficult it is to protect oneself from its opposite *kufr* or *shirk.*

Obviously, a lower stage of the Islam or *Iman* does not exclude the possibility of a subtler *kufr* or *shirk.*

These two principles should be kept in mind. It follows that the verses of the Qur'an have some esoteric meanings which are applied to the situations which its exoteric meanings cannot be applied to. Please keep this hint in mind until we explain to you its details.

Al-Qummi writes about the words of Allah, ***and with Us is more,*** that the Imam said: "Looking towards the mercy of Allah."[7]

The Prophet said: “Allah says: ‘I have prepared for My good servants that which no eye has ever seen, nor any ear ever heard, nor has it ever passed from the heart of any man.’”[8]

The author says: The meaning of the two traditions may easily be understood from what we have written about the meaning of “good ones”; and Allah is the Guide.

Imam al-Baqir (‘a) said about the words of Allah,

Or, were you witnesses when death approached Ya’qub… (***2:133***).

“It is applied to *al-Qa’im* (اَلقَآئِم = the one who stands – i.e., with sword to establish the way of Allah).[9]

The author says: The author of *as-Safi* writes: “Perhaps the Imam meant that it was about the Qa’im from the progeny of Muhammad, because every Qa’im of them asks his children the same question at the time of his death, and they reply him as the children of Ya’qub had replied.”

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1. al-Kafi.
2. al-Kafi.
3. al-Kafi.
4. al-Kafi.
5. Bihar al-anwar.
6. Bihar al-anwar.
7. at-Tafsir.
8. Majma’ al-bayan.
9. al ‘Ayyashi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 135 - 141

وَقَالواْ كونواْ هودًا أَو نَصَـٰرَىٰ تَهتَدواْ قل بَل مِلَّةَ إِبرَٰهِـمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ ٱلمشرِكِينَ قولوٓاْ ءَامَنَّا بِٱللَّهِ وَمَآ
أنزِلَ إِلَينَا وَمَآ أنزِلَ إِلَىٰٓ إِبرَٰهِـمَ وَإِسمَـٰعِيلَ وَإِسحَـٰقَ وَيَعقوبَ وَٱلأَسبَاطِ

And they say: ‘Be Jews or Christians, you will be rightly guided” Say: “Nay! (**we follow**) ***the religion of Ibrahim, the upright one, and he was not of the polytheist”*** (***2:135***).

وَمَآ أوتِىَ موسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَآ أوتِىَ ٱلنَّبِيّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِم لَا نفرّق بَينَ أَحَدٍ مِّنهم وَنَحن لَه مسلِمونَ

***Say: "We believe in Allah and* [*in*] *that which has been revealed to us, and* [*in*] *that which was revealed to Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ishaq and Ya'qub and the tribes, and* [*in*] *that which was given to Musa and Isa, and* [*in*] *that which was given to the prophets from their Lord, we do not make any distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit"* (*2:136*).**

فَإِن ءَامَنواْ بِمِثلِ مَآ ءَامَنتم بِهِۦ فَقَدِ ٱهتَدَواْ وَّإِن تَوَلَّواْ فَإِنَّمَا هم فِى شِقَاقٍ فَسَيَكفِيكَهم ٱللَّه وَهوَ ٱلسَّمِيع ٱلعَلِيم

***If then they believe in like of what you believe in, they are indeed on the right course, and if they turn back, then they are only in great dissension; so Allah will suffice you against them, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing* (*2:137*).**

صِبغَةَ ٱللَّهِ وَمَن أَحسَن مِنَ ٱللَّهِ صِبغَةً وَنَحن لَه عَٰبِدونَ

(**We have received**) ***the dyeing of Allah, and who is better than Allah in dyeing? and Him do we worship* (*2:138*).**

قل أَتحَآجّونَنَا فِى ٱللَّهِ وَهوَ رَبّنَا وَرَبّكم وَلَنَآ أَعمَٰلنَا وَلَكم أَعمَٰلكم وَنَحن لَه مخلِصونَ

أَم تَقولونَ إِنَّ إِبرَٰهِـمَ وَإِسمَٰعِيلَ وَإِسحَٰقَ وَيَعقوبَ وَٱلأَسبَاطَ كَانواْ هودًا أَو نَصَٰرَىٰ قل ءَأَنتم أَعلَم أَمِ ٱللَّه

***Say: "Do you dispute with us about Allah? and He is our Lord and your Lord; and for us our deeds and for you are your deeds; and we are sincere to Him* (*2:139*).**

وَمَن أَظلَم مِمَّن كَتَمَ شَهَٰدَةً عِندَه مِنَ ٱللَّهِ وَمَا ٱللَّه بِغَٰفِلٍ عَمَّا تَعمَلونَ

***Or, do you say that Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ya'qub and the tribes were Jews or Christians?" Say: "Are you better knowing or Allah? And who is more unjust than he who conceals a testimony that he has from Allah? And Allah is not at all heedless of what you do"* (*2:140*).**

تِلكَ أُمَّةٌ قَد خَلَت لَهَا مَا كَسَبَت وَلَكم مَّا كَسَبتم وَلَا تسـَٔلونَ عَمَّا كَانواْ يَعمَلونَ

***This is a people that have passed away; they shall have what they earned and you shall have what you earn, and you shall not be called upon to answer for what they did* (*2:141*).**

Commentary

Verse 135

Qur'an: ***And they say: "Be Jews and Christians, you will be rightly guided"*** **(*2: 135*).**

The preceding verses made it clear that the true religion followed by the children of Ibrahim – Isma'il and Ishaq as well as Ya'qub and his descendants – was the same Islam which was the religion of Ibrahim, the upright one. It means that the differences and divisions, the schisms and sects, which the proponents of Judaism and Christianity call to, have actually originated from their own desires; they are just a few toys manufactured by them. They are in great disputations, schisms and disagreements, they are divided into numerous sects and religious groups, they have dyed the religion of Allah – the religion of Unity, the religion of Oneness – with colours of their bias and prejudice, their desires and ambitions. But the religion is not divided; it is one, in the same way as God, Who is to be worshipped, is One; it is the religion of Ibrahim; the Muslims should firmly keep hold of this original religion, discarding the differences and dissensions of the People of the Book aside.

Although the life in this world looks like a constant phenomenon, in reality it is continuously changing. The same applies to all the natural world. Even the rites, customs and manners of various nations and groups are not immune from this propensity to change. More often than not, it causes changes and deviations even in religious matters. Sometimes extraneous things are inserted in religion; at other times, an essential part is declared anathema; worldly goals and ideals replace the Divine and religious goals and aims. What a tragedy is it for religion! When it happens, the religion is dyed in national or tribal colour, and starts calling to a goal other than the original one; it focuses its sight on innovations, forgetting its original purpose. In a short while, the evil (i.e., the innovation) becomes virtue. People support and defend it, because it agrees with their desires and cravings. And the virtue is treated as evil; it has no protector or defender to stand for it. Ultimately, the things deteriorate to unbelievable extent, as we are seeing with our own eyes today.

However, the sentence:

"And they say: 'Be Jews or Christians'" **(*2: 135*).**

Stands for the sentences, "The Jews say: 'Be Jews, you will be guided aright'; and the Christians say: 'Be Christians, you will be rightly guided.'" They make such divergent claims because of their divergences and differences.

Qur'an: ***Say: "Nay!*** **(we follow)** ***the religion of Ibrahim, the upright one, and he was not of the polytheists"*** **(*2: 135*).**

It is the reply of their claims. The Prophet should tell them: Nay! we follow the religion of Ibrahim, the upright one; because it is the one religion which was followed by all your prophets – Ibrahim and all

those who came after him. Ibrahim, who brought this religion, was not a polytheist. Had there been so many divisions in his religion – the divisions which were attached to it by the innovators – he would have become a polytheist: That which is not a part of Allah's religion cannot invite towards Allah, it will surely call to something other than Allah – and this is what polytheism means. The religion of Ibrahim is the religion of unity; it does not contain anything that is not from Allah.

Verse 136

Qur'an: ***Say: "We believe in Allah and*** **(in)** ***that which has been revealed to us, and*** **(in)** ***that which was revealed to Ibrahim…"*** **(*2:136*).**

After mentioning the claim of the Jews and the Christians, Allah describes the truth – and He always tells the truth. The truth consists of the testimony of belief in One God and belief in all that was brought by the prophets – without making any distinction between them. This is what is called the Islam. Belief in Allah was the fundamental part of that which was revealed to the prophets; yet it has been mentioned here separately. The reason is that the belief in the Creator is a natural instinct, it does not depend on prophetic proofs and arguments.

After that fundamental belief, Allah mentions "that which has been revealed to us", that is, the Qur'an or the knowledge contained in it. Then He mentions "that which was revealed to Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ishaq and Ya'qub". Thereafter is described "that which was given to Musa and 'Isa"; these two have been especially mentioned because the speech is addressed to the Jews and the Christians who call only to these two prophets, respectively. Finally, the testimony includes "that which was given to the prophets". This sentence covers all the prophets and thus paves the way for the next declaration: "we do not make any distinction between any of them".

Note the variation in style: That which is with us and that which was with Ibrahim, Isma'il, Ishaq and Ya'qub, is listed as "revealed" to us and them, respectively; while that which was with Musa, 'Isa and other prophets is referred to as "given" to them.

Probably the reason is this: The basic idea may be conveyed by the word, "giving", as Allah says after mentioning Ibrahim and other prophets who came before or after him:

These are they to whom We gave the book and the wisdom and the prophethood **(*6:89*).**

But this word does not clearly and necessarily mean "revelation"; for example, Allah says:

And certainly, We gave wisdom to Luqman **(*31:12*).**

And certainly, We gave the book and the wisdom and the prophecy to the Children of Israel… **(*45:16*).**

Now both the Jews and the Christians counted Ibrahim, Isma'il, Ishaq, Ya'qub and the tribes as following

their religions respectively – the Jews claimed that those prophets were Jews; the Christians claimed that they were Christians. They believed that the true religion was the Judaism or the Christianity that was given to Musa or 'Isa respectively. In this background, if Allah had said, 'that which was given to Ibrahim…, it would not have clearly shown that those prophets themselves had brought a religion, which was revealed to them by Allah; the Jews or the Christians could have claimed that what was given to them was the same thing which was given to Musa or 'Isa – peace be on them all – and that their names have been mentioned, like that of the Children of Israel, just because they followed the self–same religion! It was to remove this possible misunderstanding that Ibrahim and those named prophets (peace be on them all) were separately mentioned and it was clearly said that they had got that religion by Divine revelation. As for the prophets who came before Ibrahim ('a), the Jews and the Christians did not lay claim on their religion, and there was no chance of any misunderstanding; therefore, their religion was referred to as "given" to them.

Qur'an: ***…And the tribes*** **(*2:136*).**

'al–Asbat" (**اَلأَسْباط**) of the Israelites has the same meaning as *"al–qaba'il"* (**اَلقَبَائِل**) of the Isma'ilites, and that is, the tribes. *Sibt,* like *qabilah,* refers to the descendants of one forefathers. There were twelve tribes in the Israelites, each one descended from one of the twelve children of Ya'qub; thus each became a distinct group in itself.

If the word "tribes" refers to the whole groups, then it is used metaphorically, because the prophets who received the revelation were from those tribes. On the other hand, it may refer to the individuals, that is, the prophets themselves. In any case, it does not include the brothers of Yusuf ('a) because they were not prophets.

A similar verse is found in the Chapter of 'The Women':

And We revealed to Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ishaq and Ya'qub and the tribes, and 'Isa and Ayyub and Yunus and Harun and Sulayman… **(*4:163*).**

Verse 137

Qur'an: ***If then they believe in like of what you believe in, they are indeed on the right course,*** **(*2:137*).**

What Allah actually means is this: If they believe in what you believe in, then they are on the right course. But He has added here the word "like"

If then they believe in like of what you believe in… **(*2:137*).**

To cut the root of disputation and argumentation. Had they been invited to believe in what the Muslims believed in, they could have replied – as they used to say – No, we believe in that which has been

revealed to us and we reject what is besides that. Therefore, this verse teaches the Muslims a different way of expressions: We believe in that which contains nothing but pristine truth; therefore, you too should believe in that which contains only pristine truth like it. Addressed in this way, they will not find any loop-hole, nor will they be able to resort to their obstinate wrangles. And then they will realize that what they have had is not the unadulterated truth.

Qur'an: ***in great dissension*** (***2: 137***).

"ash-Shiqaq" (اَلشِّقاق) means hypocrisy, disputation, dissension.

Qur'an: ***so Allah will suffice you against them*** (***2: 137***).

It was a promise to the Messenger of Allah to help him against them; and Allah fulfilled this promise. And the same favour shall be completed for the Muslim nation when Allah wills.

This verse is a parenthetic statement between the preceding and the following verses.

Verse 138

Qur'an: ***the dyeing of Allah, and who is better than Allah in dyeing?*** (***2: 138***).

"as-Sibghah" (اَلصِّبْغَة) means a kind of dyeing. The verse means: The above-mentioned belief is a Divine colour in which Allah has dyed us; and it is the best of the colours - it is not a dye of the Judaism nor of the Christianity, which emanate from dissensions in religion, when people fail to keep on the right track.

Qur'an: ***and Him do we worship*** (***2: 138***).

Grammatically the sentence describes the condition; it gives the reason of the preceding phrase: "the dyeing of Allah..."

Verse 139

Qur'an: ***Say: "Do you dispute with us about Allah?"*** (***2: 139***).

It is a rebuke to the People of the Book regarding their disputation with the Muslims. The next sentences show how and why their argumentations were wrong and in vain: "and He is our Lord and your Lord; and for us are our deeds and for you are your deeds; and we are sincere to Him". When the followers dispute with each other concerning their leader, the dispute may emanate from one or more of the three causes:

First: They follow different leaders; and each wants to show the superiority of his leader over the other's, for example, a dispute between an idol-worshipper and a Muslim.

Second: They follow the same leader, but each claims a close relationship with the leader, denying a like privilege to the other.

Third: One party wants to show that the other party, because of his unbecoming behaviour and immoral character, has lost the right to be counted among the followers of the leader; his claim of being a follower of the leader is an insult to the latter.

Now, why should the Muslims and the People of the Book dispute with each other? The first reason does not apply, because both worship the same God. The same goes for the second reason, because one group's deeds do not clash with those of the other – "for us are our deeds and for you are your deeds". Coming to the third cause, the Muslims are sincere in their devotion to Allah. So why should the People of the Book dispute with them, when they have got no reason at all.

In this way, Allah first rebuked them for their disputation with the Muslims, and then dismisses all three causes of disputation one by one.

Verse 140

Qur'an: ***"Or, do you say that Ibrahim… were Jews or Christians?"*** (***2:140***).

Both groups say that Ibrahim and the other prophets named in the verse were from them; implying that they were Jews or Christians. Or, they clearly claimed that they were Jews or Christians, as may be understood from the words of Allah:

O People of the Book! why do you dispute about Ibrahim, when the Torah and the Injil were not revealed till after him? Do you not then understand? (***3:65***).

Qur'an: ***Say: 'Are you better knowing or Allah?"*** (***2:140***).

Because Allah has informed us and you in the Book that Musa and 'Isa and their books came after Ibrahim and the prophets mentioned in this verse.

Qur'an: ***"And who is more unjust than he who conceals a testimony that he has from Allah?"*** (***2:140***).

That is, he who conceals a testimony, a fact known to him, that Allah has informed in His Books that the *Shari'ah* of Judaism and Christianity were sent after Ibrahim and the other named prophets. The "testimony", thus, refers to a fact known to one.

The verse may alternatively refer to him who conceals the testimony of Allah that Ibrahim and those prophets had passed away long before the Torah and the Injil were revealed. In this case, the "testimony" would refer to giving evidence, to bearing witness. But the first meaning is more appropriate in the context of this verse.

Verse 141

Qur'an: ***This is a people that has passed away…*** **(*2:141*).**

It will do you no good to dispute about other people as to which group they belonged to; nor will silence on this matter do you any harm. You must spend your time in those things which you will be asked about tomorrow.

This verse has been repeated here because the Jews and the Christians talked (and they still do) too much on this subject – which would be of no avail to them on the Day of Judgment; especially when they knew very well that Ibrahim had passed away long before Judaism and Christianity came into being.

In other contexts, discussion about the prophets and messengers is a very beneficial thing; the Qur'an exhorts us to look into, and learn about, their teachings and their spiritual virtues; and it is with this aim that it repeatedly narrates their stories and orders us to meditate on them.

Traditions

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said about the verse:

Say: Nay! **(we follow)** ***the religion of Ibrahim…*** **(*2:130*).**

"Verily, the upright religion is the Islam."[1]

Imam al-Baqir ('a) said: "The upright religion (of Ibrahim, 'a), did not leave anything (unguided), so much so that it includes the trimming of the moustache, and cutting of nails, and circumcision."[2]

"Allah revealed the upright (religion) to Ibrahim, and it is cleanliness; and it is (made up of) ten (things), five (of them) in the head and (the other) five in the (rest of the) body. As for those which are in the head, they are: Trimming of the moustache, and letting the beard grow, and dressing the hair, and brushing the teeth, and (using) the tooth-pick; and as for those which are in the (rest of the) body, they are: removing the hair from the body, and circumcision, and cutting the nails, and the bath of *al-janabah* (**الجنابة** = the ritual uncleanliness resulting from sexual intercourse or ejaculation), and cleansing (the body) with water. And this is the pure upright (religion) which Ibrahim ('a) brought; it was never abrogated, nor will it ever be abrogated until the Day of Resurrection."[3]

The author says: Dressing the hair means to trim it and grow it. There are a lot of traditions of the same or similar meaning, narrated by both sects in their books.

Imam al-Baqir ('a) said about the words of Allah:

Say: We believe in Allah… **(*3:18*).**

“Allah has meant Ali, and Fatimah, and al-Hasan, and al-Husayn, in this verse; and after them it has continued in the Imams...”[4]

The author says: This theme may be inferred from the words,

***And* (raise) *from our offspring a group submitting to Thee* (*2: 128*).**

Which were used in the invocation of Ibrahim (‘a). There is no contradiction between this tradition and the fact that the verse is addressed to all the Muslims and obliges all of them to believe in the things mentioned therein; because the circle of such verses may be widened or shortened in different contexts, according to various stages of application – as we have explained with reference to various stages of the Islam and *Iman.*

al-Qummi narrates in his *at-Tafsir* from al-Baqir or Imam as-Sadiq (‘a), and as-Saduq narrates in *Ma’ani ‘l-akhbar* from Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) that he said explaining the words of Allah,

***The dyeing of Allah...* (*2: 138*).**

“The dyeing is the Islam.”

The author says: It is clear from the context of the verses.

Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said: “(Allah) dyed the believers with *al-wilayah* (اَلوِلايَة = love and obedience of the Prophet and his *Ahl Al-Bayt*) in (i.e., at the time of) *al-mithaq* (اَلميْثاق = the covenant taken from the souls).”[5]

The author says: It refers to the esoteric meaning of this verse, as we shall explain later on; we shall then also explain the meaning of *al-wilayah* and *al-mithaq,* Allah willing.

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1. al-‘Ayyashi.
2. al-‘Ayyashi.
3. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
4. al-Kafi; al-‘Ayyashi.
5. al-Kafi; Ma’ani ‘l-akhbar.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 142 - 151

سَيَقول ٱلسّفَهَآء مِنَ ٱلنَّاسِ مَا وَلَّهم عَن قِبلَتِهم ٱلَّتِى كَانواْ عَلَيهَا قل لِّلَّهِ ٱلمَشرِق وَٱلمَغرِب يَهدِى مَن يَشَآء إِلَىٰ صِرَٰطٍ مّستَقِيمٍ

The fools among the people will say: "What has turned them from their qiblah which they had?" Say: "The East and the West belong only to Allah; He guides him whom He likes to a straight path" (***2:142***).

وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلنَٰكم أمَّةً وَسَطًا لِّتَكونواْ شهدَآءَ عَلَى ٱلنَّاسِ وَيَكونَ ٱلرَّسول عَلَيكم شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلنَا ٱلقِبلَةَ ٱلَّتِى كنتَ عَلَيهَآ إِلَّا لِنَعلَمَ مَن يَتَّبِع ٱلرَّسولَ مِمَّن يَنقَلِب عَلَىٰ عَقِبَيهِ وَإِن كَانَت لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى ٱلَّذِينَ هَدَى ٱللَّه وَمَا كَانَ ٱللَّه لِيضِيعَ إِيمَٰنَكم إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ بِٱلنَّاسِ لَرَءوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

And thus We have made you a medium nation so that you may be witnesses for the people and the Messenger may be a witness for you. And We had not made the qiblah which you had but that We might know him who follows the Messenger from him who turns back upon his heels; and though this was surely hard except for those whom Allah has guided aright; and Allah was not going to make your faith to be fruitless; most surely Allah is Affectionate, Merciful to the people (***2:143***).

قَد نَرَىٰ تَقَلّبَ وَجهِكَ فِى ٱلسَّمَآءِ فَلَنوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبلَةً تَرضَٰهَا فَوَلِّ وَجهَكَ شَطرَ ٱلمَسجِدِ ٱلحَرَامِ وَحَيث مَا كنتم فَوَلّواْ وجوهَكم شَطرَه وَإِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ أوتواْ ٱلكِتَٰبَ لَيَعلَمونَ أَنَّه ٱلحَقّ مِن رَّبِّهِم وَمَا ٱللَّه بِغَٰفِلٍ عَمَّا يَعمَلونَ

Indeed We see the turning of thy face to heaven, so We shall surely turn thee to a qiblah which thou shalt be pleased with; turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are, turn your faces towards it; and those who have been given the Book most surely know that it is the truth from their Lord; and Allah is not at all heedless of what they do (***2:144***).

وَلَئِن أَتَيتَ ٱلَّذِينَ أوتواْ ٱلكِتَٰبَ بِكلّ ءَايَةٍ مَّا تَبِعواْ قِبلَتَكَ وَمَآ أَنتَ بِتَابِعٍ قِبلَتَهم وَمَا بَعضهم بِتَابِعٍ قِبلَةَ بَعضٍ وَلَئِنِ ٱتَّبَعتَ أَهوَآءَهم مِّن بَعدِ مَا جَآءَكَ مِنَ ٱلعِلمِ إِنَّكَ إِذًا لَّمِنَ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ

And even if you bring to those who have been given the Book every sign they would not follow your qiblah, nor can you be a follower of their qiblah, neither are they the followers of each other's qiblah; and if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, then you shall most surely be among the unjust (***2:145***).

ٱلَّذِينَ ءَاتَينَـٰهم ٱلكِتَـٰبَ يَعرِفونَه ۖ كَمَا يَعرِفونَ أَبنَآءَهم ۖ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنهم ۖ لَيَكتمونَ ٱلحَقَّ وَهم ۖ يَعلَمونَ

Those whom We have given the Book recognize him as they recognize their sons; and a party of them most surely conceal the truth while they know (it) (***2:146***).

ٱلحَقّ مِن رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكونَنَّ مِنَ ٱلممتَرِينَ

The truth is from your Lord, therefore you should not be of the doubters (***2:147***).

وَلِكلٍّ ۖ وِجهَةٌ هوَ موَلِّيهَا فَٱستَبِقواْ ٱلخَيرَٰتِ ۖ أَينَ مَا تَكونواْ يَأ ۖتِ بِكم ٱللَّه جَمِيعًا ۖ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كلِّ شَىءٍ ۖ قَدِيرٌ ۖ

And every one has a direction to which he would turn; therefore, hasten to (do) ***good works; wherever you are, Allah will bring you all together; surely Allah has power over all things*** (***2:148***).

وَمِن ۖ حَيث خَرَجتَ فَوَلِّ وَجهَكَ شَطرَ ٱلمَسجِدِ ٱلحَرَامِ وَإِنَّه ۖ لَلحَقّ مِن رَّبِّكَ وَمَا ٱللَّه بِغَـٰفِلٍ عَمَّا تَعمَلونَ

And from whatsoever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and surely it is the very truth from your Lord, and Allah is not at all heedless of what you do (***2:149***).

وَمِن ۖ حَيث خَرَجتَ فَوَلِّ وَجهَكَ شَطرَ ٱلمَسجِدِ ٱلحَرَامِ ۖ وَحَيث مَا كنتم ۖ فَوَلّواْ وجوهكم ۖ شَطرَه ۖ لِئَلَّا يَكونَ
لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيكم ۖ حجَّةٌ إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ ظَلَمواْ مِنهم ۖ فَلَا تَخشَوهم ۖ وَٱخشَونِى وَلِأُتِمَّ نِعمَتِى عَلَيكم ۖ وَلَعَلَّكم ۖ تَهتَدونَ

And from whatsoever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are turn your faces towards it, so that people shall have no argument against you, except such of them as are unjust; so do not fear them, and fear Me; ***and so that I may complete*** My ***favour on you and that you may walk on the right course*** (***2:150***).

كَمَآ أَرسَلنَا فِيكم ۖ رَسولًا ۖ مِّنكم ۖ يَتلواْ عَلَيكم ۖ ءَايَـٰتِنَا وَيزَكِّيكم ۖ وَيعَلِّمكم ٱلكِتَـٰبَ وَٱلحِكمَةَ وَيعَلِّمكم مَّا لَم ۖ
تَكونواْ تَعلَمونَ

Even as We have sent among you a Messenger from among you who recites to you Our communications and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know (***2:151***).

Commentary

Ponder on these verses and you will find them well-connected with each other, a common context joining them together like a strand running through the beads. These verses together talk about the appointment of the Ka'bah as the *qiblah* (the direction of prayer etc.) for the Muslims. Therefore, no attention should be paid to those who say that there was a change of sequence in the arrangement of these verses, or that some of them have abrogated the others. Although they narrate some traditions to this effect, but they do not deserve any comment because all of them go against the clear meaning of these verses.

Verse 142

Qur'an: ***The fools among the people will say: "What has turned them from their qiblah which they had?"*** **(*2: 142*).**

It is the second introductory sentence for the soon-to-be-promulgated order to make the Ka'bah as the *qiblah* of the Muslims. Also, it teaches the reply of the objection which the "fools among the people", that is, the Jews and the pagans of Mecca, were expected to raise: The Jews because of their partisanship of their own *qiblah,* Bayt al-Maqdis; and the pagan Arabs because they were always on the lookout for any new thing which they could object to.

Allah prepared the minds for change of *qiblah,* first by revealing the story of Ibrahim ('a) and various honours bestowed on him by Allah, as well as the honour accorded to his son, Isma'il; their prayers for the Ka'bah and Mecca, as well as for the Prophet and the Muslim group; their construction of the House and the order they received to cleanse it for the worship of Allah.

It is recognized that the change of *qiblah* from Bayt al-Maqdis to the Ka'bah was an event of greatest religious significance, one of the most important commandments given to the Muslims after the *hijrah* of the Prophet to Medina, when the roots of Islam were firmly taking place and its knowledge and realities were being spread. Understandably, the Jews were not going to remain silent in face of this legislation: According to their thinking this change negated one of their greatest religious prides, that is, *qiblah;* hitherto the Muslims were following them in their *qiblah,* and the Jews could claim a precedence over the Muslims in this religious symbol.

Moreover, this new legislation was a manifest advancement in the Muslims' religion - it made all of them to face a single point in their worship and other religious rites. It saved them from looking towards divergent directions - physically; and from difference of opinions - spiritually. Facing towards the Ka'bah had rather more influence and deeper impression on the souls of the Muslims than the rules of cleanliness and invocation etc.; and their enemies, and particularly the Jews, understood it, and they resented it.

Their stories, as narrated in the Qur'an, prove that they were a nation which did not give any credence to anything in this world which was beyond the reach of the five senses. As spiritual things were not of any importance in their eyes, they used to accept the spiritual rules without any protest – they did not consider it worth arguing about. But whenever they were given a Divine Commandment which had any connection with the physical world, which had a material form – like war, emigration, *sajdah,* polite speech etc. – they stood up against it, and opposed it very vehemently.

In short, Allah informed His Messenger what the enemies of Islam were going to say against the change of *qiblah,* and taught him how they should be replied, how their arguments should be refuted.

Their objection: The first *qiblah* was prescribed by Allah for the previous prophets. Why was it changed to another House which had no such distinction? Was this change affected by the order of Allah? How could Allah contravene His Own previously ordained rule, or abrogate His Own law? (We have mentioned under the verse of "Abrogation" that the Jews do not believe in abrogation.) Or, was it done without any order from Allah? If so, then the Muslims have deviated from the right path and have left guidance for misguidance. (This objection has not been mentioned in so many words in the Qur'an, but the suggested reply points to it.)

Reply: When Allah prescribes a house like the Ka'bah as *qiblah,* it is not based on any specialty of that house or stone; there is no unalterable and inseparable quality in that building which could demand that honour as a right. Being chosen as a *qiblah* is not an inviolable and natural characteristic of any building. Every article, every building and every direction is equally capable of being selected for this purpose; and none has any especial claim for it. Everything belongs to Allah, He issues orders about it, whatever He likes, in any way He likes, and whenever He likes. Whatever He decrees, it is for the guidance of the people, for their individual and collective good and perfection. He does not order but for guidance, and He does not guide except to the way which leads directly to their perfection and well-being.

Qur'an: ***The fools among the people will say*** **(*2: 142*).**

It means the Jews and the polytheists of Arabia; and that is why they have been referred to as "the people". They have been called "fools" because their mentality was not right, and their ideas about the Divine Law were unsound. And that is what foolishness is: crookedness of mind and unsoundness of opinion.

Qur'an: ***What has turned them…*** **(*2: 142*).**

When the verb, *"at-tawliyah"* (اَلتَّوْلِيَة) is joined to its object (without preposition), it means, to turn your face towards that thing, to keep it facing you; as Allah says: "so We shall surely turn thee to *a qiblah* which thou shalt like". When it is followed by the preposition '*an* (عَنْ), it gives the opposite meaning, that is, to turn away from, to turn one's face from. The verse means: What has turned them away, or turned their faces, from the *qiblah* which they were using hitherto, that is, Bayt al-Maqdis towards which the Prophet and the Muslims used to pray during his stay at Mecca and for a few months after his

emigration to Medina.

Qur'an: ***From their qiblah...*** **(*2:142*).**

The *qiblah is* attributed to the Muslims, although the Jews were using it centuries before the Prophet. Obviously, their turning from their own *qiblah* looks more surprising, and gives more room for objection.

And it was for the same reason that the opening phrase says: "What has turned them", instead of saying, "What has turned the Prophet and the Muslims." It would not have looked objectionable in the least if they had said: "What has turned the Prophet and the Muslims from the *qiblah* of the Jews?"

Qur'an: ***Say: "The East and the West belong only to Allah..."*** **(*2:142*).**

Only these two directions were mentioned, because it is through them that all other cardinal and compound directions are fixed, like the North, the South and all the intermediate directions between any two cardinal ones. The East and the West are relative directions which are fixed by the rising and setting of the sun and the stars; they cover all places of the earth (except two imaginary points of the true North and South Poles). Perhaps, it was for this reason that only these two were chosen to represent all the directions.

Qur'an: ***"...He guides him whom He likes to a straight path"*** **(*2:142*).**

The word *"sirat"* (صِرَاطَ = path) is mentioned here without a definite article *"al"* (أَلْ), since it is a common noun, and does not specify a definite path, because nations differ in their paths due to their differences in ability to attain perfection and happiness.

Verse 143

Qur'an: ***And thus We have made you a medium nation that you may be witnesses for the people and the Messenger may be a witness for you*** **(*2:143*).**

Apparently it means as follows: As We are going to change very soon the *qiblah* for you in order that We may guide you to a right path, in the same way We have made you an intermediary nation.

Relationship Between Prescription Of *Qiblah* And *Ummah* Being Witnesses For The People And The Messenger Being Witness For The *Ummah*

Someone has explained it in the following way: And like this wonderful making, We have made you a medium nation. Such an explanation deserves no comment.

Another explanation given by another exegete is as follows: They were made a "medium nation" to "be witnesses for the people". What does it mean? "Medium" is a thing in the centre, neither to this side nor to that. This *"ummah"* has the same position *vis-à-vis* the people - that is, the People of the Book and the polytheists. The polytheists and the dualist emphasize the physical aspects of life. Their whole

attention is fixed to this worldly life; their plans are centred on its trinkets and comforts. They do not believe in the Resurrection or the hereafter; spiritual perfection and esoteric virtues are not so important to them. On the other extreme are some groups, like the Christians, who put utmost emphasis on the spiritual aspects to the detriment of the physical ones. They teach monasticism and rejection of the world. They seem heedless to the fact that the Creator has made the physical perfection a means by which man may reach the goal for which he has been created.

In short the latter – the "people of spirit" – nullified their goal by nullifying the means; and the former – the "people of body" – nullified their goal by focusing their whole attention to the means as though it was the goal in itself. Allah has made this *ummah* a "medium", by giving them a religion which leads them to the straight and upright path, in the middle – inclined neither to this side nor to that. It strengthens both sides – the body as well as the soul – according to what each of them needs and deserves; it is a religion which encourages and invites man to combine the virtue of both. Man is, after all, a combination of body and soul; he is neither body alone nor spirit alone. If his life is to be a happy one, he must unite physical perfections with the spiritual one.

This *ummah* then is the medium and well–balanced one; it is a criterion to judge and weigh both sides of extremes. It is, therefore, the witness for all the people who have deviated from the middle way going to this side or that. And the Prophet – the most perfect and the ideal example of this *ummah* – *is* the witness for this *ummah.* The Prophet is the criterion to judge the condition of this *ummah's* individuals; and the *ummah,* in its turn, is the criterion to judge the condition of other people; it is the point to which the two extremes are expected to return.

Comment

What this exegete has said is true in itself, but it does not explain the wordings of this verse. The *ummah,* by virtue of its position in the middle, may be called a criterion to judge the extremes, as well as a point to which the people of the two extremes should return. But it does not make it a "witness" for the two extremes, nor it gives the *ummah* ability to observe the said extremes. Apparently, there is no correlation between being a medium (in the above–mentioned sense) and being a witness. Also, there is no reason why the Messenger of Allah should be made a witness for them; there is no correlation between the two witnessings. But the verse clearly says that the Messenger of Allah shall be a witness for the *ummah,* because the *ummah* shall be a witness for the people, and it shall acquire that status because it is a medium *ummah.*

Moreover, the witnessing, referred to in this verse, is one of the Qur'anic realities, which has been mentioned repeatedly in the Divine Speech; and looking at various contexts where it has been referred to, we find that its connotation differs completely from the above–quoted meaning. Allah says:

How will it be, then, when We bring from every people a witness and bring you as a witness for these? (***4:41***).

And on the day when We will raise up a witness out of every nation, then shall no permission be given to those who disbelieve, nor shall they be made to solicit favour (***16:84***).

…And the Book shall be laid down and the prophets and the witnesses shall be brought up… (***39:69***).

Note that witnessing in these verses is unconditional, and the obvious meaning is that they shall be witnesses for the deeds of their nations, and will also testify that the messengers of Allah did convey the Divine Message to those nations, as is made clear in the verse:

Most certainly then We will question those to whom (the messengers) ***were sent, and most certainly We will question the messengers*** (***7:6***).

No doubt they will give the evidence in the hereafter; but they must have seen the events in this life, as may be inferred by the words of 'Isa ('a) quoted in the Qur'an:

…And I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst take me (**away**) ***completely, Thou were the watcher over them, and Thou art witness of all things*** (***5:117***).

…And on the Day of Resurrection he (***i.e.,*** **'Isa**) ***shall be a witness against them*** (***4:159***).

Obviously, our normal senses, with all their powers, cannot perceive except the exterior forms of deeds and actions, and that also of a thing which is present, which is within the reach. They cannot perceive a non-existent or a non-present item. And it is completely beyond their power to know, comprehend or identify the realities of those actions and deeds; nor can they observe the immaterial ideas like belief or disbelief, and success or failure. In short, no man can witness a thing which is hidden from the five senses, nor can he observe the esoteric ideas and characteristics that are locked into another person's heart. But it is these hidden realities which will be taken account of, and looked into, on the Day of Resurrection, as Allah says:

…But He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned (***2:225***).

Obviously, these things cannot be seen even by those who are present, let alone those who are absent. It can be done only by a man whose affairs are managed directly by Allah, and whom Allah makes to "see" the hidden realities. This fact may be inferred from the words of Allah:

And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for intercession, but he who bears witness of the truth (***i.e.,*** **of the reality**) ***and they know*** (***43:86***).

Surely, 'Isa ('a) is included in this exception, because, Allah has testified that he is one of those who shall bear witness (as is seen from the above-mentioned two verses). Thus, he is one of those who had "seen" the realities and known the hidden factors of the deeds of their *ummah.*

In short, the witnessing mentioned in the verse under discussion does not mean that this *ummah* follows a religion which combines physical perfection with spiritual sublimity. Certainly, this explanation has nothing to do with the meaning of "witness" nor does it fit the apparent meaning of the above-quoted verses.

Actually, they have been called "witnesses" of the people, because they see and observe in this world the realities of the people's actions - felicity and infelicity, rejection and acceptance, submission and arrogance. And they shall give evidence for or against those people on the Day of Judgment, the day when Allah will make every thing to testify for or against a man, not excepting his own limbs and organs; the day when the Messenger will say:

"***O my Lord! surely my people treated this Qur'an as a forsaken thing*** (***25:30***).

Also, it is known that the whole *ummah* could not attain to this position; it is a special status given to only the pure friends of Allah. Even those who are only slightly below them in the ranks of felicity, and other just and pious believers are not included in this verse - let alone the rubble of the nation, or the Nimrods and Pharaohs of the *ummah.* You will see in the Commentary of the following verse

And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger, these are with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favours from among the prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the good ones; and excellent are these as companions (***4:69***).

That the least that can be said about the martyrs - the witnesses of the deeds - is that they are under the guardian-ship of Allah, enjoying His favours, and proceeding on the straight path. Also, it has been described in short in the explanation of the verse:

The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours... (***1:7***).

When Allah told this *ummah* that it was made witness for the people, the meaning was that the "witnesses" would be from among this *ummah.* In this respect, it is not different from those verses which tell the Children of Israel that they were made to excel over the worlds. Such verses show that there were among the Children of Israel such personalities who were given that distinction; not that every individual of them was superior to the worlds. A distinction enjoyed by a group is attributed to the whole nation, because the group is a part of the nation. Likewise, this *ummah* has been said to be "witnesses over the people", because there are, in this *ummah,* people who shall be witnesses of the people, and the Messenger shall be witness of them.

Objection: Allah says in the Qur'an:

And (**as for**) ***those who believe in Allah and His messengers, these it is that are the truthful and the witnesses near their Lord*** (***57:19***).

It shows that all the believers, in general, are "the witnesses".

Reply: The phrase "near their Lord" proves that Allah will include them among the witnesses on the Day of Resurrection, a rank which they had not got in this life. It is like the verse which says:

And **(as for)** ***those who believe and their offspring follow them in faith, We will unite with them their offspring…*** **(*52:21*).**

Apart from that, this verse is general and shows that all the believers from all the nations will be witnesses near Allah; it does not speak about this *ummah* especially; therefore, it is of no use to the objector.

Objection: If the *ummah* has been made a "medium" in this meaning, it does not necessarily follow that the *ummah,* or a certain group among the *ummah,* should be witnesses of the people's deeds, nor that the Messenger of Allah should be witness of those witnesses. Therefore, the problem which had arisen in the previous explanation, remains unanswered even by your exegesis.

Reply: The verse says that those people were made witnesses because they were made a medium nation. It means that this "mediumship" is something which brings the "evidence" and "witnesses" in its wake. And Allah says:

O you who believe! bow down and prostrate yourselves and worship your Lord, and do good that you may succeed. **(*22:77*)**

And strive hard in **(the way of)** ***Allah,*** **(such)** ***a striving as is due to Him; He has chosen you and has not laid upon you any hardship in religion; the faith of your father, Ibrahim; he named you Muslims before and in this, so that the Messenger may be a witness for you, and you may be witnesses for the people; therefore, establish prayer and pay zakat and hold fast to Allah; He is your Guardian; how excellent the Guardian and how excellent the Helper!*** **(*22:78*).**

Note that the distinction that the Messenger should be a witness for them and they should be witnesses for the people, is based on two things: First, that they were chosen by Allah; and, second, that Allah had not laid upon them any hardship in religion. Then the religion is defined as

The faith of your father, Ibrahim, **who had** ***named you Muslims before*** **(*22:78*).**

He had used this name for you when he prayed to Allah on your behalf, in these words:

And **(raise)** ***from our offspring a group submitting*** **(Muslims)** ***to Thee*** **(*2:128*).**

Allah granted his prayer and made you Muslims, you have surrendered to His order and command; you neither disobey Him nor behave arrogantly before Him; that is why you feel no hardship in the religion, no rule looks difficult for you to follow. You have, therefore, been chosen by Him, and guided on the straight path, submitting to your Lord in all affairs.

We have made you like this, in order that the Messenger may be a witness for you and you may be witnesses of the people. Accordingly, you shall be a medium between the Messenger and the people; you shall be connected to the Messenger on one side and to the people on the other. In this way, the wish of Ibrahim has been fulfilled about you and the Messenger, as he had prayed:

Our Lord! and raise up in them an Apostle from among themselves who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them (***2: 129***).

You are that Muslim *ummah;* the Messenger has transmitted the knowledge of the Book and wisdom to your hearts; and you have been purified by him. Purification has cleansed your hearts from impurities and freed it for My worship and obedience (and as mentioned earlier, it is what Islam means). Therefore, you are the Muslims, sincere in your worship. Of course, the Messenger has precedence over you, because it is he who has guided and trained you. He has precedence over the whole *ummah,* and you are the medium group – joined to the Messenger on one side, and to the people on the other.

There are many associations at the beginning and the end of the verse which point to this meaning; one may understand them on meditation; and we shall further explain it in a proper place, Allah willing.

However, the foregoing explanation shows that:

First: The fact that they have been made a medium *ummah* has a direct bearing on the two objectives. In other words, the facts that "you may be witnesses for the people", and that "the Messenger may be a witness for you", both are the direct result of their being "a medium nation".

Second: They have been called a medium *ummah* because they are placed between the Messenger and the people – not because they are a medium between two extremes, or between the "people of spirit" and the "people of body".

Third: The verse in its connotation has connection with the verses of the prayer of Ibrahim ('a); and this witnessing is a privilege of the said Muslim *ummah.*

One thing more: It appears from the Qur'an that witnessing about the deeds is not exclusively reserved for the human witnesses. Everything which has any connection with a deed – angels, time and place, religion and Book, limbs and organs, senses and hearts, for example – will testify about it.

It may be inferred from the above that the same place and limbs etc. which we have in this life will be present on the Day of Judgment. Also, it appears that all the above–mentioned things have a sort of a life and perception with which they can perceive the particulars of deeds – those particulars are imprinted on them. It is not necessary that every life should be like our own; there is no reason why life should be of only one type. It cannot be said that because time or space does not have a life like ours, therefore, it has no life.

This topic has been mentioned here just to complete the picture. Details about each point will be given in

more suitable places.

Qur'an: ***And We had not made the qiblah which you had but that We might know him who follows the Messenger from him who turns back upon his heels;*** (***2:143***).

The words: "We might know", may be explained in two ways:

First: It may mean, 'My Messenger might know'. Great people generally use this style to speak on behalf of themselves and their subordinates. For example, a ruler says: 'We killed him', or, 'We imprisoned him', although it is his employees, not him-self who kill or imprison.

Second: It may refer to that knowledge of Allah which accompanies the creation or existence of a thing, and not to that knowledge which Allah has of everything before that thing comes into being. "Turning back upon one's heels" is an allegorical expression, which denotes evasion or dissension. When a man, who is standing, turns from one direction to another, he turns on his heels. It is like the words of Allah:

And whoever shall turn his back to them on that day... (***8:16***).

Obviously, this verse aims to remove any possible misgivings which the believers would have had because of the change of *qiblah:* Why *qiblah* was changed? Why the previous *qiblah* was abrogated? What will happen to the prayers which they had prayed facing Bayt al-Maqdis?

Also, it is clear that "the *qiblah* which you had" refers to Bayt al-Maqdis, and not to the Ka'bah (as someone has said). If his explanation is accepted, it would imply that both Bayt al-Maqdis and Ka'bah were prescribed as *qiblah* twice, not once. But there is nothing to support this suggestion.

However, it was but natural that the believers should feel some uneasiness because of this change.

First of all, as Allah had already decided that He would ultimately make the Ka'bah as the *qiblah* of the Muslims, then why did He make Bayt al-Maqdis as their *qiblah* for so many years in the beginning?

The verse says that all these rules and legislations are made for the benefit of the people themselves. The laws of religion aim at training the people and perfecting them; separating the believers from others; distinguishing the obedient from the disobedient, the submissive from the arrogants. And it was for the same reason that the previous *qiblah* was prescribed for you. It was done in order that "We might know him who follows the Messenger", that is, We might distinguish him who follows the Messenger "from him who turns back upon his heels". In usual way, the sentence should have said, "who follows thee", but the Qur'an has used the noun "the Messenger" instead of pronoun, it is to remind us that his status of Messengership has a direct bearing on this separation between obedient and disobedient ones.

"We had not made the *qiblah* which you had": That is, We had not made Bayt al-Maqdis as *qiblah* for you but for the reasons described.

Their second worry could be about the prayers which they had prayed facing Bayt al-Maqdis. What would be its legal status, as it was prayed towards a building that was no longer valid?

Allah says that Bayt al-Maqdis was a valid *qiblah* as long as it was not abrogated. When Allah abrogates a rule, it loses its validity from the time of its abrogation, not from the original legislation; and it is a result of Allah's affection and mercy to the believers.

The above misgiving and its reply is inferred from the words: "and Allah was not going to make your faith to be fruitless; most surely Allah is Affectionate, Merciful to the people." *"ar-Ra'fah"* (اَلرَّأفَة) and *"ar-rahmah"* (اَلرَّحْمَة) both basically denote mercy and compassion; but the former usually has the connotation of pity for an afflicted one, while the latter is general.

Verse 144

Qur'an: ***Indeed We see the turning of thy face to heaven, so We shall surely turn thee to a qiblah which thou shalt be pleased with*** (***2:144***)***.***

The verse shows that the Messenger of Allah, before the revelation of the verse of *qiblah* - that is, this very verse - used to turn his face to heaven, as he waited - or hoped - that Allah would send some commandment regarding *qiblah.* He did so because he wished that Allah would honour him with *a qiblah* especially prescribed for him. It does not mean that he was not pleased with Bayt al-Maqdis as his *qiblah* - for be it from the Messenger to do so! Allah says: "We shall surely turn thee to *a qiblah* which thou shalt be pleased with." To be pleased with a thing does not necessarily mean to be displeased with its alternative.

The traditions, describing the occasion of revelation of this verse, say that the Jews reviled the Muslims and boasted against them, all because the Muslims prayed towards Bayt al-Maqdis - the Jews' *qiblah.* It made the Messenger of Allah sad; so he came out in the dark of the night looking towards heaven waiting for a revelation from Allah, hoping that it would cheer him up. Then this verse was revealed.

Now, suppose he would have received revelation to continue praying towards the previous *qiblah,* that is, Bayt al-Maqdis, it would have been his proof against the Jews that, he followed the *qiblah by* the order of Allah and not in imitation of the Jews. The fact is that there never was, nor there ever is, anything to be ashamed of, if the Prophet and the Muslims prayed facing Bayt al-Maqdis, because the servant has no choice but to accept and obey the order of the Master. But the verse promulgated a new *qiblah.* It removed the cause of the Jews' revile and boast, in addition to defining the new *qiblah.* In this way, it was doubly welcomed - it was a proof against the Jews as well as a source of pleasure for the Messenger of Allah (S).

Qur'an: ***Turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are, turn your face towards it*** (***2:144***)***.***

"ash-Shatr" (اَلشَّطْر) translated here as "towards", literally means "part of". "Part of the Sacred Mosque" refers to the Ka'bah. Allah used this expression, instead of saying, towards the Ka'bah, or, towards the Sacred House, to keep the new rule parallel to the previous one. They used to pray to a part of the Remote Mosque, that is, its well-known Rock; so it was changed to a part of the Sacred Mosque, that is, the Ka'bah. It is quite apart from the fact that the addition of the word, "part of" to "the Mosque" and its qualification with the adjective "Sacred" gives many details of this legislation which would have been lost if this phrase were changed to "the Ka'bah" or "the Sacred House".

Allah begins this verse by giving the order personally to His Messenger (***turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque***), and ends it by including all the Muslims in it (***and wherever you are, turn your face towards it***). It supports the traditions that the *qiblah* was changed when the Messenger of Allah (S) was praying and the Muslims were praying behind him. Therefore, he was personally told to turn towards the Ka'bah during that prayer; then the verse went on describing a general order which covered him and all the Muslims, for every time and in every place.

Qur'an: ***And those who have been given the Book most surely know that it is the truth from their Lord*** (***2: 144***).

Their Book contains the prophecies showing the truth of the prophethood of Muhammad (S), or that this True Prophet would pray facing to-wards the Sacred Mosque. In any case, the verse shows that the Jews' Book had some verses which confirmed - explicitly or implicitly - the truth of this legislation; ***and Allah is not at all heedless of what they do;*** He knows how they hide the truth and conceal the knowledge which they had been given.

Verse 145

Qur'an: ***And even if you bring to those who have been given the Book every sign they would not follow your qiblah*** (***2: 145***).

The verse rebukes them for their obstinacy and stubbornness. Their refusal is not because truth is hidden from them. No, they know very well that it is the truth - they have no doubt about it. Yet they create mischief and invent objection after objection, because they hate the religion and reject the truth. No proof would satisfy them; no sign would make them change their attitude.

Even if you bring to them every sign they would not follow your *qiblah,* because they are obstinate and refuse to accept the truth; ***nor can you be a follower of their qiblah,*** because you have a clear proof from your Lord.

This Qur'anic sentence may also be interpreted as a prohibition given in the form of a proposition. ***Neither are they the followers of each other's qiblah.*** The Jews face towards Bayt al-Maqdis wherever they may be; and the Christians face towards the East wherever they may be. Neither the former would follow the *qiblah,* of the latter, nor the latter would accept the *qiblah* of the former -

because all of them follow their own desires.

Qur'an: ***And if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, then you shall most surely be among the unjust*** (***2: 145***).

The admonition (in singular pronoun) is addressed to the Prophet, but it is really meant for his ummah. It also indicates that the Jews, in their recalcitrance, follow their desire and have become unjust.

Verse 146

Qur'an: ***Those whom We have given the Book recognize him as they recognize their sons*** (***2: 146***).

The pronoun "him" refers to the Messenger of Allah, not to "the Book"; the simile, "as they recognize their sons", fits recognition of a man, not of a book. Nobody says: He recognizes this book as he recognizes his son. Moreover, the subject of the speech is the Messenger of Allah and the revelation he received regarding the *qiblah,* it has nothing to do with the Book which was given to the People of the Book. The verse says: The People of the Book recognize the Messenger of Allah by the prophecies which their Book contains,

As they recognize their sons, and a party of them most surely conceal the truth while they know (***it***) (***2: 140***).

The previous verses were addressed to the Prophet (in second person singular pronouns); then in this verse he has been mentioned in third person, and the talk is addressed to the believers; then the next verse again reverts to the previous style and is addressed to the Prophet. The style was changed here to show that the truth of the Prophet was clear and well-known to the People of the Book. This change reminds one of a speaker who is talking before a group, one of whom surpasses all in virtues and excellence.

The speaker, therefore, addresses him especially (in recognition of his excellence), although the talk is meant for the whole group. Then for some reason, he wants to describe the virtues and excellence of that person; now he turns towards the audience and treats him as absent, mentioning him by pronouns of third person. When that topic is finished, he again assumes the previous style of addressing him directly.

Verse 147

Qur'an: ***The truth is from your Lord, therefore you should not be of the doubters*** (***2: 147***).

It emphasizes the preceding statement and strongly interdicts doubting. The talk in singular pronouns is addressed to the Prophet but is actually intended for the *ummah.*

Verse 148

Qur'an: ***And every one has a direction to which he would turn; therefore, hasten to*** **(do)** ***good works*** **(*2: 148*).**

'al-Wijhah" (اَلوِجْهَة) on paradigm of, as well as synonymous to, *al-qiblah* (اَلقِبْلَة), has the same meaning 'that to which one faces'. The verse sums up the foregoing statements and draws their attention to another more important reality. Every nation has its own *qiblah,* prescribed for them according to their own needs and atmosphere. Being *qiblah is* not an inherent and inseparable characteristic of any place or direction; it is not a natural or personal feature of a thing which could not be changed. It is therefore not good for you to waste your time and energy in disputation and argumentation about it. You should rather hasten to do good work and try to excel others in virtuous deeds; Allah is surely going to gather you on a day about which there is no doubt; and

Wherever you are, Allah will bring you all together; surely Allah has power over all things **(*2: 148*).**

This verse is applicable to the subject of *qiblah,* as it comes between the verses dealing with that subject. Also, it may be applied to the creative affairs as it points to the Divine Measure and Decree and to the related legislation. We shall explain this topic, Allah willing, in another place.

Verse 149

Qur'an: ***And from whatsoever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque;*** **(*2: 149*).**

According to some exegetes it means: And from any place you come forth and at any place you come down, turn your face to the Sacred Mosque. Others say that it means: And from whatever town you come out.

The phrase, "from whatsoever place you come forth", literally means as follows: 'from whatsoever place thou halt come forth'. Possibly it may refer to Mecca from which the Messenger of Allah (S) had to come out, as Allah says:

... ***The town of thine which has driven thee out...*** **(*47: 13*).**

However, the, verse says that the law to face the Ka'bah is a firm order which you have to observe in Mecca as well as in other towns and places. Then Allah emphasizes it in these words:

And surely it is the very truth from your Lord, and Allah is not at all heedless of what you do **(*2: 149*).**

Verse 150

Qur'an: ***And from whatsoever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are turn your faces towards it*** (***2:150***).

The first sentence is repeated here word by word, to show that this law is to be followed in every condition. For example, one says: Fear Allah when you stand up; fear Allah when you sit down; fear Allah when you speak; fear Allah when you are silent. The speaker wants to emphasize that you should fear Allah in all conditions and in every situation. This point would be lost if the above sentence were reconstructed in the following way: Fear Allah when you stand up, when you sit down, when you speak, and when you are silent. The meaning is as follows: Face towards the Sacred Mosque of Mecca whence you had to come out, and wherever you happen to be in the world, turn your faces towards it.

Qur'an: ...***So that people shall have no argument against you, except such of them as are unjust; so do not fear them, and fear Me; and so that I may complete My favour on you and that you may walk on the right course*** (***2:150***).

These sentences describe the following three benefits of this commandment, and at the same time put the utmost emphasis on obeying this law:

First: The Jews knew from their books that the promised Prophet would face towards the Ka'bah, turning away from Bayt al-Maqdis, as Allah has pointed to this fact in a foregoing verse,

And those who have been given the Book most surely know that it is the truth from their Lord (***2:144***).

If the *qiblah* were not changed, the Jews could have used it as a proof against the Muslims that the Prophet was not the one whose advent was foretold in the previous books. But now the promulgation of this order has not left them any room for disputation – except those of them who are unjust. This exception gives the following meaning: Of course, those of them who are unjust – because they follow their desire – will never be satisfied; they will continue arguing against it; "so do not fear them", because they are unjust and they follow their desires – and Allah does not guide aright the unjust people – "and fear Me".

Second: Obedience of this rule will lead the Muslims to the completion of Divine favour on them, by perfecting their religion. We shall explain the meaning of the "completion of favour", when we write the verse:

This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed **My** ***favour on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion*** (***5:4***).

Third: There is the hope that through this rule the Muslims will be guided to the straight path. We have

explained the meaning of guidance under the verse:

Guide us to the straight path (***1:5***).

An exegete has written: "The verse of *qiblah* contains the words, 'and so that I may complete My favour on you and that you may walk on the right course'. Similar words have been used in the 'Chapter of Victory', while mentioning the victory of Mecca:

Surely We have given to you a clear victory (***48:1***).

So that Allah may forgive you your (***i.e.,*** **your** ***ummah*** **their**) ***past faults and those to follow and complete His favour to you and keep you on a straight path*** (***48:2***).

This almost identical expression shows that the verse of *qiblah* too alludes to the victory of Mecca."

According to that exegete, "the Ka'bah in the beginning of Islam was occupied by the idols, which were put there by the polytheists – the power in those days was in the hands of the pagans. Islam was weak, it had no authority or power. Therefore, Allah told the Prophet to face towards Bayt al-Maqdis, the *qiblah* of the Jews, who were nearer than the polytheists, to Islam. Then the Prophet emigrated to Medina, and Islam began to gain strength. The time was coming nearer when Mecca would be conquered and the House of Allah cleansed of the idols' pollution. Allah therefore ordered the Prophet to change the direction of *qiblah.*

It was a great bounty favour which Allah has reserved for the Muslims. And Allah gave a promise, included in this verse of *qiblah,* that He would complete His favour on them and guide them to the right course. It was implied in these words that the Ka'bah would soon be cleansed of the idols and images; the Muslims would be exclusively connected to the Ka'bah as it would remain exclusively under their care. This verse actually gave the good tidings of the conquest of Mecca. Thereafter, when Mecca was conquered, Allah reminded them of that promise by using almost similar words in its description:

"… ***And complete His favours to you and keep you on a straight path"*** (***48:2***).

Comment

This explanation, although apparently well-founded, is in fact not based on deep reflection; because the words of the Qur'an do not support it. How do we know that the verse of *qiblah* contains a promise to complete the favour? The answer is: Because of li (لِ a preposition used here for the final cause; so that, in order that) in *li-utimma* (لاتِمَّ = *so that I may complete…*). And the verse in Chapter 48 (Victory), which, according to him, was revealed in fulfilment of that promise, also begins with the same proposition:

So that Allah may forgive you your (***i.e.,*** **your** ***ummah*** **their**) ***past faults and those to follow and complete His favour to you and keep you on a straight path*** (***48:2***).

Clearly, both verses contain the same promise to complete the favour in future; neither gives the good news of its fulfilment yet. Moreover, the verse of *qiblah* gives this promise to all the Muslims while that of the Victory uses singular pronouns and is addressed to the Prophet personally. Clearly they have been revealed in different contexts.

If there is any verse showing the fulfilment of the promise given in both these verses, then it can only be the verse:

This day I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion (***5:3***).

We shall explain the meaning of *an-ni'mah* (اَلنِّعْمَة = favour, bounty, blessing) in the explanation of this verse, and there we shall describe what was the favour and bounty that was completed on that day, and by which Allah has put the Muslims under His obligation for ever.

There are two other verses which, like the above-mentioned two, contain the promise of completion of favour;

But He wishes to purify you and that He may complete His favour on you so that you may be grateful (***5:6***).

Even thus does He complete His favour upon you, that haply you may submit (***16:81***).

We shall write under these verses somethings related to this topic.

Verse 151

Qur'an: ***Even as We have sent among you a Messenger from among you who recites to you Our communications and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know*** (***2:151***).

The verse begins with the word *kama* (كَمَا = like, as, even as), which is obviously a compound of *ka* (كَ = like, as) and *ma* (مَا) which changes the verb into *masdar.* The connotation, therefore, is as follows: 'We have bestowed Our favours on you by appointing the Ka'bah as your *qiblah.* It is the House that Ibrahim built, and he prayed to Us for its good and blessings. We have done this in the same way as We have favoured you by sending to you a Messenger from among you who recites to you Our communications and teaches you the Book and the wisdom and purifies you. We did so in answer to the pleading of Ibrahim, when he and his son, Isma'il, prayed to Us:

Our Lord! and raise up in them a Messenger from among themselves, who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them' (***2:129***).

This verse, in short, says that it was Allah's favour on this *ummah* that he sent the Prophet among them,

as it was a favour to appoint the Ka'bah as their *qiblah.*

Who are the people referred to by the second person pronouns in "among you a Messenger from among you"? The application may be restricted or extended, depending on the level of explanation whether it is interpreted esoterically, literally or legislatively. Esoterically, it is addressed especially to the earlier mentioned:

***Submissive group* (*2:128*).**

that is, those who were given authority over religion and followers of religion; literally all the Muslims from the progeny of Isma'il (i.e., the Arabs of Mudar tribe) are included; legislatively, it covers all the Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs alike.

Qur'an: ...*Recites to you Our communications...* (*2:151*).

"al-Ayat" (اَلآيَات = verses, signs - translated here as communications) obviously refers to the verses of the Qur'an, because it is the words (not the meanings) that are recited; *'at-tazkiyah"* (اَلتَّزْكِيَة = to purify) is to remove dirt, filth and blemish. The Prophet cleansed them thoroughly - from wrong beliefs like polytheism and rejection of true faith, from vile and base character like pride and avarice, and from evil and immoral actions and things like murder, fornication and intoxicants.

Qur'an: *And teaches you the Book and the wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know* (*2:151*).

It encompasses all primary and secondary aspects of religious knowledge.

These verses have variously changed the pronouns used for Allah, using third and first persons, singular and plural; and for others, using first, second and third persons. The reason of every such change may be understood by a little meditation.

Traditions

Al-Qummi narrates in his *at-Tafsir* that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said about the words of Allah,

***The fools among the people will say...* (*2:142*).**

"The *qiblah* was changed to the Ka'bah after the Prophet prayed towards Bayt al-Maqdis for thirteen years in Mecca; and (also) after his emigration to Medina he prayed towards Bayt al-Maqdis for seven months." (He said:) "Then Allah turned him towards Mecca. And it was because the Jews used to revile the Messenger of Allah (S), saying that he was their follower (as) he prayed to their *qiblah.* The Messenger of Allah (S) became very sad because of it; and he came out in the middle of the night looking to the horizons of the heaven, waiting for an order in this regard from Allah. When it was day and the time of the noon prayer arrived, (the Prophet, S) was in the mosque of Banu Salim. And he had

(already) prayed two *rak'ahs* of *zuhr,* when Jibril came down; and he held the Prophet's upper arms and turned him towards the Ka'bah. And he brought down to him (the revelation):

***Indeed We see the turning of thy face to heaven, so We shall surely turn thee to a qiblah which thou shalt like; turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque* (*2:144*).**

Thus, the Prophet had prayed two *rak'ahs* towards Bayt al-Maqdis, and (prayed the remaining) two *rak'ahs* towards the Ka'bah. Then the Jews and the fools said:

'***What has turned them from their qiblah which they had?'* (*2:142*)**[1]

The author says: There are numerous traditions of similar meaning narrated by the Sunni and Shi'ah narrators, which are recorded in the books of traditions. The reports differ about the time when the *qiblah* was changed. Most of them say that it happened in the month of *Rajab* in the second year of *hijrah* - the seventeenth month after the emigration; and this timing looks more correct. Allah willing, we shall describe some other related topics in a separate discourse.

There are traditions from Sunni narrators, which explain the witnessing of this *ummah* concerning the people and the witnessing of the Prophet for them, in these terms: "The nations will deny, on the Day of Judgment, that the prophets had conveyed any message to them. Then Allah will ask the prophets to bring their proof that they had really conveyed the message - and Allah knows it better. So, the *ummah* of Muhammad (S) will be brought in and they will testify (for the prophets).

Then the (other) nations will say: 'How do you know?' They will say: 'We knew it from the information which Allah revealed in His Book on the tongue of His truthful Prophet.' Then Muhammad (S) will be brought there and he will be asked about the condition of his *ummah. So* he will testify for their purity, justice and probity. And this is the meaning of the words of Allah:

***How will it be, then, when We bring from every people a witness and bring you as a witness for these?* (*4:41*).**

The author says: This theme is supported by other traditions narrated by as-Suyuti in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* and others. But how is it that the Prophet would testify about his *ummah* that they were pure and just? It can be accepted only if it is taken to mean that he will testify for a selected group, not for the whole *ummah.* Otherwise, such traditions have to be rejected, as is self-evident from the Qur'an and the *sunnah.* How can the Prophet sanction or approve all those oppressions, cruelties, tyrannies and massacres perpetrated by this *ummah,* and whose like was never seen in any of the previous nations? How can he testify that all those Pharaohs and *taghuts* of this *ummah* were pure, just and upright? What is this tradition, if not a calumny against this up-right religion? A joke with the realities of this illustrious faith? Moreover, it is based on the wrong idea that a hearsay testimony is acceptable!

The correct meaning of the verse may be seen in a tradition narrated from al-Baqir ('a) that he said:

“Only the Imams and the Messengers will be witnesses for the people. And as for the (general) *ummah,* it is unthinkable that Allah would call them as witnesses – and there are among them those whose testimony is not accepted for a bundle of vegetable.”2

Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said about the verse,

That you may be witnesses… **(*2:143*)** ***.***

“(It is) then (wrong) if you think that Allah in this verse means all the monotheists, the people of *qiblah* (*i.e.,* the Muslims). Do you think that a person whose evidence is not acceptable in this world about *a as-sa’* (**اَلصَّاع** = a weight about 3 kilogram) of date, Allah will call him as a witness on the Day of Judgment and will accept his evidence in presence of all the previous nations? Certainly not. Allah does not mean (here) such of his creatures; He means only that *ummah* in which the prayer of Ibrahim was granted;

You are the best ummah raised up for the **(benefit of)** ***men*** **(*3:110*)*.***

And they are the medium *ummah* and they are the best *ummah* raised up for the men.”3

The author says: We have described it under that verse with the help of the Qur’an itself.

Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) narrates from his father, from the Prophet, that he said: “It is among the (bounties) which Allah gave to my *ummah* and (by which) He made them excel all other nations, that He gave them three attributes which (previously) were not given but to a prophet… And when He sent a prophet, made him a witness for his nation; and surely Allah, Blessed and High is He, has made my *ummah* a witness for the creatures, as He says:

So that the Messenger may be a witness for you, and you may be witnesses for the people **(*22:78*)**4.

The author says: This *hadith is* not in conflict with the above explanation, because the word *ummah* refers to that *submissive ummah* in which the prayer of Ibrahim (‘a) was accepted.

Amir al-Mu’minin (‘a) says, *inter alia,* in *a hadith* describing the Day of Judgment: “They will gather in a place where every one will be required to speak; (but) no one shall speak:

Except he whom the Beneficent Allah permits and who speaks the right thing **(*78:38*)*.***

Then the Messenger shall be asked to stand (and speak); and that is (the meaning of) His word to Muhammad (S):

How will it be, then, when We bring from every people a witness and bring you as a witness for these? **(*4:41*)**.

And he is the witness of the witnesses, and the witnesses are the Messengers."[5]

Abu Basir, narrating from the fifth or the sixth Imam, says: "I said to him: 'Did (Allah) order him (i.e., the Prophet, (S)) to pray towards Bayt al-Maqdis?' He said: 'Yes. Don't you see that Allah, Blessed and High is He!, says:

And We had not made the qiblah which you had but that We might distinguish him who follows the Messenger from him who turns back upon his heels…'" (***2: 143***).[6]

The author says: This *hadith* shows that the words: *which you had,* are related to: *the qiblah,* and that the whole phrase refers to Bayt al-Maqdis; and it was the *qiblah* which the Messenger of Allah (S) had. As we have mentioned earlier, this explanation is in conformity with the context. Also, it supports what has been narrated in a *hadith* from Imam al-'Askari ('a): "The Meccans were attached to the Ka'bah. Therefore, Allah wished to distinguish the followers of Muhammad (S), from his opponents, by following the *qiblah* which he disliked. And because the people of Medina were inclined towards Bayt al-Maqdis, He ordered them to go against it and to turn towards the Ka'bah, in order that He may show who follows Muhammad (S) (even) in that which is not to his liking; such a man, then, believes in his truth and agrees with him... "

It also shows the incorrectness of the interpretation, to which we had made a passing reference in the Commentary, and which runs as follows: The phrase:

Which you had, (***2: 143***)

Is the second object of the verb:

We had not made (***2: 143***).

Accordingly, the verse means: And We did not make the *qiblah,* that is, the Ka'bah, which you had before Bayt al-Maqdis. In support of this interpretation, they quote the words,

But that We might distinguish him who follows the Messenger from him who turns back upon his heels (***2: 143***).

The absurdity of this interpretation and of this argument is self-evident.

Az-Zubayri, narrating from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) says: "I asked him: 'Will you not tell me about the faith, whether it is word with deed or (only) word without deed?' He said: 'The faith is deed, all of it; and (utterance of) the word is one of those deeds; (it is) obligatory from Allah, described in His Book; its light is clear, its proof well-established; the Book bears witness for it and calls to it. And when Allah turned his Prophet towards the Ka'bah, away from Bayt al-Maqdis, the Muslims said to the Prophet: "What do you see (about) our prayers which we used to pray towards Bayt al-Maqdis? What shall be our position about these? And what shall be the position of those of us who have passed away and they were

praying towards Bayt al-Maqdis?" Then Allah revealed (the verse):

***And Allah was not going to make your faith to be fruitless; most surely Allah is Affectionate, Merciful to the people* (*2:143*).**

Thus Allah named the prayer as "faith". Whoever therefore fears Allah, guarding his limbs (from sins), fulfilling (obligation of) each of these limbs which Allah has laid down for it, he shall meet Allah with perfect faith, (and he shall be) from the people of the Garden. And whoever acted falsely about any of these (limbs), or transgressed what Allah had ordered about it, he shall meet Allah (as one) having an in-complete faith.'"[7]

The author says: It has been narrated also by al-Kulayni. Although it says that the verse,

***And Allah was not going to make your faith fruitless…* (*2:143*).**

Was revealed after the *qiblah* was changed, yet it does not go against the explanation given in the Commentary.

"The Prophet prayed towards Bayt al-Maqdis for thirteen years in Mecca, and nineteen months in Medina.[8] Then the Jews reviled him, saying: 'You are a follower of our *qiblah.'* He was very much saddened because of it. Then one night he came out turning his face towards the horizons of the heaven. When it was morning, he prayed the dawn (prayer). Then when he had prayed two *rak'ahs* of *zuhr,* Jibril came and told him (the message of Allah):

***Indeed We see the turning of thy face to heaven, so We shall surely turn thee to a qiblah which thou shalt like…* (*2:144*).**

then he took hold of the Prophet and turned him towards the Ka'bah, and those who were (praying) behind him turned their faces (likewise), until the men stood in place of the women, and the women in place of the men. Thus, the early part of his prayer was towards Bayt al-Maqdis, and the latter part towards the Ka'bah. Then the news reached another mosque in Medina, and its people had already prayed two *rak'ahs* of *'asr* (to Bayt al-Maqdis), and they turned towards the (new) *qiblah.* So the early part of their prayer was to Bayt al-Maqdis and the latter part towards the Ka'bah; so that mosque was named the Mosque of the Two Qiblahs."[9]

The author says: al-Qummi has narrated a similar *hadith,* with one variation that the Prophet was in the mosque of Banu Salim.

Imam al-Baqir ('a) said explaining the words of Allah, *turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque:* "Face towards the *qiblah,* and do not turn away from the *qiblah;* otherwise your prayer will be void. For, Allah says to His Prophet concerning the obligatory prayer,

Turn then your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are, turn your face towards it

(***2:144***). [10]

The author says: There are numerous *al-mustafidah*[11] traditions which say that this verse was revealed about the obligatory prayer.

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said about the verse:

Those whom We have given the Book recognize him as they recognize their sons (***2:146***).

"This verse was revealed about the Jews and the Christians. Allah, Blessed and High is He! says:

Those whom We have given the Book recognize him (***2:146***).

That is, recognize the Messenger of Allah (S), as they recognize their sons. For, surely Allah, Mighty and Great is He!, had revealed to them, in the Torah and the Injil and Zabur, the attributes of Muhammad (S), and the attributes of his companions, as well as (the story of) his emigration. And this is (the meaning of) the words of Allah:

Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those with him are severe against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves; you will see them bowing down, prostrating themselves, seeking grace from Allah and pleasure; their marks are in their faces because of the effect of prostration; that is their description in the Torah and their description in the Injil… (***48:29***).

And this was the description of the Messenger of Allah (S) and of his companions in the Torah. Thereafter, when Allah raised him up, the People of the Book recognized him. (But they rejected him) as Allah, Great is His Majesty!, says:

But when there came to them that which they did recognize, they disbelieved in him (***2:89***).[12]

The author says: A similar *hadith* has been narrated in *al-Kafi* from Imam 'Ali ('a). Many Shiite traditions say that the words of Allah:

Wherever you are, Allah will bring you all together (***2:148***).

has been revealed about the companions of al-Qa'im ('a). Some of those traditions say that it is applied to them according to the principle of the "flow of the Qur'an".

A tradition, narrated by the Sunni narrators says that 'Ali ('a) said about the words of Allah,

So that I may complete My favour on you (***2:150***).

Completion of favour is the death in the state of Islam (i.e., to die as a Muslim)."

Another Sunni *hadith* says that the completion of favour is entering into the Garden.

An Academic And Historical Discourse On Ways Of Finding The Direction Of Qiblah

The Muslims have to face towards the *qiblah* in prayer – and it is an act of worship which each of them has to perform several times a day – and at the time of slaughtering an animal as well as at some other times. It compelled the Muslims to find out the direction of the *qiblah* wherever they might be.

In the beginning it was based on guess and rough estimates. Then the overwhelming need prompted the Muslim geographers and mathematicians to devise more accurate methods to find its direction. They based their reckoning on the longitude and latitude of a place – they calculated the degree of inclination between its location and that of Mecca with the help of trigonometry and astronomy. They fixed the direction of *qiblah* in every town with the help of the well-known Indian Circle which fixed the meridian of a place and showed the degree of its inclination from the *qiblah.*

Then they started using the compass. Its hands pointed to the North and the South; and if the degree of inclination to Mecca was known beforehand, it was easy to fix the direction of the *qiblah.* It gradually replaced the Indian Circle, being a lot quicker and easier to use.

But both these endeavours of theirs – may Allah reward them for these – were not free from defect and miscalculation.

First: The Indian Circle. The latter geographers found out that the early scholars were not very accurate in their calculation of the longitude – and this had led to confusion in calculation of the degree of inclination, and consequently in the fixing of the *qiblah's* direction. The early scholars were more accurate in finding the latitude of a place, than its longitude. They used to fix the latitude of a place by measuring the altitude of the North Pole there. But fixing a longitude depended on measuring the distance between two places, and it was done by noting the time when a certain celestial event, like a solar or lunar eclipse, occurred in one place, and then calculating as to how much time had elapsed before it appeared in the other place. Obviously, neither the old instruments were dependable enough, nor the means of communications fast enough, to give this calculation the desired accuracy.

With advancement of scientific apparatus and development of new means of communication, the need was felt to find a more accurate way of fixing the *qiblah.* The well-known scholar, Shaykh (Haydar Quli) Sardar Kabuli – Allah's mercy be on him! looked into this matter, and calculated the inclination of various places with the help of the modern sciences. He wrote on this subject his book *Tuhfat al-ajillah fi ma'rifati 'l-qiblah.* It is a fine work, in which he explains scientifically, how to find out the direction of *qiblah* for a place; also he has given charts fixing the *qiblah* of various towns.

Allah helped him in his endeavour – may He reward him for it – in such a fine way that his calculations showed a clear miracle of the Prophet.

When the early Muslim scholars calculated the position of Medina, they found that it was situated at 25°n lat. 75° 20′ long. The trouble was that *al-mihrab* (اَلمِحْرَاب = niche) of the Mosque of the Prophet (based on the original direction) was not exactly to the direction which the newly calculated position was indicating. The religious scholars were always arguing on this subject, and they invented some reasons to justify that "deviation", although none was based on reality. But Sardar Kabuli – may Allah have mercy on him! – showed clearly that Medina is situated on 24° 57′ lat. 39° 59′ long.; and that the inclination towards Mecca is 0°45′. And the niche of the Prophet's Mosque has exactly the same inclination. By this calculation, one more miracle of the Prophet came to light; it was the direction to which he turned his face while he was praying, and about which he later said that Jibril took hold of his hand and turned him towards the Ka'bah. Truth was what Allah and His Messenger said.

After him, came the great mathematician, 'Abdu 'r-Razzaq al-Bagha'iri – Allah's mercy be on him – and he calculated the direction of the *qiblah* of most of the towns of the world, and published it in his book; his charts fix the *qiblah* of more than 1,500 towns. In this way, the favour of Allah was completed about the direction of the *qiblah.*

Second: The Compass. It has been established that the Earth's magnetic Poles are not identical with its geographical Poles. First of all, the magnetic Poles have been changing from time to time. Second, the magnetic North Pole is at a distance of about one thousand miles from the geographical North Pole. Obviously, the compass does not show the exact direction of the *qiblah;* in some places the deviation may reach a degree that cannot be allowed.

Now, the leading mathematician, Husayn 'Ali Razm Ara, undertook these days (i.e., the 1332nd year of the solar hijri calendar) to solve this problem. He calculated the difference between the magnetic and geographical Poles at various places, and determined the degrees of inclination of the *qiblah* from the magnetic Pole in respect of about one thousand towns. Then he invented his compass which fixes the *qiblah* of those places very accurately.

This compass is now in general use in the Muslim world. May Allah reward him for his endeavours.

A Sociological Essay On The Meaning Of Qiblah And Its Benefits

Let us look at the social structure of humanity. Ponder on society *per se,* and you will admit that it was the human nature which brought it into being and developed it with its many-sided aspects. It did so because of the inspiration it received from Allah – the divinely-gifted instinct which made a man realize that he depends on collective efforts of other men for his survival and development. That is why human beings rely on society and keep their activities within the bounds of the social laws.

Then he acquired knowledge – mental images – related to his surrounding matter, and about his own needs and activities. What creates a relation – positive or negative – between a man and his activities is the knowledge of their various properties; like the knowledge that something is good or bad, this should

be done, that should be avoided. In fact, all the fundamental concepts of sociology come under this category. It covers leadership and subordination, ownership and jurisdiction, collective and individual affairs, and in short, all the common rules and values as well as the national or tribal traditions and customs. Even the last-mentioned rites which change from nation to nation, from region to region and from era to era, have been produced by the human nature which worked according to the divinely-bestowed instinct.

All these exoteric aspects of society are symbols of esoteric ideas and ideals; human nature sees in them fulfilment of its inner craving, and thus moves towards it in appropriate way - by taking it, discarding it, doing it, leaving it or perfecting it. Now, Allah is free from matter and its concomitants; He can never be perceived by any physical sense. How can people turn towards Him, especially if they want their inner devotion manifested in their actions - because actions are confined within material limits. It can only be done by representing the esoteric ideas with manifest actions. Various feelings and emotions are represented with various appropriate physical postures: Man prostrates to show his self-abasement; and bows down to glorify the Creator. Circumambulation around the Ka'bah represents self-sacrifice. Standing in prayer portrays the Creator's greatness, and *wudu'* and ritual bath are intended to make one spiritually clean, to prepare oneself for Divine Presence.

Undoubtedly, complete attention towards God during the prayer is the soul of the worship. Without total undiverted attention worship has no life, no vitality. And the attention depends on such representations for its existence, continuation and perfection.

The worshippers of idols, celestial bodies or other material things (like trees, animals and/or human beings) stand face to face with their deities and idols, turning towards them with their bodies maintaining close proximity with them.[13] Islam came to verify the previous religions brought by the prophets; it is the most comprehensive and complete Divine Religion. It has appointed the Ka'bah as the *qiblah* - the direction to which people should turn during prayer (and no one is excused from prayer in any condition) wherever they may be in the world. They are further obliged (or encouraged) to turn towards it in certain conditions, and forbidden to face it or keep it behind their backs in some other conditions. Thus, a Muslim is obliged to keep his attention to the House of Allah. He is not to forget his Lord in private or in public, in his working hours or in sleep, while standing up or sitting down in prayer, or in other actions - not even in his meanest condition.[14]

The above discourse looked at the benefits which an individual derives from the *qiblah.* If we ponder on this rule from sociological point of view, then its effects are even more important and far-reaching. It has united all the Muslims - of diverse places and different times - fixing their attention to one point. The *qiblah,* therefore, portrays that they are one in their belief, connected to each other in their social structure, and brothers in Islam. If such a fine spirit permeates the material and ideological lives of the individuals and groups, the society shall reach its highest point of perfection; and the most comprehensive and all-encompassing unity shall manifest itself in the Muslim society. Allah has

especially bestowed this favour on His Muslim servants. By this favour He has protected their religious unity – even now when they have fallen apart in so many groups, have been divided into so many sects and are following so many diverse ideologies.

We are thankful to Allah for His favours.

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1. Majma' al-bayan.
2. al-Manaqib.
3. al -'Ayyashi.
4. Qurb al-asnad.
5. al-'Ayyashi.
6. at-Tahdhib.
7. al-'Ayyashi.
8. The Prophet emigrated to Medina in the month of Rabi'u1-awwal. The nineteenth month after hijrah was Ramadan of the second year. (tr.).
9. al-Faqih.
10. al-'Ayyashi.
11. al-Mustafidah (اَلمُسْتَفِيضَةُ = A tradition narrated by a great many narrators, but to a degree less than that required for mutawatir. (tr.).
12. al-Qummi.
13. But that method, invented by human mind, was rejected by Divine religions brought by the prophets of God, because instead of fixing the attention to God, it actually diverted the attention towards those idols etc., making them into partners of God in worship. Yet, the original aim – a physical manifestation of undiverted attention towards God – was good and in conformity with demands of the human nature, provided it could be achieved without any risk of falling into polytheism. (tr.).
14. It is unlawful to face towards the qiblah, or to keep the qiblah on backside, while urinating or relieving the bowels. Therefore, a Muslim has to remember the direction of qiblah even at that time. (tr.).

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verse 152

فَٱذۡكُرُونِيٓ أَذۡكُرۡكُمۡ وَٱشۡكُرُواْ لِي وَلَا تَكۡفُرُونِ

Therefore remember Me, I will remember you, and be thankful to Me, and do not be ungrateful to Me (***2: 152***).

Commentary

Allah first mentioned His favour on the Muslims that He sent to them a Prophet from among them – a favour that cannot be measured in any way. Then he pointed to another great favour in that He guided them to the straight path and led them to the highest perfection. Then came the third favour of giving them a *qiblah* of their own – through that rule, their religion began its journey to perfection, their worship was unified and their religious and social virtues were enhanced.

Reminding them of these three-fold favours, He calls them to remember Him and to be thankful to Him. They should remember Him with their devotion and obedience, so that He remembers them with His favour. He will increase for them His bounty and grace, if they are thankful to Him, and if they are not ungrateful for His favours. He had already said to them:

And remember your Lord when you forget and say: 'May be my Lord will guide me to a nearer course to the right than this" (***18:24***).

If you are grateful, I would certainly give you more; and if you are ungrateful, My chastisement is truly severe (***14:7***).

These two verses were revealed before the verse of the *qiblah* in this chapter. *"adh-Dhikr"* (اَلذِّكْر = remembrance) is sometimes used as opposite of "*al-ghaflah*" (اَلغَفْلَة = inattention and heedlessness). Allah says:

And do not follow him whose heart We have made inattentive to Our remembrance (***18:28***).

Inattention is "not knowing that one knows – although the original knowledge is present in memory". "Remembrance", as its opposite, means "knowing that one knows".

The word "remembrance" at other times is used as opposite to "*an-nisyan*" (اَلنِّسْيَان = forgetfulness). Forgetfulness is "cessation of knowledge from mind"; and as its opposite, remembrance means "presence of knowledge in mind". It is to this meaning that the words of Allah refer in the verse:

And remember your Lord when you forget… (***18:24***).

This remembrance, like its opposite "forgetfulness", is a concept which has its own special effects and exclusive characteristics. Sometimes when those effects and characteristics are found, we say that one remembers, although there is no actual remembrance; or that one has forgotten, although there is no actual forgetfulness. For example, if you do not come to the aid of your friend – when you know that he needs your help – then people say that: "You have forgotten him", although in fact you remember him very well.

The word "remembrance" is also used in the same way. Apparently, the use of this word for "verbal

remembrance" (e.g., reciting or repeating the names of Allah) comes in this category, because you cannot express something in words unless you remember it in mind. Allah says:

***Say; "I will recite to you an account* (a remembrance) *of him"* (*18:83*).**

There are many other examples like it. But if verbal remembrance is counted as a real meaning of the word 'remembrance' then it will be one of its (lower) degrees.

However, remembrance is of many degrees. Allah says:

***Now surely by Allah's remembrance are the hearts set at rest* (*13:28*).**

***And remember your Lord within yourself humbly and fearing and in a voice not loud in the morning and the evening, and be not of the heedless ones* (*7:205*).**

***Then remember Allah as you remember your fathers, rather a more intense remembrance* (*2:200*).**

Now, it is the thought or feeling which becomes intense, not the words. Also, we have quoted the above verse:

***And remember your Lord when you forget and say: "May be my Lord will guide me to a nearer course to the right than this"* (*18:24*).**

The last sentence, beginning with ***Say: "May be…",*** tells the servant to hope for a rank higher than his present one. Its connotation will be as follows: If you slip down to a lower rank, that is, if you forget what you knew before, then remember your Lord and then you may hope for a higher rank that is nearer to the right course than the present one. It shows that the remembrance of the heart, *per se, is* of many degrees. It also proves the validity of the saying, "Remembrance is the presence of an idea in the mind"; because even "presence" has various degrees and ranks.

Remember Me: In this sentence, the object "Me" refers to Allah. As we explained above, remembrance is the knowledge of knowledge; and knowledge is defined as "attainment of the form and idea of a thing in the mind of the Knower". Knowledge confines the thing so known and encompasses it within the knower's mind. Obviously, Allah cannot be known, or remembered (i.e., known to be known) in any way like this. He is beyond the description of describers. He Himself says:

***Hollowed be Allah, from what they describe* (*37:159*).**

***Except the servants of Allah, freed* (from sins) (*37:160*).**

***They do not comprehend Him in knowledge* (*20:110*).**

(We shall write later on, Allah willing, somethings related to these two verses.) In view of this established fact, if we were to say that the words, "Remember Me", have been used here in their real, and not

metaphorical sense, then we will have to say that man has, or can have, a knowledge whose definition would be quite different from the one known to us.

Traditions

Numerous traditions, on the virtue of remembrance of Allah, have been narrated by the Shi'ah and Sunni narrators. For example, it has been narrated through various chains of narrators that: "Remembrance of Allah is good in all conditions."

It has been narrated that the Messenger of Allah (S) came up to his companions, and said: "Feast you in the meadows of the Garden." They said: "O Messenger of Allah! And what are the meadows of the Garden?" He said: "The gatherings of remembrance; go there in the mornings and in the evenings and remember (Allah). And whoever likes to know (what is) his position near Allah, he should see what is the position of Allah near him (i.e., in his heart); because surely Allah gives a servant the same position which the servant gives to Allah, *vis-à-vis,* his own self. And know that your best deeds (near your King) and the purest and the highest of them in ranks, and the best of all that the sun shines on, is the remembrance of Allah, the High, because Allah, the High, has said concerning His Own Self: 'I am the companion of him who remembers Me'; and He, the High One, has said:

***Therefore remember Me; I will remember you* (*2:152*).**

With My bounty; you remember Me with obedience and worship, I will remember you with bounties, and beneficence, and comfort, and (My) pleasure.'"[1]

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "Surely Allah, the Blessed, the High, says: 'Whoever is too preoccupied with My remembrance to be able to ask Me (for his needs), I give him the best of what I give to him who asks Me.'"[2]

al-Husayn al-Bazzaz said: "Abu Abdillah ('a) told me: 'Should I not tell you the most difficult (thing) which Allah has made obligatory for His creatures?' I said: 'Yes, certainly.' He said: 'To do justice to the people (even) against yourself, and your beneficence to your brother, and remembrance of Allah in every place. Why, (by remembrance) I do not mean (recitation of): "Glory be to Allah, and praise be to Allah, and there is no god except Allah, and Allah is Great" - although this is from that (i.e., it is one aspect of remembrance); but remembrance of Allah in every place (means that you should remember Him) when you rush to His obedience or to His disobedience."[3]

The author says: This theme has been narrated through numerous chains from the Prophet and his *Ahl Al-Bayt* (peace be on them all); and there is, in some of them, the following addition: "And it is the words of Allah:

***Surely those who fear* (Allah), *when a visitation from the Satan afflicts them they become mindful* (they remember), *then lo! they see."* (*7:201*).**

The Prophet said: "Allah says: 'When I know that the pre-dominant trait of My servant is to be engrossed in Me, I transfer his desire to My invocation and My secret conversation. When My servant becomes like this (i.e., when he attains this position), then if he wants to (i.e., if he is about to) forget, I come between him and his forgetfulness (i.e., I protect him from it). They are truly My friends; they are truly the heroes; it is they that when I want to destroy the people of the earth in chastisement, I remove it (the chastisement) from them because of those heroes.'"[4]

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "Allah, the High, has said: 'O son of Adam! Remember Me in your mind, I will remember you in My Self; O Son of Adam! Remember Me in seclusion, I will remember you in seclusion; remember Me in a gathering, I will remember you in a gathering better than your gathering.'" And he said: "No servant remembers Allah in an assembly of the people but Allah remembers him in the assembly of the angels".[5]

The author says: Both groups, that is, the Shi'ah and the Sunnis, have narrated this theme with numerous *asnad.*

As-Suyuti writes in *ad-Durr al-Manthur:* "at-Tabarani, Ibn Marduwayh and al-Bayhaqi (in his *Shu'ab al-Iman*) have narrated from Ibn Mas'ud that he said: 'The Messenger of Allah said: "Whoever is given four (things) is (also) given (other) four (things). And its explanation is (found) in the Book of Allah. Whoever is given remembrance, Allah remembers him, because Allah says,

***'Remember Me, I will remember you'* (*2:152*).**

And whoever is given *ad-du'a'* (ٱلدعَاء = invocation) is given response (i.e., its acceptance), because Allah says:

***'Call on Me, I will answer you'* (*40:60*).**

And whoever is given thankfulness, is given increase, because Allah says:

***'If you are grateful, I will certainly give you more'* (*14:7*).**

And whoever is given to ask forgiveness, is given pardon, because Allah says:

'***Ask forgiveness of your Lord, surely He is the most Forgiving.*' (*71:10*).**

It is written in the same book: "Sa'id ibn Mansur, Ibn al-Mundhir and al-Bayhaqi (in his *Shu'ab al-Iman*) narrate from Khalid ibn Abi 'Imran that he said that the Messenger of Allah said: 'Whoever obeys Allah, he indeed has remembered Allah, even if his prayer and his fast and his recitation of the Qur'an are small in quantity. And whoever disobeys Allah, he indeed has forgotten Allah, even if his prayer and his fast and his recitation of the Qur'an are abundant.'"

The author says: This tradition indicates that man commits sin only when he forgets Allah and becomes

inattentive to Him. Had he remembered what was the reality behind his sin and what effect it would produce, he would not have gone near it. If someone disobeys Allah – and does not care even if he is reminded of Him – and gives no importance to his Lord and Creator, then he is a transgressor (who) does not know the dignity and the sublime majesty of his Lord, nor does he understand how Allah encompasses every thing. This theme is also found in another tradition, which has been narrated in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from Abu Hind ad-Dari who said that the Prophet said: "Allah says: 'Remember Me by obeying Me, I will remember you with My forgiveness. And whoever remembers Me – and he is obedient – then it is My duty to remember him with My forgiveness. And whoever remembers Me – and he is disobedient – then it is a right on Me to remember him with hate...'" The last sentence of this *hadith* has used the word, remembrance (at the time of disobedience), in its opposite meaning; the verse under discussion and other traditions used the word 'forgetfulness' to convey that same idea.

We shall give some more details of this subject elsewhere.

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1. 'Uddatu' d-da'i.
2. al-Mahasin; ad-Da'awat, ar-Rawandi.
3. Ma 'ani al-akhbar.
4. 'Uddatu 'd-da'i.
5. al-Mahasin.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 153 - 157

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱستَعِينُواْ بِٱلصَّبرِ وَٱلصَّلَوٰةِ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ مَعَ ٱلصَّـٰبِرِينَ

O you who believe! seek assistance through patience and prayer; surely Allah is with the patient ones (***2:153***).

وَلَا تَقُولُواْ لِمَن يُقتَلُ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ أَموَٰتُۢ ۚ بَل ۚ أَحيَآءٌ ۚ وَلَـٰكِن لَّا تَشعُرُونَ

And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead; nay, (they are) ***alive, but you do not perceive*** (***2:154***).

وَلَنَبلوَنَّكم بِشَىۡءٍ مِّنَ ٱلخَوۡفِ وَٱلجوعِ وَنَقصٍ مِّنَ ٱلأَموَٰلِ وَٱلأَنفسِ وَٱلثَّمَرَٰتِ وَبَشِّرِ ٱلصَّٰبِرِينَ

And We will most certainly try you with somewhat of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits; and give good news to the patient ones (***2:155***),

ٱلَّذِينَ إِذَآ أَصَٰبَتهم مّصِيبَةٌ قَالوٓاْ إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّآ إِلَيهِ رَٰجِعونَ

who, when a misfortune befalls them, say: "Surely we are Allah's and to Him we shall surely return" (***2:156***).

أوْلَٰئكَ عَلَيهِم صَلَوَٰتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِم وَرَحمَةٌ وَأوْلَٰئِكَ هم ٱلمهتَدونَ

Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course (***2:157***).

General Comment

A single theme joins the five verses like a pearl–string; the sentences form a sequence and the topic is developed harmoniously; the beginning leads to the end, and the points to the beginning. It shows that they were revealed together, not separately. The context indicates that they must have been revealed shortly before the law of *al–jihad* (**اَلجِهَاد** = war in the way of Allah) was promulgated and the Muslims were ordered to fight in the cause of religion.

The verses prepare the believers for some trials which they will have to undergo, some misfortunes which will befall them. Not the usual type of trial and hardship, but some extraordinary misfortunes which will afflict the whole community and will continue, recurring every now and then. Man, like any other creature in this world, always faces some hardships and troubles which disturb and disrupt the pattern of his personal life. Death, sickness, fear, hunger, grief, poverty and deprivation are but a few examples of such personal misfortunes. It is the course which Allah has laid down for His servants. This world is a place of struggle and competition; the life is a chain of never–ending changes and transformations.

And you shall not find any alteration in the course of Allah; and you shall not find any change in the course of Allah (***35:43***).

Although personal afflictions and misfortunes are hard to bear for the man so affected, yet they are not as crushing, bewildering and frightening as those which affect the whole community. When an individual is afflicted by a misfortune, he seeks help of others, complementing his own wisdom, determination and steadiness with those of his relatives, friends and compatriots. But when a misfortune or hardship afflicts the whole community, it stuns them all; it numbs their minds and clouds their vision; it looks as if the

whole society has lost its collective wisdom. It disrupts not only the individual, but even the collective life. Fear terrorizes, panic overwhelms, and minds boggle down; courage deserts and dread reigns supreme. A collective misfortune is, in short, much harder to bear and much more bitter in taste. And it is these that the verse point to.

But not every collective affliction, like epidemic or famine. What the verses describe is in all–encompassing affliction which shall be brought about as a consequence of the believers' faith itself. They have accepted the belief of monotheism; they have answered the call of the truth. The whole world and especially their own kith and kin are united against them. The enemies are trying, with all the forces at their command, to extinguish the light of Allah, to erase the word of justice, to nullify the call of truth. The conflict has reached a stage where both parties realize that fighting is the only way out. Both parties have exhausted all other resources they had. The unbelievers first had tried to achieve their goal by arguments and mischief mongering, by whispering campaigns and unsettling rumours. But all was in vain. All their endeavours failed to give them any satisfaction – they did not harm the Muslims in the way they wanted. Now, from their point of view, nothing was left but to wage war against the Muslims and to annihilate them. Only then, the path of truth could be blocked and the bright light of Islam extinguished.

As from the believers' point of view, only the fighting could now help there in their endeavour to propagate the creed of monotheism, to spread the true religion and just rule, to cut at the root of falsehood. The past experience has proved that truth gains strength only when falsehood is removed – and now it cannot be removed except by force.

In short, the verses indicate that the great trial is near at hand – it mentions martyrdom in the way of Allah, and praises it laudably, saying that it is not a death, it is life – and what a life indeed! Accordingly, death in the way of Allah is a distinction which is desirable – not a thing to dislike or fear. The verses encourage the believers to fight for Islam. They are told that there is coming to them a trial, a hardship. Only if they bear it patiently, they shall reach the high ranks of spiritual perfection, receiving the blessings and mercy of Allah, and being guided aright by Divine Guidance. Also, it tells them how they may get help in bearing those burdens – they should seek assistance through patience and prayer. Patience will protect them from fear and anguish, and will save their plans from disruption. As for prayer, it will turn their attention to their Lord, and will help them in putting all their affairs in the hands of the Almighty Allah, because all power belongs to Him.

Commentary

Verse 153

Qur'an: ***O you who believe! seek assistance through patience and prayer; surely Allah is with the patient ones:*** (***2:153***).

We have explained briefly about patience and prayer, under the verse:

And seek assistance through patience and prayer; and most surely it is a hard thing except for the humble ones (***2:45***).

Patience is one of the most important characteristics, which the Qur'an praises very highly. It repeatedly tells the believers to be patient – there are about seventy verses on this theme. It praises it in such laudable ways as:

…***And bear patiently that which befalls you; surely it is of the acts which require determination*** (***31:17***).

And none are made to receive it but those who are patient, and none are made to receive it but those who have a mighty good fortune (***41:35***).

Only the patient will be paid back their reward in full without measure (***39:10***).

Likewise, prayer is one of the greatest acts of worship and devotion which the Qur'an always exhorts the believers to do. It has been praised in these words:

Surely prayer keeps (***one***) ***away from indecency and evil*** (***29:45***).

Wherever Allah exhorts the people to some good deeds, prayer is always placed at the head of the list.

Then Allah praises patience that Allah is with those who have got this virtue: In this respect this verse differs from the verse 2:45 which had focused attention on prayer;

And most surely it is a hard thing except for the humble ones (***2:45***).

But this verse singles out the patience, because here the talk is about facing the difficulties and fighting against the enemies; and in this context patience acquires a greater importance. Surely Allah is with the patient ones. It is a special proximity unlike the company mentioned in the verse:

And He is with you wherever you are (***13:4***).

This latter verse says that Allah controls your affairs and His knowledge encompasses you; while the verse under discussion means that Allah helps and aids the patient ones. Patience, therefore, is the key to get relief from distress.

Verse 154

Qur'an: ***"And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead; nay,*** **(they are)** ***alive, but you do not perceive"*** (***2:154***).

Some exegetes have said that when the verse says that the martyrs are alive, it actually means that their good names will continue for ever and their heroism will always be remembered with gratitude. Their

argument is as follows:

"The verse is addressed to the Muslims, who already believe in Allah, His Messenger and the Day of Judgment; they are also sure of the life hereafter. They have accepted the call of truth, and have already heard a lot of verses which speak of the Resurrection. They know that a man's life does not end with death. How could they speak of the martyrs as dead? Moreover, this verse affirms only about the martyrs that they are alive; and describes it as their especial excellence vis-à-vis other believers and the unbelievers. But we know that life after death is not confined to one group, it is a general phenomenon, which covers the whole mankind. Therefore, the life mentioned here must be something special, which is reserved for those who are slain in the way of Allah – and that is their eternal name and ever-lasting fame."

But this interpretation is unacceptable, because of the following reasons:

First: The life which they have mentioned is not real life; it is an imaginary thing, which has no relation with reality. Such unreal and imaginary things do not deserve to be included in Divine Speech. Allah calls to reality, to truth; and says:

"And what is there after the truth but error?" (***10:32***).

Of course, Ibrahim ('a) had prayed to Allah:

"And make for me a truthful tongue among the posterity" (***26:84***).

But what he meant by "a truthful tongue" was continuation of his true mission after him; he did not mean only that his good name be remembered and his praise be sung by coming generations.

Of course, such imaginary exegesis, such false interpretation is more in line with materialists' thinking. They believe that soul is a material thing, life, is a development of matter; once a man dies the life comes to an end, there is nothing to continue after death; as such, there is no life hereafter. But applying that idea to sociology, they encountered a great difficulty:

The fact is that man by nature believes in continuation of life after death, his instinct tells him that there is happiness and unhappiness in the other world where he goes after death; and if he wants to enjoy happiness there, he will have to sacrifice many comforts of this life. This is especially true about great affairs and ideals which cannot be established except when their supporters and adherents are willing to die for them, to sacrifice their lives for the cause. They have to die so that others may live.

Now, the dilemma of the atheists and materialists was this: If death is the end of life, if man, after his death, is lost for ever, then why should he sacrifice his life so that others may live? Why should he deprive himself of the comforts and enjoyments which he can easily get through injustice and tyranny? Just to let others live in peace? What has he got to gain by his sacrifice? Nothing. No sensible man gives something if he is not getting something in return. Human nature rejects the concept of giving

without receiving, of leaving something without getting something in exchange. It rejects the idea of dying to enable others to live, the notion of denying oneself the enjoyment of this short life so that others may enjoy it.

When the materialists realized the trouble they were in, they tried to make up this shortcoming by inventing these imaginary gains which had no existence except in their own minds. They said: A man, emancipated from fetters of superstitions and myths, must sacrifice his life for his country and for other noble goals; this sacrifice will make him immortal because his good name and widespread fame will remain alive for ever. Likewise, he should deny himself some enjoyments of life so that others may benefit from those things. In this way, society and civilization will remain on right track and the social justice will reign supreme. And that man, because of his sacrifice, will get a noble and sublime life. Would that I knew who will enjoy that noble life when the man himself is dead, when his physical body has perished, and with it have gone all traces of life including perceptions and feelings? Who will then feel and enjoy that "noble life"? Isn't it just a delirious raving?

Second: The last phrase of the verse, "***but you do not perceive***," does not agree with that explanation. If that was the meaning of "life", Allah should have said: nay, they are alive because their good name will remain for ever, and people will always sing their praises generation after generation. Obviously, such description would have proved much more satisfying and encouraging, and would have cheered them up to a greater degree than the phrase, "but you do not perceive".

Third: A similar verse – which in a way also explains it – describes the promised life in such a way as not to allow that interpretation:

"And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead. Nay, they are alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord" (3:169).

"Rejoicing in what Allah has given them out of His grace, and they rejoice for the sake of those who, (being left) behind them have not yet joined them, that they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve" (3:170).

"They rejoice on account of favour from Allah and (His) grace, and that Allah will not waste the reward of the believers" (3:171).

Clearly, it is a description of a real, not imaginary, life.

Fourth: It is not difficult to accept that some Muslims, in the middle of the Prophet's era, were unaware of the life after death. What was very clearly mentioned in the Qur'an was the Resurrection on the Day of Judgment. But so far as the life of al-Barzakh (اَلبَرْزَخ = the period between death and the Day of Judgment) is concerned, it has been described in the Qur'an, but not so clearly as not to leave any room for ambiguity. That is why not all the Muslims are agreed on this subject – even today some of them do not accept it. (These are those who believe that soul is not immaterial; that man perishes on death; and

Allah will raise him again for judging him on the Day of Judgment). This verse, therefore, could have been revealed to affirm that the martyrs were alive in al-Barzakh. May be, there were some believers who were not aware of it, even if others knew it.

In short, the verse speaks of a real, not imaginary, life. Allah, in several places, has counted the life of an unbeliever after his death as a destruction and perdition. For example:

***"…And* [*they*] *made their people to alight into the abode of perdition"* (*14:28*).**

So, it is the life of bliss that is true life, and it is only the believers who will live that life, as Allah says:

***"And as for the next abode, that most surely is the life – did they but know"* (*29:64*).**

They did not know it because their senses could perceive only the material aspects of this world's life. As they did not perceive what was beyond their limited perception, they could not differentiate between extinction and life after death. They thought that there was nothing after death but extinction. That delusion, that conjecture was common to believers and unbelievers alike. That is why Allah said:

***"Nay,* (*they are*) *alive, but you do not perceive"* (*2:154*).**

that is, by your senses. The same is the import of the last phrase in the verse:

***"That most surely is the life – did they but know"* (*29:64*).**

That is, with certainty, as He says in the verse:

***"Nay! if you had known with a knowledge of certainty"* (*102:5*).**

***"You should most certainly have seen the hell"* (*102:6*).**

The meaning of the verse, then, is as follows – and Allah knows better! And do not say about those who are slain in the way of Allah that they are dead. You should not think that they have become extinct, have perished. Of course, you generally think that death is extinction; in your language death is used as opposite of life; and this delusion is supported by your senses. But it is not correct. The martyrs are not dead, in that they are not extinct; they are alive although you do not perceive that life by your senses, by your perceptions.

This talk was addressed to the believers, although majority of them – if not all – knew that man's life continues after his death. It was done to draw their attention to a fact known to them. The aim was to cheer them up by reminding them of this reality, in order that they should not grieve, should not be perturbed, should not lose their hearts, when death faces them or their dear ones in the way of Allah. The only thing that the relatives would be afflicted with, in such cases, is separation from their martyr for a few days, as long as they themselves are alive in this world. And this temporary separation is not a big problem – especially if compared to the pleasure of Allah, and to the bounties bestowed on the martyr,

like the pleasant life and everlasting grace. And the pleasure of Allah is the greatest bounty and bliss. In this respect, the verse is not unlike the previously explained one where Allah tells His Prophet:

"The truth is from your Lord; therefore, you should not be of the doubters" (***2: 147***).

We know that the Prophet was the first and foremost of those who were sure of the Divine signs and communications. Yet he was told not to be of the doubters. This mode is generally used to show that the subject is so clear, so well-known and so well established that there is no room for any conflicting thought to come into mind.

The Life Of Al-Barzakh

This verse clearly proves that man remains alive in *al-Barzakh* (اَلبَرْزَخ = the period between one's death and the Day of Resurrection). The same is the import of the other verse on this subject:

"And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead; nay, they are alive (***and***) ***are provided sustenance from their Lord"*** (***3: 169***).

Many other verses prove this reality and we shall mention some of them at the end of this essay.

A very strange interpretation has been given to this verse by some people. They say that it was revealed about the martyrs of Badr, and therefore it is reserved exclusively for those martyrs; it cannot be applied to others who are slain in the way of Allah.

A scholar has made an interesting comment on this explanation. Writing about the preceding verse, "seek assistance through patience and prayer," he prays to Allah to give him patience and forbearance to suffer such interpretations!

Would that I knew what do they mean by that explanation. On one hand, they say that man perishes after death or murder; when his body disintegrates, he becomes extinct. If so, then how could the martyrs of Badr remain alive after being slain? Was it as a miracle? Was it because Allah had given them a distinction and excellence, which was denied to all the prophets, messengers and friends of Allah, not expecting even the Holy Prophet of Islam? If there is no life after death, then keeping them alive after their martyrdom is not a miracle – it is an impossibility.

And a miracle does not cover an impossible thing. If it is asserted that such a self-evident preposition was negated for those martyrs, then no confidence can be put in any self-evident truth – let alone other principles.

Or, do they mean that people's perceptions were mistaken about the condition of those martyrs? The martyrs were alive, were getting sustenance from their Lord, were eating, drinking and enjoying all the comforts of life – far away from the range of people's perceptions. And what the people had seen and perceived with their senses – that the martyrs were killed, their bodies mutilated, their senses gone, and

their physique disintegrated – was just a delusion, and nothing of this sort had happened in reality. If this is what they mean, if people's senses could be so deluded – perceiving correctly in one case and wrongly in another, without any differentiating cause – then no trust can be put in any of the senses at all. Then, may be, we will perceive a non-existent as existing and an existing thing as non-existent. How can a sensible person speak like that? It is nothing but sophistry.

However, that explanation somewhat follows the line adopted by a large group of the scholars of traditions. The latter believe that the things mentioned in the Qur'an and traditions, which are beyond our perception – like angels and souls of believers and other such things – are material and physical. They are ethereal bodies which may enter and penetrate dense and solid bodies, appearing thus in the form of man, for example, doing all that humans do; they possess powers and properties like ours, except that they are not governed by physical laws: they do not suffer any change or alteration, nor any composition or disintegration; they are not subject to natural life and death. When Allah wants them to appear, they manifest themselves to our senses; and when He does not want so, or wants them not to appear, they do not appear. It depends entirely on a special will of Allah; there is nothing in their senses, or in their "bodies", to tip the scale on this side or that.

Such an idea is based on rejection of the system of cause and effect in the world. If such assertions were true, then all the intellectual realities, all the academic principles, will be null and void – not to speak of the fundamentals of religion. Even those "sublime ethereal bodies" (which are supposedly beyond the reach of cause-and-effect) will be negated.

The above description, however, proves that the verse speaks about the life of *al-Barzakh;* it is also called the world of the grave, the period between one's death and the Day of Resurrection; it is the world where the dead person is rewarded or punished until the Day of Resurrection.

Some other verses speaking about *al-Barzakh* are as follows:

1. There are the three verses already quoted:

"And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead. Nay, they are alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord" (3:169).

"Rejoicing in what Allah has given them out of His grace, and they rejoice for the sake of those who, (being left) behind them have not yet joined them, that they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve" (3:170).

"They rejoice on account of favour from Allah and (His) grace, and that Allah will not waste the reward of the believers" (3:171).

We have already shown how these verses, being similar to the one under discussion, prove the life of *al-Barzakh.* Those who think that these verses were revealed exclusively for the martyrs of Badr, should

ponder on the wordings of these three, because they indicate that not only the martyrs but also other believers enjoy the life after death, and rejoice by favour and grace of Allah bestowed on them.

2. ***"Until when death overtakes one of them, he says: "Send me back, my Lord, send me back"*** (***23:99***).

"Haply I may do good in that which I have left." By no means! it is a (**mere**) ***word that he speaks; and before them is al-Barzakh until the day they are raised*** (***23:100***).

It very clearly shows that there is an intermediate life between this world's and the one which they will live after the Resurrection. Further explanation will be given when we shall write about this verse, Allah willing.

3. ***"And those who do not hope for Our meeting, say: "Why have not angels been sent down upon us, or*** (***why***) ***do we not see our Lord?" Now certainly they are too proud of themselves and have revolted a great revolt"*** (***25:21***).

On the day when they shall see the angels;[1]***there shall be no joy on that day for the guilty, and they shall say: "It is a forbidden thing totally prohibited"*** (***25:22***).

"And We shall proceed to what they have done of deeds, so We shall render them as scattered floating dust" (***25:23***).

"The dwellers of the garden shall on that day be in a better abiding place and a better resting place" (***25:24***).

"And on the day when the heaven shall burst asunder with the clouds[2]***; and the angels shall be sent down a sending"*** (***25:25***).

"The kingdom on that day shall rightly belong to the Beneficent God, and a hard day shall it be for the unbelievers" (***25:26***).

It very clearly proves the life of *al-Barzakh.* Further details will be given in its proper place, Allah willing.

4. ***They shall say: "Our Lord! twice didst Thou give us death, and twice hast Thou given us life, so we do confess our faults; is there then a way to get out?"*** (***40:11***).

They will say it on the Day of Resurrection. It means that by that time there would be two deaths and two lives. It can be explained only if we accept the life and death of *al-Barzakh.* Otherwise, there shall be only one death between this life and that of the Day of Resurrection. We have explained it to some extent under the verse:

How do you deny Allah and you were dead and He gave you life? Again He will cause you to die and again bring you to life; then you shall be brought back to Him (***2:28***).

5. ***…and the most evil punishment overtook Pharaoh's people: The Fire, they are brought before it (every) morning and evening; and on the day when the hour shall come to pass: Make Pharaoh's people enter the severest chastisement (40:46).***

It is known that the Day of Resurrection shall have no morning or evening. Clearly,

the day when the hour shall come to pass, (40:46)

that is, the Day of Resurrection is other than the day of *al-Barzakh* which has the mornings and evenings. There are many other verses which indicate, or from which we may infer, this reality. For example:

By Allah, most certainly We sent (messengers) to nations before, but the Satan made their deeds fair-seeming to them, so he is their guardian today, and they shall have a painful punishment (16:63).

The Immateriality Of The Soul

The verse under discussion, as well as those quoted above, points to another more comprehensive reality and that is the immateriality of the soul. The soul is something other than matter and body; it is beyond the jurisdiction of the rules governing matter and body, or those affecting various material compounds and mixtures. Yet, it has a special relationship with the body - keeping it alive, managing its multifarious functions and activities and enabling it to perceive and feel. Ponder on the earlier quoted verses and you will see this reality. The verses imply that man, *per se,* is not the body; he does not die when the body dies, he does not perish when the body perishes. The body disintegrates, its parts are scattered, but the "man" continues. Even after the death of his body, he continues to live, either in eternal bliss and everlasting felicity and grace, or in never ending misery and painful chastisement. That bliss or misery is based on his traits, trends, characteristics and actions, which he had acquired and done in this world's life - not in his bodily accomplishments or social achievements.

These themes are understood from the above-mentioned verses. Obviously, these traits are totally different from those of the body, and are diametrically opposed to worldly and material characteristics. Thus, the human soul is different from his body.

Also, the following verse points to this fact:

"Allah takes completely the souls at the time of their death, and those that die not during their sleep; then He withholds those on whom He has passed the decree of death and sends the other back till an appointed term" (39:42)

"at-Tawaffiyy" (اَلتَّوَفِّيّ) and *"al-istifa'* (اَلإِصْطِفَآء) both have the same meaning - to take and realize one's right fully and completely. The words used here in reference to the soul - "takes", "withholds" and "sends back" - clearly prove that the soul is something different from the body.

Another verse:

"And they say: 'What! when we have become lost in the earth, shall we then indeed be in a new creation?' Nay! they are disbelievers in the meeting of their Lord" (***32:10***).

"Say: 'The angel of death who is given charge of you shall take you completely, then to your Lord you shall be brought back'" (***32:11***).

In this verse, Allah mentions one of the misgivings of those who do not believe in the Resurrection; and then tells His Messenger how to clear their doubt. They said: When we die, our body disintegrates, our limbs and organs are destroyed, nothing remains of our original form, and all our parts are scattered here and there in the earth. No one can then perceive us nor can anyone feel us. How is it possible for us, after such a total destruction, to be created a second time?

This doubt is based on a feeling of improbability. Allah shows the Messenger (S) how to remove that misgiving:

Say: "The angel of death… be brought back." (***32:11***).

There is an angel who has been given charge of you; he shall take you completely; he will not let you be lost, as you shall be under his protection, his control; what is lost in the earth is your body, not your soul or person (the reality which is referred to by the word "you"), because the angel of death shall take "you" completely.

One more verse: Allah says, mentioning the creation of man:

"Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit…" (***32:9***).

Read it in conjunction with the verse:

"And they ask you about the soul. Say: 'The soul is from the command of my Lord'" (***17:85***).

The soul, therefore, is from the command of Allah, and that command has been explained and defined in these words:

"His command, when He intends anything is only that He says to it: 'Be', and it is" (***36:82***).

"Therefore, glory be to Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of everything…" (***36:83***).

The soul is from the kingdom and it is the word, "Be". In another place, the command is further explained in these words:

"And Our command is but one, as the twinkling of an eye" (***54:50***).

The phrase, ***as the twinkling of an eye,*** shows that the command, that is, the word "Be", is an

instantaneous, not a gradual, being. It comes into being at once, and is not bound with the chain of time and space.

It is thus evident that the command including the soul – is different from body, is something immaterial. We know that the material things come into being gradually and are fettered with time and space. Obviously, the human soul is not a material thing and is different from the body, although it has a special relationship with the body.

There are some verses which show the nature of that relation–ship. Allah says:

"From it (***the earth***) ***We created you…"*** (***20:55***).

"He created man from dry clay like earthen vessels…" (***55:14***).

"…And He began the creation of man from dust" (***32:7***).

"Then He made his progeny from an extract of water held in light estimation" (***32:8***).

"And certainly, We created man of an extract of clay" (***23:12***).

"Then We made him a small life–germ in a firm resting place" (***23:13***).

"Then We made the life–germ a clot, then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made (***in***) ***the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We caused it to grow into another creation; so blessed be Allah, the best of creators"*** (***23:14***).

The verses show that man, in the beginning was but a material body, changing into various forms; then Allah made that body into another creation – a creation that has got perception and feeling; now he perceives and wills, thinks and acts according to his thoughts and ideas; he manages and manipulates the things around him as he likes. These activities and authority are beyond the power of body and matter. Obviously, neither of these activities emanate from body and matter nor does their doer.

We may say that the soul has the same relation to the body – from which it emanates – as a fruit has to its tree, or a lamp flame has to its oil. But these similes are a bit far–fetched. However, these illustrations serve to show the nature of the relation between the soul and the body – how it is attached to the body in the beginning and how that connection is severed on death.

In short, the soul, in the beginning, is the body itself, then it grows into another creation, and lastly it becomes completely independent and separate from the body on death. These facts are understood from the above–mentioned Qur'anic verses; there are many other verses which allude to and imply this reality, and one may find them on reading the Qur'an with open eyes. And Allah is the Guide.

Verse 155

Qur'an: ***And We will most certainly try you with somewhat of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits*** (***2: 155***).

Allah told them to seek assistance through patience and prayer and forbade them to say about those who are slain in His way that they are dead because those martyrs were in fact alive. Now, He explains why He has informed them of these realities. It is because the believers were soon to be tried and tested by fighting in the way of Allah. It was by *al–jihad* that they would reach the pinnacle of their virtues; their noble lives would not be worth living except with *al–jihad.* The upright religion could not gain strength but with fighting. And while engaged in fighting, their efforts would not be crowned with success unless they were helped by those two helpers, that is, patience and prayer, and were further strengthened by a third factor, that is, the belief that their martyr is neither dead nor lost, and that their endeavours with their wealth and souls is neither forfeited nor fruitless. If they kill their enemy, they will remain alive while their enemy is destroyed; in this way they would be safe from the rule of injustice and false–hood which the enemy wanted to impose on them. And if they are killed in this endeavour, again they will remain alive for ever and equally safe from that unjust and wrong rule. In either case, they shall enjoy one of the two most excellent things.

Generally, the afflictions consist of fear, hunger and loss of properties and lives. As for the loss of fruits, apparently it means loss of children. When fighting occurs, its most telling result is not the loss of fruits but that of progeny, as the men and especially the youths are killed.

Some exegetes have said that the word "fruits" refers to the dates, and the "property" to other possessions, for example, camels, goats and sheep.

Verses 155 – 157

Qur'an: ***And give good news to the patient ones*** (***2: 155***).

Qur'an: ***Who, when a misfortunate befalls them, say: "Surely we are Allah's and to Him we shall surely return"*** (***2: 156***).

Qur'an: ***Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course*** (***2: 157***).

The patient ones are again mentioned in these verses so that Allah may give them good news to begin with, and then may teach them the way of good patience, and thirdly, may explain to them why patience is essential – it is because Allah owns the man – and fourthly, may declare what is its overall recompense, that is, blessing, mercy and being guided aright.

Allah first told His Prophet to give them good news; but did not disclose what was that good news about.

This was to show the greatness of the subject matter – it is from Allah, therefore, it must be about something especially good, great and beautiful. Moreover, it is something which Allah Himself has guaranteed.

Thereafter, He said that the patient ones are those who say these words when misfortune befalls them. *"al-Musibah"* (اَلمصِيْبَةُ = translated here as misfortune) is any happening that occurs to a man; but it is always used for a distressing happening. "Who... say: 'Surely we are Allah's...'": The word "say" as used here does not mean mere utterance of the sentence with-out keeping its meaning in mind. Even understanding its meaning is not sufficient, unless one penetrates to the depth of its reality. And that is that man is owned by Allah – in real ownership – and that he is surely to return to Allah, his Master. If this feeling takes deep root in his heart, the man will observe the highest degree of patience; sorrow, fear and anguish will be totally eradicated, and the rust of heedlessness will be removed from the heart. How?

Man and all his faculties, actions and other concomitants of existence, are there because of Allah. He is his Creator and Originator. Man exists because of Allah, and is dependent on Him in all his affairs and conditions. He does not have any existence or continuity independent of Allah. The Master has the right to manage His slave's affairs in any way He likes; the slave has no authority whatsoever in his own affairs, because he has no independence at all. Allah owns him; He is the real Owner of man's existence, faculties and actions.

Then Allah allowed man to ascribe his "self" to himself as a property is ascribed to its owner. That is why it is said that "man has existence". In the same way, He permitted him to ascribe his faculties and actions to himself. Accordingly, it is said that "man has faculties like hearing and sight", or "he does some actions like: walking, speaking, eating and hearing". With-out the Divine permission neither man nor anything else could "own" any such ascription or attribution, because nothing exists without the Divine permission, or independent of Allah's will.

Allah has also informed us that ultimately all things will revert to their original status – the state before Allah allowed them to be attributed to one or the other creature – and then no ownership will remain there except that of Allah, as He says:

To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To Allah, the One, the Subduer (**of all**) (***40:16***).

It shows that man – together with all that "belongs" to him or is with him – is to return to Allah.

In short, there is a "real" ownership; it is reserved for Allah, nobody – be he a man or something else – shares it with Him. And there is an "apparent" ownership, for example, man "owns" his own "self" as well as his children and properties etc. But the real ownership is of Allah, and man owns them in form and appearance only – and that also because Allah has allowed such attribution. Thus, when man remembers the reality of Divine ownership, and then looks at his own "self", he knows that he is wholly and totally owned by Allah. Then, he realizes that his "apparent" ownership – of his "self" as well as of

his children and properties, etc. – will soon cease to exist, will become null and void; it will return to his Lord.

Then, he will understand that ultimately, he owns nothing, either in reality or in appearance. In this back–ground, there is no reason why he should grieve if he is afflicted with some misfortune. One may be affected only by something which one owns – feeling happiness when it is found or sorrow if it is lost. But when he believes that he owns nothing, he shall not be affected by finding it or losing it. How can he be afflicted by any loss when he believes that Allah is the real Owner of every–thing, and He may manage His property in any way He likes?

The Ethics

The ethics entail betterment of morals and psychic traits – both in theory and practice. Man acquires the good morals and removes the evil traits by repeatedly doing good – and relevant – deeds, and their continuous observance. Repeated and continuous performance of an action etches its particular knowledge on the psyche. Gradually, a picture is engraved on the mind which becomes impossible – or extremely difficult – to erase. Habits become second nature. For example, if a man wants to remove the trait of cowardice and acquire that of bravery, he should repeatedly plunge himself into difficulties and dangers.

Whenever he would rush into a perilous and hazardous situation and finds himself coming out unscathed, he would acquire the taste of boldness and courage; and would understand the ignominy of flight, of taking to one's heels. Every such bold step would leave its mark on his psyche and ultimately bravery and courage would become an integral part of his character. Man has no power to acquire such traits by his own will; yet it may be counted as within his power inasmuch as its preliminary steps – those repeatedly performed deeds – emanate from his will and power.

There are two universally recognized systems to acquire high moral standards and noble manners.

First System: Many people base their moral science on good worldly foundations, that is, the knowledge, ideas and ideals which are thought praiseworthy and laudable in the society. They acquire a good trait because it is commendable in the eyes of the people. Chastity, contentedness with what is in one's hand and not looking at what others have – all these virtues create respect and honour in the people's eyes, and one's standing is enhanced in public. Avarice results in poverty and privation. Greed destroys one's prestige. Knowledge attracts people and bestows respect and dignity in the eyes of elite; it opens the eyes of the knowledgeable person, and protects him from unpleasant things. Ignorance, on the other hand, is blindness.

Knowledge protects you while riches need your protection. Bravery makes you stead–fast and saves you from fickleness; this in its turn makes people sing your praise – no matter whether you win or lose. Cowardness and rashness both cause opposite effect. Justice gives peace of mind, and keep man alive even after his death inasmuch as his good name continues and his love pulsates in people's hearts

generation after generation.

This is the well-known basis on which the moral science is founded. Ancients like Greek philosophers followed this very system.

The Qur'an does not endorse this system, because it depends on the like and the dislike of the public. It looks at what is good in the eyes of the people and what is bad - and accepts the former and rejects the latter. Even in a few verses where the Qur'an appears to use this method, it really refers to the next world's reward or punishment. Ponder, for example, on the following verses:

"…And wherever you are, turn your faces towards it, so that people shall have no argument against you…" (***2:150***).

Here Allah exhorts the Muslims to remain steadfast and firm, and for its reason, He says: "so that people shall have no argument against you".

"…And do not quarrel, for then you will be weak in hearts and your power will depart, and be patient…" (***8:46***).

Allah tells the believers to be patient, as impatience and quarrelling among themselves would weaken their hearts, dilute their power and embolden their enemy.

"And whoever is patient and forgiving, that most surely is an act of great resolution" (***42:43***).

Here Allah invites the believers to patience and forgiveness and explains its reason in terms of determination and resolution.

Second System: The second system is to keep in sight the other worldly goals. Allah has used it in many verses of the Qur'an:

"Surely Allah has bought of the believers their persons and their properties for this, that they shall have the garden…" (***9:111***).

"…Only the patient ones will be paid back their reward in full without measure" (***39:10***).

"…Surely it is the unjust that shall have a painful punishment" (***14:22***).

"Allah is the Guardian of those who believe; He brings them out of the darkness into the light; and (**as to**) ***those who disbelieve, their guardians are the rebels, they take them out of the light into the darkness…"*** (***2:257***).

There are many verses, on different subjects, which imply the same theme.

We may add here another set of the verses. For example,

"No misfortune befalls on the earth nor in your own souls, but it is in a book before We bring it into existence; surely that is easy to Allah" (***57:22***).

This verse exhorts man not to feel any sorrow (or joy) on whatever misfortune (or good thing) comes to him; what has come to him, could not be averted, and what-ever has been lost could not be obtained, because all happenings occur by a firm Divine Decree which is unavoidable. Sorrow and joy both seem, in this background, meaningless - a believer should not indulge in these vain practices because he believes in Allah and knows that all affairs are in His hands. Allah says:

"No affliction comes about but by Allah's permission; and whoever believes in Allah, He guides aright his heart" (***64:11***).

Such verses, like the earlier quoted ones, create high morals by pointing to the sublime goals of the next world. These other worldly goals are real, not imaginary, perfections. These verses reform the human character by fixing man's attention to the real already existing causes like the Divine measure and decree, adoption of the Divine characteristics and remembrance of the good names of Allah and His sublime attributes.

Question: Belief in causality of such things as the Divine measure and decree negates the rules governing this life in which we have been given freedom of will and power. This, in its turn, nullifies the noble morals and disturbs the system of this physical world. If man may rely, in acquiring such good traits as patience and steadfastness, and in refraining from sorrow and joy, on the fact that all things to happen are already firmly decreed and written in the "preserved tablet", then the same argument may be used if one does not endeavour to earn one's livelihood, to acquire good characteristics, or to refrain from bad habits. He will sit idle not caring to do any work, and not striving to defend the truth and right. His only reply to all exhortations will be that whatever was happening was already written and decreed. In this way he will neglect acquiring noble characteristics and discarding evil traits. It will be a negation of every perfection.

Reply: What we have written on the subject of "Decree", is sufficient to clear this misunderstanding. We have explained there that man's actions are integral parts of the causes of the events and effects. Effects cannot happen without their causes. It would be a manifest error to say: Satiation of hunger is either decreed to happen or decreed not to happen; and in either case, it is useless to eat. We know that satiation of hunger cannot occur unless one takes one's food - and eating is an action with-in one's power, and is a part of the causes of satiation. It is foolishness to expect an effect to appear when one has neglected or negated all or part of its causes.

It is wrong for a man to neglect and negate the principles of "free will and power", which is the king-pin of this worldly life, and to which are attributed its felicity and infelicity. It is a part of the causes of the events which happen to a man through his actions (or through the conditions and traits resulting from his actions). He cannot say that his will and power are not a part of the causes of events happening to him,

or that they have no effect on those happenings. In the same way, it is wrong to claim that his power is the complete, or the only, cause of the events and that nothing else has any influence on those events. One should not forget that there are countless things happening in the world which have influence on one's circumstances, conditions and the related events, and that the Divine Will is the foremost among them. If one were to forget this reality, one would be entrapped in many evil traits, like: conceit, pride, miserliness, joy, sorrow and grief, etc.

The ignorant man says: "I did this; I left that." Thus, he falls victim of conceit, shows arrogance to others or does not spend his money on necessary things. He is heedless to the fact that there are thousands and thousands of other causes – apart from his imperfect "power" – absence of any one of which would nullify the effects of his "power". He says: "Had I done this, I would have avoided this loss; had I done so, I would have gained that."

He does not realize that prevention of loss or death depends on thousands and thousands of causes, and even if one of them is absent, the dreaded loss or death is bound to occur, man's own power notwithstanding. Moreover, man's power itself depends on numerous causes which are beyond his power. In short, man's power is not by his power.

The above explanation is a Qur'anic reality, and, as mentioned earlier, it is derived from the Divine teachings. When you know this fact and ponder on the relevant verses, you will see that the Qur'an attributes only some of the good characteristics to the firm decree and the preserved tablet, while it does not attribute other traits to the above–mentioned Divine Decree. There are some actions, conditions and traits which, if attributed to the Divine Decree and Measure, would nullify the principle of free will; and accordingly, the Qur'an never attributes them to the Divine Decree; rather, it refutes it with full force. For example:

"And when they commit an indecency, they say: 'We found our fathers doing this, and Allah has enjoined it on us.' Say: 'Surely, Allah does not enjoin indecency; do you say against Allah what you do not know?'" (***7:28***).

On the other hand, there are some actions, etc. which, if not attributed to the Divine Decree, would imply that man had complete freedom, that his will and power were the sufficient cause of his actions, etc. and were independent of every outside cause. The Qur'an, therefore, pointedly ascribes them to the Divine Decree, and thus guides the man to the straight path – a path which does not confuse the walker. In this way, the Qur'an removes from him the base characteristics which would have resulted from those wrong ideas. For example, it attributes the happenings to the Divine Decree, in order that man should not ignorantly feel joy for what he gets or sorrow for what he loses. Allah says:

"And give them of the wealth of Allah which He has given you" (***24:33***).

Note that Allah exhorts man to be generous, by reminding him that his wealth has come to him from Allah. Also, He says:

***"…And spend* (*benevolently*) *out of what We have given them* (*2:3*).**

The verse calls him to spend by attributing the wealth to the sustenance given by Allah. Again, He says:

***"Then maybe you kill yourself with grief, sorrowing after them, if they do not believe in this announcement"* (*18:6*).**

***"Surely, We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them* (as to) *which of them is best in deed"* (*18:7*).**

In these verses Allah tells His Prophet not to grieve because of the unbelievers' disbelief, reminding him that their disbelief does not mean that they have overpowered Allah; the fact is that what-ever is on the earth has been made and put there by Allah for the purpose of test and trial.

This system of ethics is the one used by the prophets, and a lot of its examples may be found in the Holy Qur'an and other Divine Books.

There is a third system, which is found exclusively in the Qur'an; it is neither seen in the Divine Books which have been transmitted to us, nor in the teachings of the previous prophets (peace of Allah be on them!); nor is it seen in the knowledge which has come to us from divine scholars. In this system, man is trained in character and knowledge, and the knowledge is used in a way that does not leave room for base and low traits. In other words, this system removes the vile characteristics, not by repulsing them, but by eliminating all motives other than Allah.

Let us explain it in this way: What is the motive of a work done for other than Allah? It may be honour and might of the 'other than Allah', which the doer of that work longs for. Or his power which he is afraid of. But Allah says:

***"Surely might is wholly Allah's"* (*10:65*).**

***"That the power is wholly Allah's"* (*2:165*).**

And when one is imbued with this true knowledge, there will remain no question of doing any deed for letting others see, or hear about it; nor will there be any reason why he should fear, or look forward to, or rely on anyone other than Allah. Once these two realities are firmly known to a man, his psyche will be cleansed from evils of theory and practice. It will rather be adorned by the positive traits, that is, good character and Divine characteristics; for example, fear of and reliance on Allah, strength, self-respect, self-sufficiency and other such virtues.

The Qur'an has repeatedly said that the kingdom belongs to Allah, that the kingdom of the heavens and the earth is His, that to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth, as we have explained several times. Evidently, this kingdom does not leave any independence to anything, nor does it allow the creatures any freedom from want - except through Allah. Look at anything; you will see that Allah is

the Owner of its person and of all its concomitants. When a man believes in that owner–ship and this belief becomes firmly–rooted in his heart, he does not admit that anything has got any independence at all – in its person, characteristics or activities. Such a man cannot look except at the face of Allah, nor can he bow down before, hope for, or have fear of, anything other than Allah. He will not enjoy or be pleased with any other thing, nor will he rely on, or surrender to, anyone but Allah. In short, he will not desire or wish for anything except Allah – the Eternal One Who will remain when everything will perish; he will surely turn away from all the false–hood, that is, from everything other than Allah; he will not attach any importance to his own existence nor will he care for himself in face of the Absolute Truth, that is, the eternal existence of his Creator – Great is His Glory.

The same is the import of the following verses:

"Allah is He besides Whom there is no god; His are the very best names" (***20:8***).

"That is Allah, your Lord, there is no god but He; the Creator of all things" (***6:102***).

"…Who made good everything that He has created" (***32:7***).

"And the faces shall be humbled before the Living, the Self–subsistent God" (***20:111***).

"…All are obedient to Him" (***2:116***).

"And your Lord has commanded that you shall not worship (***any***) ***but Him"*** (***17:23***).

"…Is it not sufficient as regards your Lord that He is a witness over all things?" (***41:53***).

"…Now surely He encompasses all things" (***41:54***).

"And that to your Lord is the end goal" (***53:42***).

And the same is the import of the verses under discussion, that is, "and give good news to the patient ones, who when a misfortune befalls them, say: 'Surely we are Allah's and to Him we shall return.' Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course."

These and similar other verses contain a unique Divine Knowledge and produce some real and especial results. Their system is not like any other which a moralist might employ, nor even like that used by previous prophets in their teachings. According to the moralists, virtue and evil are based on the public's likes and dislikes; and the prophets based their teachings on the general religious beliefs concerning the rules of the *Shari'ah* and their recompense. But this third system is based on pure and perfect monotheism and it has been used exclusively by Islam – the best of blessings be on its Prophet and his progeny!

A Western orientalist has expressed a really strange and astonishing idea in his history where he

discusses the Islamic civilization. A gist of his observation is as follows:

"A scholar should concern himself only with various aspects of civilization which were developed by Islam among its followers, and the excellence and superiority which were its legacy to the Muslims in the form of a developed society and high culture. As for the religious precepts which Islam teaches, they are merely the moral teachings which are common to all religions and which were popularized by all the prophets."

Comment

The explanation given by us shows how unfounded his opinion is and how confused his views are. The result emerges from its premises; the effects of training emanate from the knowledge acquired by the trainee. As mentioned earlier, there are three types of the teachers of ethics: one invites to a reality of a low grade, another to an average perfection and the third to the pristine reality and highest perfection. Can it be said that the results of all three will be the same? In other words, the scholars of ethics call the people to the sociological truth; the prophets call mankind to the actual truth and real perfection by which it may get the eternal bliss in the life hereafter; but the Islam invites the people to the Absolute Reality, that is, Allah Himself, and teaches them ethical values by reminding them that Allah is One, and there is no partner in His divinity; this belief produces in man the purest servitude. Now you see how dissimilar are the systems employed by the three groups, and how different are the results.

This Islamic system created an admirable social structure, and produced a multitude of good servants, divine scholars and Allah's friends – men and women alike. And this single factor is sufficient to ensure the distinguished position of Islam.

Moreover, this system sometimes differs from the other two in its result also. It is based on the love a servant has for his Lord; it teaches him to give preference to his Lord's wishes over his own. We know that love and enthrallment sometimes lure the lover to do things which are not approved by social wisdom (which is the basis of the social ethics), nor are they commended by common sense on which is founded the general religious commandments. Reason has its own rules and loves its own. We shall further explain it in some other place, Allah willing.

Verse 157

Qur'an: ***Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course*** (***2:157***).

It appears from meditation on these words that blessings is to a certain extent different from mercy – look how "blessings" has been used in plural and "mercy" in singular. Allah says:

"He it is Who sends His blessings on you, and (**so do**) ***His angels, that He may bring you forth out of utter darkness into the light; and He is Merciful to the believers"*** (***33:43***).

The context shows that the sentence, “and He is Merciful to the believers”, gives the reason of the preceding phrases, “He it is Who sends His blessings on you.” The meaning therefore, is as follows: Allah sends His blessings on you; and it is as it should be, because He is Merciful to the believers, and you are believers; therefore, He sends His blessings on you, to show His mercy to you.

The position of blessing *vis-à-vis* mercy is like that of a premise in relation to its result, or of a glance in comparison to seeing, or of throwing into fire *vis-à-vis* burning. It is in conformity with the explanation, given by some writers of *as-salah* (اَلصَّلٰوة = the blessing), that it really means turning towards, inclination.

Blessing from Allah means that He turns towards the servant with mercy; when attributed to angels it connotes their turning towards a man and becoming a medium to convey Allah’s mercy to him; and when ascribed to man, it means turning to the Lord calling Him with humility. However, it does not mean that blessing itself is not mercy or an example of mercy. Pondering on the usage of “mercy” in the Qur’an, we find that it is the comprehensive gift of Allah, the All-encompassing Divine Bounty. Allah says:

***“And* My *mercy encompasses all things”* (*7:156*).**

Also, He says:

***“And your Lord is the self-sufficient one, the Lord of mercy; if He pleases, He may take you off, and make whom He pleases successors after you, even as He raised you up from the seed of another people”* (*6:133*).**

He may take you off because He is Self-sufficient, He does not need you; and He may make others succeed you, as He had raised you up, because He is Merciful. Even then both aspects are attributed to His mercy, and at the same time they may be attributed to His Self-sufficiency. Every creation - be it from matter or without matter - is a mercy, and also a gift and bounty emanating from His Self-sufficiency.

Allah says:

***“And the bounty of your Lord is not confined”* (*17:20*).**

And one of His bounties is *as-salah* (the blessing); this too is a mercy, but of a especial type. Probably this is the reason why in the verse under discussion, “blessings” has been used in plural and “mercy” in singular.

Qur’an: *And they are the followers of the right course* (*2:157*).

It looks like the result of the preceding clause, “Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord”. That is why Allah did not say, ‘on whom are blessing and mercy from their Lord and

guidance'; instead He described it in a separate sentence. Also, He did not say, 'and they are *al-mahdiyyun* (اَلمَهْدِيّونَ = the rightly guided ones)'; instead their acceptance of guidance has been denoted with the word *al-muhtadun* (اَلمهْتَدونَ = followers of the right course), because "following" describes the next stage, coming after and resulting from "guidance". Evidently, the mercy of Allah consisted of guiding them to Himself; the blessings were like the preliminaries of that guidance, and their following that right course was the result of that guidance. Thus, the blessings, the mercy and the following of the right course, all are different from one another, although looking from another angle all three were but Divine Mercy.

Allah gives good news to these believers of His bestowal of honours to them. To clearly understand the whole sequence, look at the following example: You see in the way a friend of yours who wants to come to your house to be your guest, and is making enquiries as to how to reach your home. You meet him with smiling face, take him to the proper path, walking with him, not leaving him alone lest he loses the way; this continues until you bring him to your house; while on the way, you tend to his needs and look after his meals and transport, and protect him from every hardship and trouble. All these things taken together are called "hospitality" accorded to him; and every care taken of him is a particular care and hospitality; for example, showing him the way is separate from hospitality and care – and even then it is a hospitality. Each of the above acts is a care, and each is a guidance and each is a particular hospitality – and all together come under one word, "hospitality". Applying this example to this verse, the one comprehensive hospitality is like the mercy, and every attention paid to the friend is like the blessings and his being your guest in your house is like the "following the right course".

Many syntactical devices of this sentence point to the prestige and rank of those believers: First, it is a nominal clause; second, it begins with a demonstrative pronoun used for distant objects; third, that pronoun has been reinforced with a separate personal pronoun; and fourth, the predicate begins with the definite article.

Traditions About Al-Barzakh And The Soul's Life After Death

Suwayd ibn Ghaflah narrates from the Commander of the Faithfuls (Imam 'Ali, ('a)) that he said: "Surely, when the son of Adam comes to (his) last day of this world and the first of the next, his property, his children and his actions are portrayed before him. So he turns to his property and says: 'By God! I was covetous of you (and) avaricious; so what have you (now) got for me?' (The property) says: 'Take your shroud from me'. Then he turns to his children and says: 'By God! Surely, I was your loving (father), and I was your protector; now what have you got for me?' They say: 'We shall convey you to your pit (i.e., grave) and bury you in it.' Then he turns to his deeds and says: 'By God! I was indifferent to you, and you were distasteful to me; (now) what is with you (for me)?' So it says: 'I am your companion in your grave as well as on the Day of your gathering – until I am presented with you before your Lord.' Then (after his death), if he is a friend of Allah, there comes to him (a visitor), the most sweet-scented of all people, of the most beautiful appearance and (wearing) the most adorned apparel, and says to him:

‘Rejoice with refreshment from Allah, and flowers and the garden of bounties; you arrived a good arrival’ (i.e., welcome to you). Thereupon, he says: ‘Who are you?’ (The visitor) says: ‘I am your good deed. Proceed from the world to the garden.’ And he recognizes the one who washes his body, and earnestly appeals to his carrier (the bier-bearer) to hasten him (to the grave). Then when he enters his grave, two angels come to him – and they are the examiners of the grave – with elegantly-dressed hairs, writing on the earth with their teeth; their voices are like roaring thunder and their eyes like streaking lightening. They ask him: ‘Who is your Lord? And who is your prophet? And what is your religion?’ And he says: ‘Allah is my Lord; and Muhammad is my prophet; and Islam is my religion.’ So they say: ‘May Allah confirm you in what you like and are pleased with!’ And this is (the meaning of) the word of Allah:

***“Allah confirms those who believe with the sure word in this world’s life and in the hereafter…”* (*14:27*).**

Then they make his grave spacious for him as far as his eye can see, and open for him a gate to the garden, and say to him: ‘Sleep happily the sleep of a fine-looking youth.’ And it is the word of Allah:

***“The dwellers of the garden shall on that day be in a better abiding place and a better resting place”* (*25:24*).**

“And if he is an enemy of his Lord, then comes to him a (visitor), the ugliest of the creatures of Allah in attires and the foulest-smelling. And he tells him: ‘Welcome to the entertainment of boiling water and roasting in Hell.’ And he (the dead person) recognizes the one who washes his body, and earnestly appeals to his carrier (the bier-bearer) to hold him back. And when he is buried in his grave, the examiners of the grave come to him and remove his shroud from him. Then they ask him: ‘Who is your Lord? And what is your religion? And who is your prophet? And he says: ‘I do not know.’ So they say to him: ‘You did not know, nor were you on the right path.’ Then they hit him with an iron-rod, a hitting which frightens every creature of Allah – except the *jinn* and the men. Thereafter they open for him a door to the Hell and tell him: ‘Sleep in the worst condition.’ So he is squeezed in a narrow space like a shaft in an arrow-head, until his brain comes out from between his nails and flesh; and Allah sets on him the serpents of the earth and its scorpions and insects which go on biting him until Allah will raise him from his grave – and he will long for the advent of the Hour, because of the trouble in which he finds himself.”[3]

Abu Bakr al-Hadrami narrates from Abu Ja’far (‘a) that he said: “No one shall be questioned in the grave except he who shall be of pure belief or of total disbelief.” I told him: “And (what about) the rest of the men?” He said: “They will be kept in oblivion.”[4]

Ibn Zubyan says: “I was with Abu ‘Abdillah (‘a), and he said: ‘What do the people say about the souls of the believers after they die?’ I said: ‘They say (that the souls are placed) in the craws of green birds.’ He said: ‘Glory be to Allah! The believer is far more honourable near Allah than this! When it happens (i.e., when the believer dies) there come to him the Messenger of Allah and Ali and Fatimah and Hasan and

Husayn (peace be on them), and with them (come) the angels of the Mighty and Glorious Allah (who are near to him). So, if Allah lets his tongue speak the witness of His Oneness and the prophethood of the Prophet and the *al-walayah* (اَلوِلاَيَة = love, obedience) of the *Ahl Al-Bayt,* then the Messenger of Allah (S) and 'Ali and Fatimah and Hasan and Husayn (peace be on them) and with them the near angels become his witnesses for it. And if his tongue is tied, Allah confers on His Prophet the knowledge of what is in his (i.e., that believer's) heart of that (belief); so he (i.e., the Prophet) becomes his witness; and then bear testimony of Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn - because of the testimony of the Prophet - on their group be the best peace from Allah! and (so do) those angels who are present with them. When Allah takes him to Himself, He sends that soul to the garden, in a shape similar to his (worldly) shape. They eat (there) and drink. When a new-corner comes to them, he recognizes them by that shape which they had in the world."[5]

Hammad ibn 'Uthman narrates from Abu 'Abdillah ('a) that he described the souls of the believers and said: "They meet each other." I said: "They meet each other?" He said: "Yes! They ask each other and recognize each other, so that if you see one you will say, '(He is) so-and-so'."[6]

Abu 'Abdillah ('a) said: "Verily, the believer visits his family and he sees what he likes; and what he dislikes is hidden from him. And verily the unbeliever visits his family and he sees what he dislikes; and what he likes is hidden from him." And he said: "There are some of them who visit (their families) every Friday; and there are others who visit according to their deeds."[7]

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "Verily, the souls are, with the characteristic features of (their) bodies, in a tree of the garden; they know each other and enquire about each other. When a (new) soul comes to (those) souls, they say: 'Let it be, because it is coming from a great terrifying (experience).' Thereafter, they ask him: 'What has happened to so-and-so? What has so-and-so done?' If the soul tells them, 'I have left him alive', they hope for his (future arrival); and if it tells them, 'He had died', they say: 'He fell down (to Hell); he perished.'"[8]

The author says: There are numerous traditions on the subject of *al-Barzakh.* We have quoted above some comprehensive ones. There is a huge lot of nearly *mutawatir* traditions describing the above-mentioned meanings. These traditions prove that the life of *al-Barzakh is* an immaterial one.

Comment

1. It is true that the science, based on senses and experiments, with all its minute, delicate and in-depth researches, has not come across a "soul". Also, it is correct that it has not found any phenomenon which irresistibly led one to the soul as its cause. But these two premises do not prove that there is not an immaterial soul - after all, we have written earlier the proofs of its existence. The natural sciences, which discuss the laws of nature and the properties of matter, are by definition limited to the researches concerning matter only, which is its subject.

The apparatus and chemicals, etc. which sciences use to conduct and complete their tests and experiments, may throw light on matter and material affairs only. But by the same token these, sciences and their apparatus, etc. cannot pass any judgment – for or against – on metaphysical and immaterial concept and beings. Utmost that a natural science can say is that it did not find a soul. But "not finding" is not "non-existence". The natural sciences, by their definition, are not expected to find within their subject (i.e., within matter and its properties and characteristics) something beyond the limit of matter and physical nature.

In fact, their above-mentioned assertion emanates from a gross misunderstanding. They think that those who believed in the existence of soul, did so because they look at some biological functions of their limbs which they could not explain within the framework of their incomplete knowledge, and so they said that there was something immaterial, that is, the soul, that was the source of those functions. But now the science has developed by leaps and bounds and has pin-pointed the natural causes of all such functions. Therefore, there is no need now to believe in the putative soul. (It is the same trend of thought which they have followed while denying the existence of the Creator.)

Obviously, it is a wrong assumption. Those who believe in the existence of soul, do not do so because of that supposed difficulty; they do not ascribe some bodily function (of known causes) to the body, and some others (of unknown causes) to the soul. Rather, they ascribe all bodily functions to the body – directly – and to the soul – indirectly, through the body. They ascribe to the soul only one function which cannot be ascribed to the body in any way – man's gnosis of Self and his vision of his person or "I".

2. They have said that the reality seen by man as one is, in fact, a series of nervous perceptions coming to the central nervous system one after another with extreme rapidity but their oneness is only composite. But this assertion is quite irrelevant, and it has nothing to do with the vision of the Self. We have argued on the strength of the vision of the Self; they are talking about arrival of the sensual visions from the peripheral sense-organs to the central nervous system, and its results. Well, let us suppose, as they say, that actually there are many things, that is, perceptions which have no real oneness; and those perceptions are all material, there is nothing behind them except their own reality; and that the vision which is 'one soul' is in fact the sum-total of these numerous perceptions. If so, then where did this "one" come from – the one which is our only vision, whose "other" has never been perceived by us? Where did this perceived oneness come from?

The talk about "composite oneness" is more like a jest than a serious proposition. A "composite one" is in reality a collection of numerous things without any oneness at all. Its oneness is imaginary, as we may say one house or one line, which is not one in fact. What they say amounts to this: The perceptions and sensations which are pluralistic and manifold in themselves are one perception in itself.

It means that these perceptions are numerous in reality, having no oneness at all, and at the same time they are actually only one perception; there is nothing beyond these sensual perceptions to perceive them as one perception – unlike a sense or imagination which consecutively and collectively receives

manifold sensory or imaginary perceptions, and perceives them as one.

They claim that those manifold perceptions are in themselves one perception – there is no other faculty beyond them which treats this collective vision as a composite one. Also, it is not possible to say that that perceiving is done by a part of brain which perceives the pluralistic picture as "one" – because it will not remove our objection: The perception of that part of brain is itself a part of those consecutively and rapidly-perceived picture, and our objection covers that perception too. That part of brain does not possess a separate perception-power which would deal with these perceptions – as an external sense deals with the external matters and acquires through them sensory pictures. (Ponder on this point.)

Exactly the same arguments (as we have offered above against "oneness" of the sensual perceptions) apply with equal force against firmness and indivisibility of this vision which is always changing and divisible by its very nature.

Apart from that, the premises – that these manifold, consequently (and with extreme rapidity) perceived pictures are perceived by mental vision as one – is wrong in itself. What is brain or its faculties? What is perception and the perceived picture?

All these things are material – and matter and material are in their quiddity manifold, changeable and divisible. But the gnosis of "Self" is not subject to these material defects. Is it not strange that even then they claim that there is nothing beyond matter and material?

3. They have said that the senses or the perceiving faculties become confused and consequently perceive manifold, divisible and changing things as one indivisible and unchanging thing. But this assertion is manifestly wrong. Error or confusion is a relative – and not an absolute – effect which occurs when one thing is compared with another. For example, we perceive the celestial bodies as small bright dots. Of course, this perception is wrong as we know from academic proofs and our other perceptions. But this error is found out when we compare our sensory perception with the reality of these perceived luminous bodies. As far as that sensory perception itself is concerned, it is a reality – we are actually perceiving small bright dots. And to that extent there is no question of any error or confusion.

The subject under discussion is not different from the above-given example. When our senses and faculties look at numerous divisible and changing things and perceive them as one indivisible and unchanging thing, their confusion and error is found out only when that picture is compared with the real thing existing outside. But so far as the perceived picture found in that faculty or sense is concerned, it is undoubtedly one, unchanging and in-divisible – and such a thing cannot be material because it lacks the properties of matter and material.

In short, the above discourse shows that the argument offered by materialists on the basis of senses and experiment, only proves that they could not find the soul. The fallacy is that they have proved 'not finding' and think that it proves 'non-existence'. Also, the picture painted by them to illustrate the vision of Self or soul – the vision that is a single, simple and unchangeable reality – is irrelevant and wrong;

that picture is in accord neither with established principles of materialism nor with the actual fact.

Now, we should have a look at the definition of soul or psyche as given by the psychologists. According to them, it is the unified condition resulting from the actions and reactions of various psychological activities – like perception, will, pleasure, love, etc. – which give rise to that unified condition. We have no-thing to say about this definition, because scholars of every branch of knowledge have right to postulate a subject for their scholarly pursuit and deliberation. And so have the psychologists.

Our concern is about the existence (or inexistence) of the soul in reality, quite independent of the assumptions of the thinkers. And it is a question within the domain of philosophy, not psychology.

There are some scholars of theology who believe that the soul is not immortal. They say: It has been established by the disciplines related to human life, like anatomy and physiology, that man's spiritual and biological characteristics emanate from live cells; those cells are the foundations of human and animal lives. Spirit or soul, therefore, is a characteristics and especial effect of those countless cells – each of which contains a life of its own. What the man calls his soul – and to which he refers as "I" – is a composite entity made up of countless souls. We know that these life conditions and spiritual characteristics cease to exist when the life-giving germs and cells die.

In this background, there is no question of a single immaterial soul or spirit which is supposed to continue even after the body dies. True that the principles of materialism, established after scientific researches, are yet unable to unravel the mysteries of life. There-fore, we may say that the physical causes are unable to create the soul, and accordingly, it may have been brought into being by a metaphysical being. The attempt to prove the immateriality of the soul by purely rationalistic argument is unacceptable in the world of modern knowledge, which does not rely on anything other than the senses and experiments.

The author says: On meditation you will see that all the objections written against the materialists' arguments apply with equal force to this argument too. The following two objections are over and above that:

First: If the scientific research is up till now unable to unravel the mysteries of soul and realities of life, it does not necessarily mean that it cannot do so even in future; nor that these spiritual characteristics are in fact not based on material causes – although we may not know it. Therefore, the theologians' argument is nothing but a fallacy by which they have equalized inexistence of knowledge with knowledge of inexistence.

Second: They seem to ascribe some worldly affairs – that is, the physical phenomena – to matter, and some others – that is, spiritual affairs – to a metaphysical cause, that is, the Creator. But it implies that there are two creators in the world. It is a proposition which is neither acceptable to the materialists nor the theists. And all the arguments of monotheism rebut such assumption.

There are some other objections against immateriality of soul, described in books of philosophy and theology; all of them show that the writers concerned have not pondered on the proof given by us, nor have they understood its main theme. That is why we have refrained from quoting and commenting on them here. Anyone desirous to know them should look into the books concerned. And Allah is the Guide.

A Philosophical Discussion On Immateriality Of The Soul

Is the soul immaterial? The word "soul" in this discussion means that thing which every man refers to when he says "I". Its "immateriality" refers to the fact that it is not a material thing, it is neither divisible nor governed by time or space.

No doubt, I conceive in myself a concept which I refer to as "I"; and it is equally certain that every man has similar conception about himself. It is a conception which we are never oblivious of – as long As we are alive and conscious. It is not a limb of ours; nor is it a part of our body which we perceive by one of our senses or even through reason. In short, it is not like our external limbs which we feel with our senses of sight or touch, etc., nor is it like our internal organs which we know by senses or experiment. Sometimes we become oblivious of one or another of those limbs or organs – or even of the whole body. But we are never oblivious of the "I". It proves that the "I" is other than the body and its parts.

One thing more. Body and its limbs and parts as well as the faculties and characteristics found in it, are all material. One of the characteristics of matter is gradual change, dissolution and divisibility. If soul were body or a part thereof, it would have been material and subject to change and division – but it is not so. If a man looks at this vision of his "Self" and then compares it with that which he used to look at since the beginning of his gnosis of the "Self", he will find that it is the same vision, the same notion, without the least change or plurality. It is unlike his body or its parts and characteristics which all undergo continuous change, in substance and form as well as in their conditions and positions.

Also, he will realize that it is a notion, simple, indivisible and non–compound, unlike the body or its parts and characteristics. And matter and every material thing is a compound and divisible. Obviously, the soul is not body, nor is it a part of the body; it is neither a development of the body nor one of its characteristics. Coming to matter again, it makes no difference whether we perceived it with a sense of ours or by reasoning, or did not perceive it at all – it is matter and material in any case. And matter is subject to change and divisibility. But we have seen that the vision which we call "soul" is not subject to any of the above characteristics of matter. Therefore, soul is neither matter nor material.

Also, this vision of "I" is a notion, simple and one; there is no plurality of parts therein, nor is there any extraneous item mixed with it; it is an absolute one. Every man finds it in himself that he is he and not someone else. Therefore, this vision is a concept subsistent by itself, and distinct; it is beyond the definition of matter and is not subject to its characteristics and properties. It is *a al–jawhar* (اَلجَوْهَر = lit. "jewel"; technically, a thing that exists in reality and which is the bearer of the accidents), separate from matter; it has a connection with the body which makes it identifiable with the body – and it is the

connection of management.

The above discourse proves our claims in this respect.

All the materialists and a group of Muslim theologians as well as the Zahiristic traditionalists do not accept the immateriality of the soul. But what they have written in support of their view stretches the credulity too far. Let us have a look at the arguments of the materialists. They say:

1. The science has nowadays advanced to a previously-undreamt-of extent in its in-depth and minute researches of natural phenomena. It has found and pin-pointed a natural and material cause for every characteristic of the body. It has not found any psychological effect which could not be explained according to the material laws. This being the case, why should we believe in the existence of an immaterial soul?

2. The nervous system continuously conveys the perceptions to its centre (i.e., brain) with extreme rapidity. The vision thus perceived is a unified series, having a single position. The pictures formed in mind are substituted with such rapidity that one frame is not distinguishable from another; that is, mind does not realize that the preceding frame has gone and been replaced by another. It is this composite "one", this illusory "unit", which we see and call our soul, and which we refer to as "I". It is true that it is other than all our limbs and organs; but it does not necessarily mean that it is other than body and its characteristics. The fact is that it is a composite series which appears to be one, because of continuous and rapid substitutions - and we are never oblivious of it, because such an oblivion would result in nullity of the nervous system - in other words, death.

Also, it is true that my vision of my "I" is constant. But it is not because there is a thing which is constant and unchanged. In fact, it is only an illusion resulting from a series of constantly and rapidly changing visions. Suppose there is a water-tank with an inlet and an outlet of the same diameter; water comes in from one side and goes out from the other, with exactly the same speed - and the tank seems always full. Our sense perceives the water as one, constant and unchanged unit, but in reality it is neither the same water nor is it constant and unchanged. Even if there is a reflection in the water, of a man, tree or some other object, it will look as unchanged, steady and constant, but actually it is not so - it is not one, it is gradually changing with the gradual change of the water. The same is the case of the apparent oneness, constancy and unchangeability which we see in our soul, Self or "I".

3. The soul, for whose immateriality arguments have been offered, based on the inner vision, is in fact a composite of natural faculties and characteristics. It is the sum-total of nervous perceptions, which in their turn emanate from mutual action and reaction between external matter and nervous system. It is a composite unity, not the real one.

A Discourse On Ethics

Ethics is the science which looks into human traits, related to man's vegetable, animal and human characteristics, and differentiates the good traits from the bad ones, in order that man may complete his practical happiness by acquiring the good traits; and thus, emanate from him such actions as attract to him general praise from the human society.

Ethics shows that human morality finally belongs to three comprehensive faculties of man. These faculties lead the psyche to acquire practical knowledge, from which emanate all actions of the human species. These are the desire, anger and rational faculty. Human actions are divided into three categories: Either they are intended to gain some benefit, for example: eating, drinking and wearing clothes, etc. They issue forth from the faculty of desire; or they are aimed at protecting, or repulsing harmful effects from, one's person, honour or property, etc. These actions emanate from the faculty of anger. Or they are related to mental conception and proposition, for example, arranging syllogism, preparation of argument, etc. Such mental activities are caused by rational faculty. Man's personality is composed of these three faculties, and they, by joining together, emerge as a composite unit and become the source of all human activities and actions. In this way, man attains his felicity and happiness, which is the final cause of this composition.

It is therefore necessary for man not to let any of these three faculties deviate from the middle path to either the right or the left, not to allow any of these to exceed the limit or to be deficient – as it would disturb the ratio of that particular ingredient, which would result in changing the entire nature of the composite unit, that is, man himself. This would negate the reason for which the man was created, that is, the felicity of the whole species.

The middle course for any of the faculties is to use it as it should be – both in quantity and quality. The middle course for the faculty of desire is called continence, and its two sides of excess and deficiency are greed and undue quiescence, respectively. The middle course for the faculty of anger is bravery, and the two sides are rashness and cowardice. The middle course of the faculty of rationality is called wisdom, and the two sides are deception and dull–mindedness.

When the three good characteristics – continence, bravery and wisdom – combine in a man, a fourth characteristic is born, just as a new quality emerges when different ingredients of a medicine or mixture are blended together. And that quality is called justice. Justice gives each faculty its due right and puts it in its proper place. Its two undesirable sides are inflicting injustice and surrendering to it.

These four – continence, bravery, wisdom and justice – are the roots of all virtuous characteristics, of good morality. Each of them has numerous branches which issue forth from it and belong to it. They have the same relationship with the above–mentioned roots as a species has with its genus. Examples of these branches are generosity and magnanimity, contentedness and gratitude, patience and gallantry, courage and modesty, sense of honour and sincerity, nobility and humility, and so on. These are the

branches of virtuous characteristics, which are given in detail in the books of the Ethics. The following is a ‘family–tree’ showing its roots and branches9.

And the Ethics defines each of them and distinguishes the middle course from its two sides of excess and deficiency; then it explains why a virtue is virtue, then shows how it can be acquired, until it becomes a firm trait, that is, by firm belief that it is good and virtuous trait and by repeatedly practising it until it becomes a firmly–rooted characteristic of the soul.

For example: We say to a coward: Cowardice is born when the psyche is gripped by fear; and fear emanates from something which may happen or may not happen – in future; and such a thing, whose existence and inexistence both are equally possible, cannot be tipped to either side without a cause; a man of reason should not indulge in such fantasies; therefore, a man should not allow himself to be

gripped by fear.

When a man teaches himself this theoretical aspect, and then repeatedly enters into dangerous situations and resolutely proceeds towards alarming perils, he soon gets rid of the bad trait of fear. The same is the case with all the virtues and evils.

The above description is based on the first system, as was explained in the Commentary. That system tries to reform the character and to create a balance, a moderation, in moral traits, in order that the man may be praised and his virtues lauded by the society.

Somewhat similar is the approach of the second system brought by the prophets and the divine legislators. The only difference is in the aims and objects of the two systems. While the first system aims at acquiring a perfect trait because it is approved by the society and attracts praise from the people, the second one aims at achieving by it the genuine happiness for the man, that is, perfection of belief in Allah and His signs, and the felicity of the next world, which is the real happiness and perfection. Yet, both systems are similar in that, the ultimate goal of both is the perfection of man in his character and morals.

As for the third system (which was explained earlier), it differs from the above two, in that it aims at seeking the pleasure of Allah, not at achieving human perfection. Consequently, its goals sometimes differ from that of the earlier two systems. It is quite possible that what appears as the middle way from this point of view, may not look so from the other two angles. When the faith of a servant proceeds on this path of perfection, when it goes on from strength to strength, his soul is attracted towards meditation about his Lord; he keeps the beautiful Divine Names before his vision, and constantly looks at His lovely attributes which are free from every defect and deficiency; his soul is relentlessly attracted to Allah going higher and higher in his meditation, until there comes a stage where he worships Allah as though he (man) were looking at Allah, and Allah were looking towards him. At this stage he feels the Divine Presence in his attraction, meditation and love. The love increases from strength to strength, because man by nature loves beauty. Allah has said:

"And those who believe are stronger in **(their)** ***love for Allah"*** **(*2: 165*).**

Such a man begins following the Messenger of Allah in all his doings, in every situation, because love of a thing results in the love of its signs, and the Messenger of Allah (S) is the wonderful sign of Allah. (In fact, the whole universe is a sign and token of Allah.) This love becomes stronger and stronger until a time comes when the servant cuts himself from every thing, in devotion of Allah; he loves nothing except his Lord, he bows before none other than Allah. Whenever such a man looks at a thing which has some beauty and attraction, he finds in it a sample – although imperfect – of the Divine Beauty. He knows that it is but a reflection of the inexhaustible perfection, the unending beauty and incomprehensible splendour of Allah.

Allah's is the beauty, grace, perfection and magnificence; every beauty and perfection found in other

things, in reality belongs to Him, because every thing is a sign of Allah – it is its only reality, it is nothing more than that; it has no other disposition; it is but a reflection showing the image of the original. This man is, and remains, overwhelmed by love; and he does not look at anything but only because it is a sign of his Lord. In short, all strings connecting his heart to other things are snipped off, leaving it attached only to the love of Allah. Whatever he loves, it is only for the sake of Allah and in the cause of Allah.

At this stage, the mode of his perceptions and actions undergoes a drastic change. When he looks at a thing, he sees Allah before it and with it, every thing loses its independence and identity in his eyes. What he sees and perceives is different from what other people see and perceive; the people look at things from be–hind a curtain, while he sees them in their true form. This shows the difference in perception, and similar is the case of actions. As he does not love anything except Allah, he does not want anything except for Allah, seeking His Sublime Majesty. He neither seeks nor intends, neither hopes no fears, neither chooses nor abandons, becomes neither despaired nor depressed, is neither pleased nor displeased – except for Allah and in the cause of Allah.

Thus, his aims and goals differ totally from those of other people; his motive is diametrically opposed to that of his fellow beings. Previously, he acquired a virtue because it was a human perfection, and discarded an evil because it was a defect. But now his only interest is in seeking the Sublime Majesty of Allah; he does not care about any perfection or defect, nor is he attracted to any worldly praise or cherished remembrance; he rises above this world as well as the next; he takes into consideration neither the Paradise nor the Hell – he discards every thing and rises above them. Now, his destination is his Lord; his provision, his humility of servitude; and his guide, his love. As a poet has said:

Love narrated to me the traditions of amour,

Through its chain of narrators, from neighbourhood

of a distinguished personality,

And narrated to me the breath of fresh breeze,

From the branching trees, from the valley of euphorbia

from the heights of Najd,

From the tear, from my sour eye, from passion,

From sorrow, from my wounded heart, from ecstasy of love,

That my ardour and love have sworn together,

To my destruction till I am laid down in my grave.

This discourse, although short and concise, explains our theme (if you study it carefully). It shows that in this third system of the Ethics the question of human perfection or defect becomes irrelevant; and the aim is changed from human perfection to the Sublime Majesty of Allah. As a result, the outlook is changed from those of the other two systems; and it may happen sometimes that what is counted as a virtue in other systems becomes evil in this one, and vice versa. Now, we should turn our attention to one remaining topic. There is another theory of Ethics which differs from the above-mentioned three systems; and probably it may be counted as a separate system.

They say: Ethics and morality changes in its roots and shoots with the changes occurring in the society, because virtue and vice change with the changing society, they are not based on any permanent, unalterable, firm foundation. Allegedly it emanates from the theory of evolution of matter.

They say: Human society has come into being because of various needs and requirements of life, which man wants to fulfil through the agency of society. He tries to keep the society alive which, he thinks, preserves his own existence. The nature is governed by the law of evolution and gradual perfection. Consequently, society too undergoes constant changes and proceeds to a more perfect and more developed goal. If an action conforms with the aim of society - that is, perfection - it is called virtue; otherwise, it is vice. Therefore, virtue and vice cannot remain unchanged, they are not static or permanent. There is nothing like absolute virtue or absolute vice; they are relative ideas, which change with the changing societies, according to regions and times. As the virtue and vice - being relative factors - under-go changes, so do the ethical and moral values. In other words, Ethics is not absolute; its views on good and bad characteristics are liable to change with circumstances.

From the above, we may infer that Ethics follows the national or social aspirations - the aspirations which are a means of achieving the social perfection (which is the goal of the society); and virtue and vice are governed by it. Whatever promotes development, whatever helps the society in reaching its goal and achieving its aspiration, is good and virtue; and whatever hinders from that goal, whatever keeps the society backward, is evil and vice. Accordingly, lie, false allegation, indecency, hard-heartedness, robbery and shamelessness may become good and virtuous, if they promote the aspiration of the society. And truth, chastity and mercy may become bad and evil - if they hinder it from achieving its goal.

This is a gist of this strange theory which has been adopted by the materialist communists. This theory is not a new one, contrary to their claims. In ancient Greece, the Cynics reportedly had the same idea. Likewise, Mazdakites (the followers of Mazdak, who lived in Iran during the reign of Kisra and was the first to call to communism) were practising it; and even today some primitive tribes in Africa and elsewhere follow this tenet.

However, it is a false theory, and the proof offered in its support is wrong both in its foundation and structure. Before exposing its falsehood, a few points should be made clear:

1. Every being – that which has external existence – has an inseparable personality of its own. Consequently, one being cannot be another being. For example, existence of Zayd has a personality and a sort of unity which prevents it from becoming the personality of ‘Amr. Zayd is one person and ‘Amr is another; they are two persons, two human beings, not one. It is a premise whose truth cannot be doubted. (There is a totally different proposition which says: “The physical universe is a being having one individual reality.” This proposition should not be confused with the above–mentioned premise.)

2. It follows that the external existence is one and the same with personality.’ But mental ideas are different from external beings and their existence is not their personality. Reason admits that an idea – whatever it may be – may be applied to more than one individual, for example, the idea of man, or that of a tall man, or that of the man standing before us.

The logicians divide idea into general and particular. Also, they divide the particular into two categories of relative and real. But these divisions are done when an idea is seen *vis–à–vis* another idea, when it is put at the side of the other; or when it is seen in relation to external existence.

This property of the ideas – their applicability to more than one individual – is also sometimes called “generality”; its opposite being “individuality” or “unity”.

3. An external physical being is governed by the law of change and general movement. Therefore, it has an expanse and that expanse is divisible into boundaries and pieces, each piece being different from other preceding or following ones. Yet, it is connected with them in its existence. Otherwise, without that connection, it could not be said to be changing or evolving. (If a thing is removed completely and is replaced by an entirely new thing, it cannot be said that the first evolved and changed into the second. If one thing is to change into another, there must be a common factor joining them together.)

4. It follows that that movement is a single thing having its own identity and personality. It looks numerous when it is seen in relation to the boundaries of a thing (as mentioned above). That relation distinguishes one piece from the others. But as for the movement itself, it is a single uninterrupted flow. This characteristic of the movement – this constant flow – is also called a ”generality” in contrast to the relations it has with each boundary; we say “general movement”, meaning a movement free of its relations with the boundaries and pieces.

This “generality” is a thing existing in reality, unlike the “generality of the ideas” mentioned in (2) above, which is mental attribute of idea – an imaginary attribute of an imaginary being.

5. Undoubtedly, man is a physical being; humanity has many members, as well as its own laws and characteristics. What is created by nature is one individual, singly and separately. It does not create the collection of people which we call human society. Of course, the nature was aware that man needs somethings to perfect his existence which he could not obtain on his own. Therefore, the nature equipped him with organs, faculties and powers which would be useful in his endeavours to make up his deficiencies within the framework of society. Obviously, the single man is the goal of creation, primarily

and principally, while society is a secondary goal, just a by-product.

6. The human nature demands a society and proceeds towards it, (if we can use the words of demand, causality and movement – in their real sense – about the society!). What is the real relation between man and this society? An individual man is a single and personal being (in the sense we have described above). At the same time, he is constantly on move, changing, evolving, proceeding to his perfection. That is why every piece of his changing being is different from other pieces. Yet his is a nature, flowing, "general", preserved in all the stages of the changes; in short, his nature is a single personality. This nature found in this individual man is preserved by the means of procreation, by branching out of one individual into other individuals. It is this factor which is called "nature of the species". It is preserved through the individuals, even if they are changed, even if they undergo creation and destruction (in the same way as was explained about the individual's nature). Individual's nature exists and proceeds towards personal perfection. Likewise, nature of species exists and proceeds towards the perfection of the species.

There is no doubt that this endeavour for perfection of species exists in the natural system. That is what we mean when we say, for example, that the human species proceeds towards perfection; or that today's man is a more perfect being than the primitive man. The same demand for perfection of species is in the minds of those scientists who speak about the evolution of species. Had there not been a nature of species, existing in reality, preserved in the individuals (or in species), such talks would not have had any value – it would have been just a metaphorical speech.

As with the individuals, so with the society. There is an individual, or let us say particular, society, which is found amongst the people of a nation, of a time or of a region. Also, there is a general society found in the human species, continuing with its continuation, evolving with its evolution (if it be correct that society, like a social man, is an externally existing condition of an externally existing nature!).

7. Society moves and evolves with the movements and changes of man. This society is a single entity from the initial stage of the movement to wherever it proceeds to, with a general existence. This "one" (which changes because of its relation with each and every boundary) becomes divided into numerous pieces. And every "piece" is a part of the society, that is, a "man". The parts or members of the society rely in their being on the persons of mankind. In the same way the general civilization – in the sense described above – depends on the general human nature. The law governing a unit is a unit of the law; and the law governing a "general" is the general rule. ("General rule" does not mean an abstract rule, because we are not talking about "general ideas".) Undoubtedly an individual man, being a single entity, is governed by a rule, which continues with his continuation. Yet that rule undergoes partial changes, following the changes occurring in the man himself. For example, there is the rule that the physical man takes food, acts by his will, has feelings and imagination, thinks and perceives. These rules exist and continue as long as the man himself exists. Of course, minor changes may occur in those general rules consequent to the changes occurring in the man.

The same principle applies to the humanity in general, the general mankind, which exists with the existence of its individuals.

8. As establishment of society is a law of human nature and one of its characteristics, so the general society is a characteristic of the general human species. (By general society we mean the society, *per se,* the society established by human nature and which is continuing uninterruptedly from the day man came into being to this time.) This general society exists and continues with the humanity. And the laws of society which it has brought into being will remain intact as long as the general society exists. Of course, some minor changes may occur in it but the main principles will remain unchanged, like the mankind itself, which continues although its individual members go on changing.

Now it is clear that there are some ethical principles which are unchangeable and are valid for ever – like general virtue and vice – as the general society is firm, constant and unalterable from the beginning. Society cannot turn into non–society (i.e., individuality) – although a particular civilization may give way to another particular civilization. Likewise, general virtue (and vice) cannot turn into non–virtue (or non–vice) – although a particular virtue may evolve into some other particular virtue.

9. An individual man needs – for his existence and continuation – some perfections and benefits which he must achieve and acquire for his own self. That is why nature has equipped him with organs and faculties to help him in this compulsory quest, for example, alimentary canal for food intake and digestion, and sexual organs for reproduction and continuation of the species. It is obligatory for man to use these systems for the purpose they have been created for. He should not completely ignore them by leaving them unused, because it would be against the dictate of nature. Likewise, he should not over–indulge in these activities, he should not eat or cohabit more than necessary; for example, he should not go on eating until he becomes sick, or dies, or becomes unable to use his other faculties. He must keep to the middle course in achieving all his requirements, perfections and benefits. This middle course is called continence; and its two undesirable sides are greed and undue quiescence.

Likewise, we see that every individual, in his existence and continuation, is faced with many such things which are harmful to him and which he is obliged to resist, and repulse from him–self. And this "obligation" is proved by the fact that nature has equipped him with the organs and powers to defend himself with. Therefore, it is obligatory for him to defend himself and resist the harmful things – keeping himself on the middle course. He should not neglect and crush these powers nor should he overuse them. This middle course is called bravery, and the other two sides are rashness and cowardice.

The same is the case with wisdom and its two sides, deception and dull–mindedness; as well as with justice and its two sides, injustice and surrender to injustice.

These are, thus, the four faculties and virtues which are demanded by the nature of an individual man – the nature which is equipped with its necessary tools: continence, bravery, wisdom and justice. And all of them are good and virtues. Good is that which is in conformity with the ultimate goal of a thing and

promotes its perfection and felicity; and, as explained above, all the four are in conformity with the felicity of the individual. And their eight opposites are bad and evil.

When an individual, by his nature and in himself, has this attribute, then he would be having it also within the framework of the society. Society, being a product of nature, cannot negate nature's rules; otherwise, it would be a contradiction in terms. After all, what is society if not the co-operation of the individuals to facilitate the perfection of their natures and achievement of their aspirations.

10. Human species in framework of the "general" society has the same characteristics as an individual has in his particular society, as mentioned above. Human species in its civilization tries to achieve its perfection by repulsing what is harmful and acquiring what is beneficial to it; by learning as much as is good for it and practising justice – that is, giving everyone his due right, without indulging into injustice and without surrendering to injustice. And all these four characteristics are virtues. The civilization, *per se,* decrees that they are absolute virtues and their opposites are absolute vices.

The above discourse clearly shows that in the constant and perpetual human society, there are absolute virtues and absolute vices – society cannot "be" without them. It also shows that the four fundamental ethical values are absolutely good and virtuous and their opposites absolutely bad and evils; as has been decreed by the social nature of humanity. And the case of their branches is not different from that of the roots.

They too are absolute and unchanging – although there may occur some differences sometimes in their applications, as we shall mention afterwards.

Now it is clear that what they have said concerning relativity in morality is not correct:

They said: "Absolute virtue and vice do not exist. What exists is the relative virtue and relative vice; and it is a changing thing which varies with regions, times and societies."

Reply: It is a fallacy, because they have confused the "generality of idea" with "generality (i.e., continuation) of existence". It is true that absolute good and vice – in the meaning of general ideas – do not have external (i.e., real) existence. But here we are not concerned with them. What we are concerned with are absolute virtue and vice – in the meaning of lasting social factors which continue as long as the society exists, by decree of nature. The aim of the society is the happiness of the species. And it is impossible to think that all happenings and possible events and actions would always be good for the society. Surely some would conform with its needs and some would not.

Accordingly, there would always be good and evil in the society. How can we suppose existence of a society – of any type – in which the members do not believe that every one should be given his due right, or that it is necessary to gain benefit to its proper limit, or that they must protect and defend the cause of the society as and when needed, or that the knowledge – by which man differentiates what is beneficial from what is harmful – is a good attribute? These four beliefs are the above-mentioned justice,

continence, bravery and wisdom. As was said, every society, of any description whatsoever, decrees that these four characteristics are good and virtuous.

Moreover, how can we think of a society that does not ordain that one must refrain from indecencies? And that feeling is modesty, a branch of continence. Or a society that does not exhort one to be enraged when rights are usurped or the sanctity of sacred things violated? And it is the earnest sense of honour which is a branch of bravery. Or that one should be happy with his due social rights? And it is contentedness. Or that one should preserve one's social status without snubbing other people, without putting them out of countenance by one's arrogance? And it is modesty and humility. We may go on enumerating in the same way each and every branch of the ethics and morality.

They say: "The views often differ from society to society on what virtue is. One thing is considered as virtue in one society, while another society treats it as vice."

Reply: Of course, there are some minor examples of this phenomenon. But it is not because one society believed in acquiring good traits while the other dismissed it as unnecessary. Whatever the difference, it only occurs because one society believes that trait to be good, while the other thinks it is evil. So the difference is not about the principle, it is only in its application.

For example: The societies ruled by autocratic rulers used to believe that the sovereign had total authority over his subjects, and absolute power to do whatever he wished and order whatever he liked. But that belief was not based on any negative attitude towards justice. It actually emanated from their belief that that absolute power was the due right of the ruler; they thought that what the ruler was doing was not injustice, he was only exercising his due authority and taking his just right.

Likewise, some societies thought that it was a shame if their kings studied to acquire knowledge, as is reported about French kings of the medieval ages. But it was not because they looked down at the virtue of knowledge; it was only because they thought that acquiring knowledge of politics and studying the ways of managing various government departments would conflict with the king's rightful royal activities and engagements.

In the same way, some societies do not acknowledge any excellence in chastity of women (i.e., not establishing sexual relation with any man other than their husbands), and their modesty. Nor do they believe that their men should feel enraged if their women indulged in licentiousness. The same is the case with some other virtues like contentedness and humbleness etc.

But it is only because those societies do not think that these things fall under continence, modesty, self-respect, contentedness and humbleness. It is not that they do not accept these main virtues as virtues. After all, they praise a judge or a ruler if he practices continence in his rule and judgment. They appreciate it if one is ashamed of breaking a law; they laud a man who, overcome by national zeal, defends the nation's independence, the cause of civilization, or the sanctity of other sacred values. They praise a man who remains content with what the law has allotted to him; and applaud the loyalty and

obedience shown by the public to their leaders and rulers.

They say: "Whether a characteristic is good depends on its conformity with the goals of social aspirations." Then they come to the conclusion that the said characteristic's excellence depends on its conformity with the society's goals. But it is a clear fallacy. Society is an institution which comes into being when its members enforce, and act upon, all the laws decreed by nature. This society is bound to take them to their happiness and felicity (provided there is no disturbance in its arrangement and flow); and the society is bound to have some rules and regulations like virtue and vice, good and evil. On the other hand, "society's aspiration" is just a set of some imaginary ideas, invented for creating a society on prescribed lines by imposing it on its members. In other words, society and society's aspirations are two completely different things: Society is an established fact, society's aspiration is only a potential which is yet to come into being; the former is an actual fact while the latter is only a plan yet to be implemented. How could one be equated with the other? The virtue and vice are brought into being by the general society on the demands of the human nature; how could such an actual fact be brought under the domain of some aspirations – the aspirations which are nothing but some imaginary notions?

Question: The general civilization, brought into being by nature, has no authority of its own; whatever authority there is, it belongs to its goals and aspirations – especially if it is a theory conforming to the happiness of the society's individuals.

Reply: The preceding discussion about virtue and vice and good and evil, shall be repeated in this case again – until the talk stops at a permanent, perpetual and unchanging decree of nature.

Apart from that, there is another difficulty. Let us suppose that virtue and vice as well as all the rules of civilization depend on the goals and aspirations of the society. And it is those aspirations on which the arguments of these people are based. But it is possible – nay a fact – that there may be different conflicting goals and aspirations within one society, or between different societies. Which aspiration would then prevail? Which one the people should give preference to? Which would be acceptable to the general society? The fact is that in this situation there will only be one criterion, and that is the power and domination; in other words, might is right. How can it be believed that the human nature led the human beings to a social structure whose parts are in conflict with one another? Can the society be governed by a rule which would negate the society itself? Is it not an ignominious contradiction in the rule of nature and the demands of its existence?

A Few Traditions On Some Related Topics

Imam al-Baqir ('a) said: "A man came to the Messenger of Allah (S) and said: 'I am keen (and) enthusiastic for *jihad.*' (The Messenger of Allah) said: 'Then do *jihad* in the way of Allah, because if you are killed, you shall remain alive near Allah and sustained, if you die (before that), then your reward is indeed with Allah...'

The author says: The Prophet's words, "and if you die...", point to the word of Allah:

***"And whoever goes forth from his house emigrating to Allah and His Messenger, and then death overtakes him, his reward is indeed with Allah..."* (*4:100*).**

It also shows that proceeding to *jihad is* emigration to Allah and His Messenger.

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said about the prophet Isma'il, whom Allah has named "Truthful in promise": "He was named 'Truthful in promise' because he had promised a man (to wait for him) in a place. So he remained waiting for that man for one year. Therefore, Allah named him 'True of promise'. Then that man came to him after that (long) time and Isma'il said to him, 'I have been waiting for you...'"[10]

The author says: It is a thing which average wisdom would probably say was a deviation from middle course, while Allah has counted it as an excellent virtue of the said prophet, increasing thereby his prestige and raising his status, as He has said:

***"And mention Isma'il in the Book, surely, he was truthful in* (*his*) *promise, and he was a messenger, a prophet"* (*19:54*).**

***"And he enjoined on his family prayer and alms-giving, and was one in whom his Lord was well pleased"* (*19:55*).**

The fact is that the criterion by which this action was judged is different from the one used by common wisdom. The average wisdom, the common sense, looks at the things according to its own views, and Allah looks after His friends by His Own help and support; and the word of Allah is the High. Many similar events have been narrated about the Prophet, the Imams and other friends of Allah.

Question: How can rules of the *shari'ah* go against the dictates of reason, in situations where reason may have a say?

Reply: True that reason may judge the virtue or vice of an action wherever it is possible for it to do so. But that thing or action should first come within its jurisdiction before it can pronounce its judgment on it. And we have explained earlier that such actions (as described in the above tradition) are governed by the third system, and that system takes such actions out of the jurisdiction of human intellect and reason - reason does not have any say against or about them. It is the way of the Divine Knowledge.

Apparently, the prophet Isma'il ('a) had given that man unconditional promise by saying, 'I shall wait for you here until you come back to me.' Therefore, he stuck to that unconditional wording, to save himself from breaking the promise, and to fulfil what Allah had put in his mind and made his tongue utter. Of the same import is an event related about the Prophet that he was near the Sacred Mosque when one of his companions told him that he would come back to him, and the Prophet promised to wait for him until he would return. That man went away and did not return, and the Prophet remained there three days waiting for him in the same place which he had promised. That man passed by that place after three

days and found the Prophet sitting there waiting for him and he himself had forgotten the promise.

As-Sayyid ar-Radi has narrated from the Leader of the faithfuls (Imam ‘Ali (‘a)) that he heard someone saying:

“***Surely we are Allah’s and to Him shall we surely return***” (***2: 156***).

Thereupon, he (Imam ‘Ali – (‘a)) said: “O man! Verily our word, ***Surely we are Allah’s,*** is acknowledgment by us that we belong to Him, and, ***to Him shall we surely return,*** is acknowledgment by us that we are to die.”11

The author says: Its meaning is clear in the light of the earlier given explanation. The tradition has been narrated in detail in *al-Kafi.*

Ishaq ibn ‘Ammar and ‘Abdullah ibn Sinan have narrated from Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) that he said: “The Messenger of Allah (S) has said: ‘Allah, the Mighty, the Great, has said: “I have given the world as loan to My servants. Then whoever gives Me a loan from it, I give him ten times to seven-hundred times in lieu of one. And whoever does not give Me a loan and I take something from him by force, then I give him three things that if I gave one of them to My angels they would be pleased of Me.” ‘” Then Abu ‘Abdillah (‘a) said: “(It is) the words of Allah:

“Who, when a misfortune befalls them, say: ‘Surely we are Allah’s and to Him we shall surely return’” (***2: 156***).

“Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course” (***2: 157***).

Then Abu ‘Abdillah (‘a) said: “It is for the man from whom Allah takes something forcibly.”12

The author says: This tradition is narrated by other chains, all having nearly the same theme.

Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said: “*as-Salah* (**اَلصَّلٰوة**) from Allah is mercy, and from the angels is purification, and from the people is prayer.”13

The author says: There are other traditions of the same meaning.

At first glance, there appears to be a conflict between this and the preceding tradition. This tradition explains *as-salah* as mercy, while the preceding one counts *as-salah* as other than mercy; and this view is further strengthened by the wording of the verse itself which mentions *as-salah* and mercy separately, “blessings and mercy from Allah”. But in fact there is no contradiction as we have explained in detail in the Commentary.

1. Clearly it refers to the time when they will see the angels for the first time, that is, the time of death – as is described in many other verses.
2. Now it speaks about the Day of Resurrection.
3. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
4. Muntakhab Basa'ir ad-darajat.
5. al-Amali, ash-Shaykh at-Tusi.
6. al-Mahasin.
7. al-Kafi.
8. al-Kafi.
9. since the author has described the branches of virtuous characteristics in the text in tree form, and in the explanatory figure (of the original work) he has also chosen the tree form representation, we therefore have duplicated the explanatory figure in the same manner (pub.).
10. al-Kafi.
11. al-Khasa'is.
12. al-Kafi.
13. Ma'ani al-akhbar.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verse 158

إِنَّ ٱلصَّفَا وَٱلمَر۟وَةَ مِن شَعَآئِرِ ٱللَّهِ فَمَن۟ حَجَّ ٱلبَيتَ أَوِ ٱعتَمَرَ فَلَا جنَاحَ عَلَيهِ أَن يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا۟ وَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيرًا۟
فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلِيمٌ

Surely the Safa and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah; so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or performs 'umrah *thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both; and whoever on his own accord does good, then surely Allah is Grateful, All-knowing* (*2:158*).

General Comment

The Safa and the Marwah are two places in Mecca between which a pilgrim has to perform *as-sa'y* (**اَلسَّعْي** = the ceremony of walking quickly seven times between the Safa and the Marwah, during the *hajj* and the *'umrah;* literally to move quickly, to run). These are two hills, the distance between them reportedly being 760½ arm. *as-Safa* (**الصَّفَا** = hard smooth rock); *al-Marwah* (**اَلمَرْوَة** = hard stone). *ash-Sha'a'ir* (**اَلشَّعَائِر**) is the plural of *ash-sha'irah* (**اَلشَّعِيرَة** = sign); from it is derived the word *al-mash'ar* (**المَشْعَر** = the *hajj* station, east of Mecca); also they say, *ash'ara '1-hady* (**أَشْعَرَ الهَدْيَ** = he marked or branded the sacrifical animal). *Al-Hajj* (**الحَج**) literally means repeated intention; in Islamic terminology it refers to the special rites collectively known as Pilgrimage of Mecca. *al-I'timar* (**اَلإِعْتِمَار**) means to visit; it

is derived from *al- 'imarah* (العِمَارَة = building) because buildings thrive by visits; in Islamic language it refers to the so-called "lesser pilgrimage" to the Ka'bah, which unlike the *hajj,* need not be performed at a particular time and whose performance involves fewer ceremonies. *al-Junah* (الجنَاح) is deviation from truth and justice; it is used for sin and misdemeanour; thus, negation of sin or blame implies permission. *at-Tatawwuf* (اَلتَّطَوف) is derived from *at-tawf* (اَلطَّوْف), that is, to make the rounds. It denotes a round trip, that is, a journey or walk that ends at its starting point; it need not necessarily be a circumambulation around something (although circumambulation is more obvious application of the word); it is the former meaning in which it has been used in this verse - it refers to *as-sa'y,* that is, walking between the Safa and the Marwah seven times consecutively.

At-Tatawwu'(اَلتَّطَوع) is derived from *at-taw'* (اَلطَّوْع = to do a walk willingly and gladly). Some people differentiate between *at-tatawwu'* and *al-ita'ah* (اَلإطَاعَة) and say that the former, unlike the latter, is exclusively used for voluntarily done good deeds. If correct, this assertion might be based on the view that the obligatory deeds - because of their obligatoriness - are probably not done willingly, unlike the voluntary and recommended actions which are done willingly by one's own accord. But it is a far-fetched interpretation. In fact, *at-taw'* (اَلطَّوْع) is opposite of *al-kurh* (اَلكرْه = dislike), and is not irreconcilable with obligatory deeds. Allah says:

"...So He said to it (i.e., the heaven) and to the earth: 'Come both, willingly or unwillingly'" (41:11).

The characteristic meaning of the paradigm *at-tafa''ul* (اَلتّفَعل) is to take to oneself, for example, *tamayyaza* (تَمَيَّزَ = he took on distinguishing), *ta'allama* (تَعَلَّمَ = he took on learning); in the same way *tatawwa'a* (تَطَوَّعَ) means, he took on doing good willingly. In short, *at-tatawwu'* is not reserved, from the linguistic point of view, for voluntary, non-obligatory good deed - unless credit is given to the usage of the common people.

Commentary

Qur'an: ***Surely the Safa and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah... to go round them both; (2:158).***

The two hills are marked by the signs of Allah; they lead accordingly to Him and remind one of Him.

They have been especially counted "among the signs of Allah" to the exclusion of other things; it shows that the word, "the signs" has not been used here in the sense in which every created thing is a sign of the Creator. They are the Divine Signs because Allah has made them so, by appointing them as the places of His worship; thus, they remind one of Allah, the Creator. They are the signs for which Allah has prescribed especial rites of worship.

Then comes the next sentence: "so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or performs *'umrah* thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both. The word "so" in the beginning shows that it is

an offshoot of the preceding sentence. Its import is to show that walking quickly between these two hills is a part of the Islamic *shari'ah* – it does not imply that the said walking is voluntary or non-obligatory. If Allah had wanted to declare its voluntariness, it would have been more appropriate to praise and extol *as-sa'y,* rather than saying that there was no blame in it. The gist of the meaning is that – because the Safa and the Marwah were among the places of the worship of Allah – it would do you no harm to worship Him therein. And it is the language of legislation. If Allah had wanted to show only its desirability, He would have said that, because the two hills were among the signs of Allah, He likes you to go round them.

Frequently, when the Qur'an wants to ordain an obligatory law, it uses such expressions which by themselves do not show obligatoriness. For example, Allah says regarding *jihad:*

***"That is better for you"* (*61:11*).**

Regarding fast:

***"And that you fast is better for you"* (*2:184*).**

And regarding shortening of prayer:

***"And when you journey in the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten the prayer"* (*4:101*).**

Qur'an: *and whoever on his own accord does good, then surely Allah is Grateful, All-knowing* (*2:158*).

The conjunctive "and" may be joining this sentence to any of the three phrases in the preceding one:

1. It may connect it with "so whoever makes a pilgrimage...". In that case it would show a more general reason for the legislation of the walking between the two hills, after giving the particular reason, that is, "Surely the Safa and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah." According to this interpretation, "doing good on one's own accord" would mean "obedience" in general term, and not a voluntary deed.

2. It may be starting a new sentence, joining it to the words in the beginning of the verse. In that case, "doing good on one's own accord" would refer to the "going round the two hills". Thus it would show only the desirability of *as-sa'y* (walking quickly seven times between Safa and the Marwah).

3. Alternatively, the phrase "doing good on one's own according" may be referring to the *hajj* and the *'umrah,* and the phrase would show the desirability of these two rites of worship.

ash-Shakir (**اَلشَّاكِر** = Grateful) and *al-'Alim* (**اَلعَلِيْم** = All-knowing) are two of the beautiful names of Allah. *ash-Shukr* (الشُّكْر = gratefulness, thankfulness). When a beneficiary returns the benevolence of the benefactor by announcing it in words and/or deeds, it is called gratefulness.

Someone gives you a property, and in return you praise him mentioning his benevolence, or use that

property in a way he likes – and thus you show your gratefulness to him.

Now, Allah is the Beneficent; His beneficence is eternal and all beneficence begins from Him; none can oblige Him in any way so that He would be grateful to that person. Yet, He, in His benevolence, looks at His creatures' good deeds as though the creatures have been beneficent to Him by doing those deeds (although, in reality the case is diametrically different; the creatures' good deeds are actually His benefaction to them). And thus he repays those good deeds with gratefulness and benevolence, which in fact is a double benevolence. Allah says:

"Is the reward of goodness aught but goodness?" (***55:60***).

"Surely this is a reward for you, and your striving shall be recompensed" (***76:22***).

Thus, the name "Grateful" is used for Allah in its real, not allegorical sense.

Traditions

One of our companions has narrated this tradition from Imam as-Sadiq ('a). He says: "I asked him about walking between the Safa and the Marwah whether it was obligatory or voluntary. He said: 'Obligatory.' I said: 'Does not Allah say:

"So whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or performs **'umrah** ***thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both?'"*** (***2:158***).

He said: 'It was in the *'umrah* of *Qada'*[1]; that is, the Messenger of Allah (S) had stipulated with them (i.e., the pagans of Mecca) that they would remove the idols (for the period of *'umrah*); and one of his companions was engaged otherwise until the idols were returned (to their places): (The Imam) said: 'Then Allah revealed:

"Surely the Safa and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah; so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or performs 'umrah thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both" (***2:158***).

I.e., even when there were idols on them.'"[2]

The author says: A nearly similar tradition is found in *al-Kafi.*

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) says describing the *hajj* of the Prophet: "After circumambulating around the House and praying its two *rak'ahs,* (the Prophet) recited:

"Surely the Safa and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah" (***2:158***).

(Then he said:) 'So I shall begin with that which Allah, the Mighty, the Great, has begun with (i.e., from the Safa).' And verily the Muslims used to think that walking between the Said and the Marwah was

something invented by the polytheists; so Allah revealed:

***"Surely the Safa and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah; so whoever makes a pilgrimage or performs* 'umrah *thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both"* (*2: 158*)**[3]

The author says: Obviously, there is no contradiction between the two traditions regarding the reason of the revelation of the verse. The words of the Prophet, "I shall begin with that which Allah, the Mighty, the Great, has begun with", show the basis of legislation. We have narrated, in the story of Hajar and her running seven times between the Safa and the Marwah, that the ritual of *as-sa'y* started from that.

'Amir ash-Sha'bi said: "There was an idol, called *Asaf,* on the Safa, and another, called *Na'ilah,* on the Marwah. The people of (the days of) ignorance, after circumambulating the House, used to walk between the two (hills) and touch and wipe the two idols. When the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) arrived at Mecca, they (i.e., the Muslims) said: 'O Messenger of Allah! (As for) the Safa and the Marwah, surely the walking around them was done because of the two idols, and walking around them is not among the signs (of Allah).' Then Allah revealed:

***"Surely the Safa and the Marwah..."* (*2: 158*).**

Thus, He (especially) mentioned the Safa because of the idol that was on it, and affirmed the Marwah because of the idol that rose from it."[4]

The author says: Both sects have narrated numerous traditions having the above-mentioned themes. Their implication is that the verse was revealed in the year when the Muslims performed the *hajj,* while the Chapter of the Cow is the first one revealed at Medina. It may therefore be inferred that the verses are unconnected with the preceding verses (of the *qiblah*) which were revealed, as described earlier, in the second year of *hijrah;* nor are they related to the verses in the beginning of the chapter which were revealed in the first year of *hijrah.* It shows that the verses were revealed in various contexts, not in one.

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1. In the 7th year of hijrah. (tr.).
2. al-'Ayyashi.
3. al-Kafi.
4. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 159 - 162

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ يَكتمونَ مَآ أَنزَلنَا مِنَ ٱلبَيِّنَـٰتِ وَٱلهدَىٰ مِن بَعدِ مَا بَيَّنَّـٰه لِلنَّاسِ فِى ٱلكِتَـٰبِ أُوْلَـٰئِكَ يَلعَنهم ٱللَّه وَيَلعَنهم ٱللَّـٰعِنونَ

Surely those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance that We revealed after We made it clear for men in the Book, these it is whom Allah does curse, and those who curse do curse them **(too)** (***2:159***).

إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ تَابواْ وَأَصلَحواْ وَبَيَّنواْ فَأوْلَـٰئِكَ أَتوب عَلَيهِم وَأَنَا ٱلتَّوَّاب ٱلرَّحِيم

Except those who repent and amend and make manifest **(the truth)**, ***these it is to whom I turn*** **(mercifully)**, ***and I am the Oft-returning*** **(to mercy)**, ***the Merciful*** (***2:160***).

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرواْ وَمَاتواْ وَهم كفَّارٌ أوْلَـٰئِكَ عَلَيهِم لَعنَة ٱللَّهِ وَٱلمَلَـٰئِكَةِ وَٱلنَّاسِ أَجمَعِينَ

Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the angels and men all (***2:161***).

خَـٰلِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يخَفَّف عَنهم ٱلعَذَاب وَلَا هم ينظَرونَ

Abiding in it; their chastisement shall not be lightened nor shall they be given respite (***2:162***).

Commentary

Verse 159

Qur'an: ***Surely those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance that We revealed...*** (***2:159***).

Obviously "the guidance" means that knowledge and *shari'ah* which the Divine Religion contains, and which lead the followers to the eternal bliss; and "the clear proofs" means the verses, signs and the arguments which are the clear evidence, proofs and attestations for the truth – the truth that is guidance. "***The clear proofs***", as used in the Divine Speech, is a special description for the revealed verses. Therefore, concealing the clear proofs may mean hiding the verses themselves from the people; or concealing their true meaning through misinterpretation and misapplication – as the leaders of the Jews did with the verses prophesying the advent of the Prophet. What the people did not know, they

concealed; and what they knew, they misinterpreted and diverted it from the Prophet.

Qur'an: ***…After We made it clear for men…*** (***2:159***).

It shows that they concealed the truth after Allah made it clear for all the mankind, not only for the Jews. It is not feasible, in the prevalent world system, to explain a thing to each and every person individually – not only in revelation but in every general announcement. As a general rule, only a few persons are informed of the matter directly, and it is through them that the rest of the people get the information; he who is present conveys the message to the absent persons; the learned one explains it to the ignorant. The knowledgeable man is counted as one of the links to convey the message, like the tongue and speech.

When a learned man, bound by the pledge taken from him, explains the message to others, he makes the truth clear to the people. If he hides his knowledge, he keeps the truth concealed from the people, after it was made clear to them. And, as Allah has said, it is the only thing which has made people differ in matters of religion, and has diverted them from the path of guidance to that of misguidance. Otherwise, religion conforms with nature; human nature agrees with it and discerning mind surrenders to it when it is properly explained. Allah says:

"Then set your face uprightly for the (**right**) ***religion in natural devotion*** (**to the truth**)**;** ***the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no alteration*** (**by anyone else**) ***in the creation of Allah; that is the right*** (**established**) ***religion, but most people do not know"*** (***30:30***).

So, the religion is natural; nature can never resist it, if it appears before it with some clarity, either because of the purity of the recipient's heart, as is the case of the prophets, or because it is explained properly – the latter method invariable always depends on the former.

That is why the above-quoted verse combines the two premises: the naturalness of religion and lack of its knowledge. It says:

"The nature made by Allah in which He has made men" (***30:30***).

And then says:

"But most people do not know" (***30:30***).

Again, Allah says:

"Mankind was but one people, so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed. And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves…" (***2:213***).

It shows that difference about the contents of the book emanates from the revolt of the scholars who already have its knowledge. Religious differences and deviations from the right path are caused by the revolt of the religious scholars as they conceal the revealed truth, misinterpret it and alter it; and because of their injustice. That is how "injustice" will be defined on the Day of Resurrection. Allah says:

"…Then a crier will cry out among them that the curse of Allah is on the unjust" (***7:44***).

"…Who hinder (***people***) ***from Allah's way and seek to make it crooked…"*** (***7:45***).

There are many verses of the same theme.

Clearly, the verse under discussion:

"Surely those who conceal the clear proofs…" (***2:159***).

Is based on the above-quoted verse:

"Mankind was but one people, so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they differed. And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves…" (***2:213***).

And it points to the recompense of that revolt in the next sentence, "these it is whom Allah does curse…"

Qur'an: ***…these it is whom Allah does curse, and those who curse do curse them*** (**too**). (***2:159***),

It describes the punishment of those who revolt against truth and hide the Book and the guidance which Allah has sent down. The punishment is the curse by Allah and the curse by those who curse. The word "curse" has been repeated because the curse of Allah is different from the curse of those who curse. The curse by Allah is removal from mercy and bliss, and that by those who curse is praying to Allah to remove the cursed one from that mercy and bliss.

There is no restriction at all on the curse of Allah or the curse of those who curse, nor is there any limitation on "those who curse". This generality shows that every curse by anyone who curses is actually directed to those revolters and concealers of the Divine Proof and Guidance. And reason supports this view: The aim of the curse is to remove the cursed one from happiness and bliss; and there is no real happiness and bliss except the religious one. As this real religious bliss is fully explained by Allah and accepted by nature, no one can be deprived of it except the one who rejects and denies it. This deprivation is confined to him who knows it and then knowingly rejects it. It does not affect him who did not know the said religious bliss and to whom it was not clarified. Allah has taken pledge from learned people to spread their knowledge and to publish whatever Divine proofs and guidance they had received.

If they conceal it and hold it back, then in effect they have rejected it. Therefore, "these it is whom Allah does curse, and those who curse do curse them (too)". This explanation is further supported by the following verse: "Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the angels and men all." Apparently, the particle *inna* (إِنَّ = surely) coming at the beginning of the verse gives the reason, or intensifies the theme, of the verse under discussion, by repeating its meaning in other words, "Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers..."

Verse 160

Qur'an: ***Except those who repent... the Merciful*** (***2:160***).

It is the exception from the preceding verse. It qualifies their repentance with amending and making manifest the truth. They must make their previous behaviour known; they must announce their repentance.

In other words, they must announce to the people what they were concealing of the truth, and also make it known that previously they had concealed it. Otherwise, it will be as though they have not repented yet – because they are still hiding the fact of their previous concealment of the truth.

Verse 161

Qur'an: ***Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the angels and men all*** (***2:161***).

It alludes to their persistence in disbelief and their obstinate and stubborn refusal to accept the truth.

(If a man does not accept the true religion, not because of obstinacy and arrogance, but because it was not made clear to him, then in reality he is not a disbeliever, he is *al-mustad'af* (المسْتَضْعَف = weak; according to Islamic terminology, a man who does not have true faith, but is not inimical to it); his judgment is in the hand of Allah.) This theme is supported by the fact that most of the verses describing the disbelief qualify it with "belying". Look especially at the verses of the descent of Adam, containing the first law legislated for the mankind:

"We said: 'Get down you therefrom all together; and if there comes to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve'" (***2:38***).

"And (***as to***) ***those who disbelieve in and belie Our signs, they are the inmates of fire, in it they shall abide"*** (***2:39***).

Likewise, in this verse the words, "Those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers," refer to those who obstinately belie the signs and guidance of Allah – those who conceal what Allah has revealed. And Allah describes their recompense in these words: "these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the angels and men all". It is a Divine Decree that every curse by anyone from among the

angels or men, without any exception, shall be attached to them only. In this respect they are like the Satan, when Allah told him:

"And surely on you is curse until the Day of Judgment" (***15:35***).

Thus, Allah made him the target of every curse from whatever source it may emanate. Likewise, these learned persons who conceal their knowledge are partners of Satan in this general and unrestricted curse. See how hard is the tone of this verse, and how formidable its theme! We shall write something related to it, Allah willing, under the verse:

"That Allah may separate the impure from the pure, and put the impure, some of it upon the other, and pile it up together, then cast it into the hell; these it is that are the losers" (***8:37***).

Verse 162

Qur'an: ***Abiding in it*** (***i.e.,*** **in the curse**), ***their chastisement shall not be lightened nor shall they be given respite.*** (***2:162***).

The word "curse", has been changed here to "chastisement"; it shows that the curse shall be converted into their chastisement on that Day.

In these verses, the references to Allah have been changed several times from the first person to the third and vice versa. The verse begins with the first-person pronouns: "We revealed", "We made it clear"; then the style changes, mentioning Allah by name, "Allah does curse". The change was affected because the theme demands show of intense displeasure, and the greater the name of the displeased person, the more severe the effect of the displeasure - and none is greater than Allah. Therefore, the action of the curse was attributed to Him by name, to give it the most vehement force. Then the reference was again changed to the first-person pronouns, "I turn (mercifully); and I am the Oft-returning (to mercy)..."

It was done to show the highest mercy and benevolence of Allah - every adjective is discarded, all attributes are set aside and "I Myself return to them mercifully". You will appreciate the difference if you read this sentence thus: These it is to whom Allah turns mercifully; or thus: These it is to whom their Lord turns mercifully. Obviously, these sentences do not show that high degree of mercy that reflects from this sentence, "these it is to whom I turn (mercifully)". The next verse again discards the pronoun for the Divine Name, "these it is on whom is the curse of Allah"; and the reason is the same as was explained for the change in the first verse.

Traditions

One of our companions has narrated from Imam as-Sadiq ('a). He says: "I said to him: 'Tell me about the word of Allah, the Mighty, the High:

***"Surely those who conceal…"* (*2: 159*).**

He said: 'We are meant by it – and to Allah is the resort for help. When (*Imamah*) comes to one of us (i.e., the Imams), he has no authority (or, choice) but to make it clear for the men who will be (Imam) after him.'"[1]

Imam al-Baqir ('a) said about this verse: "(Allah) means us by it, and to Allah is the resort for help."

Muhammad ibn Muslim said: "(The Imam) said: 'These are the People of the Book.'"

The author says: All these traditions are based on the principle of the flow of the Qur'an and its application. Otherwise, the verse is general.

Some traditions quote Imam 'Ali ('a) as saying: "Its interpretation is the learned people when they are depraved."

The Prophet said about this verse: "Whoever is asked about knowledge which he has got, and he conceals it, he shall be reined on the Day of Resurrection with a bridle of fire; and it is (the import of) His words,

***"These it is whom Allah does curse and those who curse do curse them* (too)" (*2: 159*)**[2]

The author says: These two traditions confirm what we have written in the Commentary.

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said explaining the words of Allah, *and those who curse do curse them* (too): "We are those (who curse); and they say that it means the vermins of the earth."[3]

The author says: The explanation given by the Imam reminds one of the import of the verse:

***"…And the witnesses shall say: "These are they who lied against their Lord." Now surely the curse of Allah is on the unjust"* (*11: 18*).**

The Imams are the witnesses, allowed by Allah to speak on the Day of Judgment, who speak the right thing. The Imam also mentioned some people's explanation that ***those who curse*** refers to the vermins of the earth. This interpretation is attributed to the exegetes like Mujahid, 'Ikrimah and others; and some traditions ascribe it to the Prophet.

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: about the verse,

***"Surely those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance"* (*2: 159*).**

(That it means the proofs and guidance) "regarding 'Ali."[4]

1. al- ‘Ayyashi.
2. Majma’ al-bayan.
3. al-’Ayyashi.
4. al-’Ayyashi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 163 – 167

وَإِلَـٰهكم إِلَـٰهٌ وَٰحِدٌ لَّآ إِلَـٰهَ إِلَّا هوَ ٱلرَّحمَـٰن ٱلرَّحِيم

And your God is one God! there is no god but He; He is the Beneficent, ***the Merciful*** (***2:163***).

إِنَّ فِى خَلقِ ٱلسَّمَـٰوَٰتِ وَٱلأَرضِ وَٱختِلَـٰفِ ٱلَّيلِ وَٱلنَّهَارِ وَٱلفلكِ ٱلَّتِى تَجرِى فِى ٱلبَحرِ بِمَا يَنفَع ٱلنَّاسَ وَمَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّه مِنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ مِن مَّآءٍ فَأَحيَا بِهِ ٱلأَرضَ بَعدَ مَوتِها وَبَثَّ فِيَها مِن كلِّ دَآبَّةٍ وَتَصرِيفِ ٱلرِّيَـٰحِ وَٱلسَّحَابِ ٱلمسَخَّرِ بَينَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ وَٱلأَرضِ لَأَيَـٰتٍ لِّقَومٍ يَعقِلونَ

Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the ships that run in the sea with that which profits men, and the water that Allah sends down from the cloud, then gives life with it to the earth after its death and spreads in it all (**kinds of**) ***animals, and the changing of the winds, and the clouds made subservient between the heaven and the earth, there are signs for a people who understand*** (***2:164***).

وَمِنَ ٱلنَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذ مِن دونِ ٱللَّهِ أَندَادًا يحِبّونَهم كَحبِّ ٱللَّهِ وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنوَٓاْ أَشَدّ حبًّا لِّلَّهِ وَلَو يَرَى ٱلَّذِينَ ظَلَموَاْ إِذ يَرَونَ ٱلعَذَابَ أَنَّ ٱلقوَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ شَدِيد ٱلعَذَابِ

And there are some among men who take for them-selves equals to God besides Allah, whom they love as the love for Allah, and those who believe are stronger in (their) ***love for Allah, and O that those who are unjust could see, when they see the chastisement, that the power is wholly Allah’s and that Allah is severe in chastisement*** (***2:165***).

إِذ تَبَرَّأَ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱتّبِعواْ مِنَ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّبَعواْ وَرَأَواْ ٱلعَذَابَ وَتَقَطَّعَت بِهِم ٱلأَسبَاب

When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed (**them**), ***and they see the***

***chastisement and their ties are cut asunder* (*2: 166*).**

قَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّبَعوا۟ لَو۟ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَتَبَرَّأَ مِنهم كَمَا تَبَرَّءوا۟ مِنَّا كَذَٰلِكَ يرِيهِم ٱللَّه أَعمَـٰلَهم حَسَرَٰتٍ عَلَيهِم وَمَا هم بِخَـٰرِجِينَ مِنَ ٱلنَّارِ

***And those who followed shall say: "O were there for us a return, then we would renounce them as they have renounced us." Thus will Allah show them their deeds to be intense regret to them, and they shall not come forth from the fire* (*2: 167*).**

Commentary

These verses are connected together in one context, with a single theme. They remind the audience about the belief of monotheism offering proofs to support it, and describe polytheism and its ultimate result.

Verse 163

Qur'an: ***And your God is one God!*** (***2: 163***).

We have explained the meaning of *al–ilah* (الإِلٰه = god) in the Commentary of the first verse of the first chapter, the Opening. Oneness is a self–evident idea, which needs no explanation. A thing is called one in view of one of its attributes, for example, one man, one scholar or one poet. These words show that the related attribute is indivisible, and not subject to plurality. For example, the manhood of one man, Zayd, is not shared between him and someone else. It is in contrast with manhood of two men – Zayd and 'Amr, for example – which is shared by the two, and is therefore numerous. Thus Zayd, in context of his attribute of manhood, is one and indivisible and not subject to plurality. But when he is looked at in this very context combined with his other attributes – like his knowledge, power, life, etc. – then he is not one; he is a multiple in reality.

Allah is One, in view of His attribute, like His divinity, which is not shared by anyone else. He is one in His divinity as well as in His knowledge, power and life. He has knowledge, unlike other knowledges, and power and life unlike others' powers and lives. Also, He is one because His attributes are not multiple, they are not separate from one another except in their verbal meanings; His knowledge, His power and His life, all is one thing, all is His very person; none of them is separate from the other. Allah knows by His power, and has power by His life, and is alive by His knowledge. He is not like other things where attributes are multiple and numerous not only in meanings but in reality also.

Sometimes a thing possesses the characteristic of oneness in its personality, that is, by its very nature and essence, it cannot accept multiplication or division in its self; it cannot be divided into various parts or into its person and name etc. This oneness is called oneness of person, and it is referred to with the

word *al-ahad* (ٱلأَحَد = one); this word is never used except as a first construct of a genitive construction or in a negative, prohibitive or similar sentences, in the meaning of no one, any one, etc. For example, we say: No one came to me. This sentence negates the personality itself, irrespective of its oneness or plurality, because this oneness is related to its nature and essence, and not to its attribute. This connotation will be lost if we were to say, one man did not come to me. This sentence does not imply that two or more men did not come; it is because "oneness" in this sentence is an attribute of the corner, not of his person.

The reader should keep in mind this short explanation until we write about it in detail. Allah willing, under the verse:

***Say: "He, Allah, is One"* (*112:1*).**

The words, "And your God is one God," imply that divinity, godhead, is exclusively reserved for Allah, and that His oneness in divinity is such as becomes His sublime status.

The word *al-wahid* (ٱلوَاحِد = the one), as understood by the audience of the Qur'an, gives the idea of oneness, of a general type. That meaning may be applied to various kinds of oneness. But only a few of those connotations may be applied for Allah. The word "one", may show oneness of number, of species, or of genes, etc. And the people were bound to take it in the meaning best suited to their beliefs and ideas. That is why the Qur'an did not say: And Allah is one God. Because this sentence does not establish monotheism; even the polytheists say that He is one God, in the same way as each of their deities is one god.

Nor would have the sentence, And your God is one, established monotheism. Because it could be imagined that He is one in the species – of divinity. People say, when they enumerate the species of animals: Horse is one; mule is one – although horse and mule are manifold in number.

That is why the Qur'an said: "And your God is one God." "One God" (in contrast to two or more gods) is made predicate of "Your God". In this form the sentence clearly establishes the belief of monotheism, by restricting the godhead to one of the gods in which they believed.

Qur'an: *There is no god but He* (*2:163*).

It further emphasizes the clear declaration of the preceding sentence about monotheism and negates every possible misinterpretation or superstition.

The negative particle "*la*" (لا = no) is used here to negate the genes; *ilah* (إِلَٰه = god) denotes here real and actual God. The sentence has an implied predicate "existent", and the meaning will be as follows: There is no real and actual god existing "but He". The pronoun "He", used in place of the proper name, Allah, is in nominative, not subjunctive case. Therefore, the word "but" is not used here as particle of exception; rather it is an adjective in the sense of "other than". The complete sentence, thus, means:

There is no real god, other than Allah, existing.

The sentence therefore aims at repudiation of gods, other than Allah – the deities which had no real existence outside the imagination of their worshippers. It does not aim at refuting other deities and proving the existence of Allah, as many scholars have thought. Our explanation is supported by the fact that the sentence needs only a negative mode, and not a negative followed by affirmative. Only repudiation of other imaginary deities is enough to confirm the Oneness of Allah in His godhead. Moreover, the Qur'an treats the existence of Allah as a self-evident truth which needs no proof or argument. The Qur'an only cares to affirm and prove His attributes; for example, it only proves that Allah is One; that He is the Creator, the Knower, the Powerful and so on.

Question: You say that the sentence has an implied predicate existent (or some other word of the same meaning). If so, then it would only negate the actual existence of other deities – but not the "possibility" of their existence.

Reply: 1. It is meaningless to suppose that there could be a "possible" or transient being (having equal relation with existence and non-existence), which would be the ultimate cause of all the existing things and their affairs.

2. We could change the predicate to "true" or "actual"; then the meaning would be: There is no god in reality other than He.

Qur'an: ***The Beneficent, the Merciful*** (***2:163***).

We have explained its meaning in the exegesis of the first verse of the first Chapter, the Opening. With these two names, the meaning of Allah's Lordship becomes complete. From Him emanates every general bounty – pursuant to His Beneficence – and every special favour, in the way of guidance and the next world's bliss – pursuant to His Mercy.

Verse 164

Qur'an: ***Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth*** (***2:164***).

As mentioned in the beginning, the verse aims at proving what the preceding verse has established: "And your God is one God: there is no god but He; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful." The verse under discussion may be analysed as follows: There is a god for each of these phenomena; there is only one God for all of them; and that one God is your God too; He is the Beneficent who bestows general bounties; and the Merciful, who leads to the ultimate happiness – the blessings of the next world.

These are the established facts; and in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and all the phenomena mentioned in this verse, there are signs to prove these facts for a people who understand.

The verse offers arguments to prove that there is a god, and He is one – the God of this magnificent universe is One, and He Himself is the God of man. It is not the import of this verse to prove the existence of the God of man, or His oneness. Otherwise, all the phenomena mentioned in it would have all together constituted only one sign – by showing that the management of all is interrelated and forms a single system. If so, then the preceding verse should have been restyled in this way: And your God is one, there is no god but He.

The proofs in short run are as follows:

First Proof: These heavens, the canopy high above us with all these awe–inspiring luminous stars, constellations and galaxies shining therein; this earth, our shelter and refuge, with all its wonderful natural systems; all these regular changes and alter–nations occurring in this world – the alternation of the day and the night, the running ships and boats, the pouring rains, the changing winds, the suspended clouds – all these things need by their very nature, a Creator. There is, therefore, a Creator God for all of them.

Second Proof: Look at these heavenly bodies, varying in mass from the minutest to the largest. There is one so small that the scientists have found its volume to be equal to: 0.000000000000000000000033 cubic cm.; while there are others so huge as to be equal to millions of our earth – which in itself has a diameter of about 9,000 miles.

They have found the distance between some celestial bodies to be 3,000,000 light years. A light year is approximately 365 x 24 x 60 x 60 x 300,000 kilometres.[1]

Ponder on these figures which boggle the mind and stupefy the brain. Then decide, as you wish to decide, about this unique and wonderful system. Keep in mind that each of these untold billions of the suns and planets act on, and react to the others, no matter where and how distant they are from each other. This goes on by the law of gravity, which permeates the whole universe, and through light and heat. In this way, the established system continues without any impediment. And it is an all–pervasive never stopping system, run according to an established law. Even the theory of relativity (which says that the directions of movements in the physical world are subject to deviations) affirms that that deviation itself is governed by another inviolable law.

This movement, this general rotation, appears in every part of the universe in a uniform way; look for example at the movement of the sun with its planets and satellites. Now look nearer at hand at our own earth, with its own moon and various systems (the day and the night, the winds, the clouds and the rains). Reduce your circle of vision once more, to ponder on earthly matters and creatures – minerals, vegetables, animals and various other things. Find out about countless species one after another; then go on reducing the circle until you come to the elements, then to the atoms; then the particles of the atoms; finally, you shall come to what is today the last stage of the scientific discovery, that is, the electron and the proton. Even there you will find a miniature solar system at work; a nucleus around

which these smallest particles revolve, exactly like the movement of the planets around their suns, and the endless journey of the suns (with their families) towards an unknown destination.

Stop at any stage in this scientific journey and you will find an amazing system – a system whose wonders will never cease and whose marvels will never stop. There is no exception in its flow, not even one; nor is there any question of chance in its intricately-woven design, not even a rare one. Man cannot reach its shore, nor does he fully comprehend all the signs on this path.

Proceed from the smallest to the largest heavenly body. You will find it a single universe with one and unified system and inter-related arrangement. Look through the most powerful far-reaching telescope and use the most advanced observatory, you will find the same law governing all celestial bodies.

Now, reverse your journey, until you reach again to the smallest unit. Break it down to its parts, reaching to molecule. You will find in it a miniature universe, with the same design and the same inter-related arrangement – although the two vastly differ in their natures and identities.

In short, the universe is one, and its arrangement and management inter-related; all its parts – no matter how diverse and multiple they may be – are managed under a single system:

"And the faces are humbled before the Living, the Self-subsistent God" (***20:111***).

Therefore, the God of the universe, is one; He alone created and He alone manages it.

Third Proof: Man is an earthly creature. He lives on the earth and after his death returns to it. His existence and life need nothing more than the above-mentioned system that governs the whole universe – a unified and inter-related system. The heavenly bodies with the light and heat they generate, the earth with its alternated days and nights, the winds, the clouds and the rains, the beneficial goods it produces and which are transported from region to region – these are the things man requires for his physical needs, for his existence and continuation of life.

"And Allah encompasses them on every side" (***85:20***).

It proves that the God who created the universe and manages its affairs is the same God who also created man and manages his affairs. God of the universe is the God of man.

Again, it is God who bestows on every thing what it needs for happiness of this world and for bliss of the next (if he is qualified for the bliss of the next life) – because the next world is the ultimate destination of this abode. How can anyone man-age the end of any affair other than he who manages the affair itself? This is the proof given by the two names, ***The Beneficent, the Merciful***.

And in this way is perfected the rational argument offered by this verse for the preceding one. This view is strengthened by the fact that this verse begins with the particle *inna* (إِنَّ = surely) which is also used for offering arguments. And Allah knows better. In short, the words, "Most surely in the creation of the

heavens and the earth", point to the heavens with all their luminary bodies, and the earth with all the wonderful creations and astounding products it contains; the forms which give each species its name, the matter which constitutes its body; their transformation from one form to the other, their recurring additions and subtractions, their joining together and breaking apart. As Allah says:

"Do they not see that We come into the land curtailing it of its sides?" (***13:41***).

"Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and the earth were closed up, so We have opened them: and We have made of water every thing living... ?" (***21:30***).

Qur'an: ...***and the alternation of the night and the day*** (***2:164***).

It refers to the changes in durations of the nights and the days which are caused by a combination of two factors: First is the daily rotation of the earth on its axis. This always keeps a little more than half of the earth's sphere facing towards the sun, which sends light and heat to the earth's surface – and that is called the day. The opposite side of the sphere is dark, throwing a conical shade in the space – and it is the night. The day and the night are continuously rotating on the face of the earth.

The second factor is the revolution of the earth on its orbit around the sun. The earth's axis does not form a right angle with the orbit; it has a tilt (of 23½° [*tr.*]); and because of that tilt the earth's north–south position *vis–à–vis* the sun changes at different times of the year; when the northern hemisphere is inclined to the sun, it is summer in the north and winter in the south; when the southern hemisphere is inclined to the sun, the north experiences winter and the south, summer. Also, it is because of this tilt that the equator and the North and the South Poles always have days and nights of equal length: The two Poles have only one day and one night in a year – each night and each day being six months long. When it is day on the North Pole, the South Pole has its night, and vice versa. As for the equator, it has about 365 days and 365 nights in a solar year – all of equal length. As for the other regions, the days and the nights differ – in number as well as in length, depending on their distance from the equator and the two Poles. Full description of this phenomenon may be found in the sciences concerned.

It is because of this difference that the sun's life–giving light and heat reach various regions of the earth with varying intensity. This in its turn creates diversity in various factors governing the earth and its environment. And man profits from that diversity in numerous ways.

Qur'an: ...***And the ships that run in the sea with that which profits men*** (***2:164***).

al–Fulk (**الفلْك**) is boat, ship; it is used for singular and plural both. *al–Fulk* and *al–fulkah* (**الفلْكَة**) have the same meaning; as *at–tamr* and *at–tamrah* (**اَلتَّمْر، التَّمْرَة** = date) are synonymous. "that which profits men", refers to various types of cargoes and food items which are transported by ship from coast to coast, from region to region.

The verse counts the ships (which are made by man) side by side with those things and natural

phenomena which are beyond human power, like the heavens, the earth and the alternation of the day and the night. It shows that ultimately the ships too, like those natural phenomena, are the handiwork of Allah. On deep consideration, when we ascribe a work to a man, it has no more significance than ascribing it to a natural cause. Of course, man has a free will and power. But he is not a sufficient or total cause; nor does that freedom make him independent of Allah. He is as much in need of Allah's will and permission as any other natural cause. A natural cause acts on, and reacts with, a matter and through a process of combination and break up gives it a form – let us say, turns it into a rock. A man cuts, breaks up and joins some matters giving them a form – let us say, turn them into a boat. Is there any difference between the two makers? Both ultimately draw their strength and ability from Divine creation and invention; nothing is independent of Allah either in its person or in its activities.

Boat too, like all physical creations, depends on Allah in its existence, as well as in management of its affairs. Allah has pointed to this fact in the verse, where Ibrahim ('a) is quoted as telling his people about the idols which they worshipped as god:

"And Allah has created you and what you make" (***37:96***).

Admittedly, an idol is but a thing made by man, and Ibrahim ('a) ascribes its making to Allah. The same applies to the boats and ships. Also, Allah says:

"And His are the ships reared aloft in the sea like mountains" (***55:24***).

According to this verse, the ships belong to Allah. Again, He says:

"And He has made the ships subservient to you, that they might run their course in the sea by His command…" (***14:32***).

This verse declares that also the ships' affairs is in Allah's hands.

Can Man-Made Things Be Attributed To Allah

How heedless are those who think that the things made and manufactured by man are exclusively his creation and can-not be attributed to Allah at all – just because they are made by man's will and choice!

First, in this group are the materialists who do not believe in a Creator. They say: The theists believed in a Creator because they found in the nature many things and happenings whose material cause they did not know. As they knew that nothing could happen without a cause, they had to admit that there was a cause for such things and happenings, which was not known to them yet. In this way they came to believe that there was, for those things of unknown cause, a cause whose reality was hidden from them and which was beyond the natural world – and that cause was God. According to the materialists, the belief in the existence of a Creator was a hypothesis which emanated from the ignorance of the primitive man: that man was surrounded by so many phenomena of unknown causes; for example, atmospheric changes and many happenings on the earth. Likewise, there were many psychological factors (whose

natural causes are unknown to the science even today). And this resulted in the belief in a super-natural Creator.

They say: Now the sciences have succeeded in unravelling many mysteries of natural phenomena, and in identifying their natural causes. Thus, one of the two pillars of the above-mentioned hypothesis has been pulled down - that is, the need of some natural phenomena for a super-natural cause. Now remains the other pillar - that is, the need of some psychological factors for an immaterial cause. The recent advances in the field of the organic chemistry, give us hope that man will soon understand the mysteries of the soul; then he will be able to manufacture the life-giving cells and germs. This will enable him to create any living being and bring about any psychological effect. Then the second pillar of this hypothesis will go down - and there will remain no basis for believing in a super-natural Creator. Man will create whatever he wishes of spiritual and psychological effects, as he is making today whatever he likes of the physical and material things - although just yesterday he was insisting that there was a hypothetical super-natural cause for these things. Now we know why he held that belief - it was just because he did not know the real cause of these phenomena.

Comments

First: If these fat-heads were to wake up from their conceit, they would see that the theists from the very beginning of their belief in a Creator (and there never was a beginning for it) affirmed that creative cause for the whole universe - those things having known physical causes as well as those having un-known causes. According to them this whole lot, in its entirety, needs a cause, separate from the universe. Clearly what the materialists reject is not what the theists believe in.

The theists - and the history and the research has not been able to pin-point a starting point for the belief in the Creator, in the history of humanity - have believed in the existence of one or more creators for the whole universe, although the Qur'an has shown that the religion of monotheism appeared before poly-theism; and the orientalist, Max Muller, the pioneer in the studies of Sanskrit, also has thrown light upon it. Obviously, the theists, even the primitive man among them, used to see and recognize physical causes of many physical phenomena. Yet, they affirmed that there was a God for the whole universe (not excluding those phenomena of known causes).

Evidently, when they believed in the existence of the Creator, basing their argument on the all-pervasive system of cause-and-effect, it was not to solve the problem of some phenomena of which they could not find a cause. After all, they did not say that some parts of the universe needed a Creator, while others (having some known causes) did not need that. What they believed was this: The universe is made up of a series of natural causes and effects. This whole universe, taken as a composite unit, needs and requires a Cause, above all other causes; all actions and reactions, all causes and effects, interacting amongst its countless components, rely and depend on that Cause of the causes.

The belief in that Supreme Cause does not negate the general law of causality which permeates all

components of the universe. In the same way, the existence of material causes for the material effects does not make this whole chain of the causes and effects independent of the Supreme Cause, who is out of this universe and separate from it. (When we say 'out of this universe', we do not mean that the Supreme Cause is placed on the summit of the pyramid of the causes and effects. We mean that the Supreme Cause encompasses the whole universe with all its causes and effects, from every possible side.)

The materialists have fallen in an amusing contradiction. They believe that there is a general all-pervasive compulsion in all happenings in the world - including human actions. According to them, every action, every happening, is a compulsory, inescapable effect of various causes. And at the same time, they say that if a man created another man, it would not finally end at the Cause of the universe - if there is such a cause.

This fine and deep theme is always present in the subconscious mind of common people (even if a simple man is unable to express it in so many words). That is why they say that the whole universe - together with all its causes and effects - is the creation of a Creator God.

Second: When the theist philosophers furnish the rational proofs to prove the existence of the Creator, they do so after establishing that there is an all-pervasive system of causality in the world. Then they proceed to prove that all these "possible", transient causes must end at an essential, self-existent cause. This method has been used by them for thousands of years, from the earliest age of philosophy to this day. There was never any doubt in their minds that the effects - including the natural transient causes - need an essential Cause. In other words, when they attribute the effects to an essential cause, it is not done because they do not know some thing's natural cause.

Third: The Qur'an proves the oneness of the Creator. It does so by showing that all components of the universe are governed by the general law of causality; it accepts the attribution of each happening to its particular cause, and confirms what normal wisdom says about it. It ascribes natural phenomena to their natural causes, and attributes to man the actions done by his own free will. There is no need to quote here numerous verses based on this theme. And then it ascribes all these things and happenings - without any exception - to Allah. For example,

"Allah is the Creator of every thing" (***39:62***).

"That is Allah, your Lord, the Creator of every thing; there is no god but He "(***40:62***).

"His is the creation and command" (***7:54***).

"His is what is in the heaven and what is in the earth and what is between them two and what is beneath the ground" (***20:6***).

Whatever may be called a "thing", it is created by Allah, and may be attributed to Him in a way befitting

His Majesty. There are other verses which attribute an action to its doer and at the same time ascribe it to Allah. For example,

"And Allah has created you and what you make" (***37:96***).

The verse attributes the actions of men to them and then attributes their creation and that of their actions to Allah. Also, it says:

"And you did not smite when you smote (**the enemy**), ***but it was Allah Who smote"*** (***8:17***).

This verse admits that the act of throwing arrow was done by the Messenger of Allah, and then negates it, ascribing it to Allah Himself. There are other verses of the same connotation.

There are some other verses which combine the two attributions in a general way. For example,

"…And Who created every thing, then ordained for it a measure" (***25:2***).

"Surely We have created every thing according to a measure" (***54:49***).

"And Our command is but a single [***word***], ***like the twinkling of an eye"*** (***54:50***).

"Certainly We have destroyed your likes. So is there anyone who will be admonished?" (***54:51***).

"Everything they have done is in the books" (***54:52***).

"And every thing small and great is written down" (***54: 53***).

"Allah indeed has made a measure for every thing" (***65:3***).

"And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure" (***15:21***).

Making or appointing a measure for every thing means that Allah has confined it within the limits of the material causes and the boundaries of time and space.

In short, it can never be doubted that the Qur'an proves the existence of the One and Only God basing its arguments on the system of causality found in all the components of the universe; and then it attributes the whole universe to Allah, Who created and made all of it. It is not that we ascribe some things to Allah and some others to their material causes – as the materialists allege.

Why could not the materialists understand this clear fact? They were misled by the Church in the medieval ages, whose pseudo-philosophers tackled this and similar problems in the manner quoted by the materialists; writers of other religions too rely on similar arguments. The fact is that their discourses were distorted, and their arguments lacked precision. They wanted to explain their true claim (which, their reason told them in general terms, was correct). They tried to go into details of that general idea.

But their weak understanding and unripe reasoning led them away from the right method; consequently, they generalized their claim and misdirected their argument. It were they who attributed every thing or effect of unknown cause directly to Allah, and said that voluntary actions did not need any outside cause, and that consequently man's voluntary actions did not belong to Allah; man was independent of Allah in such actions. We have written on this topic in detail under the verse:

"But He does not cause to err by it **(any)** ***except the transgressors"*** **(*2:26*).**

Here something more has been added to complete the discourse.

Another group is that of some Muslim traditionalists and theologians (and some others) whose vision does not penetrate to the inner core of a subject. They did not understand how could the voluntary actions of man be attributed to Allah in a manner that would conform with His Sublime Majesty. Consequently, they thought that man-made things could not be said to have been made by Allah, and especially those things which were made exclusively for sins, for example, liquor, and instruments of music and gambling etc. Allah says:

"…Intoxicants and games of chance and **(sacrificing to)** ***stones set up and*** **(dividing by)** ***arrows are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork…"*** **(*5:90*).**

And evidently what Allah counts as handiwork of Satan should not be ascribed to Allah Himself.

Comment

The discourse written earlier is enough to show the invalidity of this erroneous surmise- both from the Qur'an and traditions and the rational point of view. The fact is that man's voluntary actions may be attributed to Allah in a befitting manner, and likewise man-made things, being the result of those actions, may be attributed to Allah.

Moreover, "the stones", mentioned in the verse 5:90 above, refers to the idols and images which are set for worship, and the following verse,

"And Allah has created you and what you make" **(*37:96*).**

Says that those idols too are creation of Allah.

Obviously, an idol may be looked at from different perspectives. From one point of view it may be ascribed to Allah, for example, looking at the nature of its existence, disregarding the fact of its being used for sin of polytheism. What is an idol? It is just a stone or metal with a particular shape; and as such there is no reason why it should not be attributed to the Creator of all things. Of course, from another angle it is a thing that is worshipped besides Allah; and from this perspective it cannot be attributed to Allah; it should rather be ascribed to the Satan or man. The same principle may be applied for other man-made things.

It clearly shows that man-made things may be attributed to Allah just like any other natural phenomenon, without any difference. Of course, it all depends on the degree of existence the said things enjoy. (Think on it.)

Qur'an: ...***And the water that Allah sends down from the cloud, then gives you life with it to the earth after its death and spreads in it all*** (**kinds of**) ***animals*** (***2:164***).

What is rain? There are various elements mixed in the water of rivers and other water sources. Then it turns into steam, going up and carrying heat. The steam continues to ascend until it reaches extremely cold strata of the atmosphere. Then the steam changes into water coming down as rain. Sometimes the steam is frozen into snow or hail. In whatever form, it comes down to us, which drinks it in and becomes alive again. Also, the earth stores a major part of the rain, etc., above or below its surface, and that water comes out and flows as streams and rivers, etc., on the face of earth. Water is the source of life for every living thing. The rain coming down from the clouds is a phenomenon of life, which takes place according to a well-regulated and intricately laid down system - without any break down or exception. The genesis of vegetables and animals - of all types - depends on water.

The rain - being inter-woven with so many phenomena of the universe, horizontally and vertically - becomes an inseparable part of the universe. It needs a Creator to create it, a cause to bring it into existence. In other words, there is a God for it. And man's genesis and life depend on the rain and water. Therefore, the same God who has created water and the intricate system of rain, is the God who has created man. The God of rain is the God of man.

Qur'an: ...***And the changing of the winds*** (***2:164***).

It refers to the changes in directions of the wind, because of various natural factors, the most important of them being the sun's rays. The sun raises the temperature of the air, making it lighter and less dense. This lighter air is unable to carry the load of the surrounding air which is cooler and heavier. Therefore, the heavier air glides down, forcibly displacing the lighter one. The lighter air travels in a direction opposite to that of the heavier one. And the resulting current is called wind. The wind helps in pollination of trees, shrubs and flowers, removes atmospheric pollutions, carries rain clouds from one place to another, besides rendering many other services. Blowing of wind is a most important factor in the genesis and life of vegetable, animal and man.

Wind, by itself, proves that there is a Creator God; by its inter-woven relation with other terrestrial and extra-terrestrial phenomena, proves that there is only one Creator for the whole universe; and by being a very important factor for the genesis and life of man, proves that the God of man and the God of the universe is one and the same.

Qur'an: ...***And the clouds made subservient between the heaven and the earth*** (***2:164***).

as-Sahab (**اَلسَّحَاب**) is condensed watery vapour floating in air at some distance; it is the source of rain.

As long as the steam remains on or near the earth, it is called *ad-dabab* (اَلضَّبَّاب = fog; mist); when it leaves the earth and floats in the air at a distance, it is called *as-sahab, al-ghaym* (اَلغَيْم) and *al-ghamam* (اَلغَمَام), etc., all having the same meaning: cloud. *at-Taskhir* (التَّسْخِيْر = to subjugate a thing, to make it subservient in its activities). The cloud is made subservient, in its flow and rain, to the winds and atmospheric temperature and other relevant factors, by the permission of Allah.

The cloud is a sign of Allah in the same way as other things mentioned with it.

The alternation of the day and the night, the rain coming down from the clouds, the blowing of wind and the subservient clouds are the main natural phenomena, which together make up the system of creation in the terrestrial world, like the vegetable, the animal and the man. This verse may therefore be taken to be a detail of the general statement contained in the verse:

***"...And He blessed therein and made therein its foods, in four periods: alike for the seekers"* (*41:10*).**

Qur'an: ***There are signs for a people who understand* (*2:164*).**

al-'Aql (اَلعَقْل) is *masdar* of *'aqala, ya'qilu* (عَقَلَ، يَعْقِل = he understood, he understands). It denotes perfect comprehension and understanding. *al-'Aql is* that by which man differentiates between good and bad, distinguishes fact from fiction, and discerns truth and falsehood. It is the self same man who perceives; it is not one of his faculties and characteristics which are like branches of the soul, for example, the memory, and the eye-sight, etc.

Verse 165

Qur'an: ***And there are some among men who take for them-selves equals* (*i.e.,*** objects of worship) ***besides Allah* (*2:165*).**

an-Nidd (اَلنِّد) is on the paradigm of *al-mithl* (اَلمِثْل) and has the same meaning: equal, alike, etc. In some other verses Allah has used a slightly different phrase; for example:

***"Therefore do not set up equals to Allah"* (*2:22*).**

***"And they set up equals with Allah"* (*14:30*).**

The style has been changed here to "besides Allah" because it is preceded by the exclusive statement: "And your God is one God! there is no god but He;..." Thus anyone taking any object of worship besides Allah would violate that exclusiveness without any justification; he would take as god something which, he is well aware, is not god; he would do so just in pursuit of his base desire, and in complete disregard to the decree of his reason. That is why Allah has used the word "equals" as common noun, to show their degradation: "And there are some among men who take for themselves equals besides Allah."

Qur'an: ...***Whom they love as the love for Allah, and those who believe are stronger in*** **(their)** ***love for Allah...*** **(*2:165*).**

The word used is *yuhibbunahum* (يحِبونَهم = they love them); the objective pronoun used here is reserved for rational beings. It means that the word "equals" does not refer to idols only, it includes also the angels and those men who were worshipped besides Allah. Rather, it covers all those who were obeyed by people without any authority from Allah. This interpretation gets support from the verse following it:

"When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed **(them)*" (2:166).***

Also, Allah says:

"...And **(that)** ***some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah"*** **(*3:64*).**

"They have taken their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allah" **(*9:31*).**

The verse shows that love may be attributed to Allah in reality, contrary to the claims of those who say that love, being a branch of the faculty of desire, is related in reality to the body and the matters concerning the body only; and cannot be attributed as such to Allah. According to them, love of God means obedience to Him, doing what He commands us to do and refraining from what He forbids; thus love may be attributed to Allah only in a metaphorical sense, as Allah says:

"Say: 'If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your sins'" **(*3:31*).**

But the verse under discussion goes against their claim. The phrase "stronger in (their) love for Allah", shows that love of Allah may vary in intensity; it is stronger in the believers than in those who take others as equals to Allah. On the other hand, if love is taken to mean obedience, the meaning would be: "and those who believe are more obedient to Allah". Obviously, there could be no question here of any comparative degree of obedience, because the obedience of others is no obedience at all in the eyes of Allah. Therefore, "love" here has been used in its real, not metaphorical, sense.

It is supported also by the verse which says:

"Say: 'If your fathers and your sons and your brethren and your mates and your kinsfolk and property which you have acquired, and the trade slackness of which you fear and dwellings which you like, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His way'..." **(*9:24*).**

The word translated here as 'dearer' is *ahabb* (أَحَب = more loved). Evidently the love ascribed to Allah, and that ascribed to His Messenger, and the love attributed to the fathers, the sons, and the property, etc., is all of the same quiddity, all of it has the same reality. Otherwise, the phrase 'dearer to you' could not be used. The comparative degree signifies that both sides – the preferred one and the preferred against – share in the basic quality, although they differ in its degree, one being stronger, the other weaker.

The verse condemns those who take others as equals to Allah, saying: "whom they love as the love for Allah"; then it praises the believers, saying that they, "are stronger in (their) love for Allah." This comparison between the two groups apparently shows that the former has been condemned because they have divided their love between Allah and those whom they have taken as equals to Allah. There was possibility of a misunderstanding that if they had loved Allah more, they would not have been blamed. But the next sentences leave no room for such erroneous surmises. "O that those who are unjust could see when they see the chastisement that the power is wholly Allah's... When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed (them), and they see the chastisement and their ties are cut asunder... Thus will Allah show them their deeds to be intense regret to them..."

These verses make it clear that they have been condemned not because of the love, *per se,* but because of its concomitant, that is, following. They followed false deities thinking that those deities had power which would help the followers to fulfil their desires or to ward off some undesirable situation. Thus, they discarded the truth either wholly or in some aspects – and the one who follows Allah in some aspects only, is not a follower at all. Thus, there is no room for the above-mentioned misunderstanding. It is now clear that man should not take any partner for Allah in this love, otherwise, it will be polytheism. However, when the love for Allah becomes stronger, the lover does not follow anyone other than Allah; he exclusively obeys the commands of Allah. That is why the believers have been praised that they "are stronger in (their) love for Allah".

Now we know that the love has been praised and condemned because of its concomitant, that is, following and obedience. If a man loves someone other than Allah in obedience to the commands of Allah, when that someone calls to the obedience of Allah only, then such a love cannot be censured at all. As Allah says:

"Say: 'If your fathers and your sons... are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger'..." (***9:24***).

This verse assigns to the Messenger (S) a love as it assigns it to Allah Himself; it is so because love of the Messenger of Allah (S) is one with the love of Allah. Why? Because the effect of this love, that is, following of the Messenger (S) is exactly the obedience of Allah. Allah Himself calls to the obedience of His Messenger, as He says:

"And We did not send any messenger but that he should be obeyed by Allah's permission" (***4:64***).

"Say: 'If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you'" (***3:31***).

In the same category comes the love of any one whose obedience leads to the obedience of Allah, for example, a religious scholar who guides people by his knowledge, a sign that points to Allah, the Qur'an which brings the reciter nearer to Allah, and things like that. All these are loved because of the love of Allah, and by following them one obeys Allah and comes nearer to Him.

In short, whoever loves any one besides Allah, thinking that he has a power, and follows him in order to

fulfil some of his needs, or obeys him in a matter which Allah has not allowed, then he has indeed taken other objects of worship besides Allah, and surely Allah will show them their deeds to be intense regret to them. On the other hand, the believers are those who love nothing except Allah, do not seek power except from Allah, and do not follow except that which is from the commands and prohibitions of Allah. They are those who are sincere to Allah in religion.

Also, it is clear that the love of those whose love is Allah's love, and whose obedience Allah's obedience (like the Prophet and his progeny; the divine scholars, the Book of Allah and the traditions of His Prophet; in short, every thing that leads one to Allah's remembrance in a sincere way) is diametrically opposed to polytheism. Indeed, one proceeds nearer to Allah by loving and following the above-mentioned personalities and things. To honour and respect them is a part of piety, and love and fear of Allah. As Allah says:

"And whoever respects the signs of Allah, this surely is (the outcome) ***of the piety of hearts"*** (***22:32***).

ash-Sha'a'ir (الشَّعَآئِر) means the signs that lead or point to something; the phrase, 'the signs of Allah' is general, not restricted to any particular thing like the Safa and the Marwah, etc. It means that one must respect every sign of Allah, every divinely approved symbol which reminds one of Allah; because it is an outcome of piety, a reflection of the love and fear of Allah. And this principle applies to all the signs which lead one to piety.

Of course, it is clear as day that one should not think that those signs and symbols are in any way independent of Allah, or that they control for themselves or for others any harm or profit, or that they have any independent authority over their own or others' life, death or resurrection. Evidently, if one had such a belief, then these things would not remain signs of Allah, they would become equals of Allah – and it would be *ash-shirk* (الشِّرْك = ascribing partners to Allah); may He protect you from such polytheism.

Qur'an: ***O that those who are unjust could see, when they see the chastisement, that the power is wholly Allah's and that Allah is severe in chastisement*** (***2:165***).

Apparently, "when they see the chastisement" is the object of the verb, "could see"; and "that the power is wholly Allah's and that Allah is severe in chastisement" are the explanatory phrases describing "the chastisement" (in the phrase "when they see the chastisement". *Wa-law* (وَلَوْ = would that; O that; if only; I wish) is an optative particle, used to express wish. The verse therefore means: Would that those who are unjust could see in this world the day when they would see the chastisement; then they would see that the power belongs wholly to Allah, and that they had committed the greatest blunder when they ascribed some of that power to their false deities, and that Allah is severe in chastisement and in punishing those who are guilty of this unforgiveable sin.

As the next verses show, the chastisement would contain of their seeing their blunder in taking other

objects of worship besides Allah, and in their wrong assumption that those objects had any power, and then seeing the punishment of their polytheism and misdeed. The next two verses support this interpretation: “When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed (them).” The followers will not get any hoped-for benefit from their leaders; “and they see the chastisement and their ties are cut asunder”.

Nothing shall have any power or effect besides Allah. “And those who followed shall say: ‘O were there for us a return:’” they shall ardently wish to return to this world. “then we would renounce” these objects of worship whom we took as equals to Allah, and whom we followed, in this world, “as they have renounced us” in the next world. “Thus will Allah show” those who were unjust and took others as equals to Allah, “their deeds” (i.e., their love and obedience to those leaders whom they took as equals to Allah) “to be intense regret to them, and they shall not come forth from the fire”.

Verse 167

Qur’an: ***...and they shall not come forth from the fire (2:167).***

It is a proof against those who say that the chastisement of the fire shall one day come to an end.

Traditions

Shurayh ibn Hani said: “A Bedouin went on the day of the Camel to the Leader of the faithful (Imam ‘Ali, a.s.) and said: ‘O Leader of the faithful! Do you say that Allah is one?’” (Shurayh) said: “Then the people bore down on him and said: ‘O Arab! Don’t you see how preoccupied the Leader of the faithful is?’ But the Leader of the faithful said: ‘Let him be. Because what (this) Bedouin wants (i.e., gnosis of Allah) is the very thing which we want from these people (i.e., the enemies): Then he (Imam Ali, (‘a)) said: ‘O Arab! The sentence, “Allah is one”, may be interpreted in four ways, two of them are not permissible for Allah and two are allowed. The two meanings which are not permissible for Allah are:

(1) The saying of a sayer “one”, when he uses it as a number: It is not permissible, because that which has no second (i.e., is unique) does not come within the domain of number. Do you not see that (Allah) has declared him an unbeliever who said that God was the third of the three?

(2) And the saying of a sayer that “He is one of the people”, in the same sense as a species is one of (its) genes.

This (also) is not allowed because it likens Allah (to other things), and our Lord is too great for, and far above of, this (likening). And as for the two meanings which are applicable to Him, they are:

(1) The saying of a sayer, “He is one, there is nothing like unto Him”; such (indeed) is our Lord.

(2) And the saying of a sayer that, He, the Mighty, the Great, is unique in significance, that is, He is not

divisible – neither in existence, nor in thought or imagination; such (indeed) is our Lord.'"[2]

The author says: The two meanings confirmed by him (Imam 'Ali ('a)) conform with what we have written in the explanation of the verse:

***"And your God is one God..."* (*2:163*).**

The lectures narrated from Imam 'Ali ('a), Imam ar-Ridha'('a) and other Imams of the *Ahl Al-Bayt* ('a) repeatedly say that 'He is one not by number'. It refers to His pristine person which does not accept counting.

There is in a prayer of *as-Sahifah as-Sajjadiyyah,* the sentence, "Thine is the oneness of number". It is interpreted as to refer to "ownership", that is, 'Thou art the owner of the oneness of number'; it does not meant that 'Thou art one in number', because reason as well as the Qur'an and the traditions firmly prove that His existence is Unique and pure, it is not duplicable nor can it be repeated – according to His person and reality.

Imam al-Baqir ('a) said in a tradition, *inter alia,* about the words of Allah,

***"And there are some among men who take for them-selves equals besides Allah..."* (*2:165*).**

"O Jabir! They are, by Allah!, the leaders of the unjust ones and their followers"[3]. In the last-named book the wording is: "O Jabir! By Allah! They are the leaders of the injustice and their followers."

The author says: Its meaning is clear in the light of the explanation given above. Why did the Imam refer to them as "the leaders of injustice"? It is because Allah has said:

***"O that those who are unjust could see..."* (*2:165*).**

Thus, the followers who took for themselves equals besides Allah were "unjust"; therefore, their leaders must be "the leaders of the unjust ones" and "the leaders of injustice".

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said about the words of Allah,

***"Thus will Allah show them their deeds to be intense regret to them..."* (*2:167*).**

"He is a man who leaves (untouched) his wealth and because of avarice does not spend it in the obedience of Allah; then he dies and leaves it to someone who uses it in the obedience of Allah, or in His disobedience. If he (the heir) used it in the obedience of Allah, (the legator) shall see it in the "balance" of another man, and he shall look at it in intense regret, as the wealth had (originally) belonged to him. And if he (the heir) used it in disobedience of Allah, then it was he (the legator) who strengthened him with that wealth so that he used it in the disobedience of Allah."[4]

The author says: This meaning has been narrated by al-'Ayyashi, as-Saduq, al-Mufid and at-Tabrasi,

from Imam al-Baqir (‘a) and Imam as-Sadiq (‘a). It has used the word, equals, in a wider sense; and as we have explained earlier, this expanded meaning is without any doubt, quite in place.

A Philosophical Discourse On Love

Love is one of our emotional feelings; we apply it for the love of food, love of women, love of wealth, love of honour and love of knowledge. We have no doubt that we have these five loves. Also, there is no doubt that when we use the word, love, in the above contexts, we intend the same meaning everywhere; and not only the word, but the meaning also is the same in all the five phrases. At the same time, we know that these contexts are different. The question is: Is this a difference of categories, or of some other type?

Let us look at the love of food. We love an edible thing, like a fruit, because it is related to the activity of our faculty of nutrition. If there were no such faculty, if there were not that nourishment which perfects our body, we would not have loved that fruit, and there would have been no such love. Therefore, the love exists, in reality, between the faculty of nutrition and its activity, on one side, and the satisfaction which that faculty gets from that activity, on the other side. When we say, “satisfaction”, we do not mean the satisfying taste which one feels when eating – because the sense of taste is a functionary of the faculty of nutrition, and not the faculty itself. We actually mean that particular pleasure which the faculty gets from its activity.

Likewise, if we look at the love of women, we find that that love is related in reality and primarily to cohabitation, and only secondarily to the women, as its concomitant – in the same way as the love of food was related to a particular food just secondarily and only as a concomitant. Cohabitation is the effect of a faculty given to animals, in the same way as eating food is the effect of a faculty given to them. Evidently, these two loves belong to the same root, that is, a subsistent relationship between these two faculties and their activities – in other words their active perfection.

At this stage, it might possibly be thought that love was an attachment exclusively reserved for the above two faculties, that it was not found in other contexts. But experiment (through various effects) removes this misunderstanding. This attachment, known as love, has an effect on the lover. The lover moves towards the object of his/its love, and yearns for the loved action if he/it is separated from it, and does not like to leave it, after he/it has found it. This particular effect of love is found in all our powers of conception and their actions.

All our powers and faculties like eye-sight, hearing, memory and imagination – in short all our internal and external senses – have this very effect, this very attribute, no matter whether they are acting or reacting. Each of these faculties loves its activity and is attracted to it. And it is only because its activity is its perfection, makes up its deficiency, and fulfils its natural need. In this way, we know the significance of the love of wealth, love of power and love of knowledge. Man seeks his perfection through his wealth, honour and knowledge.

It may be inferred from it that love is a special emotional attachment, a particular conscious attraction between man and his perfection. Detailed researches have shown that it is found in animals too. And it is because the lover acts upon, and reacts to, his loved activity; then that love extends to the things related to that activity, as the love of eating was extended to that of fruit. This principle would apply also to other things besides animals, provided they could consciously seek or bestow perfection.

From another point of view, as love is a subsistent relation–ship between the lover and the loved, there exists a positive connection between them. Now, if an effect (which has the relation of love with its cause) is a conscious being and has got sense and feeling, it would find that love within its soul – if it has a soul and independent existence.

The above discourse leads us to the following conclusions:

First: Love is a subsistent relationship, a special attraction between perfecting cause (or things like that) and perfection–seeking effect (or things like that). That is why we love our actions, because through them we seek perfection. And as its extension, we love the things related to our activities; for example, food which we take, mate with whom we cohabit, wealth which we use, honour from which we gain benefit, a benefactor who bestows something on us, a teacher who teaches us, a leader who guides us, a helper who helps us, a student who learns from us, a servant who serves us, a follower who obeys and follows us. All these are various manifestations of love, some of them are physical, some imaginary and some others intellectual.

Second: Love has different degrees of strength and weakness, because it is a subsistent attraction, an existing attachment – and there are such degrees even in existence itself. Obviously, the attachment between a sufficient cause and its effect cannot be like the one existing between an insufficient cause and its effect. Also, the perfection (because of which the attachment of love comes into being) is itself of various categories, some of it essential, some others inessential, some of it material (like nourishment), others immaterial (like knowledge). It shows the invalidity of the theory which says that love is exclusively reserved for material things. (Some of them said that love was basically related to food only, and other loves issued forth from it; some others gave that central place to the love of sexual intercourse; according to them all other loves branched out from it.)

Third: Allah deserves to be loved – from whatever angle you look at it. Allah is Self–subsistent, exists by Himself; His perfection is limitless while all other perfections are but limited. A limited thing attaches itself to the limitless one in existence. This attachment, this love, is a part of existence, a part of personality; it can never diminish or go away. Moreover, Allah has created us, and bestows on us countless and limitless favours; that is why we love Him, as every bestower of bounties is loved for his favours.

Fourth: As mentioned in the beginning, love is subsistent and existing relationship. Such relations are not separate from the very existence of their subjects. It follows that everything loves its own person. Also, it was mentioned that by its extension, we love the things related to the loved – therefore,

everything loves the effects of its own existence. It is clear from the above that Allah loves His creation because of His love of His Own Self; and He loves His creation because they are recipients of His favours; and He loves His creation because they accept His guidance.

Fifth: We said earlier that sense, consciousness and knowledge are concomitants of love. But it is necessary in practice only, Otherwise, the subsistent attachment – which is the reality of love – does not depend, *per se,* on these factors. It appears from this that even the natural powers and faculties – which have no sense or feeling – love their own actions and effects.

Sixth: It follows that love is a reality which permeates all the existing things.

Another Philosophical Discourse On Perpetuity Of Punishment

The question arises: Will the chastisement of the Hell come to its end at some time, or will it continue endlessly? Both theories have their adherents and both groups support their views with intellectual reasoning and apparent meanings of the Qur'an and traditions.

As for the Qur'an, it unambiguously declares that many groups shall abide for ever – endlessly and perpetually – in the Hell. As Allah says:

"And they shall not come forth from the fire" (***2:167***).

And nearly *mutawatir* traditions narrated from the Imams of the *Ahl Al-Bayt* ('a) clearly say the same thing. Of course, there are some traditions emanating from other sources which support the view that the chastisement will end. But these traditions must be rejected outright because they are against the clear declarations of the Qur'an.

Now, we come to intellectual reasons. As we said under the verse:

"And be on your guard against the day when one soul shall not avail another…" (***2:48***).

It is not possible to explain the details concerning the Resurrection and the Judgment with the help of intellectual deductions, because our reason lacks the premises necessary to lead to a conclusion. The only way is to believe in what the Truthful Prophet (S) has brought to us through Divine Revelation – because his truth has been proved without any doubt.

As for the spiritual bliss and chastisement, they happen to the immaterial soul as it acquires good or bad characteristics and traits and is thus wrapped in beautiful or ugly conditions. We have mentioned there[5]* that these conditions and characteristics appear to the psyche in their respective good or ugly shapes, and the psyche enjoys the beautiful and good shapes, if it is itself good; and is tormented by what is bad and ugly, whether it is itself good or bad.

If these resulting shapes are not deeply imprinted on the psyche, and are not agreeable to its person,

they are bound to disappear sooner or later, because their appearance is a matter of constraint; and we know that constraint does not continue for ever. Suppose there is a true believer who has committed some sins. This man is good and happy in his person, but his psyche has been polluted by, and wrapped in, ugly unhappy shapes. Obviously, this ugly shape, not being deeply imprinted will certainly get removed.

But if these ugly shapes have been deeply imprinted on the psyche, then it reshapes the psyche in its own mould. The soul acquires a new shape and becomes almost a new species. Suppose there is a "niggard man"; now niggardliness gives a new form to his humanity, in the same way as "rationality" gives a new form to "animality", and "rational animal" (i.e., man) becomes a new species under the genes, "animal". Likewise, "niggard man" becomes a new species under the genes "man". This species has an eternal existence of its own. The man, before the characteristics of niggardliness were firmly ingrained in his psyche, did practise niggardliness under constraint and felt unhappy. But now he does it, by permission of Allah, naturally without any constraint. And as it is done by this new species without constraint, it is eternal, endless and perpetual – contrary to the former condition when it was done under constraint and could therefore be got rid of. This man gets punished because of the concomitants of his characteristics and traits.

We may compare his case with that of a man suffering from chronic melancholia or hallucination. His mind perceives frightening nightmares and he is always tortured by it – although it is he himself who produces these fantasies without any extraneous constraint or compulsion. The pictures appearing in his mind are not agreeable to his sick psyche, and he is tortured by it, although it is he himself who has created them. Yet, as we know, he suffers because of it. What is punishment? It is that from which man runs away (if not inflicted by it yet) and longs to extricate himself (if already suffering from it). And this definition applies to the ugly shapes and frightening conditions which an "unhappy" man suffers in his next abode. It proves that the chastisement of the next world is perpetual and never-ending – for a man whose unhappiness has become an integral part of his personality.

Many objections have been raised against perpetuity of chastisement, all of them clearly without a leg to stand upon:

First Objection: Allah's mercy is limitless, all-encompassing. How can He, in His mercy, create someone whose destination would be a perpetual chastisement which no one could bear?

Second Objection: Punishment is punishment when it is not agreeable to the nature of the convicted person. In other words when it is a compulsion, a constraint. And perpetual constraint is unthinkable. Therefore, it is wrong to say that there would be perpetual punishment.

Third Objection: The man had committed sins which were not perpetual; they came to their end after a short or long duration. How can he be requited with a perpetual never-ending punishment?

Fourth Objection: Even the evil-doers serve the system of creation no less than the good-doers. If

they were not there, the virtue of good people could not come about. This being the case, why should they be thrown into perpetual punishment?

Fifth Objection: It is a revenge to punish someone who disobeys the commandments of Allah. As a rule, revenge is taken be-cause the unjust and disobedient person makes the wronged party suffer some loss; and that party, if powerful enough, avenges itself to make up that loss. But this rule cannot apply to Allah, because He is Self-sufficient and nobody can inflict any harm or loss upon Him. In this background, how can He punish anyone - and especially with a perpetual punishment?

There are other similar objections against the perpetuity of punishment. If you ponder on what we have written earlier explaining the meaning of the perpetuity of punishment, you will realize that these objections are completely wide of mark:

General Reply: Perpetual punishment is the effect of the form of infelicity and unhappiness when it becomes an inseparable characteristic of the "unhappy" man. It happens after the man acquires full capability for it - through relevant conditions of the psyche - and exercises his free choice by choosing evil, instead of good. That capability creates in the psyche the shape commensurate with it. We do not ask why a man does human actions, once the matter has acquired the human form - because the human form itself is sufficient cause of human activities. Likewise, we cannot ask why the effects of the inseparable unhappiness and infelicity (including perpetual punishment) are appearing, after the psyche has acquired the form of inseparable unhappiness and infelicity. Because it is its inseparable characteristic and effect. This general reply sufficiently refutes all the objections. Now let us look at each objection separately:

Reply to the First Objection: When we say "mercy of Allah" we do not refer to any softness of heart, mildness of temper or other such psychological effects, because such mercy presupposes material existence, and Allah is far above such insinuations. Divine Mercy means bestowing on the recipient all things which he is fully qualified for. A fully qualified person longs for the things he is qualified for; and his qualification itself becomes a constant demand for it as if it had a tongue of its own. And Allah gives him what he thus demands and asks for. His Mercy is of two kinds: general and particular. The general mercy gives whatever a person is qualified for in the framework of existence. The particular mercy bestows whatever a person is qualified for in the highway that leads towards monotheism and bliss of Allah's Nearness.

When Allah gives the form of inseparable "unhappiness" to a person who is fully qualified for it, it is not against the general mercy; it is rather a part of that mercy. And perpetual punishment is a compulsory result of that form. As for the particular mercy, it does not cover the person who is not proceeding on the highway of guidance. Now let us look at the claim that perpetual punishment is against the Divine Mercy. If by "mercy" they refer to the general mercy, then surely it is not against it - it is rather a part of the general mercy. And if they mean the particular mercy, then the claim is untenable, because this case is out of the jurisdiction of the particular mercy.

Moreover, this objection, if sustainable, could also be laid against intermittent punishment. Nay, it would invalidate punishments of this world too.

Reply to the Second Objection: First we should decide why a thing is disagreeable to the nature. A thing or condition may be disagreeable to a man because there is no common factor between the man and that thing or condition. This indeed is a constraint, and it happens because of compulsion by an extraneous agent; and goes away as soon as that constraint is removed.

There is, on the other hand, an action or condition which emanates from the very nature of the man, when that nature is thoroughly polluted, when it is moulded in ugly mould and ac–quires a shape other than the original one. Man, in that existence, demands terrifying punishment; his transformed psyche, by its very nature, longs for chastisement – although at the same time he does not like it. We have earlier given the example of the man suffering from melancholia: Doubtlessly, the terrifying pictures emanating from his mind are "agreeable" to his psyche, because they are the products of that distorted psyche itself, and such effects are surely agreeable to the related psyche or nature. But at the same time, they are indeed torture and punishment, because the definition of "punishment" applies thereto. In short, the eternal punishment is disagreeable from the viewpoint of sensitivity, and at the same time it is agreeable because it emanates from the psyche itself.

Reply to the Third Objection: The punishment is not the result of the sin and disobedience which were limited and came to an end. It is the effect of the perpetual ugly shape to which the man's psyche was moulded as a result of those limited and counted sins. There is no question here of a limited cause bringing about an unlimited effect – which, of course, is impossible. As an example, look at the man himself; there were a lot of limited causes which ultimately moulded the matter into human form; now he acts and reacts as a human being, because of that human form. And that humanity continues for ever, even after his death. We cannot ask about this man, as to how did a set of limited causes bring into being those unlimited and unending effects – because their efficient cause exists with them for ever. Likewise, it cannot be asked how can a set of limited sins bring about perpetual limitless chastisement.

Reply to the Fourth Objection: Service and worship, like mercy, is of two kinds: general and particular. General service is to submit to the Source of existence, that is, God, in the affairs and conditions of existence. Particular service is to submit to God and obey Him, in the path that leads to monotheism. Each type of service and obedience has a reward of its own, a mercy most suitable to it. Obviously, the general service in the system of creation is rewarded by general mercy – and as explained earlier, eternal bliss and eternal chastisement both are parts of that mercy. And the particular service is rewarded by the particular mercy, that is, bounties of the Paradise.

Moreover, if this objection is recognized as valid, then it would also negate the limited chastisement of the Hell and even punishments of this world too.

Reply to the Fifth Objection: As you have seen, the perpetual chastisement is ascribed to the shape of

unhappiness acquired by man; and to Allah in the sense in which every existing thing is attributed to Him. That punishment is not attributed to Him in the meaning of revenge and satisfaction of the feeling of rage and anger, because such thing is impossible for Allah.

Of course, one of the names used for Allah is “the Avenger”. But it is used in the sense that Allah requites severely His servant when he (the servant) transgresses the limits of servitude and crosses the boundary of obedience going into that of revolt and disobedience. “Revenge” in this meaning is not impossible for Allah; and the perpetual punishment may be called “revenge” in this sense, without any difficulty.

Moreover, this objection, if tenable, may be laid against terminable punishment also; and even against the worldly punishments.

A Qur’anic Note On The Above Subject

It should be noted here that this method of argument, which we have used against the above-mentioned objections, has been used also in the Qur’an and traditions. Allah says:

“Whoever desires this present life, We hasten to him therein what We please for whomsoever We desire, then We assign to him the hell; he shall enter it despised, driven away” (***17:18***).

“And whoever desires the hereafter and strives for it as he ought to strive and he is a believer; (**as for**) ***these, their striving shall be thanked”*** (***17:19***).

“All do we aid - these as well as those - out of the bounty of your Lord, and the bounty of your Lord is not confined” (***17:20***).

As you see, the verses count both chastisement and good recompense as parts of the bounty and mercy of Allah; and it is made clear that whatever happens, it is related to the will, desire and striving of the servant himself. It is this very method that we have used in explaining the main topic and replying to the objections. There are many other verses of this connotation; and we shall write on them in their proper places, Allah willing.

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1. A light year is equal to 5,880,000 million miles. With tremendous advance in astronomy, it is now more usual to reckon distances in the parsec, which is equal to 3.258 light years, or 19,150,000 million miles. (tr.).
2. al-Khisal; at-Tawhid; Ma’ani ‘l-akhbar.
3. al-Kafi; al-Ikhtisas; al-’Ayyashi.
4. al-Kafi.
5. See al-Mizan (Eng. transl.), vol.1, pp.261-2. (tr.).

SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 168 - 171

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاس كلواْ مِمَّا فِى ٱلأَر۟ضِ حَلَـٰلاً۟ طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعواْ خطوَٰ۟تِ ٱلشَّيطَـٰنِ۟ إِنَّه ۥ لَكم۟ عَدوٌّ۟ مّبِينٌ

O men! eat the lawful **(and)** ***good things out of what is in the earth, and do not follow the footsteps of the Satan, surely he is your open enemy*** **(*2:168*).**

إِنَّمَا يَأ۟مركم بِٱلسّوٓءِ وَٱلفَحشَآءِ وَأَن تَقولواْ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعلَمونَ

He only enjoins you evil and indecency, and that you may speak against Allah what you do not know **(*2:169*).**

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهم ٱتَّبِعواْ مَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّه قَالواْ بَل۟ نَتَّبِع مَآ أَلفَينَا عَلَيهِ ءَابَآءَنَآ أَوَلَو۟ كَانَ ءَابَآؤهم۟ لَا يَعقِلونَ شَيـًٔا وَلَا يَهتَدونَ

And when it is said to them: "Follow what Allah has revealed," they say: "Nay! we follow what we found our fathers upon." What! and though their fathers had no sense at all, nor did they follow the right way **(*2:170*).**

وَمَثَل ٱلَّذِينَ كفَرواْ كَمَثَلِ ٱلَّذِى يَنعِق بِمَا لَا يَسمَع إِلَّا دعَآءً۟ وَنِدَآءً۟ ۚ صمّ۟ بكمٌ عمىٌ۟ فَهم۟ لَا يَعقِلونَ

And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who calls out to that which hears no more than a call and cry; deaf, dumb **(and)** ***blind, so they do not understand*** **(*2:171*).**

Commentary

Verses 168 - 169

Qur'an: ***O men! Eat the lawful*** **(and)** ***good things out of what is in the earth…*** **(*2:168*).**

Qur'an: ***…What you do not know*** **(*2:169*).**

al-Halal (**اَلحَلَال** = lawful) is opposite of *al-haram* (**اَلحَرَام** = forbidden); *al-hill* (اَلحِل) is used as opposite of *al-hurmah* (**اَلحرْمَة** = prohibition), *al-haram* (**اَلحَرَم** = sanctuary); while *al-hall* (**اَلحَل** = to untie) is opposite of *al-'aqd* (**العَقْد** = to tie). All these usages of *al-hill* allude to freedom of a thing in its action and effect.

at-Tayyib (الطَّيِّب = good) is opposite of *al-khabith* (الخَبِيْث = bad, evil), and basically means "agreeable"; a good speech is that which is agreeable to the hearing; a good perfume is agreeable to the sense of smelling; a good place or house is agreeable to the people residing therein. *al-Khutuwat* (الخطوَات) is plural of *al-khutwah* (الخطْوَة = step, pace, stride). Some reciters have read it as *al-khatawat* (الخَطَوَات) which is plural of *al-khatwah* (الخَطْوَة = one step). The phrase, "the footsteps of the Satan" refers to things leading to the Satanic aim, as footsteps lead to the walker's aim and destination. The Satan's aim is to mislead with polytheism; therefore, his footsteps are the things which lead to polytheism, and take the walker away from Allah.

al-Amr (اَلأمْر = to enjoin); the enjoiner imposes his own will on the enjoined, so that the latter does what the former wants. The Satan enjoins and orders by devilish insinuations and temptations encouraging man to do what the Satan wants. *as-Su'* (اَلسوء = evil) refers to the thing or action which is repugnant and repulsive to society. When it exceeds that limit, it becomes *al-fahsha'* (الفَحْشَآء = indecency); it is *a masdar* like *as-sarra'* (السَّرَّآء = prosperity; happiness) and *ad-Darra'* (الضَّرَّآء = adversity; distress).

Allah has addressed these verses to all the men in general, because the order promulgated therein concerns all. As for the polytheists, they followed some self-imposed taboo, and falsely ascribed its promulgation to Allah. It is reported, for example, that the tribes of Thaqif, Khuza'ah, Banu 'Amir ibn Sa'sa'ah and Banu Madlaj had forbidden themselves certain things of tilth and cattle, as well as some categories of camels, forging a lie against Allah. Similar baseless taboos are found in other countries and societies too.

Coming to the believers, there was a possibility that even after accepting Islam, some myths and superstitions might continue in their society, because of hereditary influence and national tradition. As a matter of fact, every new spiritual or temporal system concentrates in the beginning on eradicating and destroying the roots of the old system. After it is done, and if by that time it is left with some vitality and vigour - by good training and learning - then it starts mopping up operation by obliterating and erasing the remnants of that old system. Otherwise, the residue of that system is mixed with the new one, and the resulting mixture becomes a hybrid - neither this nor that.

Allah ordered the people to eat from what is in the earth. To eat is to swallow after chewing. Sometimes the word "eating" is allegorically used for general usufruct of a property, for unrestricted right of its disposal, because eating is the basic activity of man, the main pillar of his life. For example, Allah says:

"...Do not swallow up your property among yourselves by wrongful means, except that it be trading by your mutual consent..." (***4:29***).

The verse under discussion may easily be interpreted in this wider sense, because it is general, not restricted. It would therefore mean: Eat, make use of, and enjoy the usufruct of the bounties of Allah that are in the earth, and which the earth has prepared and kept in store for you by permission of Allah; and it should be in a lawful and proper way. But you should see that there is no snag or hindrance in eating or

using it, either from your own nature or from the nature of the earth. For example, there are some things which by their nature cannot be eaten; there are others which man by his nature does not want to eat; and lastly there are things which are eatable and useable, but your own nature rejects them and does not want to touch them at all, for example, a food that was obtained by unlawful means.

Thus, the words of Allah, "eat the lawful (and) good things out of what is in the earth", promulgate general permission of eating all the lawful and good things of the earth, without any condition, without any restriction. But the next sentence, "and do not follow the footsteps of the Satan", shows that there are some things (related to this lawful and good eating) which are called "the footsteps of the Satan". They are of two categories: either refraining from some food as a result of following the Satan, or eating it for the same reason. Thereafter, Allah mentions a general principle applicable to all that is done for following the Satan, that it is evil and indecency, as well as speaking against Allah what one does not know. Desisting from a food is not allowed except when Allah is pleased with such abstaining; likewise, one should not audaciously use any thing without the permission of Allah. Eating out of what is in the earth is not lawful and good unless Allah permits and allows it. And He has allowed it in this and similar verses. Also, one should ascertain that a particular thing is not forbidden or prohibited by Allah, as He says after a few verses:

"He has only forbidden you what dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine…" (***2:173***).

The meaning of the verse then would be as follows, and Allah knows better: Eat out of what is in the earth, from the bounties of Allah which He has created for you, as He has made them lawful and good for you; and do not leave some of them abstaining from them, because that would be evil and indecency, and you would be guilty of speaking against Allah what you do not know; it would be tantamount to making your own law against the law of Allah; and you would thus be following the footsteps of the Satan.

The verse thus shows that:

First: Man has been given a general permission for unrestricted use of all that is in the earth – except the things excluded from this general rule by other proofs. Allah may forbid a thing as easily as He permits it.

Second: One who abstains, without any reasonable proof, from that which Allah has made lawful, in fact promulgates his own law – which he is forbidden to do.

Third: Following the footsteps of the Satan means worshipping Allah in a way Allah has not allowed, by a method He has not approved. Allah has not forbidden any walking except that in which man puts his foot in the footsteps of the Satan, making his walk conform with that of the Satan; thus he would be following the Satan's footsteps.

It may be inferred from above that, although the reason given of this prohibition

(***He only enjoins you evil and indecency…***) (***2: 169***)

demands that man should neither proceed to do any thing without knowledge, nor refrain from any thing without knowledge; but this is not what this verse is meant for; because it is not following the footsteps of the Satan, though it is following the Satan.

Qur'an: ***He only enjoins you evil and indecency, and that you may speak against Allah what you do not know*** (***2: 169***)***.***

Evil and indecency are attributes of action, *vis–à–vis,* speech. It shows that what the Satan enjoins is confined to the action that is evil and indecency, and the word that is spoken without knowledge.

Verse 170

Qur'an: ***And when it is said to them, "Follow what Allah has revealed," they say: "Nay! we follow what we found our fathers upon"*** (***2: 170***)***.***

al–Ilfa' (اَلإِلْفَآء = to find). The verse supports what we have inferred from the preceding verse, regarding the footsteps of the Satan.

Qur'an: ***What! And though their fathers had no sense at all, nor did they follow the right way*** (***2: 170***)***.***

It is rebuttal of their saying; it shows that they speak without knowledge and without ascertaining the truth; and it is a thing which reason rejects. They say, "We follow what we found our fathers upon." It is an unconditional declaration – they intend to follow their fathers in all conditions, without looking at their qualifications and credentials. They are determined to follow their fathers even if they had no sense, even if they had gone astray. They claimed that whatever their fathers did was correct. But such claim, such declaration, is just a talk without knowing; it leads one to say what no sensible person would ever say – if his attention was drawn to its absurdity. There would be no blame on them if they followed their fathers only in those things which they (the fathers) had knowledge of, and concerning which they followed the right way; if they followed them in such things knowing well that their fathers had their knowledge and had been on right way, it would not be counted as following without knowledge.

It shows that the phrase, "What! and though their fathers had no sense at all, nor did they follow the right way," is not intended as an exaggeration, although one may think that negation of all sense and knowledge from their fathers – who certainly knew many things concerning their life and livelihood – was intended as an exaggeration. But it is not so. Actually, the verse exposes the absurdity of their unconditional declaration by pointing out a situation in which no one would allow the following.

Verse 171

Qur'an: ***And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who calls out to that***

which hears no more than a call and cry (***2:171***).

al-Mathal (اَلمَثَل = proverb; parable, adage); also it is used for attribute and comparison, as Allah says:

"See how they coin comparisons for thee. So they have gone astray, therefore they shall not be able to find a way" (***25:9***).

an-Na'iq (اَلنَّعِيق = admonishing cry of a shepherd to his sheep); *an-nida'* (اَلنِّدَآء = to call) is *masdar* of *nada, yunadi, munadatan* (نَادى ، ينَادِي، منَادَاةً = he called, he calls, to call); it is more particular than *ad-du'a'* (الدعآء = to call), because *an-nida'* is reserved for calling in a loud voice, while *ad-du'a'* is general.

The meaning of the verse is as follows, and Allah knows better: And O Prophet! your parable, when you call the unbelievers to the truth, is like a man who calls out to the animals while the animals do not understand what he says, except that they hear a call and cry, and stop in their tracks as soon as they hear it without understanding any thing spoken. The unbelievers are, therefore, deaf, they do not hear any talk which would benefit them; dumb, not speaking any sensible word; blind, not seeing any worthwhile thing. Thus, they do not understand anything, because their windows of understanding are closed shut.

It appears that there is a sort of reversal in this parable. Although it begins as a parable of those who disbelieve, it changes to describe the shepherd, the caller to guidance; it is in fact the likeness of the Prophet not of those who were being called by him to the right path. But as the three adjectives deducted from it ***"deaf, dumb*** [***and***] ***blind, so they do not understand"*** (***2:171***), were attributes of the disbelievers – not of him who was calling them to the truth – it was highly appropriate to ascribe the parable to the disbelievers, and not to the Messenger of Allah (S). Thus, there appears to be a reversal in the parable.

Traditions

'Abdu 'r-Rahman says: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah about a man who vowed to slaughter his child. He said: 'That is from the footsteps of the Satan.'"[1]

Mansur ibn Hazim said: "Abu Abdillah ('a) said to me: 'Have not you heard about Tariq? Verily, Tariq was a cattle-dealer in Medina. He came to Abu Ja'far and said: "O Abu Ja'far! I have taken an oath by divorce (of my wives), emancipation (of my slaves) and vow." Thereupon, (Abu Ja'far, a.s.) said to Him: "O Tariq! verily this is from the footsteps of the Satan."'"

Abu Ja'far ('a) said: "Every oath taken in the name of other than Allah, is from the footsteps of the Satan."[2]

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "When a man takes oath for not doing a thing – while what he has sworn against, its doing is better than its leaving – then he should do that which is better; and there is no

penalty on him; surely it (i.e., such oath) is only from the footsteps of the Satan."[3]

The author says: The traditions, as you see, interpret the footsteps of the Satan as the deeds supposed to bring one nearer to Allah, while in fact they are not so, because the *shari'ah* does not recognize them – as we have explained above. Of course, as for the divorce, etc. (mentioned in the second tradition), there is an additional reason for the invalidity of such oaths; and that is making it conditional on some contingency in future; and it is against the principle of immediate and unconditional effecting of such transactions. (It is a topic of jurisprudence.) Oath in the name of other than Allah refers to an oath which has no validity in the *shari'ah,* and to swearing by what Allah has not sworn by and to which He has given no excellence.

Imam al-Baqir ('a) said about the words of Allah,

***"And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who calls out…"* (*2:171*).**

"That is, their likeness when you call them to the faith is like the caller who calls out to the cattle which understands nothing other than hearing a voice."

A Moral And Sociological Discourse On Blind Imitation

Opinions and beliefs are of two kinds, which we shall call theoretical and practical knowledges. The theoretical knowledge is the one not directly related to action, for example, theorems of geometry, propositions of physics and issues of metaphysics. Practical knowledge, on the other hand, is directly related to action, for example, the moral teachings concerned with what to do and what not to do. The only way to acquire the theoretical knowledge is through rational proofs or the senses. The only way to get the practical knowledge is to follow that which leads to man's felicity, and to refrain from that which leads to infelicity or hinders the felicity. Apart from that, it is merely a superstition to believe in what is not known to be the truth and fact (in theoretical knowledge) and what is not known to be good or evil (in practical knowledge).

Man, when left to his pristine nature, does not accept superstitious ideas based on blindness and ignorance. His opinions are based on the demands of nature which wants him to find out the causes of the things, and exhorts him to strive for real perfection.

But sometimes his sentiments and feelings aroused by imagination – and especially the fear and the hope – make him to believe in myths and superstitions. What happens is this: Imagination creates some images in his mind which produce fear or hope. That feeling of fear or hope then preserves that image and does not let the psyche forget it. Let us say, a man finds himself in a valley; he is alone and the moonless night is pitch-dark; he cannot see his own hands. He has no light to illuminate his surroundings, no companion to share his thoughts with. Then his imagination takes hold of him. Every formless figure appears to him as a fearful ugly ghost intent on putting him to death. Then he sees the

ghouls moving, coming and going ascending to the skies and descending to the earth. The imagination keeps producing these figures and he remains awake, frightened out of his wits. Later on, he describes that horrifying experience to someone, graphically describing the devilish antics of those ghosts and ghouls, and the hearer stands aghast, his eye askance. In this way the 'belief' in these things spreads – while in fact it is just an imaginary "thing" having no reality at all.

Sometimes this superstition reawakens the instinct of self-defense in man, and he devises some rites to ward off the harmful effects of this imaginary "being"; and exhorts others to do like-wise, so that they too would be safe. Thus, a superstitious rite takes root in the society and grows.

Man, from the earliest days of his existence, has remained in the tight grip of myths and superstitions; and the situation is not different even today. And it is not confined to the eastern nations – as many people think. It is prevalent among westerners in equal, if not greater, degree.

The elite group, that is, the scholars, have been trying, since time immemorial, to eradicate the rites and ceremonials arising from deep-rooted superstitions which have kept the common people enthralled. They try to awaken the public to the reality – but to no avail. It is because man has never been able to free himself from following the others in theoretical views and real knowledge on one side, and sentiments and feelings on the other. We can see that the treatment has not been successful, and the situation goes from bad to worse.

The most astonishing is the myth prevalent today among the scientists and sociologists. They say that the foundation of modern science is laid on the senses and experiment; it rejects every thing that is not perceivable through the senses and which cannot be experimented upon. Also, according to them, the civilization is based on the urge of perfection; it seeks perfection in every possible direction, as much as it can.

But strangely enough, this view itself is a myth which they are following. The natural sciences look only at the factors and faculties of the nature. In other words, these material sciences search only for the hitherto unknown peculiarities of the matter. So far as the things beyond matter are concerned, these material sciences have no way to reject or refute them – as they are beyond their scope, outside their jurisdiction. As such it is a clear superstition and myth to reject metaphysical and immaterial things – just because the material sciences (which admittedly cannot see beyond matter) have not been able to see those things which are admittedly beyond the reach of matter.

Likewise, it is another myth to base the civilization on the above-mentioned urge of perfection of the society. This perfection of society, this felicity of civilization, often demands sacrifices from its members. It becomes necessary for some people to offer their individual happiness on the altar of the society; they lose their all, including the lives, in defence of their country or their cause; an individual is thus deprived of his happiness and his life in order that the society may be saved. Obviously, no man will voluntarily accept these personal privations unless he believes in this pursuit of society's perfection, and unless he

looks at that sacrifice itself as a personal perfection. But that sacrifice is not a perfection for himself – it is a nullity, a deprivation. Of course, it may be a perfection – if we accept it as such – for the society, *per se,* not for himself. But man had invented society as an instrument for his own benefit; he had not bargained that the role would be reversed and he would be used as a tool for the society's benefit.

It is to overcome this basic difficulty that the societies have invented some myths. They say to their members that man by sacrificing himself in the way of the society earns eternity because his good name is always remembered with reverence and affection – and man should strive for that eternal life. But evidently it is nothing but a story, a myth. Where is this supposed life once the man is dead? There is nothing for him except death and oblivion. But the society says, it is life – merely a name without any substance!

Also, they say: It is necessary for man to obey the laws even if they are tough and irksome to him. He should patiently bear the loss of some of his happiness, some of the things he earnestly desires, in order that the society may prosper, the civilization may attain its perfection. In this way, that partial deprivation will lead to his own perfection – through the perfection of the society. He is thus made to believe that the perfection of the society is his own perfection. But it is merely a myth.

The perfection of the society may be the man's perfection, when both perfections go hand in hand, when both are one and the same. Otherwise, not. Why should a man look at society's perfection as his own perfection, and to good remembrance as his lasting glory; and especially so if he can easily attain to his aims and goals – even if through injustice and oppression – and when his strength and power surpasses that of his competitors? The same question may be asked in respect of a powerful nation, *vis–à–vis,* the others. And it is not just a theoretical question. We see every day how the powerful nations go on exploiting the weaker ones. These superpowers tread on the prone bodies of the weaker peoples, crush their dignity and self–respect, expropriate their natural resources, and put the whole populace under their yoke. (Once it was called imperialism and colonialism, now it is neo–colonialism. Result in both cases is the same:) weaker people are subjugated and enslaved. (They say they are there to help these people in their difficulties – and in this process they rob them of their freedom and dignity.) They cure a disease by putting the patient to death.

What is the guidance given by the Qur'an in this respect? In theoretical field, it tells man to follow the commandments of Allah and not to speak without knowledge. In practical affairs, it directs him to seek only what is pleasing to Allah: if it tallies with his own desires, then he shall get happiness of both worlds; if it does not agree with it, if he has to sacrifice his own wish for the pleasure of Allah, then he shall get great reward from Allah; and what is with Allah is better and everlasting.

Also, the materialist say: Belief in religion is a blind following which the science does not allow. Such belief is a remnant of the superstitions of the second of the four periods through which mankind has passed. There was first the period of mythology, followed by that of religion. Then came the era of philosophy which was replaced by that of science. Presently, we are living in this era, and it follows the

knowledge and rejects myths and superstitions.

Comment

This in itself is a myth. These people talk without knowledge.

They have said: "Belief in religion is a blind following." The fact is otherwise. Religion is a composite entity; it consists of the gnosis of the beginning and final destination of man, the laws regulating the rites of worship and social dealings (which are based on revelations brought by the prophets whose truth was definitely proved by rational proofs), and some information given by the same truthful prophets. Evidently, when one follows the religion he follows the knowledge, because the truth of the prophet concerned was fully established by proofs.

We have written something on the topic of "following", under the verse:

"Surely Allah commands you that you should sacrifice a cow" (***2:67***).

There is another amusing aspect of this objection. This disparaging condemnation comes from those who have got nothing in their hands except blind imitation and who uncritically follow their desire, without ascertaining its value. This aping encompasses their whole being, right from their principles of life to the social customs – be it food or drink, dress or residence, marriage or other social relations. Of course, they have given a new name to this imitation: They say, they have adopted the ways of the developed nations. Thus the blind following remains firmly-rooted in society, but the name is discarded; the bottle is the same, the label has been changed. The result: "Do as the Romans do" becomes a scientific adage, a sign of social advancement; and:

"Do not follow desire, lest it should lead you astray…" (***38:26***).

Is treated as a blind religious following, a superstitious view!!

They have divided the progress of human species into four stages. But what we definitely know concerning the history of philosophy and religions refutes this division. It is wrong to say that philosophy came after religion. Ibrahim ('a) brought his religion long after the rise of philosophy in India, Egypt and Chaldea; and the religion of 'Isa ('a) came after the Greek philosophy. Likewise, the religion of Muhammad (S), that is, Islam, was promulgated after the philosophy of Greece and Alexandria. In short, philosophy reached its zenith long before the rise of religion. We have also mentioned earlier that the religion of monotheism was the first and earliest of all religions and systems.

The Qur'an divides the path of human progress in a different way. There were two periods only: First, the period of simplicity when all were of one nation, and then the period when materialism and revolt took its hold. We shall describe it in detail under the verse:

"Mankind was but one nation; so Allah sent the prophets…" (***2:213***).

1. at-Tahdhib.
2. al-'Ayyashi.
3. al-Kafi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 172 – 176

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ كُلُواْ مِن طَيِّبَـٰتِ مَا رَزَقنَـٰكُمۡ وَٱشۡكُرُواْ لِلَّهِ إِن كُنتُمۡ إِيَّاهُ تَعۡبُدُونَ

O you who believe! eat of the good things that We have provided you with, and give thanks to Allah if Him it is that you worship (***2:172***).

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيۡكُمُ ٱلۡمَيۡتَةَ وَٱلدَّمَ وَلَحۡمَ ٱلۡخِنزِيرِ وَمَآ أُهِلَّ بِهِۦ لِغَيۡرِ ٱللَّهِۖ فَمَنِ ٱضۡطُرَّ غَيۡرَ بَاغٖ وَلَا عَادٖ فَلَآ إِثۡمَ عَلَيۡهِۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَفُورٞ رَّحِيمٌ

He has only forbidden you what dies of itself, and that over which any other (**name**) ***than*** (**that of**) ***Allah has been invoked; but whoever is forced*** (**to it**), ***not revolting, nor exceeding the limit, no sin shall be upon him; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful*** (***2:173***).

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ يَكۡتُمُونَ مَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ مِنَ ٱلۡكِتَـٰبِ وَيَشۡتَرُونَ بِهِۦ ثَمَنٗا قَلِيلًاۙ أُوْلَـٰٓئِكَ مَا يَأۡكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمۡ إِلَّا ٱلنَّارَ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ ٱللَّهُ يَوۡمَ ٱلۡقِيَـٰمَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمۡ وَلَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

Surely those who cancel what Allah has revealed of the Book and take for it a small price, they eat nothing but fire into their bellies, and Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement (***2:174***).

أُوْلَـٰٓئِكَ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱشۡتَرَوُاْ ٱلضَّلَـٰلَةَ بِٱلۡهُدَىٰ وَٱلۡعَذَابَ بِٱلۡمَغۡفِرَةِۚ فَمَآ أَصۡبَرَهُمۡ عَلَى ٱلنَّارِ

These are they who have bought error for the guidance, and chastisement for forgiveness; Oh! how (**bold**) ***they are to endure fire*** (***2:175***).

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ نَزَّلَ ٱلۡكِتَـٰبَ بِٱلۡحَقِّۗ وَإِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱخۡتَلَفُواْ فِي ٱلۡكِتَـٰبِ لَفِي شِقَاقِۭ بَعِيدٖ

***This is because Allah has revealed the Book with the truth; and surely those who differ in* (matter of) *the Book are in a great opposition* (*2:176*).**

Commentary

Verse 172

Qur'an: ***O you who believe! eat of the good things that We have provided you with* (*2:172*).**

The preceding verses were addressed to the "men" in general; now a selected group among them (i.e., the believers) is especially spoken to. Thus, this talk issues forth from the preceding one. It seems as though Allah is turning away from an intractable and self-opinioned group that was impervious to reason, and looks towards those who would listen to, and accept the call of, the Speaker, because they believe in Him. The difference in the two speeches springs from the change of the audience. The believers were expected to accept what was said to them. Therefore, they were told to "eat from the good things that We have provided you with". The expression is more loving than the previous impersonal phrase addressed to the general public: "eat the lawful (and) good things out of what is in the earth". The loving expression of the verse under discussion paves the way for the direction that they should be thankful to Allah alone, because they are monotheists, they do not worship anyone other than Allah. It was for this very reason that Allah said, "that We have provided you with", and did not say, 'what you have been provided with', or "what is in the earth". The Qur'anic expression (in active voice) shows that Allah is known to them and near them, is affectionate and compassionate to them.

The Arabic phrase translated as "the good things that We have provided you with", would be literally translated as 'the good things of what We have provided you with' – in genitive case. Apparently, the adjective (*the good things*) is the first construct, related to the second construct (*what We have provided you with*); and means in effect, 'eat from Our sustenance that is all good'. This meaning is appropriate in this context which is meant to show Allah's kindness and compassion for the believers. The phrase is not meant to restrict the second construct with the first one. In other words, it does not mean, 'eat from the good provisions, not from the bad ones': because such meaning would be quite irrelevant in this setting in which Allah wishes to remove prohibition, telling them not to abstain from any provision given by Allah – as, such behaviour would be a self-imposed unauthorized legislation, would be a talk without knowledge.

Qur'an: ***And give thanks to Allah if Him it is that you worship"* (*2:172*).**

Apparently, it should have been 'give thanks to Us', but the Qur'an says, "give thanks to Allah". This expression is more appropriate for the theme of monotheism which the verse leads to. And for the same reason the next phrase, "if Him it is that you worship", was preferred to a shorter, 'if you worship Him'. The present expression restricts and confines the worship to Allah alone.

Verse 173

Qur'an: ***He has only forbidden you what dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine, and that over which any other*** **(name)** ***than*** **(that of)** ***Allah has been invoked*** **(*2: 173*).**

Invoking any name other than Allah's, means slaughtering for any thing other than Allah, for example, sacrificing for idols.

Qur'an: ***But whoever is forced*** **(to it),** ***not revolting, nor exceeding the limit*** **(*2: 173*).**

That is, when he is not unjust, nor does he exceed the limit; is driven to it because of emergency. The meaning is therefore as follows: Whoever is forced to eat some of these forbidden things, because of some emergency, while he does not like at all to go against the law of Allah, nor does he exceed the limit, there shall be no blame on him. But if he was trapped into that emergency because of his own revolting behaviour or because he had exceeded the limit and was then driven to that necessity, then he is not allowed to eat from these things. The sentence, "surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful," shows that the above permission is just a concession given by Allah to the believers; otherwise, the basis of prohibition is present even in this case.

Verse 174

Qur'an: ***Surely those who conceal what Allah has revealed of the Book...*** **(*2: 174*).**

It is an allusion to the People of the Book. There were many good and lawful things – in the rites of worship and other matters – which their elders and leaders had arbitrarily forbidden them – while they had got the Book and that Book contained no sanction against those good things. These people did not conceal what they did but only because they wanted to protect their high position and prestige in the community, and because they did not like to stem the flow of gifts, riches and properties which their power supposedly entitled them to.

This verse unambiguously proves that a man's deeds are embodied and assume the form of a body; and it is the deeds that finally emerge as their own results. In this verse, Allah first says that their action of taking a small price for the Divine Revelation is one and the same with their eating the fire into their bellies. Then the description of their concealing and price taking is changed to that of buying error for the guidance; then this gives way to bartering chastisement for forgiveness. Then it ends on the words, "Oh! how (bold) they are to endure fire". Thus, their misdeed itself is transformed into the fire, although what they had done was to conceal the revelation and to continue on that behaviour.

Traditions

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said about the words of Allah, ***but whoever is forced*** **(to it),** ***not revolting, nor exceeding the limit:*** *'al-Baghi* (اَلبَاغِيْ = revolting) is one who desires hunting[1], and *al-'adi* (اَلعَادِيْ =

exceeding the limit) is thief. They are not allowed to eat dead (animal) even if they are faced with emergency. It is forbidden to them. This (concession) does not cover them as it does (other) Muslims. And they are not allowed to shorten the prayer (in such journeys)."[2]

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: *"al-Baghi* is unjust and *al-'adi* is usurper."[3]

Hammad narrates from the same Imam that he said: *"al-Baghi* is one who revolts against the Imam, and *al-'adi* is thief."

Abu Ja'far and Abu 'Abdillah ('a) have said: "Not revolting against the Imam of the Muslims, nor transgressing the path of the righteous ones with disobedience."[4]

The author says: All these are various applications of these words; and they support the meaning we have given earlier.

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said about the words of Allah,

***Oh! how* (bold) *they are to endure fire"* (*2:175*).**

(It means,) how bold they are to commit the deeds which, they know, will take them to the fire."[5]

'Ali ibn Ibrahim narrates from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) about this sentence: "How daring they are to (risk) the fire."[6]

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "How active they are in the deeds of the people of the fire."

The author says: These traditions are in fact similar in their meanings: The first tradition explains boldness for fire with boldness in perpetrating the causes of the fire; the second one gives its meaning as daring to enter the fire; the third one interprets it as boldness to commit sins that would lead to the fire - and it is almost the same with the meaning of the first tradition.

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1. Another meaning of al-baghi is "desirous"; the explanation in the tradition is based on this meaning. (tr.).
2. al-Kafi.
3. al-'Ayyashi.
4. Majma' al-bayan.
5. al-Kafi.
6. Majma' al-bayan.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verse 177

لَّيسَ ٱلبِرَّ أَن تولّواْ وجوهَكم قِبَلَ ٱلمَشرِقِ وَٱلمَغرِبِ وَلَـٰكِنَّ ٱلبِرَّ مَن ءَامَنَ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱليَومِ ٱلأَخِرِ وَٱلمَلَـٰئكَةِ وَٱلكِتَـٰبِ
وَٱلنَّبِيِّـنَ وَءَاتَى ٱلمَالَ عَلَىٰ حبِّهِ ذَوِى ٱلقربَىٰ وَٱليَتَـٰمَىٰ وَٱلمَسَـٰكِينَ وَٱبنَ ٱلسَّبِيلِ وَٱلسَّآئلينَ وَفِى ٱلرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ
وَءَاتَى ٱلزَّكوٰةَ وَٱلموفونَ بِعَهدِهِم إِذَا عَـٰهَدواْ وَٱلصَّـٰبِرِينَ فِى ٱلبَأسَآءِ وَٱلضَّرَّآءِ وَحِينَ ٱلبَأسِ أوْلَـٰئك ٱلَّذينَ صَدَقواْ
وَأوْلَـٰئِكَ هم ٱلمتَّقونَ

***It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is the one who believes in Allah and the last day and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for* (the emancipation of) *the captives, and keeps up prayer and pays the* zakat, *and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflict – these are they who are true and these are they who are the pious* (*2: 177*).**

Commentary

It is said that when the *qiblah* was changed from Bayt al-Maqdis to the Ka'bah, there ensued a long drawn-out controversy and conflict in the public. It was then that this verse was revealed.

Qur'an: ***It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West****: al-Birr* (**اَلبِر** = righteousness); *al-barr* (**اَلْبِرّ** = righteous), it is a perpetual adjective. *Qibal* (**قِبَل** = towards, in the direction of), *al-qiblah* (**اَلقِبْلَة** = a certain direction) is derived from it. *Dhul-qurba* (**ذو القرْبى** = relative); *al-yatama* (**اَليَتَامى**) is plural of *al-yatim* (**اَليَتِيْم** = orphan; he who has lost his father); *al-masakin* (**اَلمَسَاكِيْن**) is plural of *al-miskin* (**اَلمِسْكِيْن** = miserably poor, one who suffers a worse condition than *al-faqir* (**اَلفَقِيْر** = poor). *Ibnu 's-sabil* (**اِبْن السَّبِيْل** = one stranded in journey); *ar-riqab* (**اَلرِّقَاب**) is plural of *ar-raqabah* (**اَلرَّقَبَة** = neck; it refers to slave). *al-Ba'sa'* (**البَأسَآء**) is *a masdar* like *al-bu's* (**اَلبؤس**), both having the same meaning: hardship, poverty. *ad-Darra'* (**الضَّرَّآء**) too is *a masdar* like *ad-darr* (**الضَّر**) and both mean affliction with injury or loss, for example, when a man is afflicted with a disease, injury, or loss of property or child. *al-Ba's* (**اَلبأس** = intensity of war).

Qur'an: ***...but righteousness is the one who believes in Allah...*** (***2: 177***).

Instead of defining righteousness, the verse turns to describing the righteous ones; thus, it introduces the people in the light of their attributes. In this way, it points to the fact that abstract ideals and abstruse ideas have no value in Islam unless they appear in concrete shape in the character of a man. It is a well-known style of the Qur'an that it explains and defines a condition and a rank by introducing the people having that rank and condition; it is never satisfied with mere theoretical explanations of good

and bad, virtue and vice.

The words, “the one who believes in Allah and the last day...,” define the righteous ones, and explain their real state. The verse introduces them with all three aspects of belief, deeds and morals, in three stages. the first stage begins with the words, “the one who believes in Allah;” the second is the sentence, “these are they who are true;” and the third is, “and these are they who are the pious.”

Allah begins the first stage, saying: “the one who believes in Allah and the last day and the angels and the Book and the prophets”. It is a comprehensive description of all the true gnosis which Allah wants His servants to believe in. The belief referred to in this verse is the perfect belief which can never fail to produce its effect. When a believer attains to this stage of faith, his heart is never assailed by any doubt or confusion; he does not take a dim view of whatever befalls him, nor is he offended if afflicted with a misfortune. Likewise, his morals and actions are safe from adverse influences. This interpretation is further supported by the phrase, “these are they who are true”. Truth, in this verse, is general and unconditional; it is not restricted to any condition of man’s heart or any activity of his limbs. It means, they are real believers, true in their belief; as Allah says:

“But no! By your Lord! they do not believe until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them, and then do not find any straitness in their hearts as to what you have decided and submit with total submission” (***4:65***).

Thus, their condition fits the fourth stage of the belief, described under the verse:

“When his Lord said to him, Submit (**yourself**), ***he said: ‘I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds’”*** (***2:131***).

After description of belief, Allah mentions some of their deeds: “and gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives, and keeps up prayer and pays the *zakat”.* Here their prayer is mentioned, and it concerns the Divine Worship. Allah says:

“...Surely prayer keeps (**one**) ***away from indecency and evil...”*** (***29:45***).

Also, He says:

“...And keep up prayer for My remembrance” (***20:14***).

It is followed by mention of *zakat;* and it is a financial obligation promulgated for economic good of the society. And before it all, the verse refers to their giving away wealth to various groups; this habit of theirs spreads the good and enlarges the circle of non-obligatory munificence, in order that the need of the poor may be fulfilled and their condition improved.

Lastly, the verse cites some of their excellent moral characteristics: “and the performers of their promise

when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflict". *al-'Ahd* (العَهْد = to promise; to commit oneself to something). The verse mentions "their promise" unconditionally. Yet, it does not cover the belief and the resulting obligation of following the laws of the *shari'ah* (as some people have said). Why? Because on going further we find the proviso, "when they make a promise"; and clearly acceptance of true faith and sub-mission to its concomitants is an unconditional obligation; and is obligatory on all the people at all the times. It does not depend on one's commitment. However, the "promise", by its generality, covers every commitment made by man. For example, when he says: I'll surely do it; or, I'll never do it. It includes every deal made in business transactions, every word spoken in social and family circles.

Patience is steadfastness in face of hardship, be it a series of benumbing misfortunes or a fight against formidable adversaries.

These two excellent virtues - fulfilment of promise and patience - do not cover all the necessary virtues; but when they are found somewhere, the other virtues invariably always follow suit. One of these two virtues (patience in hardships) has a passive quality, while the other (fulfilling the promise) has an active role. By mentioning them, Allah in effect says that when they say something they surely proceed to do it, and do not withdraw from it even if they have to face difficulties.

The second stage of introduction is contained in the phrase, "these are they who are true". Truth is a comprehensive virtue, encompassing all attributes of knowledge and action. Truth is an inseparable concomitant of all basic virtues - continence, bravery, wisdom and justice - and of their branches. Man's life is made up of his belief, words and actions. When he is true, all the three aspects conform with each other. He does not do except what he says, and does not say except. that which he believes.

Man by instinct accepts the right and truth; and even if he pretends otherwise, he submits to it in his heart. When he believes in the right truthfully, his word conforms with his belief, and his action with his word. It is then that he reaches the perfection in all three aspects of belief, morality and deeds. His faith becomes pure, his character virtuous and his deeds good.

Allah says:

"O You who believe! fear Allah and be with the true ones" (***9:119***).

The restrictive style, "these are they who are true", puts emphasis on the description of the righteous. It means - and Allah knows better - that if you want to find the true ones, then these are the righteous.

The third and final stage of their introduction is the phrase, "and these are they who are the pious": This restrictive style looks at the level of perfection. Piety cannot be complete and perfect, unless righteousness and truth have attained their completion and perfection.

The attributes ascribed here to the righteous are the same which Allah has described in other places.

Allah says:

"Surely the righteous shall drink of a cup the admixture of which is camphor" (***76:5***).

"A fountain from which the servants of Allah shall drink; they shall make it to flow a (**goodly**) ***flowing forth"*** (***76:6***).

"They fulfil **vows** ***and fear a day the evil of which shall be spreading far and wide"*** (***76:7***).

"And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive" (***76:8***).

"We only feed you for Allah's sake; we desire from you neither reward nor thanks" (***76:9***).

"Surely we fear from our Lord a stern, distressful day" (***76:10***).

"Therefore, Allah will guard them from the evil of that day and cause them to meet with radiance and happiness" (***76:11***).

"And reward them, because they were patient, with garden and silk" (***76:12***).

These verses, about some righteous personalities, describe their attributes of belief in Allah and the last day, their spending for the sake of Allah, their fulfilling the vows and their patience. Again, Allah says:

"Nay! Most surely the record of the righteous shall be in the **'Illiyyin***"*** (***83:18***).

"And what will make you know what the **'Illiyyin** ***is?"*** (***83:19***).

"It is a written book" (***83:20***).

"See it those who are near (**to Allah**)***"*** (***83:21***).

"Most surely the righteous shall be in bliss" (***83:22***).

"On thrones, they shall gaze" (***83:23***).

"You will recognize in their faces the radiance of bliss" (***83:24***).

"They are made to quaff of a pure drink that is sealed" (***83:25***).

"The sealing of it is (**with**) ***musk; and for that let the aspirers aspire"*** (***83:26***).

"And the admixture of it is a water of Tasnim" (***83:27***).

"A fountain from which drink they who are drawn nearer (**to Allah**)***"*** (***83:28***).

If you meditate on these verses in conjunction with those quoted above, you will see the reality of their

attributes and their final destination. These verses praise the righteous that they are servants of Allah, and are drawn near to Him. Now, Allah describes His servants in these words:

"Surely as regards My ***servants, thou hast no authority over them"*** (***15:42***).

And He says about those drawn near to Him:

"And the foremost are the fore-most" (***56: 10***).

"These are they who are drawn near (***to Allah***)***"*** (***56: 11***).

"In the gardens of bliss" (***56: 12***).

It is now clear that the righteous are the foremost in this world in reaching nearer to Allah, as they are foremost in the next world in attaining to the bounties of the garden.

If you continue looking at the condition of the righteous in the light of these verses you will unearth many hidden nuggets of spiritual reality.

The above discourse shows that the righteous are in the highest, that is, the fourth, stage of belief, as we have explained earlier. Allah says:

"Those who believe and do not mix their faith with iniquity, those are they who have the security and they are those who go aright" (***6:82***).

Qur'an: ***And the patient in distress*** (***2: 177***).

The word "patient" in the Arabic text is in accusative case while the other attributes are in indicative. This change has been effected to point out its excellence, to show its importance.

Also, it has been said that when a speech becomes a bit lengthy, several adjectives following each other, then the Arabs break the monotony by interposing negatives between the positives, or by exchanging accusative and indicative cases.

Traditions

The Prophet said: "Whosoever acted in accordance with this verse, he surely perfected (his) faith."

The author says: Its reason is clear from the explanation written above. az-Zajjaj and al-Farra' are reported to have said: "This verse is reserved for the sinless prophets, because nobody, except the prophets, can perform these things as they should be." But this comment shows that they had not pondered on it properly. They seem confused regarding spiritual ranks. The verses of the Chapter of the Man (76:5-12) quoted above, were revealed about the family members of the Messenger of Allah (S); Allah in those verses has named them "the righteous", although they were not prophets.

Of course, the rank of the righteous is very high, and their position is of very great importance. Allah praises the men of understanding saying that they:

"...Remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth" (***3:191***).

Then He quotes their prayer, which shows that their highest aspiration was that their Lord should join them to the righteous:

"Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day, there are signs for those who possess intellect" (***3:190***).

"Those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth [***and say***], ***'Our Lord, You have not created this in vain! Immaculate are You! Save us from the punishment of the Fire"*** (***3:191***).

"Our Lord, whoever that You make enter the Fire will surely have been disgraced by You, and the wrongdoers will have no helpers" (***3:192***).

"Our Lord, we have indeed heard a summoner calling to faith, declaring, "Have faith in your Lord!" So we believed. Our Lord, forgive us our sins and absolve us of our misdeeds, and make us die with the pious" (***3:193***).

Al-Hakim at-Tirmidhi narrates from Abu 'Amir ash-Sha'bi that he said: "I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! What is the completion of righteousness?' He said: 'That you should do in private what you do in public.'"[1]

Abu Ja'far and Abu 'Abdillah ('a) said: "The near of kin are the relatives of the Prophet."[2]

The author says: It is an application of this verse, keeping in view the verses of ***near relatives*** (***42:23***).

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: *"al-Faqir* (poor) is he who does not ask from the people; and *al-miskin is* of more straitened circumstances than the "poor"; and *al-ba's* (اَلبآئِس) is the most wretched of all." [3]

Abu Ja'far ('a) said: "The wayfarer is the one stranded in the way."[4]

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) was asked about an al-mukatib ([5](المُكَاتِب who, after making a partial payment was unable to pay (the balance of the stipulated money of) his al-mukatabah (المكَاتَبَة). He ('a) said: "It will be paid on his behalf from the money of *as-sadaqah* (الصَدَقَة = charity money; also *zakat*), because Allah, the Mighty, the Great, says: *and for* (the emancipation of) *the captives."*[6]

The same Imam said about the words of Allah,

"And the patient in distress and affliction" (***2:177***).

“In hunger, and thirst and fear.” And he (‘a) said about the word,

“And in time of conflict” (***2:177***).

“In the fighting.”7

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1. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
2. Majma‘ al-bayan.
3. al-Kafi.
4. Majma‘ al-bayan.
5. In Islam a slave was allowed to enter into an agreement with his master. This agreement, called al-mukatabah, entitled him to gain his freedom on payment of stipulated amount. Such a slave was called al-mukatib. (tr.).
6. at-Tahdhib.
7. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 178 – 179

يَـٰٓأَيُّها ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنوا۟ كتِبَ عَلَيكم ٱلقِصَاص فِى ٱلقَتلَى ٱلحرّ بِٱلحرِّ وَٱلعَبد بِٱلعَبدِ وَٱلأنثَىٰ بِٱلأنثَىٰ ۚ فَمَن عفِىَ لَه مِن أَخِيهِ شَىءٌ فَٱتِّبَاع بِٱلمَعروفِ وَأَدَآءٌ إِلَيهِ بِإِحسَـٰنٍ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ تَخفِيفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكم وَرَحمَةٌ ۗ فَمَنِ ٱعتَدَىٰ بَعدَ ذَٰلِكَ فَلَه عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

O you who believe! retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the slain; the free for the free, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female; but if any remission is made to any one by his **(aggrieved)** ***brother, then*** **(the demand for the bloodwit)** ***should be made according to usage, and payment should be made to him in a good manner; this is an alleviation from your Lord and a mercy; so whoever exceeds the limit after this, he shall have a painful chastisement*** (***2:178***).

وَلَكم فِى ٱلقِصَاصِ حَيَوٰةٌ يَـٰٓأُوْلِى ٱلأَلبَـٰبِ لَعَلَّكم تَتَّقونَ

And there is life for you in the retaliation, O men of understanding, that you may guard your-selves **(against evil)** (***2:179***).

Commentary

Verse 178

Qur'an: ***O you who believe! retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the slain; the free for the free…*** (***2:178***).

The verse is addressed to the believers. It means that the law promulgated herein applies to the Muslims only. As regards the non-Muslims - whether under protection of an Islamic State or not - the verse is silent about them.

Some people think that this verse has abrogated the verse 5:45 (***life is for life***)*;* because it does not allow killing of a free person for a slave, or of a man for a woman. But actually there is no room for this supposition. The position of this verse *vis-à-vis* the verse 5:45 is like that of an explanation *vis-à-vis* its text.

Al-Qisas (**القِصَاصُ =** retaliation) is the *masdar* of *qassa yuqassu* (**قَآصَّ يقَاص** = he followed, he follows); an Arab says: *qassa atharahu* (**قَصَّ أثَـرَه** = he followed someone's tracks). Another derivative is *al-qssas* (**القَصَّاص =** story-teller) - it is as though he follows the tracks of the past generations. Retaliation is called *al-qisas* because it follows the footsteps of the offender, giving him a punishment similar to that which he had inflicted upon his victim.

Qur'an: ***But if any remission is made to any one by his*** (***aggrieved***) ***brother*** (***2:178***).

Its literal translation is: then whoever is remitted any thing by his brother. "whoever" refers to the murderer; the heir/s of the murdered person may waive his/their right of retaliation. Therefore, "any thing" refers to that right; it is used here as a common noun, in order that the rule may cover all possibilities, whether there was a full remission or partial. Let us say, for example, that there are many heirs and only some of them waive their right; then there shall be no retaliation; instead the blood-money will be imposed. The heir of the murdered person who has the right of retaliation) has extraordinarily been described here as the "brother" of the murderer; this expression has been used to awaken the feeling of love and kindness in the heart of the aggrieved party, and gives a hint to him that remission and forgiveness is highly preferable in the eyes of Allah.

Qur'an: ***Then*** (**the demand for the bloodwit**) ***should be made according to the usage, and payment should be made to him in a good manner*** (***2:178***).

Its literal translation is: then following according to usage, and payment to him in a good manner. Both phrases are subjects with their predicates implied. Thus literally it would mean: then it is obligatory on the aggrieved "brother" to follow that remission with demand for the blood-money according to usage; and it is obligatory on the murderer to pay it to the aggrieved brother, that is, heir of the slain, in a good manner without any annoying delay.

Qur'an: ...***This is an alleviation from your Lord and a mercy*** (***2:178***).

The permission to commute the retaliation into blood-money is an alleviation from your Lord, and therefore, once effected, it cannot be changed. The heir of the slain person cannot revert to retaliation after granting remission. If he transgresses the limit and retaliates after remission, then he shall have a painful chastisement.

Verse 179

Qur'an: ***And there is life for you in the retaliation, O men of understanding, that you guard yourselves*** (**against evil**) (***2:179***).

This verse points to the philosophy of this legislation. It aims at removing a possible misunderstanding that - because Allah has allowed remission and blood-money, and also because remission expands the circle of mercy and affection - remission is more in conformity with public weal and social good. The verse shows that, although remission is an alleviation based on mercy, common good and society's peace depend on the retaliation. The only guarantee of life is the law of retaliation, and not remission, blood-money, or any other thing. Man has to accept this fact, if he has understanding. "that you may guard yourselves" that is, from murder. It gives the basic of the law of retaliation.

The scholars have said that the verse, "and there is life for you in the retaliation," is one of the most eloquent in its clarity, and the most refined in rhetorics, in addition to its having many other fine literary points, like brevity - it has so few words and such a small number of total letters - fluency of style and clarity of composition. It combines the force of argument with beauty of meaning, the fineness of proof with clarity of result.

Before this verse was revealed, the Arabs were fond of some adages and maxims (on the subject of murder and retaliation), of whose rhetorics and fluency they were very proud. For example:

'To kill some is to keep alive all', and 'To increase killing is to decrease killing'. And the most remarkable in their eyes was the sentence: 'Killing stamps out killing.' But when this verse was revealed all were forgotten. Some of its distinguishing points are as follows: The verse has fewer letters, and is easy to pronounce. "the retaliation" with definite article is a proper noun, while "life" is common noun - it shows that the resulting good is greater and more widespread than the retaliation. It explains the result in clear words and describes the real philosophy of the law, that is, the life. It unambiguously shows by what means the desired result can be obtained: Obviously, it is the retaliation that leads to life, and not the killing. (After all, many killings are done unjustly, and they do not lead to life, they are negation of life.) The word, "retaliation," covers also other punishments besides killing, that is, the reprisal in the matter of injury, etc. - and such retributions too lead to the society's life. The word conveys another extra meaning, as it shows that the retribution has resulted from unjust killing. (Compare it with their maxim, "Killing stamps out killing", which does not give any idea that "killing" refers to any punishment.) Then

there is an exhortation in this sentence, as it points to a life reserved for the people, which they are oblivious of; it behoove them to take hold of it as it really belongs to them; it is as if someone tells you: There is a property belonging to you with so-and-so, or in such and such a place. Lastly, the opening word of the verse, that is, "for you" makes it clear to the men of understanding that the law-giver only desires to protect their interest, and no benefit is ever to accrue to him.

These are a few of the fine points found in this verse. The scholars have mentioned some more points, which may be seen in the books of rhetorics. The fact is, the more deeply you look at this verse, the more dazzled you shall be by its brilliance and radiance; and the word of Allah is the highest.

Traditions

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said about the word of Allah,

***"...The free for the free"* (*2:178*).**

"A free man shall not be killed for the slave; but he shall be beaten a severe beating and be fined the blood-money of the slave. And if a man kills a woman, and the heirs of the slain (woman) want to kill him, they shall pay half of his blood-money to the man's heirs."[1]

al-Halabi narrates from Imam as-Sadiq ('a). He says: "I asked him about the word of Allah, the Mighty, the Great:

***"But he who for-goes it, it shall be an expiation for him"* (*5:45*).**

He (the Imam) said: 'His sins shall be expiated, as much as he forgives.' And I asked him about the word of Allah, the Mighty, the Great:

***"But if any remission is made to anyone by his* (aggrieved) *brother, then* (the demand for the bloodwit) *should be made according to usage, and payment should be made to him in a good manner"* (*2:178*).**

He said: 'He who has got the right (i.e. the aggrieved party) should not put his brother (i.e. the murderer) in difficulty, when he has made settlement with him concerning the blood-money; and he who has got the duty (of paying the blood-money) should not delay in its payment when he has ability to do so; and he should pay it to him in a good manner.' And I asked him about the word of Allah, the Mighty, the Great:

***"...So whoever exceeds the limit, he shall have a painful chastisement"* (*2:178*).**

He said: 'It refers to a man who accepts blood-money or forgives, or makes compromise, then exceeds the limit (and kills the murderer); so he shall be killed as Allah, the Mighty, the Great, has said.'"[2]

The author says: There are many traditions of the same meanings.

An Academic Essay On Retaliation

Before the advent of Islam, and until this verse was revealed, the Arabs believed in requiting a murder with killing. But the retaliation had no defined limit. It all depended on the strength or weakness of the aggrieved party. Sometimes they killed a man for a man, and a woman for a woman – thus keeping a balance between the crime and its punishment. At other times they killed ten persons for one, a free man for a slave, a chief for and ordinary man. Many times a tribe destroyed another just in retaliation of one man.

The Jews believed in retribution, as we see in chapters 21 and 22 of Genesis, and chapter 35 of Numbers. The Qur'an quotes it in these words:

"And We prescribed to them in it that life is for life, and eye for eye, and nose for nose, and ear for ear and tooth for tooth, and **(that there is)** ***reprisal in wounds"*** **(*5:45*).**

The Christians reportedly recognize only remission and payment of blood–money in the matter of murder.

All societies and nations, with all their differences, believed in, and practised, retaliation by killing, in one way or the other; although they did not have any fixed code for it even up to the recent centuries.

Islam opted for a middle course between confirmation of retaliation and its negation. It prescribed retaliation but did not make it obligatory – it allowed remission and payment of blood–money. Then it laid the foundation of justice by prescribing equality between the murderer and the murdered, telling us that:

"…The free for the free, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female" **(*2:178*).**

Objections have been laid against the law of retaliation in general, and the capital punishment, that is, retaliation by killing, in particular. The brunt of the argument is that nowadays the advanced nations do not recognize – or do not enforce – the law of capital punishment. Their objections may be summarized as follows:

1. Human nature disapproves the idea of a life for a life, when a man looks at this matter from the point of view of mercy and service to humanity.

2. The killing (i.e. the crime) had caused loss of one person; now the second killing (i.e. its punishment) would be a further loss, a loss upon loss.

3. Capital punishment is based on hard–heartedness and desire of revenge. These are not good traits; they should be eradicated from society through general training. Even a murderer should be punished through corrective measures; and it can easily be done through prison and hard labour, not capital

punishment.

4. A criminal becomes criminal only because of psychological sickness. He should be put into mental hospital for treatment.

5. Civil laws and penal codes follow the trends of society. As the society changes, so do the laws and codes. There is no reason why the law of capital punishment should continue to plague the civilization – even the advanced nations – for ever and ever. Society should make use of its manpower to the maximum possible extent. A criminal may be given a punishment, which would be as effective as killing – without putting him to death. He may be imprisoned for life, or for a long period. It would satisfy both demands – that of the society and that of the heirs of the slain.

These are the main objections against the law of retaliation with killing. The Qur'an has replied to all this criticism with one sentence:

"…Whoever slays a soul, unless it be for man-slaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he slew all men (***5:32***).

As the following explanation shows:

The laws, observed by members of a society, are laid down by men and based on a subjective approach – with a view to serve the interest of the society. But the general and basic cause (which brings them into being) is the human nature which has real existence, and which demands that its deficiencies be made up and its needs fulfilled. This nature, this real being, has nothing to do with the number of the men, nor is it related to the composite unit, that is, the society. Because society is a handiwork of human nature, while we are talking about the man himself, about his nature itself. This nature, this real being, makes no distinction between a single man and a thousand; all are human beings; and as far as the existence is concerned, one man and the whole humanity have got equal weight, equal value.

This really existing nature has equipped itself with powers and instruments to ward off harmful and destructive influences from itself, because it loves existence, and repels all things which could deprive it of life. It defends its existence, by all possible means. It does not stop at any thing, and is ready and willing to kill and destroy the attacker who endangers its existence. Nature tells man to kill whosoever wants to kill him (if he cannot be repelled by any other means). And no one denies justifiability of such killing.

Look at these advanced and "civilized" nations. They have no hesitation in waging war in defence of their freedom, independence and national interest. What will they do if someone wanted to kill all their nationals? They think that supremacy of law is sacrosanct. They defend the rule of law, they try to preserve order in the society, by all possible means – even if it entailed killing some offenders. They protect their national interest – even by war, if nothing else works. They justify war for this reason in high-sounding phrases – the war which shakes the world to pieces and destroys the tilth and the

generations. There is a never-ending race for armaments: A country sacrifices its progress to arm itself with some sophisticated military hardware; and then its adversaries try to acquire even more advanced arms. Ask them, "Why this mad race?" They will say, it is essential for their defence, for the safety of their society and civilization.

Now, society and civilization is only a handiwork of the nature. How is it that the nature allows massacres, mass destructions and wholesale killings just to save a handiwork of its, and does not allow it for its own protection and safety? How is it that it allows to kill someone who intends to kill but has not killed yet, but forbids killing the man who intended to kill and killed?

The nature has decreed that every action should have a reaction;

"So he who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it" (***99:7***).

"And he who has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it" (***99:8***).

Now what type of nature is this which breaks its own law, violates its own decree, when it comes to giving death penalty to someone who has killed an innocent person?

Moreover, Islam does not accord any value, any weight to man, unless he is on the religion of monotheism. One man believing in the one and the only God is equal in the eyes of Islam to the whole human race. Therefore, whoever slays a believer, it is as though he slew all men – because he committed a sacrilege against the dignity of that believer. Likewise, whoever slays any person, it is as though he slew all men – looking at the reality of his existence. But so far as the civilized nations are concerned, religion has no value in their eyes. If they had accorded as much value (if not more) to religion as they give to civilization, they would have defended the religion to the same extent at least.

Furthermore, Islam has brought the *shari'ah* which is meant for the whole world – not for a particular country or a selected group only. Let us say that what the advanced nations have legislated is good for their society. But they have opted for this course after they have made sure that the general training of their people has been effective; that their governments are faithfully discharging their duties; that according to crime statistics, these well-trained nations are now totally averse to murder and violence; that as a result of this aversion, no one indulges in crimes of violence – except in extremely rare cases. And because it happens so rarely, these nations have decided to punish murder in some ways other than death. Islam does not say that such training should not be given, or that if given it would not be effective. When that stage is reached, capital punishment may give way to remission – with the law of retaliation keeping its basic position unaltered. The relevant sentence in this verse points to this fact:

"But if any remission is made to any one by his (**aggrieved**) ***brother, then*** (**the demand for the bloodwit**) ***should be made according to usage, and payment should be made to him in a good manner"*** (***2:178***).

Clearly, the language used is that of moral training; and when a nation advances to a level where all take pride in forgiveness and remission, then they would not deviate from the path of remission to that of revenge.

But what about other nations? We know their moral status is not so high. We see the condition of these societies, and the extent of the moral decay of their people. In these places, the criminals are not afraid of prison or hard labour; they are immune to sermons and exhortations; they do not understand such abstract ideas as human rights, nor do they give any importance to them. And the facilities which they are provided with in prisons are far much better and much more comfortable than the wretched life they are accustomed to at home. The result? They do not care about social disgrace or penal sentence; they are afraid of neither prison nor hard labour; beatings and floggings are just occupational hazards to them. That is why crime rates are going higher and higher in almost every country.

Suppose there is there an ideal society we have mentioned earlier; still the overwhelming majority of nations come into this second less ideal category. Therefore, the general and basic law could only be the retaliation with possibility of remission. After that, if the ethical standard of a nation improved and if it advanced gracefully on the path of moral perfection (and Islam spares no effort for moral upliftment of its people), it would automatically opt for remission. If on the other hand, it continued its downward slide, and remained ungrateful to Allah's favours, then the law of retaliation would prevail – with possibility of remission even then.

Now, let us have a look at their objections:

The talk about mercy and kindness to human beings is all very good. But not every kindness is good, nor is every mercy a virtue. Showing mercy to a hardened criminal who has no regard for others' life and honour, is a loathsome offence against good law-abiding people. Indiscriminate application of mercy would disrupt the social system, destroy the humanity and nullify the virtues.

The same applies to their criticism concerning hard-heartedness and revenge. Avenging an oppressed from the oppressor – in pursuit of justice and truth – is not objectionable in any way; nor is the love of justice a thing to disparage. Moreover, death penalty has not been legislated for revenge only; it serves also to train general public in good character and to shut the door of mischief in the society.

The assertion that the crime of murder is a psychological disease which should be treated in mental hospitals, has provided an excuse – and what a good excuse it is! – to the criminals. It has contributed a lot in the growth of murder, indecency and other crimes of violence in the society. Why should a criminal refrain from making murder his hobby, when he knows that his urge of violence is but a psychological disease, and that it is an acceptable plea which would oblige the government to treat him with kindness and benevolence, arranging for his medication in hospitals?

Now, we come to the view that society should utilize all available manpower, and as such should use the criminals in compulsory labour and other such work, by imprisoning them and cutting their access to the

society. If these people really believe in what they say, if there is any truth in this sermon, then why do they forget it in those cases in which their legal system provides for capital punishment? We should not forget that there is in every civilized country provision for capital punishment for specified crimes. They give death penalty in those cases because they think those crimes to be extremely heinous and atrocious. But we have already explained that, in the eyes of nature, life of one man is as precious as that of the whole human race put together.

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1. al-'Ayyashi.
2. al-Kafi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 180 - 182

كتِبَ عَلَيكم إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكم ٱلمَوت إِن تَرَكَ خَيرًا ٱلوَصِيَّة لِلوَلِدَينِ وَٱلأَقرَبِينَ بِٱلمَعروفِ حَقًّا عَلَى ٱلمتَّقِينَ

Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth, for parents and near relatives, according to usage, a duty **(incumbent)** ***upon those who guard*** **(against evil)** **(*2:180*).**

فَمَن بَدَّلَه بَعدَمَا سَمِعَه فَإِنَّمَآ إِثمه عَلَى ٱلَّذِينَ يبَدِّلونَه إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Whoever then alters it after he has heard it, the sin of it then is only upon those who alter it; surely Allah is Hearing, Knowing **(*2:181*).**

فَمَن خَافَ مِن مّوصٍ جَنَفًا أَو إِثمًا فَأَصلَحَ بَينَهم فَلَآ إِثمَ عَلَيهِ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَفورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

But he who fears an inclination **(to a wrong course)** ***or an act of disobedience on the part of the testator, and effects an agreement between the parties, there is no blame on him. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful*** **(*2:182*).**

Commentary

Verse 180

Qur'an: ***Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth*** **(*2:180*).**

The language is that of an obligatory rule, because *al-kitabah* (اَلكِتَابَةُ = to write; translated here as "prescribed") is used in the Qur'an always for definitely obligatory laws. It is further strengthened by the word "a duty" coming at the end of the verse, because duty too is used, like writing and prescription, for compulsory orders. But the word "a duty" is qualified by "upon those who guard (against evil)"; this somewhat weakens the sense of obligatoriness; it would have been more appropriate, in case of obligatoriness, to say, 'a duty upon the believers'. In any case, it is said that the verse was later abrogated by the verse of inheritance. If so, then it would only be its "obligatoriness" which was abrogated, not its being liked, recommended. Perhaps, the phrase qualifying "a duty" was used for this very purpose.

al-Khayr (الخَيْر) is wealth; it probably denotes considerable wealth, not an insignificant amount. *al-Ma'ruf* (المَعْرُوف = known; common usage of good deed and favour).

Verse 181

Qur'an: ***Whoever then alters it after he has heard it, the sin of it then is only upon those who alter it*** **(*2:181*).**

The pronoun in "the sin of it" refers to the alteration; all the rest refer to the bequest according to usage; bequest is *a masdar* and is used both as masculine and feminine. (That is why the pronouns used in the verse are of masculine gender.) "upon those who alter it": Allah did not say 'upon them', because the wording used clearly indicates the nature of sin, that is, alteration of a will; also it paves the way for the next verse.

Verse 182

Qur'an: ***But he who fears an inclination*** **(to a wrong course)** ***or an act of disobedience on the part of the testator, and effects an agreement between the parties, there is no blame on him*** **(*2:182*).**

al-Janaf (اَلجَنَف = inclination; deviation); it is said that it indicates outward inclination of the feet, and *al-hanaf* (اَلحَنَف) shows their inward inclination. In any case, it is used here to denote an inclination towards sin and disobedience, as it is followed by "or an act of disobedience". The verse branches out from the preceding one. Its meaning is as follows (and Allah knows better): The sin of alteration is only upon those who alter the bequest (which was made according to usage).

Of course, if someone fears that the bequest of the testator is, or shall be, an act of disobedience or inclined towards a wrong course, and then effects an agreement between the parties, free from error and sin, then there is no blame on him; because he has not changed a bequest made according to usage; rather he has altered only the wrong and sin found in it.

Traditions

Muhammad ibn Muslim says that he asked Imam as-Sadiq ('a) whether a bequest was allowed in favour of an heir. The Imam said: "Yes". Then he recited this verse, "Bequest is prescribed... if he leave behind wealth, for parents and near relatives..." (al-'Ayyashi). This tradition is also narrated, with a slight change in wording, in *al-Kafi* and *at-Tahdhib.*

Imam as- Sadiq ('a) narrates through his father from 'Ali ('a) that he said: "He who did not bequeath at the time of his death for those of his near relatives who were not his heirs, surely ended his deeds with disobedience."[1]

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said about this verse: "(It is) a right which Allah has given in the properties of men to the Master of this affair (i.e. to the Imam)." The narrator says: "I said: 'Is there a prescribed limit for it?' He said: 'Yes'. I said: 'How much?' He said: 'Its lower limit is one-sixth; and the higher, one-third.'"[2]

The author says: This theme has been narrated also by as-Saduq in his *al-Faqih* from the same Imam. It is a fine inference from this verse read in conjunction with the verse:

***"The Prophet has a greater claim on the believers than they have on themselves, and his wives are their mothers; and the possessors of relationship have the better claim in the ordinance of Allah to inheritance, one with respect to another, than* (other) *believers, and* (than) *those who have fled* (their homes), *except that you do some good to your* awliya'; *this is written in the Book"* (*33:6*).**

This verse abrogated the system prevalent in early days of Islam by which *a "muhajir* brother" inherited from his *"ansar* brother"; and initiated inheritance between the relatives; then it made an exception (from this rule of inheritance by relationship), and that was about doing *some good to your* awliya'[3]. Now Allah has made the Prophet *al-waliyy* and his pure progeny *al-awliya'* of the believers. And this exception of doing good to the *awliya'* brings it within the jurisdiction of the verse under discussion:

***"Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth, for parents and near relatives"* (*2:180*).**

And the Imams are also the "near relatives" (of the Prophet). Understand it.

The Fifth or the Sixth Imam said about the verse,

***"Bequest is prescribed for you…"* (*2: 180*).**

"It is abrogated. The verses of inheritance abrogated it."[4]

The author says: This tradition may be reconciled with the preceding ones if we say that it was only its obligatoriness which was abrogated; thus the order will continue as *al-mustahabb* (المسْتَحَبّ = liked, recommended) even after that.

Abu Ja'far ('a) said about the verse,

***"But he who fears an inclination* (to a wrong course) *or an act of disobedience…"* (*2: 182*).**

"al-Janaf is inclination to the side of error without knowing that it is allowed (or not)."[5]

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "When a man has made his will, then it is not allowed to the executor to alter the bequest made; he should enforce it as (the testator) has bequeathed; except when (the testator) has made his will against the command of Allah, and done injustice (to an heir). Then it is allowed to the executor to bring the will to the truth (i.e. the right course). Let us say, there is a man who has got some heirs; and he bequeaths all (his) property to some of the heirs, depriving the others. In such cases, it is allowed to the executor to bring the will to the right (course). And this is (the meaning of) the word of Allah,

***"An inclination* (to a wrong course) *or an act of disobedience"* (*2: 182*).**

And *al-Janaf* is inclination to some of his heirs, leaving the others aside; and *al-ithm* (الإِثْم = sin; act of disobedience) is that he directs to build fire-temples, and to take intoxicant. Then the executor is allowed not to do any such thing."[6]

The author says: The explanation of *al-janaf* given in this tradition, makes clear the meaning of the word of Allah:

***"And effects an agreement between the parties"* (*2: 182*).**

The words refer to effecting reconciliation and settlement between the heirs, when there is conflict and quarrel among them because the testator was inclined to wrong course, and favoured one heir at the cost of the others.

Muhammad ibn Suqah said: "I asked Abu Ja'far ('a) about the word of Allah:

***"Whoever then alters it after he has heard it, the sin of it then is only upon those who alter it"* (*2: 181*).**

He said: 'It has been abrogated by the next verse;

***"But he who fears an inclination* (to a wrong course) *or an act of disobedience on the part of the testator, and effects an agreement between the parties, there is no blame on him"* (*2: 182*).**

He said: 'It means that if the executor fears that the testator is inclined to a wrong course concerning his children in the bequest he has entrusted the executor with, in a way Allah is not pleased with, (and which is) against the truth, then there is no blame on him, (i.e. on the executor of the will) if he changes it to the truth, and to the way of right that Allah is pleased with.'"[7]

The author says: This tradition explains one verse with the help of another. Therefore, the word, "abrogated", is not used here in its terminological meaning. And we have earlier mentioned that the word, "abrogation", is sometimes used in the speech of *Ahl Al-Bayt,* in a meaning different from the language of the Principles of Jurisprudence.

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1. al-'Ayyashi.
2. al-'Ayyashi.
3. al-Awliya' (اَلأَوْلِيَاءُ) is plural of al-waliyy (الوَلِيُّ), which has several meanings, important among them being: friend, guardian, relative, a person close to Allah, and master. In the explanation given in the text, it has been taken to mean master and guardian. (tr.).
4. al-'Ayyashi.
5. Majma'ul-bayan.
6. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
7. al-Kafi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Appendix A: A Chronological List of the Fourteen Infallibles ('a)

SL. No.	Designation	Agnomen (*Kunya*)	Name	Father's name	Title (*Laqab*)	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Martyred by means of	Place of burial
1.	The Last Prophet of Allah	Abu 'l Qasim	Muhammad (Ahmad) (Al-Mustafa)	'Abdullah	Rasulu'llah, Nabiyyu'llah, An-Nabiyy, Khatamu'n- Nabiyyin	17th Rabi' I, in the year of the Elephant. (25.8.570 AD)	28th Safar, 11 AH (25.5.632 AD)	Natural	Holy Medina, al-Munawwa-rah, Saudi Arabia

SL. No.	Designation	Agnomen (*Kunya*)	Name	Father's name	Title (*Laqab*)	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Martyred by means of	Place of burial
2.	One of the Fourteen Infallibles	Umm Abiha	Fatimah	Muhammad	az-Zahra', as-Siddiqah, al-Batul, Sayyidatu'n- Nisa'.	20th Jumada II, in the fifth Year after the declaration of the Prophet-hood. (2.1.615 AD)	3rd Jumada II, 11 AH (26.8.632)	Injured	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
3.	1st Imam	Ab al-Hasan, Ab al-Hasanayn, Abu Turab.	'Ali	Abu Talib	Amir al-Mu'minin, al-Wasiyy, al-Murtada, (Haydar).	13th Rajab, 10 Years before the declaration of the Prophethood. (25.5.600 AD)	Struck on 19th Ramadan (25th January); Died on 21st Ramadan 40AH (27.1.661 AD)	Sword – while he was engaged in prayers.	Holy an-Najaf al-Ashraf, Iraq. (al-Ghariyy)
4.	2nd Imam	Abu Muhammad	al-Hasan	'Ali	Al-Mujtaba, as-Sibt (al-Akbar).	15th Ramadan, 3AH (1.3.625 AD)	7th Safar, 50 AH (6.3.670 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
5.	3rd Imam	Abu 'Abdillah	al-Husayn	'Ali	Sayyidu'sh-Shuhada, as-Sibt (al-Asghar).	3rd Sha'ban, 4 AH (8.1.626 AD)	10th Muharram, 61 AH (10.10.680 AD)	Sword – in the Battle of 'Ashura	Holy Karbala' (at-Taff), Iraq.
6.	4th Imam	Abu Muhammad	'Ali	al-Husayn	Zaynu'l-Abidin, Sayyidu's-Sajidin, as-Sajjad.	5th Sha'ban, 38 AH (6.1.659 AD)	25th Muharram, 94/95 AH (31.10.712 / 20.10.713 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
7.	5th Imam	Abu Ja'far	Muhammad	'Ali	al-Baqir.	3rd Safar, 57 AH (16.12.676 AD)	7th Dhi'l-hijjah, 114 AH (28.1.733 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
8.	6th Imam	Abu 'Abdillah, Abu Musa.	Ja'far	Muhammad	as-Sadiq.	17th Rabi' I, 83 AH (20.4.702 AD)	25th Shawwal, 148 AH (14.12.765 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
9.	7th Imam	Ab al-Hasan (al-Awwal – The First), Abu Ibrahim	Musa	Ja'far	al-Kazim, al-'Abd as-Salih, al-'Alim.	7th Safar, 129 AH (28.10.746 AD)	25th Rajab, 183 AH (1.9.799 AD)	Poison	Holy al-Kazimiyyah, Iraq.

SL. No.	Designation	Agnomen (*Kunya*)	Name	Father's name	Title (*Laqab*)	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Martyred by means of	Place of burial
10.	8th Imam	Ab al-Hasan (al-Thani – The Second),	'Ali	Musa	Ar-Rida.	11th Dhi 'l-qi'dah, 148 AH (29.12.765 AD)	17th Safar, 203 AH (24.8.818 AD)	Poison	Holy Mashhad, (Tus – Kurasan), Iran.
11.	9th Imam	Abu Ja'far (ath-Thani – The Second)	Muhammad	'Ali	at-Taqi, al-Jawad.	10th Rajab, 195 AH (8.4.811 AD)	30th Dhi 'l-qi'dah, 220 AH (25.11.835 AD)	Poison	Holy al-Kazimiyyah, Iraq.
12.	10th Imam	Ab al-Hasan (ath-Thalith – The Third)	'Ali	Muhammad	an-Naqi, al-Hadi.	2nd Rajab, 212 AH (27.9.827 AD)	3rd Rajab, 254 AH (28.6.868 AD)	Poison	Holy Samarra' (Surra-man-ra'a), Iraq.
13.	11th Imam	Abu Muhammad	al-Hasan	'Ali	al-'Askari.	8th Rabi 'II, 232 AH (3.12.846 AD)	8th Rabi 'II, 260 AH (1.1.874 AD)	Poison	Holy Samarra' Iraq.
14.	12th Imam	Abu 'l Qasim	Muhammad	al-Hasan	al-Mahdi, al-Qa'im, al-Hujjah, al-Gha'ib, Sahibu 'z-Zaman, Sahib al-Amr, al-Muntazar.	15th Sha'ban, 255 AH (29.7.869)	Still alive, but in occultation.	----	----

[1] [1]
SHARES

Appendix B: List of Names and Numbers of the Surahs of the Holy Qur'an

In this book the references of the Qur'anic verses have been given by writing serial number of the relevant chapter, followed by a colon (:) that is followed by the number/s of the Verse/s. The names of the chapters have been omitted for the sake of brevity.

The names of the chapters with their serial numbers are given here for the guidance of the readers.

To find, for instance, the verse 5:67 in the Qur'an, the reader should open the fifth chapter, that its, *al-Ma'idah* (اَلمَآئِدة = The Table) and then find the 67th verse.

SL. No.	Arabic Names of the Chapters	Transliteration	Meaning
1.	فاتِحَة الكِتاب	*Fatihat al-kitab*	The Opening of The Book
2.	البَقَرة	*al-Baqarah*	The Cow
3.	آل عِمران	*Al 'Imran*	The House of Imran
4.	النِّســاء	*an-Nisa'*	Women
5.	المَـائِدة	*al-Ma'idah*	The Table
6.	الأنْعـام	*al-An'am*	Cattle
7.	الأعراف	*al-A'raf*	The Battlements
8.	الأنْفـال	*al-Anfal*	The Spoils
9.	التَّوْبَة	*at-Tawbah*	Repentance
10.	يونس	*Yunus*	Jonah
11.	هود	*Hud*	Hood
12.	يوسف	*Yusuf*	Joseph
13.	الرَّعد	*ar-Ra'd*	Thunder
14.	اِبراهيم	*Ibrahim*	Abraham
15.	الحِجْر	*al-Hijr*	El-Hijr
16.	النَّحل	*an-Nahl*	The Bee
17.	الإِسْرآء	*al-Isra'*	The Night Journey
18.	الكَهْف	*al-Kahf*	The Cave
19.	مَريَم	*Maryam*	Mary

20.	طه	***Ta Ha***	**Ta Ha**
21.	الأَنْبِيآء	***al-Anbiya'***	**Prophets**
22.	الحَجّ	***al-Hajj***	**The Pilgrimage**
23.	المؤمِنون	***al-Mu'minun***	**The Believers**
24.	النّور	***an-Nur***	**Light**
25.	الفرقان	***al-Furqan***	**Discrimination (Salvation)**
26.	الشـعَراء	***ash-Shu'ara'***	**The Poets**
27.	النَّـمْل	***an-Naml***	**The Ant**
28.	القَصَص	***al-Qasas***	**The Stories**
29.	العَنْكَبوت	***al-'Ankabut***	**The Spider**
30.	الروم	***Ar-Rum***	**The Greeks**
31.	لقْمان	***Luqman***	**Lokman**
32.	السَّجْدة	***as-Sajdah***	**Prostration**
33.	الأحزاب	***al-Ahzab***	**The Confederates**
34.	سـَبَأ	***Saba'***	**Sheba**
35.	فاطِر (المَلائِكة)	***Fatir (or, al-Mala'ikah)***	**The Originator (or The Angels)**
36.	يـس	***Ya Sin***	**Ya Sin**
37.	الصّـافّات	***as-Saffat***	**The Rangers**
38.	ص	***Sad***	**Sad**
39.	الزمَر	***az-Zumar***	**The Companies**

40.	المؤْمِن	***al-Mu'min***	**The Believer**
41.	فصِّلَت	***Fussilat***	**Distinguished**
42.	الشورى	***ash-Shura***	**Counsel**
43.	الزخْرف	***az-Zukhruf***	**Ornaments**
44.	الدخان	***ad-Dukhan***	**Smoke**
45.	الجاثِية	***al-Jathiyah***	**Hobbling**
46.	الأحقاف	***al-Ahqaf***	**The Sand-Dunes**
47.	محَمّد (ص)	***Muhammad***	**Muhammad**
48.	الفَتْح	***al-Fath***	**Victory**
49.	الحجرات	***al Hujurat***	**Apartments**
50.	ق	***Qaf***	**Qaf**
51.	الذّارِيات	***adh-Dhariyat***	**The Scatterers**
52.	الطور	***at-Tur***	**The Mount**
53.	النَّجْم	***an-Najm***	**The Star**
54.	القَمَر	***al-Qamar***	**The Moon**
55.	الرَّحمن	***ar-Rahman***	**The All-merciful**
56.	الواقِعَة	***al-Waqi'ah***	**The Terror**
57.	الحَديد	***al-Hadid***	**Iron**
58.	المجادَلة	***Al-Mujadalah***	**The Disputer**
59.	الحَشْر	***al-Hashr***	**The Mustering**

60.	الممتَحَنة	***al-Mumtahanah***	**The Woman Tested**
61.	الصَّف	***as-Saff***	**The Ranks**
62.	الجمعة	***al-Jumu'ah***	**Congregation**
63.	المنافِقون	***al-Munafiqun***	**The Hypocrites**
64.	التَّغابن	***at-Taghabun***	**Mutual Fraud**
65.	الطَّلاق	***at-Talaq***	**Divorce**
66,	التَّحْريم	***at-tahrim***	**The Forbidding**
67.	الملْك	***al-Mulk***	**The Kingdom**
68.	القَلَم	***al-Qalam***	**The Pen**
69.	الحَاقّة	***al-Haqqah***	**The Indubitable**
70.	المَعارِج	***al-Ma'arij***	**The Stairways**
71.	نوح	***Nuh***	**Noah**
72.	الجِنّ	***Al-Jinn***	**The Jinn**
73.	المزَّمِّل	***al-Muzzammil***	**Enwrapped**
74.	المدَّثِّر	***al-Muddaththir***	**Shrouded**
75.	القِيامَة	***al-Qiyamah***	**The Resurrection**
76.	الدَّهر (الإنسان)	***ad-Dahr*** **(or,** ***al-Insan*****)**	**The Time (or, Man)**
77.	المرسَلات	***al-Mursalat***	**The Loosed Ones**
78.	النَّبأ	***an-Naba'***	**The Tiding**
79.	النّازِعات	***an-Nazi'at***	**The Pluckers**

80.	عَبَس	***'Abas***	**He Frowned**
81.	التَّكْوير	***at-Takwir***	**The Darkening**
82.	الإنفِطار	***al-Infitar***	**The Splitting**
83.	المطـَفِّفين	***al-Mutaffifin***	**The Stinters**
84.	الإنشِقاق	***al-Inshiqaq***	**The Rending**
85.	البروج	***al-Buruj***	**The Constellations**
86.	الطّارق	***at-Tariq***	**The Night-star**
87.	الأعلى	***al-A'la***	**The Most High**
88.	الغاشِيَة	***al-Ghashiyah***	**The Enveloper**
89.	الفَجْر	***al-Fajr***	**The Dawn**
90.	البَـلَـد	***al-Balad***	**The Land**
91.	الشـَّمْس	***ash-Shams***	**The Sun**
92.	اللَّيل	***al-Layl***	**The Night**
93.	الضحى	***ad-Duha***	**The Forenoon**
94.	الإنشـِراح	***al-Inshirah***	**The Expanding**
95.	التِّين	***at-Tin***	**The Fig**
96.	العَلَق	***al-'laq***	**The Blood-clot**
97.	القَدر	***al -Qadr***	**Power**
98.	البَيِّنَة	***al-Bayyinah***	**The Clear Sign**
99.	الزِّلزال	***Az-Zilzal***	**The Earthquake**

100.	العَاديات	***al-'Adiyat***	**The Chargers**
101.	القارِعَة	***al-Qari'ah***	**The Clatterer**
102.	التَكاثر	***at-Takathur***	**Rivalry**
103.	العَصْر	***al-'Asr***	**Afternoon**
104.	الهمَزَة	***al-Humazah***	**The Backbiter**
109.	الفيل	***al-Fil***	**The Elephant**
106.	قـرَيْش	***Quraysh***	**Quraish**
107.	الماعون	***al-Ma'un***	**Charity**
108.	الكَوْثَر	***al-Kawthar***	**Abundance**
109.	الكافِرون	***al-Kafirun***	**The Unbelievers**
110.	النَّصر	***An-Nasr***	**Help**
111.	تَبَّت	***Tabbat*** **(or,** ***Lahab*****)**	**Perish (or, The Flame)**
112.	الإخْلاص (التَّوحيد)	***al Ikhlas*** **(or,** ***at-Tawhid*****)**	**Sincere Religion (or, Divine Unity)**
113.	الفَلَق	***al-Falaq***	**Daybreak**
114.	النَّاس	***an-Nas***	**Men**

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Al-Mizan, An Exegesis Of The Qur'an - Volume 3

Al-Mizan, An Exegesis Of The Qur'an - Volume 3

Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i

Translated by
Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi

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This is the third volume of the renowned commentary on the Holy Qur'an, written by one of its greatest modern commentators, and translated by Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi. This volume contains the exegesis of Suratul Baqarah from verse 183 to 223.

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Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi [6]

Topic Tags:

Qur'anic Exegesis (Tafsir) [7]

Foreword

1. al-'Allamah as-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i (1321/1904 — 1402/1981) — may Allah have mercy upon him was a famous scholar, thinker and the most celebrated contemporary Islamic philosopher.

2. We have introduced him briefly in the first volume of the English translation of *al-Mizan* which will be published, by the help of Allah, in the near future.

3. al-'Allamah at-Tabataba'i is well-known for a number of his works of which the most important is his great exegesis, *al-Mizan fi tafsiri 'l-Qur'an* which is rightly counted as the fundamental pillar of scholarly work which the 'Allamah has achieved in the Islamic world.

4. We felt the necessity of publishing an exegesis of the Holy Qur'an in English. After a thorough consideration, we chose *al-Mizan* because we found that it contained in itself, to a considerable extent, the points that should necessarily be expounded in a perfect exegesis of the Holy Qur'an and the points

that appeal to the mind of the contemporary Muslim reader.

5. Therefore, we proposed to al-Ustadh al-'Allamah as-Sayyid Sa'id Akhtar ar-Radhawi to undertake this task because we were familiar with his intellectual ability to understand the Arabic text of *al-Mizan* and his literary capability in expression and translation.

6. So we relied on him for this work and consider him responsible for the English translation as al-'Allamah at-Tabataba'i was responsible for the Arabic text of *al-Mizan* and its discussions.

7. We have proceeded to publish the translation of the second volume of the Arabic *al-Mizan* earlier as it was ready for printing, whereas the first volume is not ready yet for the reasons which we do not wish to state here. So we saw no reason in delaying its printing.

8. We have included two appendixes: one for the authors cited in all the volumes of *al-Mizan,* and the other for the books cited therein. These two appendixes have been attached to the first volume of the English translation. Apart from this, the readers will find two appendixes in all the volumes of the translation of *al*-Mizan.

* * * *

We implore upon Allah to affect our work purely for His pleasure and to help us to complete this work which we have started. May Allah guide us in this step which we have taken and in the future steps, for He is the best Master and the best Helper.

WORLD ORGANIZATION FOR ISLAMIC SERVICES
(***Board of Writing, Translation and Publication***)
6/4/1402
1/2/1982
Tehran, Iran

Suratul Baqarah: Verses 183-185

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

١٨٣) يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ)

١٨٤) أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ۚ فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۚ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ
مِسْكِينٍ ۖ فَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُ ۚ وَأَن تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

١٨٥) شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ ۚ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنكُمُ الشَّهْرَ
فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۖ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا
الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

'O' you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard yourselves (***against evil***) (***183***)***,***

for a counted number of days; but whoso among you be sick or on a journey than (***he shall fast***) ***that number of other days; and those who are with difficulty able to do so, on them is a redemption by feeding a poor man, and whoso on his own accord performs good, it is better for him, and that you fast is better for you if you know*** (***184***)***;***

The month of Ramadan, in which was sent down the Qur'an, a guidance for the people, and clear evidence of guidance and discrimination (***between right and wrong***)***; so whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein; and whosoever is sick or on a journey*** (***he shall fast***) ***the same number of other days; Allah desires ease for you and He desires not hardship for you; and so that you may complete the*** (***prescribed***) ***number, and that you may glorify Allah for his guiding you, and so that you may be thankful to Him.*** (***185***)

General Comment

The sequence of the three verses shows that they were revealed together; ***for a counted number of days*** (in the beginning of the second verse) is an adverbial phrase which qualifies the word, *fasting,* in the first verse; and ***the month of Ramadhan*** in the beginning of the 3rd verse is a predicate, whose subject is a deleted but an understood pronoun denoting the words ***counted number of days*** (which appear in the 2nd verse).

Thus it would mean ***the counted number of days is the month of Ramadhan.*** Alternatively, it may be a subject of a deleted but implied predicate, and would mean ***the month of Ramadhan is that in which fasting is prescribed for you.***

As a third possibility, it may be an alternative of the *fasting* mentioned in the first verse. Whatever be the grammatical position, it is the explanation and description of the counted number of days in which fasting has been prescribed.

Therefore, all three verses are well arranged statements with a single aim, i.e., promulgation of the ordinance of fast in the month of Ramadhan.

Obviously, the first sentences have been revealed to prepare minds for the final ones. The first two verses are like a preparatory statement, with which a speaker tries to keep the audience calm and quiet, and this ensures that they do not become restless on hearing the tough commandment which he is to announce shortly.

All the sentences in these two verses gently lead the hearer's mind to the ordinance of the fast of Ramadhan. They mention such things as removing of gloom and anxiety, cheering the soul, and imperceptibly assuaging the mood of unruliness and disobedience.

They point to various concessions and indulgences which have been incorporated in the commandment. And all this is in addition to the goods of this world and the next which may be earned by following the law.

It is for this reason that the sentence ***O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you*** is followed by the phrase ***as it was prescribed for those before you*** — hinting that you should not think it as a heavy burden nor should you feel gloomy, for it is not a new command for which you have been singled out; it was ordained for previous peoples also.

It further encourages them by pointing out: by following this command you may get what you aim at by your faith — and that is piety (*taqwa*, **التّقوى**) which is the best thing for those who believe in Allah and the Day of Judgement — and you are believers.

This is the import of the phrase ***so that you may guard yourselves*** (*tattaq*ۡ*n* , **تتقون**, from the same root as *taqwa*).

Moreover, this worthy action, which inspires the hope of piety in you (as it did in your predecessors), does not **involve** ***all your time, nor even most of it. It is only for a counted number of days.***

The word "days" (*ayyaman,* **أَيَّامٍ**) is a common noun, and it shows insignificance. It's adjective, "counted", hints that the number is very easy (as we see in the words of Allah in the Qur'an, 12:20,

And they sold him for a small price, some counted pieces of silver).

Allah, now points to further concessions: Look how we have been lenient on the man who has a genuine difficulty in keeping the fast, as well as on the person who is hard pressed to do so.

Such a man should redeem it by a substitute which is neither difficult nor heavy, and that is feeding a poor person.

But whoso among you be sick or on a journey, then **(he shall fast)** ***that number of other days; and those who are with difficulty able to do so, on them is a redemption by feeding a poor man.***

You must appreciate that this act brings much good to you; and that Allah has made it as easy for you

as possible. It is in your interest that you should perform it willingly and eagerly without reluctance, sluggishness or annoyance; because if one performs a good deed on his own accord, it is better for him than if he does it under coercion.

This point is made clear in the words:

And whoso on his own accord performs good, it is better for him, and that you fast is better for you if you know.

In this way, the first two verses prepare minds for the third verse, ***So whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein ....***

In the light of this explanation, it is clear that the sentence in the first verse, ***Fasting has been prescribed for you,*** is the report of the fact of prescription; it is not the initial promulgation [like the verses,

O Ye who believe! retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the slain ... (**2:178**)

and

Bequest is prescribed for you, when death approaches one of you if he leaves behind wealth, for parents and near relatives ... (**2:180**)]

There is a difference between retaliation in the matter of the slain and bequeathing to parents and near relatives on the one hand, and the fast on the other.

Retaliation for the slain is a matter which is dear to the hearts of the heirs of the slain; and it conforms to the natural rage which is inflamed in them when they see the murderer alive and safe without any worry for the crime he had committed.

Likewise, tender love for one's relatives is in itself enough to encourage one to make one's will in favour of one's parents and relatives, and especially so at the time of death and permanent separation.

These two commandments, i.e., retaliation and bequest are in conformity with natural feelings, and, as such, they do not require preparatory statements or preambles before their promulgation. But the case of the fast is different.

Here the man is denied his choicest desires and most coveted acquirements, i.e., food, drink and sex. It is a heavy burden which should, by nature, be disliked by him.

When such an order is directed to the general public it needs some preparatory and introductory statement so that they may accept this hardship willingly and eagerly.

Therefore, the prescription in the verses of retaliation for the slain and bequest, for parents and relatives

is the original promulgation (without need of any preamble); but the words, ***Fasting has been prescribed for you*** is just a report of the commandment and has been used as the preamble of the actual command which comes later:

so whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein ....

Commentary

Qur'an: ***O ye who believe.***

This mode of address reminds them of a virtue (faith, belief) which encourages them to accept whatever order is given to them by their Lord, even if it is against their desires and habits.

The verse of retaliation also begins with this very phrase because the Christians, unlike other people, did not believe in retaliation. Therefore, it was necessary to point out that retaliation is allowed to the faithful, even if others do not believe in it.

Qur'an: ***Fasting has been written*** **(i.e. prescribed)** ***for you, as it was written*** **(i.e. prescribed)** ***for those before you:***

"Kitabah" (الكتابة) means to write. Metaphorically it is used for prescription, enjoinment and irrevocable decision, as Allah says, *Allah has written down*:

I will most certainly prevail, I and My apostles **(58:21);**

and We write down what they have sent before and their footprints **(36:12);**

and We wrote on them in it, a soul for a soul **(5:45).**

"Siyam" and *"sawm"* (الصّيام and الصّوم) are infinite verbs meaning to abstain from an action, like abstaining from eating, drinking, sexual intercourse, talking, walking, etc.

Also it is said that it means abstaining from desirable and coveted things. Later in religion, it was mostly used for abstaining from some specified things from dawn-break up to sunset with intention (*niyyah,* النّيّة.)

Those before you **means** the nations that came before the advent of Islam: the followers of the previous prophets, like the followers of Mۥsa, 'Isa, etc. It is this meaning that is understood from this phrase wherever it occurs in the Qur'an.

The comparison ***as it was prescribed for those before you*** is not general; it does not cover all the peoples, nor all the details of the Islamic fast.

In other words, it does not mean that the fast was prescribed for the followers of all previous prophets,

nor that the fast ordained for them was like the Islamic fast in all the details, like period, rules and other particulars.

The comparison is only in the principles of fasting and abstaining from some things without any regard to the particulars.

Those before you indicates followers of the previous religions without specifying who they were.

The words ***as it was written*** (**prescribed**), show that they were followers of revealed religions, and that the fast was ordained for them, but the present Old and New Testaments do not say that fasting was compulsory and obligatory; rather they extol and praise it.

Still, the Jews and the Christians do fast on various days in the year, in various ways, like abstaining from meat, or milk, or food and drink. There are stories in the Qur'an of the fasts of Zakariyya and Maryam in which they abstained from talking.

Fasting was also observed in traditional (unrevealed) religions, as is reported from ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. The Hindus observe fasts even now.

Apparently, it is human nature itself that leads one to believe that the fast is an act of worship which brings one nearer to the Creator.

Sometimes it is said that ***those before you*** means the Jews and the Christians; or that it refers to only the previous prophets (and not their followers). The basis of these assertions is some traditions which are not free from weakness.

Qur'an: *So that you may guard yourselves* (against evil) (or, so that you may become pious).

Idol-worshippers fasted to please their deities, or, on committing a sin, to extinguish their deities' anger, or to get their prayers granted.

This turns the fast into a trade or barter; the man performs what is needed by the deity and the deity in its turn grants the prayers of the man; the worshipper pleases the deity so that the deity may do what will please the worshipper.

But Allah is All-holiness. No want, need, emotion or grievance can be attributed to Him even in imagination. In short, He is free from every shortcoming.

So, all the good effects of the worship (whatever the act of worship and whatever the good results) return to the worshipper himself, not to the Lord. The same is the case of sins.

Allah has said:

If you do good, you do good for your own souls, and if you do evil it is for them (**only**) (**17:7**).

It is this principle which the Qur'an teaches by always connecting the effects of good and evil actions with man: man, who is all needs and wants, as Allah says

***O man! You are the ones who stand in need of Allah, and Allah is He who is the Self-sufficient* (35:15);**

and refers to the fact specifically in connection with fasting in the words, ***so that you may become pious*** (**may guard your selves against evil**).

There is no doubt that one may achieve piety through fasting. Everyone naturally feels that for union with the sublime world of holiness and for rising to the height of perfection and spirituality man should first of all restrain himself from gratifying material desires.

He should keep away from satisfying the body's lust and inclinations, and purge his soul from the love of worldly affairs. In short, he should guard himself against all such things which may carry him away from his Lord. This is piety (*taqwa,* **التّقوى**) which is achieved through abstinence from lust and desires.

Even more beneficial and more effective for the common man is the abstinence from common lawful desires like food, drink and sex. This trains him to keep away from unlawful things; and creates in him the will to guard himself against sin and evil, and to come nearer to Allah.

Obviously, when he accepts the words of Allah by abstaining from lawful desires, and heeds to and obeys His commandment; he will be more needful and obedient to His words in connection with sins and unlawful things.

Qur'an: *Counted number of days* (*ayyaman ma'dadatin,* **معدودات ايّاما**):

"*ayyaman*" has the vowel of (*fathah*,**الفتحه , ـً**) because an adverb of time, in (*fi*, **فى**) is understood before it. It is connected with the word fast (*siyam*, **الصّيام**).

It has already been explained that bringing the word "days" as a common noun and attaching to it the adjective, "counted", implies that the order given is not very difficult or bothersome.

This in turn encourages the man to obedience. Also it has been maintained that the words ***the month of Ramadhan*** .... are the explanation of "days". So, the meaning of ***counted number of days is the month of Ramadhan.***

Some commentators have said that the words, *counted number of days,* mean three days in every month and the fast of the day of 'Ashura' (10th day of Muharram).

Some others have said that it is the 13th, 14th and 15th days of every month plus the fast of 'Ashura' According to them, the Messenger of Allah and the Muslims used to fast on these days, then Allah revealed the verses ***the month of Ramadhan in which was sent down the Qur'an ...*** and this verse

abrogated the previous system and made the fast of Ramadhan obligatory.

These commentators rely on many traditions of the Sunnis — traditions which contradict each other.

There are many things which prove the falsity of these assertions:

First: Fasting is a common act of worship involving the whole *ummah.* Had there been a system, at any time, of fasting for three days in a month, it would have been recorded in history, and there would not have been any difference about its ordination and then abrogation. But it is not so.

Moreover, saying that the fast of the day of 'Ashura' was obligatory (or even desirable), like the fast of the three days of every month, is the innovation of the Umayyids (May Allah curse them).

They wiped out the progeny of the Messenger of Allah and his family members on the day of 'Ashura'; they killed their men-folk, imprisoned their women and children and looted their belongings in the battle of Karbala'; and then they regarded it as a blessed auspicious day.

They took that day as an *'id* (festival), started its fast to obtain its supposed blessings, and then invented for it many virtues and excellences.

They forged many traditions showing that it was an Islamic festival. They went even further and said that it was a common festival which had been observed even by the pagans of Arabia, as well as by the Jews and the Christians since the advent of Musa and 'Isa.

But all these assertions are baseless. This day has no national importance like the Nowruz of the Persians, nor did there occur any victory or important event on that day to make it an Islamic festival (like the Day of the first revelation or the Birthday of the Prophet) nor has it any religious aspect which could make it a purely religious festival like 'Idu '1-fitr and 'Idu '1-adhha. So how could it be given importance without any reason?

Second: The context makes it impossible to say that the 3rd verse, i.e. ***the month of Ramadhan ... ,*** was revealed alone, to abrogate the first two verses.

As mentioned earlier, it is the predicate of a deleted but understood subject, or the subject of a deleted but implied predicate.

Thus it is a clarification of the words, ***counted number of days,*** and all three verses are one inter-related speech with a single aim, i.e. the promulgation of the obligatory fast of the month of Ramadhan.

Those commentators claim that the phrase, ***month of Ramadhan,*** is the subject and words, ***in which was sent down the Qur'an,*** are its predicate.

If we accept this claim then this third verse would become an independent sentence, capable of being revealed alone. But then it could not abrogate the previous two verses, because there would be no

contradiction between this verse and the previous ones; and no verse can abrogate another when there is no contradiction between them.

Even weaker than this is another view, which appears in some writings. It says that the second verse, ***for a counted number of days,*** abrogated the first verse, ***Fasting has been prescribed for you...***

They claim that fasting was prescribed for the Christians, but they went on changing its number after 'Isa (a.s.) until finally it was settled as fifty days.

Allah then ordained it for the Muslims by the first verse, and people fasted accordingly in the beginning of Islam, until the second verse ***counted number of days*** was revealed and the new system was introduced abrogating the first order.

This view is clearly weaker and more false than the previous ones and all the objections mentioned therein apply here also. Clearly the second verse is complementary to and a continuation of the first verse.

The traditions upon which these people have based their views are obviously against the clear meaning and context of the Qur'an.

Qur'an: *But whoso among you be sick or on a journey then* (he shall fast) *that number of other days*:

"f..." (ف, then, but, so, and, etc) here is for derivation. It means that the sentence is an off-shoot of ***Fasting has been prescribed on you*** **and** ***for a counted number of days.***

The fast is written down and obligatory and the number is a part of that obligation. The basic obligation (fast) cannot be neglected and the same is the case of the prescribed number.

Even if for any reason like sickness or journey the obligation of fasting during the counted number of days (i.e. month of Ramadhan) is waived, the obligation of fasting an equal number of days after that month will still be enforced, in order to make up for the lost days of Ramadhan. It is this principle which has been mentioned in the 3rd verse ***and so that you may complete the*** **(prescribed)** ***number.***

Here we find another significance of the phrase, ***counted number of days;*** it implies that the order given is not very difficult, and also it shows that the number is an integral part of the said obligation.

"Sickness" is the opposite of "health". *Safar* (journey, السّفر) is derived from a root-word which means to uncover. It is as though the traveller is uncovered by going out of his house which is his refuge and shelter.

Allah used the words, ***on a journey,*** and did not say ***a traveler***; it shows that for the purpose of this rule one must be on a journey presently. Past travel or a travel which is yet to start (i.e. to commence later)

would not make one entitled to this concession.

Most of the Sunni scholars say that this sentence shows only that a sick person or a traveler is allowed, but not compelled to leave the fast. According to them, a sick person or a traveler has the choice of fasting or not fasting.

But, as has been explained earlier, the meaning of ***then that number of other days*** is that he is (not only allowed but is) 'compelled' not to fast during the originally prescribed days; he must fast that number of "other days."

This is narrated from the Imams of the *Ahlu 'l-bayt.* Also, it is the ruling of a group of the companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) like 'Abdu 'r-Rahman ibn 'Awf, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Abu Hurayrah and 'Urwah ibn az-Zubayr.

The Sunni scholars say that this sentence means: ***but whoso among you be sick or on a journey*** (**and did not fast**) ***then*** (**he shall fast**) ***that number of other days;*** thus they suppose that there is a deleted but implied verb in this sentence. But this supposition is incorrect because:

First: Such a supposition is against the apparent meaning. A deletion can be accepted only when the context demands it; and the context of this sentence does not need any such thing.

Second: Even if we accept this implied verb, it will not mean that a sick person or a traveler has only an option to break his fast.

In these verses Allah is promulgating a law and in this context the hypothetical, implied words, ***and did not fast*** will mean that during sickness or journey, breaking one's fast is not a sin, rather it is lawful.

The word 'lawful' is a general one, meaning all or any of its three kinds: obligatory, recommended and allowed. There is no reason to suppose that in this context it would mean only "allowed" (to the exclusion of the other two meanings.)

Rather there is a reason against such a supposition, because the Wise Law-Giver when promulgating a law cannot leave one of its important and obligatory aspects.

Qur'an: ***and those who are with difficulty able to do so on them is a redemption, by feeding a poor man...***

'spending one's active strength in a work' (*itaqah,* **الاطاقة**) is the meaning explained by some scholars.

It necessarily means that the work would be done with difficulty and by overstraining oneself. *Fidyah* (**الفدية**) means a substitute.

Here it is a material substitute, i.e., food for a poor man. The word implies a food which satiates a hungry poor man; and it should be the normal food of the man.

The rule of the substitute also is obligatory, like the rule of repaying a fast afterward for the sick or the traveller. It is shown by the words, 'on those' (*'ala'l-ladhina,* على الّذين), which is obviously for obligation and not merely for option or choice.

Some people have said that this sentence gave the people an option and then it was abrogated. According to them, Allah had given all those who were able to fast an option to keep the fast or to redeem it by feeding a poor man every day, because in the beginning people were not accustomed to fast.

Then it was abrogated by the sentence, ***So whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein.*** Some of those writers said that this verse abrogated the option so far as able persons were concerned.

But the rule regarding those who were unable to fast (like extremely old persons, pregnant women and women who are suckling a baby) remained unabrogated and they could give the substitute.

By God, such an explanation is nothing but playing with the Qur'an and cutting and chopping up the verses into shreds and fragments.

If you study these 3 verses, you will see that it is all a well-connected speech, delivered with one aim, all in one context only; its sentences are connected with each other, having a sweetness and flow of their own.

But if you cut it into pieces and accept these people's interpretation then everything will fall out of context and some phrases will contradict others; the latter sentences will clash with the former ones.

According to their explanation, first it says 'Fasting is prescribed for you', then it says that 'those who are able to fast have an option to fast or to redeem it by a substitute'; then it goes on to say that 'fasting is obligatory for all of you when you witness the month'; then it abrogates the rule of redemption for able persons and keeps it unchanged for unable ones (while the fact remains that even before the supposed abrogation that verse was not concerned at all with those who were unable.

They want us to believe that the single word meaning 'those who are with difficulty able to do so (*yutiqnahu,* يطيقونه) referred, before the abrogation, to those who were able to fast; and now after abrogation the same word means 'those who are unable to fast'!

In short, according to these commentators, ***those who are with difficulty able to do so*** in the middle of the verse would abrogate ***fasting is prescribed for you*** which is in the beginning of the verse, because both would be contradictory to each other; but the question would arise why that abrogation was made conditional on ability without any apparent reason.

Then again the sentence, ***So whosoever of you witnesses the month he shall fast therein,*** at the end of the verse, would abrogate ***those who are with difficulty able*** which is in the middle.

Still the question would arise as to how it abrogated that rule for only those who were able to fast and not for those who were unable to do so, when the verse is unconditional and comprehensive, and covers able and unable persons alike.

Interestingly enough, the supposedly abrogated verse in itself did not cover those who were unable. This is its most obvious absurdity.

Add to it their assertion that the words, ***the month of Ramadhan ...,*** abrogated the words, ***counted number of days,*** which in their turn abrogated the words, ***Fast has been prescribed for you;*** and then ponder with this background upon the meaning of the verses and you will be astonished!

Nothing of the verses would remain intact; all would have been abrogated!!

Qur'an: ***and whosoever on his own accord performs good it is better for him.***

'To do work willingly and gladly' (*tatawwu',* **التّطوع**) is of the form *tafa''ul* (**التّفعّل**) from *tawu'* (**الطّوع**) which is the opposite of 'to dislike' (*kurh,* **الكره**).

The meaning of acceptance is implied in the form *tafa'ul* (**التّفعّل**); therefore, the meaning of *tatawwu'* (**التّطوّع**) is 'the present doing of work willingly and gladly without reluctance or annoyance, whether that work is obligatory or not'.

The use of this word especially for non-obligatory good work was established among the Muslims long after the revelation of the Qur'an, and this later usage is based on the view that it is only non-obligatory good work which is done willingly without compulsion, while there is a shade of compulsion in obligatory work because there is no choice, it has to be done.

Anyhow, the word *tatawwu'* (**التّطوع**) in its root or form, was not used only for non-obligatory good work.

The preposition for derivation is here represented by *"f ..."* (**ف**; and, so, etc.), and the sentence is an off-shoot of the previous sentences.

Thus its meaning is: Fasting is prescribed for you, keeping in view your good and betterment, with the additional advantage that it brings you in line with previous peoples, and it has been made easy for you; therefore you should perform it willingly, to do it thus rather than doing it reluctantly.

It appears from the above that the words of Allah: *whoso performs good willingly* have metaphorically put the 'cause' in the place of 'effect'. It says that to perform good willingly is better for him, instead of saying that to fast willingly is better.

It is like the verse,

Indeed We know, it certainly grieves thee that which they say, but verily it is not thee that they belie, but it is the signs of Allah which the wrong-doers deny **(6:33),**

which means "so endure it and do not be grieved because they do not deny ,thee..."

Sometimes it is said that the sentence, ***whoso willingly performs good it is better for him,*** is connected with the preceding sentence, i.e. ***those who are with difficulty able to do so, on them is a redemption by feeding a poor man.***

According to this interpretation it means that whoso performs non-obligatory good work by giving redemption twice — feeds one poor man twice or two poor men once, it is better for him.

But there are three defects in this interpretation:

First: As mentioned earlier, there is no evidence to show that the word meaning 'to do a work willingly' (*tatawwu',* التّطوّع) is reserved for non-obligatory good work.

Second: In this interpretation "*f* ..." (ف) would be without any real significance. It has been mentioned above that the sentence is an off-shoot of the previous sentence. But what is the connection between the rule of redemption and giving non-obligatory food on one's own accord?

Third: This interpretation confuses ***adding something on one's own accord*** **with** ***performing good willingly.*** But obviously these are two separate things.

Qur'an: ***and that you fast is better for you if you know***:

This sentence is complementary to the preceding one; and the meaning is: Perform willingly the fast which is prescribed for you because willingly doing a good deed is in itself another good work, and the fast is good for you, therefore, to fast willingly is good twice.

Sometimes it is said that the sentence, ***and that you fast is better for you,*** is addressed to those who are excused from fasting and not to the other believers who are obliged to fast and for whom the fast is compulsory.

They say that its apparent meaning is that fasting is better for you, but there would be no objection if you do not fast. Obviously this meaning can fit the non-obligatory fast only, and not the obligatory one.

The implication is that those who have the option not to fast (like a sick person or a traveller) are exhorted to fast and it is recommended to them to keep the fast rather than to break it.

There are five objections to this interpretation:

First: There is no evidence to support this view.

Second: The two sentences differ in syntax. The pronoun in ***whoso among you be sick ...*** is in the 3rd person, and those in ***and that you fast ...*** are in the 2nd person.

Third: The first sentence does not give any option to the sick man or the traveller. On the contrary, the words, ***then*** **(he shall fast)** ***that number of other days,*** obviously specify fasting on other days, as explained earlier.

Fourth: Even if we accept, for the sake of argument, that the first sentence gives an option to the sick person and the traveller, that option is not between fasting and not fasting; it is between fasting in Ramadhan and fasting on other days.

And as both options are of a fast in different periods, merely the words, ***that you fast is better for you,*** cannot prove (in the absence of a clear context) any preference for fasting in Ramadhan over fasting on other days.

Fifth: Allah in this sentence is not promulgating any law, so that it may be argued that the description of the preference of fasting shows that in this particular case it is not obligatory.

Rather, according to the context of this verse, its aim is to emphasize that the law given by Allah cannot be devoid of benefit, good and advantage for you.

Other examples of this style may be seen in many verses, like,

therefore turn to your Creator and kill your selves; that is better for you **(2:54);**

then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading; that is better for you, if you know **(62:9);**

you shall believe in Allah and His Apostles, and struggle hard in Allah's. way with your properties and your lives; that is better for you if you know. **(61:11).**

And there are many such verses which show that this style of speech in the Qur'an does not give an option to the believer, it only shows that a given order is for their own advantage and benefit.

Qur'an: ***the month of Ramadhan in which was sent down the Qur'an, a guidance ...*** :

The month of Ramadhan is the ninth month of the lunar Arabic calendar, between the months of Sha'ban and Shawwal. No other month has been mentioned by name in the Qur'an.

The word meaning 'to come down' is *nuz*ا*l* (النّزول). Its transitive forms meaning 'to bring down' are *inzal* (الانزال) and *tanzil* (التّنزيل); the difference between them is that *inzal* (الانزال) implies bringing down all at once, while *tanzil* (التّنزيل) implies bringing down gradually.

The Qur'an (القرآن) is the name of the book sent down to His Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), because it is recited and read. [It is derived from the root form *qara'a* (قرأ) meaning to read or recite.] Allah has said:

Surely We made it an Arabic Qur'an that you may understand **(43:3).**

This name is used for the whole book as well as for its parts.

The verse proves that the Qur'an was sent down in the month of Ramadhan. But Allah has also said,

And the Qur'an which We revealed in portions so that you may read it to the people by slow degrees, and We sent it down sending it **(in portions) (17:106).**

And this verse clearly shows that it was revealed gradually during the entire period of the Call, which was about twenty-three years. Also accepted history proves it. This has apparently given room to the objection that there was a complete conflict between these two verses.

Some people have replied that the Qur'an was sent down all at once to the lowest heaven in the month of Ramadhan, and then was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) in portions, gradually, over about twenty-three years — the total period of the Call.

This reply is based on some traditions, some of which will be quoted during the discussion of traditions.

Others have objected to this reply. They say that the words ***a guidance for mankind, and clear evidence of guidance and distinction*** which come immediately after these words do not support this interpretation; it is difficult to understand how the Qur'an guided the people and was a source of discrimination between truth and falsehood during the time when it was in the heaven for years and years.

This objection has been answered in this way: The Qur'an is a guidance and a discrimination; it means that it had the potential and ability to guide those who needed its guidance and to discriminate between the truth and falsehood if there was any confusion.

It could remain with that hidden potential for a while until the time came for that potential to become a fact. There are countless examples in civil laws and state constitutions where many articles remain on paper until the occasion arises for their enforcement and they are then acted upon.

But we must admit that there is a great difference between constitutions and civil laws on one hand, and addresses and lectures on the other.

Lectures or talks cannot be delivered a single moment before their time and occasion, and there are in the Qur'an numerous verses of this type. For example:

Allah surely heard the plea of her who pleads with you about her husband and complains to Allah, and Allah knows the contentions of both of you ... **(58:1);**

And when they see merchandise or sport, they break up for it and leave you standing ... **(62:11);**

Of the believers are men who are true to the covenant which they made with Allah: so of them is he who accomplished his vow, and of them is he who yet waits, and they have not changed in the least **(33:23).**

Moreover, the Qur'an contains verses which have been abrogated and other that abrogated them, and there is no sense in combining both of them in revelation sent all together.

Another interpretation is that the declaration that the Qur'an was sent down in the month of Ramadhan means that its first verses were revealed at that time.

It is difficult to accept this interpretation either. It is well known that the Prophet (s.a.w.) was sent with the Qur'an, and the beginning of his Call was on the 27th Rajab, and there is between this date and Ramadhan a gap of more than thirty days.

How could the prophethood remain without the revelation of the Qur'an for such a long period? Look at the 96th chapter which was the first chapter revealed (***Read in the name of your Lord ...***) its context shows that it was revealed at the beginning of the Call.

Likewise, the contents of the 74th chapter show that this also was revealed at the beginning.

Anyhow, the words, ***the month of Ramadhan in which was sent down the Qur'an,*** obviously do not mean that only the first verses were revealed at that time; and there is no such indication in the context.

Therefore, such explanation would be without any proof or evidence. Also there are some more verses which have similar meaning.

For example,

By the Book that makes manifest **(the truth),** ***Surely We sent it down on a blessed night; Surely We are ever-warning*** **(44:2-3);**

and

Surely We sent it down on the Night of Destiny **(97:1).**

Neither the apparent meanings of these verses nor their contexts support the view that ***sending down of the Qur'an*** means the beginning of its revelation or the revealing of its first verses.

Deep consideration of the verses of the Book shows something quite different from all the above interpretations.

The verses which say that the Qur'an was sent down in the month of Ramadhan, have used the verbal form of *inzal* (الانزال) which indicates sending down all at once. (Qur'an 2:185; 44:23; 97:1). This "all at once" can mean either of these two things:

1) To consider the complete book as one collection and look at it as a collective noun, as Allah says in 10:24

Like the water which we sent down from the sky.

Now, the rain comes down gradually, but it is looked upon as one whole collection and that is why the verbal form *inzal* (**الانزال**), and not *tanzil* (**التّنزيل**), has been used.

The same is the meaning of the verse

(this is) ***a book We have sent down to you abounding in good, so that they may ponder over its verses ...*** **(38:29)**

in which the whole book has been taken as one collection and the verbal form *inzal* (**الانزال**) has been used.

2) To accept that the reality of the Book is something different from the words written on paper, etc.

Its common meaning gives the picture of a thing which can be divided and sectionalized, and which can be a subject of expansion and graduality, but the reality of the Book is a single, non-gradual thing which was sent down all at once, and not in pieces.

3) This second meaning is apparent in many verses of the Qur'an. See for example the verses,

(This is) ***a book whose verses were confirmed, then they were divided*** **(made clear)** ***from One Wise All-aware.*** (11:1)

"Strengthened" or "confirmed" (*uhkimat,* **احكمت**) is the opposite of "divided", "made clear" (*fussilat,* **فصّلت**). The literal meaning of *tafsil* (**التّفصيل**) is to divide into parts and sections; that is why it implies explanation and clarification.

Therefore, confirmed (*uhkimat,* **احكمت**) would mean that in that state it was indivisible and indistinguishable in its parts, because it was a single unit without any part of section.

The sequence of the words in this verse shows that this division which we find in the Qur'an came to it later; before that, it was something confirmed, undivided and one.

More clear are the verses,

And certainly, We have brought them a Book which We have 'sectionalized' **(i.e. explained)** ***with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for the people who believe. Do they wait for aught but its final interpretation? On the day when its final interpretation comes about, those who neglected it before will say: Indeed the Apostles of our Lord had brought the truth ...*** **(7:52-53).**

Also the verses,

And this Qur'an is not such as could be forged by those besides Allah, but it is a verification of that which is before it and a 'sectionalization' **(explained)** ***of the Book, there is no doubt in it, for the Lord of the worlds ... Nay, they rejected that of which they have not comprehensive knowledge, and its final interpretation has not yet come to them ...*** **(10:37–38).**

These verses, and especially the last one, clearly show that the division into parts is a thing which came later unto the Book. Therefore, the reality of the Book is one thing and the division which it was subjected to is another.

The unbelievers rejected the division (explanation) of the Book because they neglected (forgot) something to which that explanation led and which has been referred to here as the "final interpretation", and which will appear before them on the Day of Judgement and, at that time, they will inevitably know it, but then their regret will not benefit them, ***and it is too late to repent.***

These verses also imply that the real Book is the final interpretation of the Book.

Even far more clear are the verses,

By the Book which makes manifest **(the truth),** ***surely We made it an Arabic Qur'an that you may understand, and surely it is in the Source of the Book with Us truly elevated, full of Wisdom.*** **(43:2–4)**

It is apparent that there is a Book which makes manifest the truth, which was later made into an Arabic Qur'an (Recited thing); and it was clothed in recited words and Arabic language so that people might understand; but in reality it is in the Source of the Book with Allah, elevated, so that minds do not reach it, full of wisdom without any division.

This verse contains the definition of the Manifest Book and that it is the foundation of the Qur'an revealed later in plain Arabic.

In the same way Allah says in 56:75—80

But nay! I swear by the falling of stars – and most surely it is a great oath if you only know — Most surely it is an honoured Qur'an in a Hidden Book, none touches it save the purified ones; A sending down **(revelation)** ***from the Lord of the worlds.***

These verses clearly show that the Qur'an has its own place, in the Hidden Book, where none touches it save the purified servants of Allah, and it was only later that it was sent down.

But before being sent down it was in a Book which is hidden from others. It is that Hidden Book which was referred to as the Source of the Book in 43:2–4. The verse 85:21–22 calls that Source the Guarded

Tablet:

Nay! It is a Glorious Qur'an in a Guarded Tablet.

This tablet is called Guarded because it is preserved and protected from changes; but we know that in the Qur'an which was sent down gradually there are verses abrogating other verses; gradual completion itself is a sort of change.

So this Qur'an cannot be called the Guarded Tablet. In short, the Manifest Book is the foundation of this Qur'an and this Qur'an is like a clothing to that Reality.

Now we know that the relation of this Qur'an, when it was gradually revealed, to the Manifest Book — which we call the Reality of the Book — is that of a dress to its wearer, and of a metaphor to its real meaning, and of a proverb to its actual aim.

It is because of this relationship that the word Qur'an is sometimes used for the Real Book itself, as in the divine words, ***Nay! It is a Glorious Qur'an in a Guarded Tablet,*** and in other similar verses.

Therefore, we may correctly interpret the 'sending down of the Qur'an', in the three verses, where it is said that it was revealed in the month of Ramadhan (2:185), on a blessed night (44:3), on the Night of Destiny (97:1), as the revelation of the Source of the Book, i.e., the Manifest Book to the heart of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) all at once.

And the sectionalized Qur'an was revealed to his heart gradually during the entire period of his prophetic Call.

This can be better appreciated when we study some other verses. Allah says,

and do not make haste with the Qur'an before its revelation is made complete to you... **(20:114)**

Also He says:

Do not move your tongue with it to make haste with it; surely on Us is the collecting of it and the reciting of it. Therefore, when We have recited it, then follow its recitation; again on Us is the explaining of it. **(75:16-19).**

These verses prove without any shadow of doubt that the Messenger of Allah had prior knowledge of what was being revealed to him. That is why he was asked not to make haste in reciting before its revelation was completed. (This matter will be further explained, God willing, in its proper place)

In short, after pondering on the verses of the Qur'an one cannot but accept that:

This Qur'an which was gradually revealed to the Prophet is based on a sublime Reality which the minds of common people cannot comprehend and the hands of defiled imaginations (defiled with lust, greed

and materialism) cannot touch.

That sublime Reality was revealed to the Prophet all at once in the month of Ramadhan. And in this way Allah taught him the real goal and meaning of the Book. (This subject will be explained under the verse 3:7.)

This is what a deep consideration of the verses of the Qur'an leads one to believe. Of course, the traditionalists, and most of the theologians as well as the materialists (who do not accept the reality of metaphysics, the things beyond the matter) have no way but to interpret these and the like verses (e.g. the verses which say that the Qur'an is a guidance, mercy, light, spirit, setting-place of the stars, manifest book, in a guarded tablet, sent down from Allah, in purified pages etc.) as metaphorical and figurative expressions. Thus they have turned the Qur'an into poetic prose!!

A writer has discussed the meaning of the revelation of the Qur'an in the month of Ramadhan. What follows is the gist of his writing; our comment will follow thereafter:

"There is no doubt that the beginning of the Call of the Prophet coincided with the revelation of the first revealed verses of the Qur'an, and with his being asked by Allah to announce the truth and warn the people.

Also, there is no doubt that this happened in the night, as Allah says,

Surely We sent it down on a blessed night **(44:3).**

Again, there is no doubt that it was in a night of the month of Ramadhan as Allah says,

the month of Ramadhan, in which was sent down the Qur'an. **(2:185)**

"The whole Qur'an was not revealed on that night; but as the chapter of ***The Opening*** was revealed in it, and this chapter covers all the features and knowledge of the Qur'an, it was as though the whole Qur'an was revealed therein.

(Moreover, the name "Qur'an" is used for parts of the Book as well as for the complete book. Further, it is used in Qur'anic terminology for all divine books like the Torah, the Injil, the Zabur etc.)

"The first revelation was

Read in the name of Thy Lord ... **(96:1)**,

which was sent down on the 25th night of Ramadhan. It was revealed when the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was proceeding to the house of Khadijah in the middle of the valley, looking at Jibril, who revealed to him the divine words, ***Read in the name of Thy Lord Who created ...*** When the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) received the revelation, it came into his mind to ask Jibril how to remember the name of his Lord.

So, Jibril appeared before him and taught him the chapter of the Opening, ***In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful, All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds ...*** Then he taught him the method of prayer and disappeared.

Then the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) regained consciousness, and did not find any trace of what he had witnessed except a fatigue which had overcome him because Jibril had pressed him hard at the time of revelation.

Now, the Prophet continued on his way but he did not realize that he was sent by Allah as His Messenger to mankind, commissioned to guide them unto the right path.

When he entered the house, he slept the whole night because of weariness. In the morning, the angel returned and brought the revelation of God,

O thou shrouded **(in thy mantle!)** ***Arise, and warn ...*** **(74:1–2)**

Then he goes on to say:

"This is the meaning of revealing the Qur'an in the month of Ramadhan, and the coincidence of his Call with the Night of Destiny.

As for the assertion of some Shi'ite books that the start of the Call was on the 27th day of Rajab, these traditions (which are only found in some Shi'ite books which were not written before the beginning of the 4th century of Hijrah) are against the Qur'an, as you know."

Then he says:

"And there are other traditions which support these (Shi'ite) traditions and say that the meaning of the revelation of the Qur'an in the month of Ramadhan is that it was sent down, before the beginning of the Call of the Prophet, from the Guarded Tablet to the Inhabited House, and there Jibril dictated it to the angels so that it might be sent down to the Prophet after the beginning of his Call.

But these mythological ideas which have been interpolated into the traditions are rejected, first, because they are against the Qur'an, and second, because ***the guarded tablet*** mentioned in the Qur'an means the physical world, and ***the inhabited house*** means the earth because mankind lives therein."

This was the gist of his writing and, by my life; I do not know which sentence in this balderdash can be amended to conform with fact and reality. The damage is too extensive to be repaired.

First: It is a strange fabrication which he has uttered about the beginning of the prophethood and the revelation of the Qur'an for the first time.

Where did he find that ***Read in the name of Thy Lord ...*** was revealed to the Prophet when he was on his way; and that the chapter of ***the Opening*** was revealed to him then and there; and at the same time

he was taught the prayer, and that thereafter he entered his house and slept weary and tired, and then in the morning the chapter of *al-Muddaththir* (the Shrouded) was revealed asking him to announce his prophethood and warn the people?

All of this is just his imagination which has no basis at all; neither any clear verse nor any tradition of any standing supports it. It is just a mythological story which conforms with neither the Qur'an nor the traditions, as you will see.

Second: He claims that it is accepted that the beginning of the prophethood and the revelation of the Qur'an as well as the command to announce his prophethood, all happened at one and the same time.

Then he explains it by saying that the prophethood started with the revelation of the Qur'an; and the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was a prophet without being an apostle (Messenger of Allah) for one night, then in the morning he was given Messengership when the 74th chapter (The Shrouded) was revealed.

But the writer cannot show any evidence to support himself either from the Qur'an or from the traditions; and what he claims to be "accepted" is not accepted at all.

As for the traditions, what he has criticised the Shi'ite collections for (that they were written long after the incident) equally discredits all other collections of traditions and no trust can be had in any of them, because not a single book of the traditions, whether of the Sunnis or the Shi'ahs, was written before the expiry of the second century of Hijrah or even later; this is about the traditions.

The position of history — which, by the way, does not give the above details — is worse than the traditions. And the criticism of interpolation which he has levelled against the traditions must be directed against history also.

So far as the Qur'an is concerned, it does not support any of his assertions. On the other hand, it plainly contradicted what he has said and refutes what he has fabricated.

The 96th chapter (***Read in the name of Thy Lord ...***) is the first one revealed, as has been described by the traditions and is proved by the meaning of the first five verses; and nobody has said that this chapter was revealed piecemeal, (at least there is a likelihood that the whole chapter was revealed all together).

Now, this chapter clearly shows that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) used to pray in the presence of the Meccans, some of whom forbade him to do so and talked about him in their gatherings.

(We do not know the method of the prayer which the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) performed in the beginning of his Call to be nearer to Allah, except that this chapter mentions prostration.)

Look at these verses of this chapter:

Did you see him who forbids a Servant **(of Allah)** ***when he prays? Have you considered if he*** **(the Servant)** ***were on the Guidance or enjoined guarding*** **(against evil)?** ***Have you considered if he*** **(the unbeliever)** ***gives the lie*** **(to the truth)** ***and turns*** **(his)** ***back? Did he not know that Allah does see? Nay! If he desist not, We will certainly smite his forehead; a lying sinful forehead. Then let him summon his council; We too will summon the tormentors of Hell. Nay! Obey him not, and prostrate and draw nigh*** **(to Allah) (95:9—19).**

These verses show that there was someone who used to forbid a worshipper to pray, and used to mention this matter in his council and did not desist from his deed, and obviously the one who used to pray was the Prophet himself (s.a.w.a.), especially as Allah directly addresses him in the last verse, ***Obey him not, and prostrate and draw nigh*** (to Allah).

This chapter, therefore, proves that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) used to pray even before the revelation of the first chapter of the Qur'an, and was a Guidance, and enjoined piety and guarding against evil.

In other words, his work at that time consisted of prophethood and was not just a warning. In short, even before the Qur'an was revealed, and the chapter of ***the Opening*** sent down to Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), and even before he was told to start his Call, he was a prophet and used to pray.

So far as the chapter of ***the Opening*** is concerned, it was revealed some time after the beginning of the Call.

Had there been any truth in the assertion of the above writer that it was revealed just after the 94th chapter because "it came into the Prophet's mind to ask Jibril how to remember Allah", it would have begun with the word say (*qul,* **قل**):

Say, in the name of Allah ... **or** ***Say, all praise belongs to Allah ... ;*** and would have ended at the words, ***Master of the Day of Judgement,*** because the last three verses have no relation with that supposed question, and it is not the style of the Qur'an to indulge in unnecessary talk.

Of course, a verse in the 15th chapter (al-Hijr) says "***And certainly We have given you seven oft-repeated*** **(verses)** ***and the great Qur'an"*** (15-87) .

This chapter is of Meccan period as its subject matter shows. ***Seven oft-repeated verses*** means the chapter of ***the Opening,*** and it has been mentioned here side by side with the Qur'an, which shows its greatness and excellence.

Yet it was not counted as the *Qur'an,* but only as ***seven of its oft-repeated verses,*** and only one of its parts.

For further proof see 39:23 where the Qur'an has been given the adjective, "oft-repeated":

Allah has revealed the best discourse, a Book conforming in its various parts, oft-repeated ...

Thus, the Qur'an is "oft-repeated" and the chapter of ***the Opening*** is only ***seven of its verses.***

The 15th chapter mentions the 1st chapter (the Opening). It proves that the 1st chapter was revealed before the 15th. And the 15th chapter contains the verses;

Therefore, declare openly what you are bidden and turn aside from the polytheists. Surely, We will suffice you against the scoffers. **(15:94—95)**

These verses show that the Messenger of Allah had refrained from openly warning for a time and then was told to start it again by the words, ***declare openly.***

Now let us look at the 74th chapter (the Shrouded) and its 2nd verse, ***Arise, and warn.*** *If* this chapter was revealed all together, then this verse has the same implication as the verse

declare openly what you are bidden **(15:94)**

because this chapter contains the following verses:

Leave Me and him whom I created alone and given him vast riches ... Then he turned back and was big with pride and, then he said, this is naught but an enchantment narrated .... **(74:11-25).**

This subject matter is similar to 15:94 which says

and turn aside from the polytheists.

And if it was revealed piecemeal, then the context says that at least the verses in its beginning were revealed in the early days of the Call, after the Prophet had refrained from an open warning for some time.

Thirdly: He asserts that those traditions are forged and mythological which say that the Qur'an was sent down on the Night of Destiny from the Preserved Tablet to the Inhabited House all together before the beginning of the prophethood and then its verses were revealed in segments to the Messenger of Allah.

He says that they are against the Book of Allah and their meaning is not correct. He claims that the Preserved Tablet means the Natural World and the Inhabited House means the Earth. Well, all the above claims are incorrect and a complete lie:

First, because no clear verse of the Qur'an goes against these traditions as has been explained earlier.

Second, because nowhere in these traditions has it been said that the Qur'an was sent down to the Inhabited House *before the beginning of the prophethood.* This clause has been added by the said writer without any basis.

Third, his assertion that the Preserved Tablet means the natural world (i.e. the universe) is a very ugly

interpretation; nay, rather it is a laughing-stock. Can he explain the basis of naming this universe — in the word of Allah — as 'the Preserved Tablet'?

Is this because this universe is free from change and alteration? But it is a world of movement, always in a state of fluidity, always changing its quality. Or is it because this universe is safe from physical deterioration? But the facts belie such a claim.

Or is it because undeserving persons cannot have any knowledge of it (as Allah says in 56:77-79,

***Most surely it is an honoured Qur'an, in a book that is protected*; *none shall touch it save the purified ones*)?**

But the knowledge of the universe is not restricted to any one group.

In short, that writer did not produce any interpretation concerning the revelation of Qur'an in the month of Ramadhan, which could be in accord with the words of the verse. His interpretation boils down to this:

The words, ***in it was sent down the Qur'an,*** mean "it is as though in it was sent down the Qur'an." And the words, ***Surely We revealed it in the Night of Destiny.*** mean "It is as though We revealed it in the Night of Destiny." Any such interpretation cannot be tolerated by language, usage and context.

Further, that writer says that the whole Qur'an was revealed to the Messenger of Allah in the Night of Destiny because he was given in that night the chapter of the *Opening* which contains all the important knowledge of the Qur'an.

Well why cannot others say that the revelation of the Qur'an all at one time means that all its knowledge was sent down to the heart of the Messenger of Allah in that night? There is nothing to contradict this interpretation.

There are many other fabrications and lies in that writing but this is not the place to go into a detailed refutation of it.

Qur'an: *a guidance for the people and clear evidence of guidance and discrimination* (between right and wrong):

"People" generally refers to the lowest category of mankind whose intelligence is not high. This word is generally used in the Qur'an with this very implication.

For example,

***but most people do not know* (30:30);**

***And these examples, We set them forth for the people and none understand them but the learned* (29:43).**

This word generally refers to the people who just follow what others say; they cannot understand abstract ideas even with the help of evidence and proof; they cannot discriminate between right and wrong through any argument; they need someone to explain ideals and a guide to lead them to the right path.

And the Qur'an is a guidance for these people; and what an ideal guidance it is!! Then comes the special group which is perfect both in knowledge and deeds, ready to receive the light of divine guidance, and may be relied upon to discriminate between right and wrong.

For such people, the Qur'an is the clear evidence and proof of guidance and discrimination. It leads them to the guidance and chooses right for them and shows them how to discriminate between good and evil, right and wrong. Allah says:

Whereby Allah guides him, who follows His pleasure, into the ways of peace and takes them out from darkness towards the light by His will and guides them unto the path that is straight. **(5:16)**

From the above discourse one may understand why Allah has used here two words "guidance" and "clear evidence of guidance". The relation between the two is that of general and particular. The Qur'an is guidance for one group and clear evidence of guidance for another.

Qur'an: ***so whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein.***

Shahadah (witnessing, **الشّهادة**) means 'presence' by which one acquires knowledge. Witnessing the month means arrival of the month and the knowledge of its arrival.

Some people say that witnessing of the month means sighting of the new moon, and not on journey. But there is no evidence to support this interpretation. Of course, sometimes the context implies such a meaning but there is no such context in this verse.

Qur'an: ***and whosoever is sick or on a journey*** **(he shall fast)** ***the same number of other days*****,**

this sentence has been repeated here. But this repetition is not for emphasis.

It was explained earlier that the first two verses did not promulgate any law; rather they paved the way for such promulgation and prepared the minds to accept and follow the law which was to be shortly announced.

It is in this third verse in which that law has been promulgated. As the aim of the first sentences is different from this one, there is, in fact, no repetition.

Qur'an: ***Allah desires ease for you and He desires not hardship for you; and so that you may complete the*** **(prescribed)** ***number*****:**

it is the explanation of the above mentioned exception.

A sick person or a traveller has to break his fast because ***Allah desires ease for you,*** and he shall fast the same number in other days ***so that you may complete the prescribed number.***

So that "*L…*" (**ل;** so that) in 'so that you may complete the number" (*litukmilu 'l–'iddah ,* **لتكملوا العدّة**) gives the meaning of cause, and it is governed by the verb "desires".

Therefore, its meaning will be: We ordered you to break the fast (under certain conditions) and repay it in other days to lighten your burden and to complete the prescribed number.

Qur'an: ***and that you glorify Allah for his guiding you, and so that you may be thankful to Him*:**

Apparently, these two sentences, the first of which begins with 'so that' (*L …,* **ل**) for a 'cause', give the reason of the fast, and not of the exception and exemption.

The words ***the month of Ramadhan*** are followed by the description of the revelation of the Qur'an in this month.

And it indicates that there is a connection between the promulgation of the fast of the month of Ramadan and the revelation of the Qur'an in it as a guidance for the people and a clear evidence of guidance and discrimination between right and wrong.

Therefore, the "so that" (L… ,**ل**) points out that keeping the fast is meant to glorify Allah because He revealed the Qur'an for them and announced His Lordship and the people's servitude.

Also it is a thanks to Him since He guided them unto the truth and gave them a Book which discriminates for them between right and wrong.

There is a difference between thanking Allah by fasting and glorifying Him through it. A fast can be said to be a thanks to Allah only when it contains the real spirit of the fast.

What is the real spirit of the fast? To be sincere towards Allah by purifying oneself from material involvement and abstaining from the greatest desires of the heart.

But glorifying Him does not depend on that real spirit. The form of the fast and mere abstaining from those things which break the fast (whether it is done with sincere intention or not) shows the glory of Allah and His greatness, as the man is following His command with such self–denial.

Keeping in view this difference, Allah has differentiated between glorifying and thanking:

Thanking has been prescribed with "**لعلّ**" (*la'alla*) which literally means 'perhaps' and is used to indicate hope, while glorifying has begun with "so that" (L, **ل**) which indicates cause. And thus we find

and that you glorify Allah…and so that you may be thankful to Him.

It is the same style which is used at the end of the first of these verses so that you may guard yourselves...

Traditions

al-Hadith al-Qudsi: Allah said, "The fast is for Me and I shall give its reward." (or, "I shall be its reward")

Explanation: This *hadith* has been narrated by both groups (i.e. Sunni and Shi'ah) with slight variations. Why has the fast been declared to be for Allah?

Because it is the only act of worship which consists of a negative aspect only, for example, not eating, not drinking, etc., while all other acts of worship, like prayer and pilgrimage etc., consist of positive actions or are made up of positive and negative aspects.

The positive actions cannot be absolutely pure in showing the worshipper's spirit of servitude or the Lordship of Almighty Allah. It cannot be free of materialistic imperfections and limitations, and sometimes it may be done to please someone other than Allah (as in the case of hypocrisy and showiness.)

But the fast is an act of worship in which one has just to abstain from lust and desire and restrain oneself from worldly matters. This negative aspect is a thing which nobody can know except Allah.

It is a deal entirely between the servant and his Lord, and therefore this worship is purely for Allah; others can have no share in it.

"I shall give its reward" can also be translated "I shall be its reward". If it is the former, then it means that Allah Himself will give its reward directly and will not make anyone a link between Himself and His servant.

The servant worshipped Him in a way that nobody knew but Allah, so he will be given its reward in a way that nobody will know it but Allah.

It is like the *hadith* about alms: "Verily alms, Allah takes it Himself without making anyone a link in it. Allah said,

Do they not know that Allah ... takes the alms. **(9:105)**

If the second translation is correct, then it indicates that the reward of the one who fasts is nearer to Allah.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "The Messenger of Allah, in the early days of his prophethood, used to fast continuously so that people would think that he would not leave a single day's fast, and then to leave the fast continuously so that they would say he would not fast again.

Then he changed this regime and began fasting on alternate days, and this was the fast of Dawud. Then he changed it and started fasting three bright days (i.e., 13th, 14th and 15th of the lunar month when the moonlight is the brightest.)

Then again he divided the three days — one day each in every ten days, the first and last Thursdays and the Wednesday in the middle. And he continued with this regime till he left this world." [*al-Kafi*]

And there is *a hadith* from 'Anbasah al-'Abid that when the Messenger of Allah died, it was his custom to fast in Sha'ban and Ramadhan and three days in every month.

The author says: There are numerous traditions about it from *Ahlu 'l-bayt*; and this is the *sunnah* fast which the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) used to keep in addition to the fast of Ramadhan.

There is a *hadith* in *Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi under the words of Allah, ***O ye who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you,*** from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that "It is for the believers only."

Jamil asked as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the words of Allah ***O ye who believe! Fighting has been prescribed for you,*** **and** ***O ye who believe! Fasting has been prescribed on you.***

The Imam replied: "All such verses cover (even) those who have gone astray as well as the hypocrites, and (in short) everyone who accepted the declared Call (i.e. Islam)."

Hafs said: "I heard Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) say: 'Verily the month of Ramadan, Allah did not prescribe its fast for any of the people before us.' I asked: 'Then (what is the meaning of) the word of Allah:

O ye who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you?'

(The Imam) said: 'Verily Allah prescribed the month of Ramadhan for the prophets, not for their peoples. Thus Allah honoured this *ummah* and prescribed its fast for the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) as well as for this *ummah.'"* [*Man la yahdhuruhu 'l faqih*]

The author says: This *hadith is* weak because there is Isma'il ibn Muhammad in its chain of narrators. The same thing is narrated from al-'Alim i.e. al-Kazim (a.s.), and probably both traditions are one and the same. In any case, this is a solitary tradition (*khabaru 'l-wahid*, **الخبرالواحد** — a tradition which is not narrated by a great enough number of narrators as to create a certainty of its truth).

The obvious meaning of the verses does not support the view that "as it was prescribed for those before you" refers to the prophets only.

Had it been the case (and we know that this sentence has been revealed to encourage the believers to fast, to prepare them for it and to exhort them), then it would have served the purpose better if the word, 'prophets', had been clearly mentioned, as it would have been more effective. And Allah knows better.

There is a tradition from a man who asked as-Sadiq (a.s.) whether the Qur'an and furqan are two things or one. (The Imam) said: "Qur'an is the complete Book and Furqan is the obligatory law." [*al-Kafi*]

A hadith from the same Imam (a.s.) says: "Furqan is every clear verse of the Book." [*Jawami 'u 'l- jami '*]

The same Imam (a.s.) said: "Furqan is every clear law in the Qur'an and the Book is the complete Qur'an which vouches for the previous prohets." [*at-Tafsir,* al-'Ayyashi and al-Qummi]

The author says: This interpretation is supported by the literal meaning of the word.

It has been said in some traditions that Ramadhan is one of the names of Allah; therefore, one should not say 'Ramadhan came' or 'Ramadhan went away'; but should say 'the month of Ramadhan ...' But it is a solitary tradition and is unusual.

This saying has been reported also from Qatadah from among the commentators of the Qur'an. But the traditions which count the names of Allah do not mention Ramadhan as one of His names.

And the use of the word Ramadhan without the word "month" as well as its dual form "Ramadhanan"(two Ramadhans) is very common in the traditions narrated from the Prophet and the Imams of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* (a.s.)

This usage is very common; and it cannot be said that a particular narrator might have omitted the word 'month' by mistake.

as-Sabah ibn Nubatah said: "I told Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) that Ibn Abi Ya'fur told me to ask you some questions. The Imam said: 'And what are those?' I said:

'He asks you, if the month of Ramadhan enters and one is in his house, is he allowed to go on a journey?' The Imam said: 'Verily Allah says ***so whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein.***

Therefore, anyone who is in his house when the month of Ramadhan enters is not allowed to travel except for *hajj* or *'umrah* or in search of such goods which are in danger of being lost.' " [al-'Ayyashi]

The author says: It is a fine inference of a non-obligatory law based on the generality of the words.

'Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.) said: "And as regards the fast of a journey and sickness, the Sunnis (*'ammah,* العامّة) have conflicting views: a group says, he shall fast; others say, he shall not fast ; still others opine, he will fast if he so wishes, and shall leave it if so desires.

But we say he shall leave the fast in both conditions. And if he fasted while on journey or during illness then on him is its repayment, i.e. he must fast the same number on other days, because Allah says,

But whoso among you be sick or on a journey, then **(he shall fast)** ***the sane number of other days."*** [*al-Kafi*]

The author says: al-'Ayyashi also has narrated this tradition.

And there is in the same *Tafsir* (under the word of Allah, ***so whosoever of you witnesses the month ...***) a tradition of al-Baqir (a.s.) in which the Imam said:

How clear is this verse for him who understands — He who is present in Ramadhan shall fast, and he who is on a journey during it shall break the fast.

The author says: There are numerous traditions of the Imams of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* that it is incumbent on the sick and the traveller to break the fast; and the same is their *madhhab.* Also, you have seen that the verse of the Qur'an clearly proves the same.

Ab Basir said: "I asked him (the Imam — a.s.) about the words of Allah and those who are hardly able to do so, on them is a redemption by feeding a poor man. The Imam said: 'The aged man who is not able (to fast) and the sick.' " [al-'Ayyashi]

Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) is reported to have said about that verse: "The aged man, and the one who has a sickness in which he is always thirsty." [*ibid.*]

as-Sadiq (a.s.) is reported to have said in explanation of that verse: "The woman who is afraid for her child and the aged man." [*ibid.*]

The author says: There are numerous traditions from the Imams to this effect. And the "sick" mentioned in the tradition of Ab Basir (mentioned above) means that sick person whose illness continues the whole year till the next Ramadhan comes; such a sick person will not be required to fast the same number of other days.

Sa'id said that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Verily, there is *takbir* (*Allahu akbar*) on the day of 'Idu '1-fitr. I said: 'There is no *takbir* except in 'Idu '1-Adhha.'

The Imam said: 'There is *takbir* on that day, but it is *sunnah* in prayers of sunset, nightfall, dawn, noon and afternoon and in the two *rak'ats of 'id.*' " [al-'Ayyashi]

Sa'id an-Naqqash said: "Ab 'Abdillah (a.s.) told me, 'There is *takbir* on the eve of 'Idu 'l-fitr but it is *sunnah*. I asked him; 'And when it is?'He said: 'In the prayer of sunset, nightfall on the eve of 'Idu 'l -fitr and in the prayers of dawn and 'id. Then it is discontinued.' I asked him: 'How should I say it?' He said: 'You say

الله اكبر لا اله الّا الله و الله اكبر الله اكبر على ما هدانا

(*Allahu akbar Allahu akbar laillaha illa'llahu wa'llahu a kbar Allahu akbaru 'ala ma hadana*) — and it is the meaning of the words of Allah, ***so that you shall complete the number*** **(i.e. prayer)** ***and that you glorify Allah for His guiding you.***

And the glorifying (*takbir,* **التكبير**) is that you say: **الله اكبر لا اله الّا الله و الله اكبر و لله الحمد** (*Allahu akbar, la illaha illa'llah u wa'llahu akbar wa lillahi 'l-hamd*).' And he said: 'In a tradition the last *takbir is* four times.'" [*al-Kafi*]

The author says: The first tradition includes prayers of noon and afternoon in glorifying (*takbir,* **التّكبير**) and the last one omits them. This difference may be an indication of the difference in the degrees of *sunnah.*

And the word of the Imam, "i.e. prayer", perhaps indicate that the words of Allah, ***so that you shall complete the number,*** meant 'complete the number of the days of fast with the prayer of 'id and glorify Allah with prayers for His guiding you'.

This meaning is not against the meaning which we described earlier because it is an inference of a non-obligatory rule from a sentence containing an obligatory law.

It is like the tradition quoted earlier in which the Imam inferred from the verse, ***so whosoever of you witnesses the month he shall fast therein*** the undesirability of travel when one is in his abode on the first night.

The tradition has two different methods of *takbir.* This difference supports the opinion of some writers that glorifying in "that you glorify Allah" includes praising also, and that is why it is followed in this verse by the preposition on (*'ala*, **على**) which is the preposition generally used after praise (*al-hamd,* **الحمد**)

Ibn Abi 'Umayr said that he asked as-Sadiq (a.s.): "May I be your ransom! Is it correct what we are told, that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) fasted for twenty-nine days much more than he fasted for thirty days?

He (the Imam) said: 'Allah did not create a single letter of this talk. The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) did not fast but thirty days, because Allah says: ***You shall complete the number.*** Was the Messenger of Allah shortening it?' " [al-'Ayyashi]

The author says: This question is for repudiation. The tradition shows what we have already mentioned that completing herer means completing the month of Ramadhan.

One of our companions narrates about the words of Allah, ***so that you glorify Allah for His guiding you,*** that glorifying means 'extolling' and guidance means 'friendship of the Imams' (*wilayah,* **الولاية**). [*al Mahasin*]

The author says: The interpretation of guidance as friendship of the Imam is like explaining an idea by giving a clear example. Also, it may be treated as its inner meaning.

It is as has been mentioned in some traditions that in the verse: ***Allah desires ease for you and He desires not hardship for you,*** 'ease' means friendship (of the Imams) and 'hardship' means their enmity and friendship with enemies of Allah.

Hafs ibn al-Ghiyath asked Abū 'Abdillah (a.s.) about the words of Allah ***the month of Ramadhan in which was sent down the Qur'an,*** when (the fact is that) the Qur'an was sent down twenty years from its beginning to its end.

Abū 'Abdillah (a.s.) said: "The Qur'an came all together in the month of Ramadhan down to the 'Inhabited House'; then it came down (in segments) in a period of twenty years."

Then the Imam said: "The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said: 'The book of Ibrahim came down in the first night of the month of Ramadhan, and the Torah was sent down on the sixth of the month of Ramadhan, and the Zabūr was sent down on the eighteenth of the month of Ramadhan and the Qur'an was sent down on the twenty-third of the month of Ramadhan.' " [*al-Kafi*]

The author says: The tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) narrated by the Imam (a.s.) has been narrated by as-Suyūti in *ad-Durru 'l-man thūr,* with several chains from the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) through Wathilah ibn al-Asqa'.

Ya'qūb said: "I heard a man asking Abū 'Abdillah (a.s.) about the Night of Destiny, whether it occurred (once only) or it comes every year. Abū 'Abdillah (a.s.) said:

'If the Night of Destiny were taken away, the Qur'an would be taken away.' " [*al-Kafi* and *Man la yahdhurruhu 'l faqih*]

Ibn 'Abbas said: "The month of Ramadhan and the Blessed Night is the Night of Destiny because verily the Night of Destiny is the Blessed Night and it is in Ramadhan.

The Qur'an came down all together from reminder (*dhikr,* الذّكر) to the Inhabited House and it is the falling place of the stars in the lowest heaven where the Qur'an came down.

Later it descended on Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) piecemeal, about order, prohibition, and in battles.' " [*ad-Durru 'l-manthūr*]

The author says: This matter has also been narrated by others, like Sa'id ibn Jubayr. And it appears from this talk of Ibn 'Abbas that he inferred it from the Qur'anic verses; for example the words of Allah:

and the wise reminder **(3:58),**

And **(I swear by)** ***the Book written in an outstretched fine parchment and the inhabited house and the elevated canopy*** **(52:2—5);**

But nay! I swear by the falling of stars, and most certainly it is a great oath if you only know,

most surely it is an honoured Qur'an in a Book that is hidden; none shall touch it save the purified ones **(56:75—79) ;**

and We adorned the lowest heaven with lamps **(stars)** ***and*** **(made it)** ***to guard*** **(41:12)**

And all His words are clear except what He said about the place of falling, that it is the lowest heaven and is the place of the Qur'an. The meaning of this assertion is obscure and the verses of the 56th chapter do not clearly show it.

Of course; it is narrated from *Ahlu 'l–bayt* that the Inhabited House is in heaven, and we shall explain it, God willing, in its proper place.

What should clearly be understood is that traditions are like the Qur'an, because there are, in traditions also, some clear ones and others ambiguous.

One very commonly finds in their talks which are based on hints and symbols, and especially so in the explanation of such facts as the Tablet, the Pen, the Curtain, the Heaven, the Inhabited House, the Swollen Sea etc.

Therefore, it is obligatory for a research scholar to strive his utmost to find out if there is any hint or context to determine the true meaning of a given text.

Suratul Baqarah: Verse 186

١٨٦) وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ۖ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ۖ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ)

And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then verily I am near, I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me, so they should answer My call and believe in Me, so that they may walk in the right way**. (2:186)**

Commentary

Qur'an: ***And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then verily I am near, I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me.***

This is the best expression of the subject matter in the most elegant and beautiful style.

The whole verse is based on the first person singular pronoun which shows the great importance which the speaker, i.e. Allah attaches to this subject; then come the words ***My servants*** and not "people" or such other words, and this enhances its importance even more; the reply (***then verily I am near***) starts dramatically just after the question without any preamble like: "then say that I am near"; and the reply has been emphasized with "verily" (*inna* انّ); and the nearness of the speaker is described with the adjective *near* and not with any verb like "I come near him", thus it shows that He is already near and will always remain near; then it mentions answering the prayer with the verb the *mudhari'* (المضارع = aorist tense) which combines both the present and the future tenses, and indicates that He answers at present and will continue to answer the prayers of the supplicant; then the answer (I answer the prayer of the supplicant) is conditioned with ***when he calls on Me,*** but in reality it is not a condition separate from the main clause, both are one and the same thing, and it serves to emphasize that the prayer of the supplicant is answered without any condition or stipulation (as we see also in the verse:

call on Me, I will answer you **40:60**).

These seven points show how much importance has been attached to the answering of prayers. In addition, this verse — short as it is — repeats the first person singular pronoun seven times; it is the only verse with this characteristic in the whole of Qur'an.

"Du'a"" and *"da'wah"* (call, الدعآء and الدّعوة) mean to turn the attention of the called one to the caller. Asking (*su 'al,* السّوال) means to gain a benefit or advantage from the one whose attention is drawn towards the asker and before whom his (asker's) need is put.

Therefore, asking (*su'al,* السّوال) is the final aim of calling (*du'a',* الدعآء). This meaning covers all types of asking, for example, asking for the removal of ignorance, asking with the meaning of reckoning, asking in the sense of seeking beneficence.

Literally, "bondage" (*'ubdiyyah,* العبودية), as explained earlier, is the status of being owned. It is not used for any other owned thing except human beings. Therefore, "servant" (*'abd,* العبد) is used only for a human being or another intelligent being (like an angel).

The ownership of Allah is as different from the ownership of others as is the truth from pretence or the reality from metaphor. Allah owns His servants; His ownership is total and comprehensive.

They have no authority, independent from Allah, over their own selves or over matters or things which are subordinate to them; for example, their attributes and actions and all things which are related to them, like wives, children, property, honour, etc.

Everything which they own and is related to them in any way — as we say, his self, his body, his ears, his eyes, his actions, his impression (and these are a sort of natural and real possessions), or as we say, his spouse, his wealth, his honour, his right — (and these are a sort of supposed or assumed possession) — is in his possession only because Allah allowed the establishment of that relation of

ownership between man and his possession, whatever it may be.

It is Allah, glorified be His name, who gave their selves and their persons to them — and if He did not wish so, it could not be attributed to them and they would have remained without any self or person — in other words, non-existent. It is He who gave them hearing and sight and hearts; and it is He who created everything, then fixed for it a measure.

Therefore, Allah intervenes between a thing and its self, between it and between all its associates like child, spouse, friend, property, honour and rights.

It means that He is the nearest of all to His creatures. In other words, He is the Near One in the true sense of this word. He has said:

And We are nearer to him than you, but you see **(Us)** ***not*** **(56:85);**

and We are nearer to him than his life vein **(50:16) ;**

and know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart **(8:24).**

'Heart' here means the rational soul or spirit.

In short, Allah's ownership of His creatures is real ownership, and as they are His servants He is near to them in its true sense, which means nearest of all things.

This ownership gives Him authority to make use of them as He wishes, without any hindrance or obstruction.

Also it gives Him authority to answer any prayer which is put before Him by any of His creatures, and to fulfil his need by accepting his supplication, because the ownership is all encompassing, and His Power and pervasiveness cover all possible situations.

It is not as though He has authority in one eventuality and not in the other, as the Jews say that when God created things and decreed their destinies, His work was finished and now His hands are folded up, He can not take any new decision; there is no abrogation (of previous laws), no change and no answering of prayer because every affair is already finished.

Nor is it, as a group of this *ummah* said, that Allah has no power about the actions of His creatures. They are called Qadariyyah and were named the Magians of this *ummah* by the Messenger of Allah.

Sunnis and Shi'ahs both have reported that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) said: "Qadariyyah are the Magians of this *ummah".*

The truth is that real ownership in its totality is by Allah only and nobody owns any thing but when He makes him its owner and allows him to possess it.

Therefore, whatever Allah wills and gives in possession and allows its coming into being, comes into being. And whatever He does not will, and does not give in possession and does not allow, does not come into being, even if one strives his utmost to bring it into being.

Allah has said:

***O people! You are they who are needy unto Allah, and Allah is He who is the Self-sufficient, the Most Praised One*. (35:15)**

It is, thus, clear that this verse not only mentions a fact, i.e., answering prayer, but gives its reasons also: because the supplicants are servants of Allah, He is near to them, and because He is near to them, He answers their prayers without any reservation.

And the unconditional answering of prayer means that there is no condition imposed on prayer also; whatever prayer is addressed to Him, He shall answer it.

Of course, it seems that His promise 'I answer the prayer of the supplicant' depends on the condition, ***when he calls Me***.

But this condition is not something different from the main clause; and such a mode of expression indicates that the main clause is free from metaphor and analogy; that its meaning is what appears from the words.

For example, when we say, "Listen to the sincere advisor when he sincerely advises you", or "Respect the scholar if he be a scholar", it means that we want him to be sure that the advisor is really sincere or the scholar is really a scholar so that listening to him or respecting him becomes necessary.

In the same way, the condition ***when he calls on me*** shows that the promise of answering the prayer shall apply when the supplicant is a supplicant in reality; when he wants that thing according to his natural and deep ingrained knowledge and when his heart is really in what his tongue is asking for.

The reality of prayer and supplication is what the heart decries and the tongue of nature asks for, not this tongue of flesh which moves as it is moved without caring whether the word spoken is a truth or a lie, a reality or a metaphor, a serious talk or a joke.

It is because of this that Allah has even mentioned such prayers in which the tongue is not used at all. He said:

***And He gave you of all that you asked Him; and if you count Allah's bounties, you will not be able to compute them*; *Verily, man is very unjust very ungrateful* (14:34).**

Mankind prays to Him and beseeches Him for bounties which they cannot count, but this asking is not done by the tongue of the mouth, it is done by the tongue of their neediness, the tongue of nature and

existence. Also He said:

***All those in the heavens and the earth do beseech Him*; *every day He is in a* (new) *splendor* (55:29).**

This verse more clearly proves what we have just said.

Therefore, the natural prayer addressed to Allah shall always be answered. If a prayer is not answered then it lacks both or one of the two things mentioned in the verse: ***the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me.*** It may happen in following ways:

First: There may be no prayer at all; it may only be a misunderstanding of the supplicant. For example, a man prays for an impossible thing (but he does not know that it is impossible), or for a thing which, if he knew the fact, would not have wanted at all.

Let us say that someone was sick and died but his friend is unaware of his death and prays for his recovery, while now the prayer should be for bringing him back to life.

If he had been really sure that a dead body could be resurrected and had asked for its resurrection (as the prophets did) his life would have been returned to him; but he does not have such firm conviction and therefore the prayer is not answered.

Or, let us say, he asks for a thing which, had he known it really, he would not have wanted. Therefore, it is not granted.

Second: There is indeed a prayer, but it is not addressed exclusively to Allah. For example, a man beseeches Allah for his needs, but his heart is looking towards its apparent causes or to some imaginary beings whom he thinks have power to fulfil his needs.

In this case, his prayer is not addressed exclusively to Allah. In other words, he did not beseech Allah at all, because Allah, Who answers the prayers, is the One who has no partner in His affairs. He is not the one who works in partnership with apparent causes and imaginary beings.

So these are the two groups of supplicants whose hearts were not sincere in their prayers even if their tongues were.

This is the gist of the subject of prayer according to the verse of the Qur'an. The meaning of all verses on this subject may be understood from this explanation. See, for example, the following verses:

***Say, my Lord would not care for you, were it not for your prayer; but you have indeed rejected* (the truth), *so soon you shall be in the grip* (25:77).**

Say, think you that if the chastisement of Allah comes to you or the Hour comes to you, will you call upon other than Allah, if you are truthful* [*Nay! Him you will call upon, so He clears away that

for which you pray, if He pleases, and you will forget what you set up **(with Him) (6:40–41).**

Say, who is it that delivers you from the **(dread of the)** ***darkness of the land and the sea*** **(when)** ***you pray to him*** **(openly)** ***humiliating yourselves and secretly: "If He delivers us from this, certainly we shall be of the grateful ones". Say, Allah delivers you from them and from every distress, yet again you associate*** **(others)** ***with Him*** **(6:63–64).**

These verses prove that man has been created with a natural prayer and inborn request, which is silently addressed to his Lord.

But when he spends his life in ease and prosperity, his soul becomes blinded by apparent causes and he treats them as partners to his Lord; thus he becomes confused and thinks that he does not ask his Lord for anything and does not beseech Him, while the fact is that he does not beseech anyone other than Allah, because this prayer (to Allah) is ingrained into his nature, and there is no change in the creation of Allah.

Later comes the hardship and the apparent causes become divorced from the expected effects, and those whom he treated as partners of Allah or intercessors before Him disappear completely; then he realizes that there is no one to fulfil his needs and to answer his prayers except Allah.

Thus, he returns to his natural monotheism and forgets every other cause and turns his face towards the Beneficent Lord; and the Lord clears away his hardship and fulfils his wants and places him under the shade of opulence.

But as soon as he regains his prosperity and happiness he goes back to the previous polytheism and forgetfulness.

And your Lord said: Call upon Me, I will answer you. Verily, those who are arrogant to **My** ***worship shall soon enter Hell, disgraced*** **(40:60).**

This verse invites mankind to beseech Allah, and promises the answering, and goes even further by naming the prayer as worship in the clause, ***arrogant to My worship*** which means "to my prayer".

Rather, it equates the worship with prayer: it threatens with Hell those who do not pray, and such a threat can only be justified when one neglects worship completely, not on neglecting only one kind of it.

Therefore, the prayer is not just an important type of worship; it is the foundation of worship itself.

From the above, one may appreciate the meaning of other verses on this subject:

Therefore, call upon Allah, being sincere to Him in religion, though averse be the disbelievers **(40:14).**

And call on Him fearing and hoping; surely, the mercy of Allah is near to those who do good

(7:56).

... surely they used to ... call unto Us with love and reverence, and were humble before Us **(21:90).**

Call upon your Lord humbly and secretly; surely He loves nots those who exceed the limit **(7:55).**

When called he **(Zakariyya)** ***unto his Lord in low voice. He said: My Lord! Surely my bones are weakened and my head flares with hoariness, and, my Lord! Never have I been unsuccessful in my prayer to Thee*** **(19:3-4).**

And He answers those who believe and do good deeds, and increases unto them of His grace **(42:26).**

There are other relevant verses, and all of these contain the pillars of prayer and explain the manner of the supplication.

And the most important of all is to keep the prayer exclusively for Allah; it will come true when the feeling of the heart conforms with the words spoken by the tongue; when one abandons reliance on all apparent reasons other than Allah and depends exclusively upon Allah.

Also among them are: fear of Allah, hope in His answering, His love and reverence, humility and humbleness, as well as perseverance in prayer, remembrance of Allah, good deeds, true faith, presence of heart at that time and similar things.

Qur'an: ***So they should answer My call and believe in Me.***

This sentence branches out from the previous one. Allah is near to His servants; nothings comes between Him and their prayer; He cares for them and for the things they ask for; that is why He invites them to call upon Him and He is of such high attributes.

Therefore, they should accept this invitation of their Lord and should advance towards Him, and have faith in Him about this attribute, having firm belief that He is near and He answers their call; so that they may be guided rightly in praying unto Him.

Traditions

The Sunnis and Shi'ahs both have narrated from the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) that "Prayer is the armament of the believer."

It is narrated in *al-Hadith al-qudsi*: "O Mūsa! Ask from Me all that you need, even fodder for your goat and salt for your dough." [*'Uddatu'd-da'i*]

The Prophet said: "Calling (upon Allah) is better than reciting the Qur'an, because Allah (Powerful and Great is He!) said, 'Say, My Lord would not care for you were it not for your prayer.'" [*Makarimu 'l-akhlaq*]

The same *hadith* has been narrated from al-Baqir and as-Sadiq (a.s.).

Muhammad ibn 'Ajlan narrates from Muhammad ibn 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn from his cousin, as-Sadiq (a.s.) from his forefathers from the Prophet that he said:

"Allah informed one of his prophets in a revelation: 'By My Power and Dignity! Verily I shall change into despair the hope of everyone who hoped from other than Me, and I shall dress him with the clothing of disgrace before people, and I shall remove him from My relief and bounty.

Does my servant put his hope in other than Me in hardships, while hardships are in My hand; And does he expect anything from other than Me, while I am the Self-sufficient, the Munificent?

In My hand are the keys of the doors, while they are closed; and My door is open for the one who calls on Me . ..' " [*'Uddatu 'd-da'i*]

The Prophet said: "Allah said, 'No creature seeks refuge in another creature, leaving Me, but that I cut off all the means in the heavens and the earth for him.

Then if he asks from Me, I do not give him; and if he calls on Me, I do not answer him. And no creature seeks refuge in Me, leaving My creatures, but that I make the heaven and the earth responsible for his sustenance; then if he calls on Me, I answer him and, if he seeks pardon from Me, I forgive!'" [*ibid.*]

The author says: The aim of the above two traditions is to emphasize that the invocation must be purely for Allah. It was not meant to negate the positive causes which Allah has created as instrumental links between the things and their needs.

But these instruments are not independent causes. The Independent Cause is only Allah. And man does have an inner feeling of this fact; he feels by his nature that there is a Perfect Cause who fulfils his needs and who can never fail in bringing about the desired effect.

On the other hand, he knows that all the apparent causes which are expected to produce an effect; some times fail to do so. Thus he knows that the First Cause, who is the Source and Origin of everything and upon whom every need relies and depends for its fulfilment, is other than these apparent causes.

Once he realises it, he will never entirely rely on these causes, forgetting the Real Cause. Man may appreciate this fact after just a little thinking.

Now, if he prays for something and that need is fulfilled, it will prove that he asked his Lord for it, and that the prayer, which emanated from his inner feeling and knowledge, reached through the apparent

causes to His Lord and was granted by Him.

On the contrary, if he prays to some apparent causes for it, then it does not originate from natural inner feeling and knowledge; it is just an imaginary need, based not on inner feeling but on some imaginary reasons.

It is one of the situations where appearance goes against reality, because he thinks that he is praying, while his inner self knows nothing about that prayer.

Another example: Many times a man likes a thing and makes all efforts to get it; but when he gets it, he finds that it is harmful to another thing which is far more important and far more dear than that thing.

Then he leaves that which he had strived for and keeps that which is more important. Likewise, sometimes he dislikes a thing, but once it comes to him he finds it far more beneficial and far better than the alternative which he previously preferred.

A child is sick; when he is given a bitter medicine, he refuses to take it and starts crying. But at the same time he wants to regain his health. Now the position is this: his natural inner feeling prays for health and, therefore, for the medicine; but his words and deeds reject the same medicine.

Likewise, man, in his life, has a discipline based on natural understanding and inner feeling, and he also has a system based on his imagination only.

The natural discipline makes no mistake; it never leads astray while the imaginary discipline often goes wrong. It is clear from the example of the sick child that sometimes man asks for some thing urged by his imagination but in reality that very prayer is the prayer for its opposite.

This discourse will help the readers in understanding the meaning of the traditions, and it is also the implication of the words of 'Ali (a.s.) which come later, "Verily, the granting (of Prayer) is according to the measure of the intention ..."

The Prophet said: "Call upon Allah and you can be confident for the answering." [*'Uddatu 'd-da 'i*]

"I am near the opinion (i.e. expectation) of My servant about Me; so, he should not have any opinion about Me (i.e. should not expect from Me) except good." [*al-Hadith al-qudsi*]

The author says: It is because if one prays and at the same time is pessimistic or doubtful about its outcome, then it shows that the prayer is just a formality, the supplicant has no real intention of asking for it (see the previous explanation). And the traditions forbid asking for a thing which one is sure will not come about.

The Prophet said: "Resort to Allah in your needs; and seek refuge in Him in your misfortunes, and humiliate yourselves before Him and beseech Him, because, verily, supplication is the essence of

worship.

And no believer calls upon Allah but He answers him: either it is speeded up to him in this world, or is kept in reserve for him for the next one, or his sins are forgiven in proportion to his supplication, provided he does not pray for a sinful thing." [*'Uddatu'd-da'i*]

'Ali (a.s.) wrote in his will for his son, al-Husayn (a.s.): "Then He placed the keys of His treasures in your hands in the sense that He allowed you to ask Him.

Therefore, whenever you wish, you may get the doors of His bounties opened with prayer, and get the heavy rains of His Mercy to fall upon you.

Delay in acceptance of the prayer should not disappoint you, because the granting (of prayer) is according to the measure of (your) intention. And sometimes, the answering of your prayer is delayed so that it brings a greater reward to the asker and a better granting to the expectant.

Sometimes you ask for a thing and it is not given to you, but a better thing is given to you, immediately or later; or a thing is diverted from you for some greater good for you, because often you ask for a thing which would have destroyed your religion had it been given to you.

Therefore, your prayer should be for things whose beauty should last for you and whose evil should remain away from you. As for wealth, it will not last for you, nor will you last for it." [*Nahju 'l-balaghah*]

The author says: "The granting (of prayer) is according to the measure of (your) intention." 'Ali (a.s.) means that the answer is given according to the call.

The supplicant is granted whatever he asks for from Allah with the firm conviction of his conscience and with his heart, and not what is asked for in words.

As explained earlier, the words sometimes do not completely conform with the real requirement demanded by the nature. This sentence, therefore, shows in the most lucid and comprehensive way, the relationship between prayer and its answer.

'Ali (a.s.) has, in this writing, explained many cases in which it appears that the prayer was not granted, e.g. where there is delay in answering the call, or a material bounty is asked for but it is changed to some thing which is far better for him either in this world or in the next, or it is diverted to some thing more beneficial for the asker.

The supplicant had, for example, asked for a pleasant bounty, and if he were given it without delay it would not have been really appreciated and valued, and, therefore, its granting was delayed.

In short, when he asked for a "pleasant" bounty, he implicitly asked for a delay in granting of the prayer. Likewise, a believer who seriously pays attention to his religion prays for some thing which would be

harmful to his religion, although he does not know it and thinks that it would bring him happiness.

But his happiness is in his religion and in the next world. Therefore, his prayer is in fact for the next world, not for this one, and, accordingly, it is granted for the next world, not for this one.

al-Baqir (a.s.) said: "A servant does not extend his hand towards Allah, but that Allah is ashamed to return it empty. He puts in it from His bounty and mercy whatever He wishes.

So, when one of you calls (upon Allah), he should not return his hand until he wipes it on his head and face." [*'Uddatu 'd-da 'i*] In another *hadith* it is "on his face and chest".

The author says: There are in *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr* eight similar traditions narrated by a number of the companions, like Salman, Jabir, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Anas ibn Malik and Ibn Abi Mughith from the Prophet, and all of them mention raising of the hands in the prayer.

Therefore, it is meaningless to reject raising of hands in the prayer as someone has done saying that "it is suggestive of the belief that Allah has a body, because the raising of the hands towards the sky is an indication that He is there - Holy and Sanctified is He from it."

But this statement is wrong. All acts of worship performed by the body are in reality the heartfelt sense of gratitude and inner attention which is reduced to the level of symbolic appearance; and the spiritual realities are demonstrated in the moulds of the body, as one may see in the *salat,* the fast, the *hajj,* etc., their parts and conditions.

Had it not been so, there would not have been any justification for worship by the body. And invocation is such a form of worship.

It is the attention of the heart and the inner supplication demonstrated by the symbol of the begging of a wretched pauper coming near a powerful and wealthy person, raising and extending his hands towards him and asking his needs from him, humiliating himself before him and imploring him to grant him his requirements.

ash-Shaykh has reported in *al Majalis wa 'l-akhbar,* with his *sanad* (chain of narrators) from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) and Zayd from their father, Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn from his father al-Husayn (a.s.) from the Prophet that "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) used to raise his hands when he prayed and beseeched (Allah) as a pauper begs for food."

The same *hadith* is written in *'Uddatu 'd-da'i* without *sanad.*

'Ali (a.s.) heard a man saying "O Allah! I seek refuge in Thee from temptation." 'Ali (a.s.) said: "I see, you are seeking refuge against your wealth and children.

Allah says:

Verily your wealth and your children are temptations **(8:28).**

You should rather say: O Allah! I seek refuge in Thee from misleading temptations.'' [*Biharu 'l-anwar*]

The author says: It is another way of determining the meaning of a word. And there are many such examples in traditions.

The fact is that the true meaning of every word is that for which it has been used by Allah in His talk. And some examples of this are the traditions which explain the meaning of 'part', 'many' etc.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: ''Verily, Allah does not answer the memorised prayer by a forgetful heart.'' [*'Uddatu 'd-da'i*]

'Ali (a.s.) said: ''Allah does not accept the prayer of an inattentive heart.'' [*ibid.*]

The author says: There are other traditions with this meaning; and the reason is that there is in reality no prayer and supplication with forgetfulness and inattention.

There is in the Torah: Allah says to His servant, ''Verily, when you pray against one of my servants because he was unjust to you, then at the same time there may be another of my servants praying against you too because you were unjust to him.

Now, if you so wish, I shall grant your prayer and also his prayer against you; and if you so wish, I shall postpone the cases of both of you for the Day of Resurrection.'' [ar-Rawandi, *ad-Da'wat*]

The author says: If someone prays for something then it means that he is pleased with it and this pleasure naturally extends to all those things which are similar to it in all respects.

He prays for punishment of his oppressor; he prays against him because of his oppression and injustice. It means that he is pleased with the punishment of the unjust.

Now, if he himself oppressed another person then the same prayer against his oppressor shall become a prayer against himself.

If he is pleased that he himself should be punished (and he shall never be pleased with it), then he will be given the same punishment which he wanted for his oppressor.

And if he is not pleased with it, then there is in reality no prayer at all. Allah said:

And man prays for evil as he aught to pray for good, and man is ever hasty **(17:11).**

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) said to Ab□ Dharr: ''O Ab□ Dharr! Should I not teach you some words by which Allah will benefit you? I (Ab□ Dharr) said:

'Surely! O Messenger of Allah.' He said: 'Guard (the commands of) Allah, (and) Allah will guard you.

Keep (the rememberance of) Allah, (and) you will find Him before you.

Make the acquaintance of Allah in opulence, He will know you in hardship. And when you ask, ask from Allah ; and when you seek help, seek help from Allah, because whatever is to happen upto the Day of Resurrection has already been written, and if all the creatures together strived to benefit you with what Allah did not write for you, they would not be able to do so.' " [*'Uddatu'd-da'i*]

The author says: His words, "Make the acquaintance of Allah in opulence, He will know you in hardship", mean "Call upon Allah in opulence and do not forget Him, so that He will answer your call in hardship and will not forget you."

Anybody who forgets his Lord in opulence is as if he believes that the apparent causes are the total and real cause of his opulence. Then comes the hardship and he starts calling on his Lord.

His action indicates that he believes in the Lordship of Allah only when he is afflicted with hardship. But Allah is not so. He is the Lord in every condition and every situation.

Therefore, if he calls on a lord whose lordship is limited to the time of hardship only, he does not call on the True Lord.

This meaning has been explained in some traditions in a different language. as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "One who goes on calling (on his Lord) in advance, his call will be answered when there comes down an affliction (on him), and it will be said,'(it is) a known voice', and it will not be screened out of the heavens.

And the one who does not call (on his Lord) in advance, his call is not answered when an affliction comes, and the angels say, 'It is a voice which we do not know...' "[*Makarimu'l-akhlaq*]

And it is understood from the word of Allah,

***They forget Allah, so He forgets them* (9:68).**

There is another tradition that *du'a'* (prayer) is not rejected if one cuts oneself (from all apparent causes and turns exclusively towards Allah).

There is no contradiction between this tradition and those mentioned before, because affliction and hardship is something different from exclusively turning towards Allah.

His words:

and when you ask, ask from Allah, and when you seek help, seek help from Allah.

It teaches one to adhere only to Allah in reality while asking and seeking help, because so far as these nominal causes, which we find in this world are concerned, their relation with their effects is confined within the limit set for it by Allah.

They are not independent in producing the effect as it appears to un-informed eyes; they are only a means to produce that effect that is incumbent on the man to turn towards Allah in all his needs, without relying on nominal causes and means, although Allah has decreed not to produce an effect if its cause is missing.

In short, the above sentence tells one not to rely on nominal causes and not to forget that it is Allah who has made it a cause of that effect. It does not mean that one should neglect the causes and means and ask for one's needs without striving for its cause; it would be rather asking for the impossible.

One should realise that even the heart where the prayer originates, the tongue which utters the words of the prayer and the hands, etc., which are used in praying are but some of the causes and means. So, how can one escape from the apparent causes?

Let us look at the example of man himself. Whatever he does, is done with his limbs and organs: he gives with his hands, sees with his eyes and hears with his ears.

Now, if one asked his Lord to fulfil his needs neglecting its causes and means, it would be as if he asked someone to give him something without using his hand, or to look at him without using his eyes or to listen to his pleas without using his ears.

On the other hand, if one relies on the nominal causes without remembering Allah, it would be as though one thinks that it is the man's hand which gives, his eyes which see and his ears which hear, and forgets that the real doer of these actions is man himself. Such a person is stupid and a simpleton.

The above explanation does not mean that the Power of Allah is limited, or that His Authority is conditional. No, His Power and Authority are All-encompassing and without limit.

In the same way the limitations are meant to apply to the deeds not to doers. Obviously, it is man who has the power to give, see and hear, though he gives with his hand, sees with his eyes and hears with his ears.

Likewise, Allah is All-powerful, but the specification depends on intermediate causes. Zayd is a creation of Allah, and he was born through the union of his parents in a certain place on a certain day when certain conditions were fulfilled and certain obstacles removed.

Now, if even one of these causes is missing and one of these conditions is not fulfilled, there would be no Zayd. Thus the existence of Zayd depends on the fulfilment of all these causes and means; but what depends is the creature, i.e., Zayd, not the Creator. (Think on this point.)

His words:

Whatever is to happen upto the Day of Resurrection has already been written.

It is based on the sentence, ***And when you ask, ask from Allah,*** and gives its reason.

It means that all events are written and decreed by Allah; no cause has any real influence on them; therefore, you should not ask from anyone other than Allah, and should not seek any one's help other than that of Allah.

As for Allah, His authority is everlasting; His Power is Eternal; His Will is effective; and every day He is in a new Splendour.

It is for this reason that this sentence is followed by the words:

and if all the creatures together strived to benefit you with what Allah did not write for you, they would not be able to do so.

Among the traditions of *du'a'* is the near *mutawatir hadith:* "Verily, *du'a'* (prayer) is a part of destiny."

The author says: This is the reply to the objection of the Jews and others on *du'a'.* They say: The need asked for is either already measured or decreed (to happen) or not.

If it is already decreed, then it would happen in any case and the prayer would be superfluous. If it is not decreed, then it can never happen and the prayer would be meaningless. In either case, the prayer will have no effect at all.

The reply: Even when an event is already decreed, it does not mean that it is independent of its causes, and one of the means of its coming into existence is *du'a'*.

If one beseeches Allah for his need, one of the conditions of its existence is fulfilled, and the effect follows the cause. This is the meaning of the tradition, "Verily, *du'a'* (prayer) is a part of destiny."

And there are other traditions with the same meaning. There is *a hadith* from the Prophet: "Nothing turns away the decree (fate) except prayer (*du'a'*)." [*Biharu 'l-anwar*] And there is another one from as-Sadiq (a.s.): "Prayer (*du'a'*) turns away the decree even after it is confirmed."

[*ibid.*] Another one from Abu'l-Hasan Mūsa al-Kazim (as.): "On you is *du'a',* because *du'a'* and asking from Allah turns the calamity away even when it is measured and decreed and nothing remains except its enforcement; then if Allah is called upon and asked, He removes that calamity entirely." [*ibid*]

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Verily, the prayer (*du'a'*) turns away the confirmed decree even after its confirmation. Therefore, pray often (and repeatedly), because it is the key to every mercy and the fulfilment of every need.

And what is with Allah is not obtained except through prayer because verily, no door is knocked repeatedly but it is hoped that it will be opened to the knocker." [*ibid.*]

The author says: This *hadith* exhorts one to pray often and repeatedly; and this is one of the important elements of prayer, as repeated remembrance of a need creates purity of intention.

Isma'i1 ibn Hammam narrates from Abu '1-Hasan (a.s.): "One secret prayer of a servant is equal to seventy open prayers."

The author says: This teaches one to keep one's prayer (*du'a'*) secret and confidential because it helps in keeping the prayer pure.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "The prayer is kept screened (i.e. is not granted) until he (the beseecher) prays for the blessings of Allah upon Muhammad and his progeny." [*Makarimu 'l-akhlaq*]

Also, as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Whoever advances (the names of) forty believers (in his prayers) then prays (for himself), his call will be answered." [*ibid*.]

One of the companions of as-Sadiq (a.s.) said to him: "There are two verses in the Book of Allah (the application) for which I am seeking without finding it."

The Imam asked: "And what are those?" The companion says: "I said, '(there is the verse): ***Call upon Me, I shall answer ...*** but we call upon Him and do not get any answer.'

The Imam said: 'Well, do you think Allah has broken His promise?' I said: 'No!' He said: 'Then what?' I said: 'I do not know.' He said: 'But I will tell you. Whoever obeys Allah in His commandments, and then calls upon Him in the proper way, He will answer him.'

I said: 'And what is the proper way of prayer (*du'a'*)?' He said: 'You shall begin with the praise of Allah and shall glorify Him and remember His bounties upon you and thank Him; then you shall pray for His blessings upon Muhammad and his progeny; then you shall remember your sins and confess them ; then you shall seek (His) pardon for them.

So this is the proper way of prayer (*du'a'*).' Then the Imam asked: 'And what is the second verse?' I said:

***'and whatever thing you spend, He returns it* (34:39),**

and I find that I spend but He does not return it.'

He said: 'Well, do you think Allah has broken His promise?' I said: 'No!' He said: 'Then what?' I said: 'I do not know.' He said: 'If any of you earn his wealth lawfully and spend it in its proper place, he will not spend a single dirham but that Allah shall return it to him!' " [*ibid*.]

The author says: The reason of the manners of prayer (*du'a'*) mentioned in these traditions is clear, because these things bring the servant (of Allah) nearer to the reality of prayer and request.

Ibn ’Umar reported that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) said: “Verily, when Allah wishes to answer (the call of) a servant, He allows him to call (upon Him).” [*ad–Durru ’l–manthūr*]

Also, Ibn ‘Umar narrates from him (the Holy Prophet): “Whenever the door of prayer (*du‘a’*) is opened for anyone among you, the doors of Mercy are opened for him.”

Another tradition says: “When the (door of) prayer is opened for anyone among you, the doors of the Garden (Paradise) are opened for him.” [*ibid.*]

The author says: The same thing has been narrated from the Imams of *Ahlu ’l–bayt* also: “Whoever is given *du‘a’,* is given (its) answer.” Its meaning is clear.

Also there is a tradition from Ma‘adh ibn Jabal from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.): “Had you known Allah, as He should be known, verily the mountains would have been moved by your prayer.” [*ibid.*]

The author says: If a man does not know the dignity of the Creator and the power of His Lordship, and if he relies upon the causes, then he believes that these causes have real influence upon the result, and that events cannot happen without their normal and apparent causes.

Sometimes he does not believe that these causes have any real effect upon the outcome, still he thinks that they are essential in order to bring a thing into existence.

For example, we see that movement and walking brings one nearer to one’s destination.

And even when we do not believe that movement has any real effect on the nearness, we go on believing that movement is a means, though it is Allah who is the real cause, of that nearness, and in this way we go on believing that the middle causes are essential, at least as a means, if not as the real cause.

Thus, we think that if there is no movement, we cannot come near our destination. In short, we believe that the effect cannot be separate from its causes, even if these causes are just apparent means and not the real cause.

But such a belief is below the dignity of Allah; it does not conform with divine authority which is total and perfect.

It is this belief which creates the idea that effects cannot come into being without their normal causes, e.g. a body cannot be without a weight and gravity; movement is necessary for bringing two things nearer; eating and drinking is essential for satisfying the hunger and thirst, etc. etc.

We have already mentioned in the discussion of miracles that the system of cause and effect is an inescapable fact, but it does not mean that the ‘cause’ is confined to the normal causes only.

Reason as well as the Qur’an and the traditions prove that while everything depends upon a cause, that

cause is not confined within the limits of normal ones.

The Creator may create causes for it, quite different from the normal ones. So, while it is true that the effect depends upon a cause, it is not true that it depends upon a particular cause.

Of course, the things which are, according to reason, impossible, cannot come into being.

In short, when you properly know Allah, you will believe that the prayer for what is not impossible by reason, even if normally it does not happen, will be answered. A major portion of the miracles of the prophets was basically the answer to their calls.

There is in the *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi under the words of Allah: ***So they should answer My call and believe in Me,*** a *hadith* from as-Sadiq (a.s.): "They should know that I have power to give them whatever they ask from Me."

And there is another *hadith* in *Majma'u 'l-bayan* from the same Imam that he said: *"**and believe in Me*** means that they should have firm belief that I have power to give them what they ask for; so ***that they may walk in the right way*** means so that they may reach the Truth."

Suratul Baqarah: Verse 187

١٨٧) أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَىٰ نِسَائِكُمْ ۚ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ ۗ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ
أَنفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنكُمْ ۖ فَالْآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۚ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ
الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ۖ ثُمَّ أَتِمُّوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ ۚ وَلَا تُبَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَأَنتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ
تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرَبُوهَا ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

It is made lawful to you on the night of the fast to go in unto your wives; they are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them*; *Allah knew that you were acting unfaithfully to yourselves, so He has turned to you (**mercifully**) ***and forgiven you. Wherefore, now be in contact with them and seek what Allah has written for you, and eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct unto you from the black thread*** (**of night**) ***at dawn-break, then complete the fast until night. And associate not with them while you are confined in the mosque. These are the limits*** (**prescribed by**) ***Allah; therefore, draw not yourselves near them. Thus does Allah make clear His signs for the people, so that they may guard themselves*** (**against evil**). (**2:187**)

Commentary

Qur'an: ***It is made lawful to you on the night of the fast to go in unto your wives.***

Ihlal (الاحلال) means to allow; its root is *hall* (to open, الحلّ) which is opposite of *'aqd* (to tie, العقد)

Rafath (الرّفث) literally means to say clearly such words which are generally unmentionable, which are normally only hinted at; such words are usually uttered during sexual intercourse.

Now, this "uttering unmentionable words" has been used as metaphor of the sexual intercourse; and this is the nobility of the exalted Qur'an.

And all words used for this meaning in the Qur'an are of the same type; none were made for copulation, all are used as a metaphor, like *mubashirah* (to be in contact with each other, المباشرة), *dukhl* (to enter, الدّخول), *mass* or *lams* (to touch, المسّ or اللّمس), *ityan* (to come to, الاتيان),*qurb* (to be near, القرب), etc.

The same is the case of the words, *wat'* (to press down, الوطء) and *jima'* (to come together, الجماع) which are used in Islamic books other than the Qur'an, although some of these words have been so much used for this meaning that now they are no longer metaphoric.

The words, *farj* (an opening, الفرج) and *gha'it* (the depth, الغائط), which are now commonly used for "vulva" and "excrement" respectively, are the other examples of this type.

It is said that the preposition *ila* (to, الى) coming here after *rafath* (الرّفث) gives the meaning of entering into.

Qur'an: ***they are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them.***

Libas (اللّباس) means what a man uses to cover his body. The two sentences are used figuratively, because each spouse restrains the other from unchastity, and protects society from debauchery.

Thus each one is like an apparel for the other with which he/she covers his/her shame and protects his/her privacy.

It is a very fine metaphor, and its literary value has been increased by putting it after the sentence, ***It is made lawful to you ... to go in unto your wives.***

A man hides his private parts from others with his dress, but there is no hiding from the dress itself. Likewise, each spouse protects the other one from having sexual relations with others; but there is no restriction on them against such relations with each other.

Qur'an: ***Allah knew that you were acting unfaithfully to yourselves, so He has turned to you*** **(mercifully)** ***and forgiven you.***

Ikhtiyan (الاختيان) and *khiyanah* (الخيانة) are synonymous; and it is said that they convey the meaning of defect, decrease.

You were acting unfaithfully conveys the meaning of continuity; and it shows that this unfaithfulness commonly continued among the Muslims after the command of the fast had been promulgated; and they were sinning against Allah secretly by being unfaithful to their own souls.

Had not this unfaithfulness been a sin, there would have been no need to mention ***turning to them mercifully*** **and** ***forgiving****;* and although these two words do not say openly that a sin had already been committed, still their most obvious meaning shows a preceding sin, especially when both are mentioned together.

Accordingly, the verse proves that before its revelation, sexual intercourse in the nights of the fast was forbidden; and that it was this verse which made it lawful and abrogated its prohibition, as has been stated by a group of the commentators of the Qur'an.

As a further proof, look at the words,

It is made lawful to you. You were acting unfaithfully, so He has turned to you (**mercifully**) ***and forgiven you*** **and** ***Wherefore, now be in contact with them.***

Had there been no previous prohibition, such words would have been out of context; instead there would have come the words like "there is no blame on you that you be in contact with them".

Some people say: "This verse does not abrogate any rule, because the verse of fasting mentioned earlier did not prohibit intercourse or food or drink in the night.

Apparently, according to some Sunni traditions, when the fast was prescribed and the words were revealed, ***Fast has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you*** refers to the fast per se, and not meant total conformity in all the details of fast.

It is said that the Christians used to eat, drink and go to their women during the early period of the night, then abstained from it. So the Muslims adopted the same system. But it proved difficult.

Many youths could not restrain themselves from secret sexual intercourse, but they thought that they were committing a sin and acting unfaithfully to themselves.

Likewise, aged persons found it a heavy burden to abstain from eating and drinking once they began their sleep. Sometimes someone could not keep his eyes open before eating and drinking and then thought that food and drink was unlawful for him.

It was to remove this misunderstanding that this verse was revealed; it made it clear that sexual intercourse, food and drink was not unlawful for them during the night of Ramadhan.

This verse also made it clear that the comparison in ***"as it was prescribed for those before you"*** refers to the fast per se, and not to its details. The words ***It is made lawful to you*** do not necessarily mean that this was unlawful before that; it simply declares legality of this action.

See, for example, the words:

The game of the sea is made lawful to you **(5:96);**

as it is known that the game of the sea was not unlawful to the pilgrims before the revelation of this verse. Likewise, the words ***Allah knew that you were acting unfaithfully to yourselves*** means that they were doing wrong according to their own view only.

That is why Allah said "unfaithfully to yourselves". Had He said "unfaithfully to Allah", it would have conveyed the meaning of prohibition, as, for example, in the verse:

Be you not unfaithful to Allah and the Apostle **(8:27).**

Also the word *ikhtiyan* (**الاختيان**) may be taken to mean "curtail" or "decrease" and the sentence may be translated as "Allah knew that you were curtailing your desires".

The words ***He has turned to you*** **(mercifully)** ***and has forgiven you*** do not clearly convey the idea that sexual intercourse was a sin before that.

But this argument is not conclusive, because it goes against the clear meaning of the verse.

We have already said that the words like ***It is made lawful to you; you were acting unfaithfully to yourselves, He has turned towards you*** **(mercifully)** ***and forgiven you*** do not say openly that a sin had already been committed; still, this is their most obvious implication.

Add to it the words ***now be in contact with them*** which would be inappropriate if there were no previous prohibition, as I have explained earlier.

The argument, that "this verse does not abrogate any rule because the verse of fasting did not prohibit sexual intercourse in the night", is not valid because that verse did not prohibit it clearly for the day time also.

It is known that the Messenger of Allah had explained the rules of fasting before this verse was revealed. Perhaps the prohibition of sexual relations during the night was one of those rules; and the verse abrogated it.

So this verse cancels not another verse, but a tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

Someone may object: The words ***they are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them*** have been used as the reason for this permission.

Now, the husband and wife were like apparel to each other when, supposedly, copulation at night was forbidden and they remained like the apparel when that prohibition was supposedly lifted.

So where, in these words, is the reason for the supposed abrogation if they are equally true in both conditions — before abrogation and after abrogation?

We know that the reason given for a rule of the *shari'ah is* mostly its benefit, and not necessarily its real causes. And as a benefit, it need not be fully comprehensive. Still, in a supposedly abrogating verse at least it should not be common to both conditions.

But deep consideration of the verse does not sustain this objection. It is not acceptable that this sentence is the reason of this permission.

The permission in this verse is limited to ***the night of the fast,*** while the simile of apparel is as much true during the day as in the night. So, it cannot be the reason of that permission.

The fact is that the three clauses in this verse coming one after the other, and all taken together, give us the reason for this abrogation. They are ***on the night of the fast, they are an apparel for you*** *… ,* and ***you were acting unfaithfully to yourselves.***

As the spouses are like apparel to each other they should be allowed to establish sexual relations together without any restriction.

Then came the commandment of the fast, without demanded self-denial and abstention from desires, like food, drink and sexual relations. But the servants of Allah found it difficult to abstain for a full month from copulation, and this unfaithfulness was common and continued.

Therefore, Allah in His mercy eased the conditions and lightened their burden by allowing it during the night.

In this way, the general implication of the sentence of ***apparel*** is made subordinate to the ***fast;*** and thus is limited to the night time only (when there is no fast).

In short, the sentence of apparel is not a reason for this permission; rather it is the reason or benefit of copulation per se. The main aim of the whole verse is to explain why copulation was allowed in the night of fast.

And the sentence beginning with ***they are an apparel*** and ending on ***forgiven you*** taken together show this reason, not any single sentence alone. And this reason is not found in the rule which was followed before this permission.

Qur'an: ***Wherefore, now be in contact with them and seek what Allah has written for you.***

This is an order preceded by prohibition; thus it means permission.

The verse begins with the words, ***It is made lawful to you.*** The meaning, therefore, is,' from now on you are allowed to establish sexual relations with them''. *Ibtigha'* (الابتغاء) means 'to seek', 'to desire'.

Seek what Allah has written for you means seeking the children which Allah has written to give to the mankind. Allah created in human being the desire to copulate and made it the means of that gift (of children) and to some extent put them under the pressure of that desire.

When a couple engages in that action, they are in reality seeking what Allah has written for them, even if at that time their only aim is to satisfy their sexual desire or lust. It is like taking food and drink.

Allah had written that their lives, growth and health depend on food and drink, and that remains the goal of nature even when they, at that particular time, do not look further than satisfying their hunger and thirst or to pamper their gustatory pleasure. This is the compulsion put on them by Allah in all such matters.

It has been said: ***What Allah has written for you*** means ''what Allah has allowed to you''; and the implication is that they should take advantage of this permission.

Allah likes His servants to take advantage of His permission as He likes them to obey His compulsory commandments.

But his view is not acceptable, because we have not seen a single instance in the Qur'an where ''writing'' is used for 'permission'.

Qur'an: ***and eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct unto you from the black thread*** **(of night)** ***at dawn-break.***

There are two dawns: the first is called the 'false' dawn because it vanishes in a short time.

It is also called the 'tail of the wolf' because it looks as if a tail is raised. This false dawn is a beam of light like a vertical column; it appears at the end of the night on the eastern horizon when the sun reaches an angle of 18 degrees below the horizon.

Then it gives way to a horizontal line of light which looks as if a white thread has been stretched on the horizon. This is the second dawn. It is called 'true' dawn because it truthfully announces the arrival of day-time and is connected with sunrise.

Obviously, the ***white thread*** in this verse means the ''true dawn''; and ''at'' (*min,* من) in ''at dawn-break'' (*mina 'l-fajri,* من الفجر) is explanatory so as to clarify this phrase.

This sentence is metaphorical and it likens the streak of light, stretched across the horizon, to a white thread and the darkness of night adjoining that light to a black thread.

This shows that the limit of the given permission is exactly the beginning of the true dawn, because soon

after, when the sun comes nearer to the horizon, both threads disappear. There remains neither the white thread nor the black.

Qur'an: ***Then complete the fast until night*:**

As the start of the fast was from the dawn-break, there was no need to say, 'keep the fast during day-time'. Instead its other limit is now mentioned in these words.

Complete the fast shows that the fast of one day is one unit, a single act of worship which is not made up of various parts. There is a difference between completion (*tamam,* **التّمام**) and perfection (*kamal,* **الكمال**).

Completion (*tamam,* **التّمام**)**,** the word used in this verse, means that a single thing (which is not made of such parts which may have separate functions) finally comes into being.

Perfection (*kamal,* **الكمال**) means that a single thing (which has various parts and every part has a separate function) finally comes into being.

Allah says:

This day I perfected (*akmaltu,* **اكملت**) ***for you your religion and completed*** (*atmamtu,* **اتممت**) ***My favour on you*** **(5:4).**

The religion is a collection of various things like prayer, fast, *hajj* etc. and all these have a separate effect; therefore, the religion was "perfected". But the favour of Allah is one thing without any parts (as I will explain under that verse); therefore, it was "completed".

Qur'an: ***And associate not with them while you are confined in the mosques:***

'ukf (**العكوف**) and *i'tikaf* (**الاعتكاف**) both mean "to keep close to". When used with the name of a place, they mean to remain continuously in that place.

I'tikaf (**الاعتكاف**) is an act of worship. When in *i'tikaf* (**الاعتكاف**), one must remain inside a mosque, not going out without a genuine reason (e.g. to relieve oneself); and fasting is an essential part of this act of worship.

As the Muslims were given permission to have sexual relations with their wives in the night of fast, there was a possibility that they might think that that permission extended to the nights of *i'tikaf* also, when they were inside a mosque. This sentence removed the chance of any such misunderstanding.

Qur'an: ***These are the limits*** **(prescribed by)** ***Allah; therefore, draw not near them.***

Hadd (limit, **الحدّ**) literally means "to keep from", "to restrict". All its uses carry this meaning; for example, *haddu 's-sayf* (edge of sword ,**حدّ السّيف**), *haddu 'd-dar* (boundary of the house, **حدّ الدار**), *haddu '1 fujr*

(punishment of immorality, حدّ الفجور) etc.

Therefore the phrase, *hud□du 'llah* (حدود الله) mentioned in the verse, means, the "restrictive ordinances of Allah" and the command not to go near them figuratively means not to commit that sin.

In short, it says: you should not commit the sins mentioned here, i.e., eating, drinking and copulating during the prohibited hours; you should not trespass beyond the limits ordained for you; you should not neglect the fast or the guarding of yourselves against evil in the period of that special worship.

Traditions

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Food and copulation were unlawful in the month of Ramadhan at night after sleeping." (That is, if one prayed the prayer of *al-'isha'* and slept without breaking one's fast, then, he was not allowed to eat or drink even if he awoke later in the night.

And sexual intercourse was unlawful in the month of Ramadhan both in the day and in the night.) There was a companion of the Messenger of Allah, Khawwat ibn Jubayr al-Ansari.

He was brother of 'Abdullah ibn Jubayr, who in the battle of Uhud, was deputed by the Messenger of Allah at the mouth of the mountain-pass with fifty archers; most of them left him, but he remained at this station with only twelve soldiers and was martyred there.

His brother Khawwat ibn Jubayr, was an aged and weak person, and was fasting with the Messenger of Allah in the battle of the Khandaq (Trench).

In the evening he came to his house and asked: "Do you have any food?" They said: "Do not go to sleep; we shall prepare some food for you."

There was some delay in cooking and he was overcome with sleep before breaking his fast. When he woke up he said to his family: "Now eating is forbidden to me tonight."

Next day, he presented himself at the Khandaq and fainted. The Messenger of Allah looked at him and felt pity for him. Also, there were some youths who had secretly indulged in sexual relations at night in the month of Ramadhan.

Therefore Allah sent down (the verse); ***It is made lawful to you on the night of fast to go in unto your wives ...***

Thus Allah allowed sexual relations during the nights of the month of Ramadhan, and eating after going to sleep up to the dawn-break, as He said, ***until the white thread becomes distinct from the black thread*** **(of night)** ***at dawn-break.***

The Imam said: "It means the whiteness of the day from the darkness of the night." [*at-Tafsir,* al-

Qummi]

The author says: The sentences (given in bracket), starting with "That is" and ending upto "both in the day and in the night", are explanatory notes of the narrator of this tradition.

This episode is narrated in other traditions also, by al-Kulayni, al-'Ayyashi and others.

All these traditions say that the words, ***eat and drink ...*** were revealed because of the event of Khawwat ibn Jubayr al-Ansari; and the words ***It is made lawful to you*** ... were revealed because of the secret doings of some Muslim youths.

There is another tradition in *ad-Durru'l-manthr* from various commentators and traditionalists from Bara' ibn 'Azib who said:

"It was the custom among the companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) that if someone fasted and the time of *iftar* (breaking the fast) came but he went to sleep before breaking his fast, he did not eat that night and fasted the next day without eating anything, till the next evening came.

Once Qays ibn Sarmah al-Ansari fasted, and that day he had been working in the field. The time came for breaking the fast and he came to his wife and asked: 'Do you have any food?'

He could not keep awake and went to sleep. When his wife returned and found him sleeping she said: 'Woe unto you! Did you go to sleep?' In the noon of the next day, he fainted.

This was reported to the Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Then this verse was sent down:

It is made lawful to you on the night of the fast ... at dawn-break.

And the Muslims were extremely happy at it."

The author says: This story is narrated by other chains also. In some of them the name is given as Abu Qubays ibn Sarmah; in others, Sarmah ibn Malik al-Ansari. There is some variation in the story also.

Ibn Jarir and Ibn al-Mundhir have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas as follows: "The Muslims were forbidden (sexual relations with) women and food in the month of Ramadhan once they had prayed the prayer of *al-'isha',* till the next evening.

But some of them ate food and had sexual intercourse with women after the *al-'isha'* in one Ramadhan; one of them was 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. Then they complained about it to the Messenger of Allah. Therefore Allah sent down the verse,

It is made lawful to you ... be in contact with them. [*ad-Durru 'l-manthr*]

The author says: There are numerous traditions from Sunni chains about this matter; most of them

mention the name of ‘Umar.

All say with one voice that the rule about sexual intercourse in the night of Ramadhan was the same as that about food and drink; all of these were allowed before the sleep, forbidden after it.

But the obvious meaning of the first tradition is that the sexual intercourse was completely forbidden in the month of Ramadhan, during the night as well as in the day-time; and the food and drink were allowed before sleeping, forbidden after that.

And the context of the verse supports this tradition. Had the sexual relation been like food and drink (allowed before sleeping and forbidden after) it would have been necessary to mention here the farthest limit of the permission, as was done about food and drink (***eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct...***)

But it only says:

It is made lawful to you on the night of the fast to go in unto your wives,

without putting any limit to it. It shows that previously they were forbidden to indulge in this act the whole “night of the fast”.

Some traditions say (and the one quoted last is one of them) that the Muslims were acting unfaithfully not only in the matter of sexual relations, but also in food and drink.

But the sequence of the sentences of the verse does not support it. The sentence, ***Allah knew that you were acting unfaithfully ...*** is put in the middle of the permission for sexual relations and the words ***eat and drink*** appear after this topic has ended.

Therefore the “acting unfaithfully” cannot be connected with eating and drinking.

Verily, the Messenger of Allah said: “The dawn is of two kinds. The one which looks like the tail of the wolf does not allow anything, nor prohibits anything. But the long one which covers the horizon allows the prayer (of dawn) and prohibits food.” [*ad-Durru ’l-manthūr*]

The author says: The traditions of this meaning are nearly *mutawatir* from Sunni and Shi‘ah sources; as are the ones about *i‘tikaf* and prohibition of sexual intercourse in that period.

Suratul Baqarah: Verse 188

١٨٨) وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتُدْلُوا بِهَا إِلَى الْحُكَّامِ لِتَأْكُلُوا فَرِيقًا مِّنْ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْإِثْمِ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ)

***And do not swallow up your property among yourselves by wrongful means*; *neither seek to gain access thereby to the authorities, so that you may swallow up a portion of the property of men wrongfully while you know* (2:188)**

Commentary

Qur'an: ***And do not swallow up your property among yourselves by wrongful means.***

Akl (to eat, to swallow up, **الاكل**) metaphorically means 'to take hold of, or to make use of.'

The reason of this metaphorical use is that eating is the most common and the earliest natural desire; as soon as his life begins, man feels the need of food and then gradually proceeds to other needs like clothing, habitation and marriage, etc.

Acquiring food is his first natural action and wilful doing. That is why if one uses or takes a thing it is said one has eaten it, and especially so in the case of wealth and property. And this figure of speech is common to all languages.

Mal (wealth, property, **المال**) literally means the possession which is desired. It seems that its root is *mayl* (inclination, desire, bent, **الميل**), because it is one of those things to which the heart is inclined, which it desires.

Baynakum (among yourselves, **بينكم**) *bayn* (**بين**) means the gap between two or more things.

Wrong (*batil,* **الباطل**) is opposite of truth (*haqq,* **الحقّ**): *haqq* (**الحقّ**) means a thing which is confirmed.

The proviso ***among yourselves*** added after the command ***do not swallow up your property*** shows that wealth is for all the people; but Allah has distributed it among them — a just distribution — by promulgating laws based on justice and equity, which cut at the roots of corruption and immorality.

If anybody trespasses the limits put by these laws, it will be invalid and wrong. This verse, in a way, explains the verse:

***He it is who created for you all that is in the earth* (2:29).**

Your property (*amwalakum,* **اموالكم**): History and ancient tradition show that ever since man put his foot on this globe, society has recognised the right to property and upheld it in one way or other. By using this possessive pronoun, Allah confirms this right.

This principle has been mentioned in the Qur'an in more than a hundred places, in various words like dominion (*mulk,* **الملك**), property (*mal,* **المال**), the preposition for (*1 ... ,* **ل**) used for possession, and

istikhlaf (to make man Allah's deputy on earth, الاستخلاف); but there is no need to quote the references here.

Likewise all the verses which regulate selling, trade and other commercial dealings implicitly recognise this right. For example:

***and Allah has allowed trading* (2:275),**

***do not swallow up your property among yourselves by wrongful means, except that it be trading by your mutual consent* (4:29),**

***and the trade dullness of which you fear* (9:25)**

and other such references, and *mutawatir* traditions support it.

Qur'an: ***neither seek to gain access thereby to the authorities, so that you may swallow up a portion of the property of man wrongfully while you know.***

Idla' (translated here as "to gain access", الادلآء) literally means to send the bucket (*dal*ء*,* الدّلوء) down into the well for drawing water. Its metaphorical use in this verse implies offering money, etc., to the authorities to induce them to give judgement in favour of the bribe-giver.

It is a very nice allegory. The desired judgement is the water in the depth of the well; the bribe is the bucket which is sent down to bring the desired result.

A portion (*fariqan,* فـريقا): It is a part separated from the whole.

This sentence is in conjunction with the word *swallow up*; therefore, grammatically it is a prohibitory verb, and hence the sign of quiescence.

Another possibility: The "and" (w ..., و) (the conjunction word not appearing in the above translation) may be taken to mean "with" (ma', مع), and further it may be presumed that after it, the word that (*inna,* انّ) is implied.

In this case the whole verse will be one sentence and will mean: ".....by wrongful means with seeking to gain access..."

Thus, the verse prohibits the mutual understanding between the bribe-giver and bribe-taker so that they wrongfully swallow up the property of the people by sharing it between themselves — the bribe-taker taking the portion which has been offered to him, and the giver usurping the other portion — while they know that it is wrong and unjust.

Traditions

In a tradition, as–Sadiq (a.s.) says about this verse: "The Arabs used to gamble with their wives and property. So, Allah prohibited them to do so." [*al–Kafi*]

Ab□ Basir says: "I asked Ab□ 'Abdillah (a.s.) the meaning of the words of Allah in His book:

and do not swallow up your property among yourselves by wrongful means; neither seek to gain access thereby to the authorities.

He (the Imam) said: 'O Ab□ Basir! Verily Allah knew that there would be in this *ummah* judges who would do injustice. Verily, He did not mean (here) judges of a just authority, but He meant those of an unjust authority.

O Ab□ Muhammad! (i.e. Ab□ Basir) if you had a right against someone and you summoned him to the judges of a just authority, but he did not agree to it and compelled you to put your case before the judges of an unjust authority, so that they might decide in his favour, then that man would be among those who had resorted to the judgement of the *tagh□t* (Satan). And it is the word of Allah:

***Have you not observed those who think that they believe in what has been sent down unto you and what was sent down before you? They intend to resort to the judgement of tagh□t* (Satan), *though they were commanded to deny* (reject) *him ...* (4:60)*' "* [*ibid.*]

There is a tradition from Ab□ Ja'far (a.s.): "The meaning of 'wrongful means' is the false oath with which property is usurped." [*Majma'u 'l–bayan*]

The author says: All the above traditions give some examples, but the verse is general.

On Social Science

All organic things, vegetable, animal and human beings make use of other things to sustain their lives. They actively take advantage of those surrounding things which may help in their continued existence.

We have never heard of a thing which exists but is not active, or an action which is done without the doer expecting its benefit to return to him.

Remark the vegetable kingdom which does whatever it does with the single aim of benefiting from it in its existence, growth, and reproduction.

Similarly, all animals and human beings do whatever they do with the aim of getting benefit one way or another, even if that benefit be only in the imagination and thought.

Plants have been taught by the Creator, and animals and men know by their instinct that they cannot

use any material for the fulfilment of their natural needs and the protection of their existence unless that material has a very special relation to them; in other words, unless it belongs to them.

They know that one deed cannot be done by two doers. Accordingly, man and animal etc. prohibit others from interfering in their affairs and do not allow anything to utilize what they want to utilize for themselves.

This is the foundation of this special relation – namely, possession which is recognised by one and all. Hence the words ‘my’, ‘your’, etc.

For a further proof, look at any animal fighting to remove others from its territory, its prey, or its mate. Again, see children quarrelling for, and defending, whatever food, or toy, they have got.

Even a suckling infant does not allow another infant to suck at the same breast. This is the lesson taught by nature.

When man, being a social animal, established society, that natural instinct was bound to become more pronounced, and eventually became a well–organised and well– balanced system that took the shape of social ethics and moral values; gradually the basic concept of that special relation branched off into various kinds with different names: the monetary relation was named ‘property’, the nonmonetary, ‘right’ and so on.

Human beings may have different views on the legality of various means of acquiring property, like inheritance, trade, confiscation by the ruling authority, etc., or on the suitability of the owner, whether he is adult or minor, sane or idiot, a single person or a group, and so on.

But there is no escape from recognising the basic principle of ownership. That is why even those who apparently reject the idea of ownership have only transferred it from the individual to the society or the state.

Even then, they have not been able to abolish private ownership totally, and they will never be able to do so, because it is the verdict of nature, and if nature is rejected, man will perish.

We shall discuss, God willing, in their proper places the details of this basic principle, according to the means of its acquirement, such as trade, profit, inheritance, war–booty, collection, etc. and according to the status of the owner, i.e. adult or minor, etc.

Suratul Baqarah: Verse 189

١٨٩) يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَهِلَّةِ ۖ قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ ۗ وَلَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِأَن تَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِن ظُهُورِهَا وَلَٰكِنَّ الْبِرَّ
مَنِ اتَّقَىٰ ۗ وَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

They ask you concerning the new moons. Say, they are **(indications of)** ***times fixed for men and*** **(for)** ***the pilgrimage. And it is not righteousness that you should enter the houses from their backs; but righteousness is the one who guards himself*** **(against evil);** ***and enter the houses by their doors and fear Allah, so that you may be successful*** **(2:189).**

Commentary

Qur'an: ***They ask you ... the pilgrimage.***

Ahillah (**الأهلة**) is plural of *hilal* (crescent, **الهلال**). The moon is called *hilal* (**الهلال**) at the beginning of the lunar month when it comes away from the direct rays of the sun; it is named crescent (*hilal,* **الهلال**) on the first and second nights according to one group, while some others say that it is named so for the first three nights; still others say that this name continues until a faint circle of light shows the outline of the moon.

A fourth group says that is a "crescent" until its light brightens the night; this occurs on the seventh night, after which it is simply called moon (*qamar,* **القمر**) and on the fourteenth night it becomes full moon (*badr,* **البدر**). Its general name in Arabic is *zibriqan* (**الزّبرقان**).

The Arabs say *istahalla's-sabiyy* (**استهل الصّبيّ**) when the newly born child cries soon after birth. Also they say *ahalla'l-qawmu bi 'l-hajj* (**اهل القوم بالحجّ**) when the pilgrims call out loudly *labbayk Allahumma labbayk.*

Thus the root *H-L-L* (**هلل**) gives the idea of raising one's voice, and the new moon is called *hilal* (**الهلال**) because people hail it and raise their voice to point it out.

Mawaqit (**المواقيت**) is plural of *miqat* (**الميقات**) which means the time appointed for a work. It also means the place appointed for it, as we say: The *miqat* of the Syrians or the Yemenes, which means the place where they wear the robes of *ihram* for pilgrimage. In this verse it has the first meaning, i.e. the appointed time.

They ask you concerning the new moons. It does not say what the question was. Some say that they wanted to know the reality of the moon and why it appeared in different shapes from night to night.

Others think that they wished to know the reason for the reappearance of the new moon after its disappearing at the end of the month.

But the word used is *ahillah* (new moons, الأهلّة) in the plural, and it proves that the question was not about the reality of the moon or its various phases, because in that case it would have been appropriate to say "they ask you concerning the moon" not "the new moons".

And if the question was about the reason of the new moon, the proper words would be "they ask you concerning the new moon". In both cases the use of the plural would be inappropriate.

This plural "new moons" proves that the question was: What is the reason or benefit of the appearance of the moon as crescent after crescent and of its marking the lunar months?

This question was shortened into "new moons" because it is the new moon which starts a new month, and then its benefit was explained.

This question may be inferred from the reply: ***say they are*** **(indications of)** ***times fixed for men and*** **(for)** ***pilgrimage.*** The times fixed for various actions and activities are the 'months', and not the various shapes of the moon but about the lunar months which are marked by the new moons.

And Allah explained that these months were the times fixed for the benefit of man in affairs of their material and spiritual lives. Man, by his nature, is obliged to measure all his activities by time.

It was, therefore, necessary to divide time (which is the yard-stick of his actions) into various short and long portions. The mercy of Allah which looks after the affairs of His creatures, and guides them towards the betterment of their lives, effected this division by creating night, day, month, season and year etc.

The most obvious and the clearest division is the grouping of the days in the lunar months. Everyone may benefit from it, be he a scholar or an ignorant person, a bedouin or a city-dweller; everyone can observe the beginning of the new moon if his eye-sight is correct; and everyone may easily keep its count.

These benefits are conspicuously absent in the solar calendar; man did not wake to this idea, and could not come to grips with its complicated reckoning, until many centuries after human society came into being. Moreover, not every one can always know the dates of the solar calendar.

Therefore, the lunar months are the times fixed and prescribed for men for their use in their material and spiritual affairs, and especially so for the *hajj* (pilgrimage) because it is performed in the known months.

The *hajj* (pilgrimage) has especially been mentioned here as an introduction to the topic which is dealt with in the following sentences.

Qur'an: ***And it is not righteousness … by their doors.***

It is known from the reports that in the days before Islam it was the custom of some Arabs that after wearing the robes of *ihram* for pilgrimage, if they had to enter their houses for any reason, they did not use the doors, but cut a hole in the wall for that purpose.

Islam disapproved that practice and told them to enter the houses from their doors. The verse has been revealed in a way that the above-mentioned report may be believed to be true.

Had there been no such reliable report, these words could be interpreted metaphorically as a prohibition of performing religious rites in any way other than the prescribed one.

For example, pilgrimage should not be done but in its prescribed months, fast should not be kept in any month other than Ramadhan, and so on. In that case, the sentence would have been complementary to the previous one.

The meaning would have been: these months are the times prescribed for the religious deeds fixed for them, and it is not permitted to transfer those deeds to other months, like doing *hajj* (pilgrimage) outside the prescribed months or fasting in a month other than Ramadhan.

But the first interpretation is supported by the traditions. The words, ***it is not righteousness* to *enter the houses from their backs***, proves that this practice was never approved of by the religion; otherwise it would not have been said to be against righteousness.

It was just a bad custom of the pre-Islamic times; and Allah said that it was not righteousness. Rather, righteousness was the fear of Allah and guarding oneself against evil.

but righteousness is the one who guards himself* (against evil):** Apparently, the sentence should have been "but righteousness is guarding oneself (against evil)", but Allah used the expression ***the one who guards himself to show that the real virtue is in practicing "piety", and not in its abstract idea.

It is like the verse:

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the east and the west but righteousness is the one who believes in Allah ... **(2:177)**

and enter the houses by their doors: It is not a compulsory order; it is a guidance that entering into houses from their doors is the proper method, as it is the usual and recognised way.

People build houses and put doors in them for this very purpose, and there is no reason why a hole should be drilled for entering into, or going out of, the house.

This sentence admonishes them not to follow a foolish custom which goes against common sense. In short, the sentence does not say that it is obligatory on every one to enter into a house through the door.

It just tells them that it is the proper way. Of course, if one enters into a house by a way other than the

door, thinking that this custom is a part of religion, then it will be an "unlawful innovation".

Qur'an: ***and fear Allah, so that you may be successful.*** It was mentioned in the beginning of this *sūrah* (chapter) that *taqwa* (piety) is virtue which gathers in its fold all ranks of the faith and all stages of perfection.

Obviously, not every stage and rank leads one to spiritual success and happiness, as do the last stages which remove all shades of polytheism and misdirection.

It is these last stages which guide one to success and bring the good tidings of happiness. That is why Allah said, ***so that you may be successful,*** using the word 'may'.

Also, it is possible to interpret the words, "fear Allah", here as following this particular order, and discarding the practice of going into houses from their backs.

Traditions

Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "The people asked the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) concerning the new moons.

Then this verse was revealed, ***They ask you concerning the new moons. Say, 'they are*** **(indications of)** ***times fixed for men';*** they know from them the time their loans are due, the waiting period (number of months a women must wait after divorce or the death of her husband before the next marriage) of their women and the time of their pilgrimage." [*ad-Durru 'l-manthūr*]

Some others from different chains are from Abu '1-'Aliyah, Qatadah and others.

There is another tradition that someone asked the Prophet about the various phases of the moon; so this verse was sent down. But we have already commented on this report that it is against the apparent meaning of the verse, and, therefore, is not worthy of consideration.

There is a tradition reported by Waki', al-Bukhari and Ibn Jarir from al-Bara'. In the days of "ignorance", when they wore the *ihram,* they used to go into the house from its back. Therefore, Allah sent down the. verse

And it is not righteousness that you should enter the houses from their backs; but righteousness is the one who guards himself **(against evil);** ***and enter the houses by their doors.*** [*ad-Durru 'l-manthūr*]

There is another tradition reported by Ibn Abi Hatim and al-Hakim (and he has said that it is "correct") from Jabir. He said: "The Quraysh were called *hums* (enthusiastic, strenuous, الحمس), and they used to enter by the doors in the condition of *ihram.*

The *ansar* (helpers) and other Arabs did not enter from the door in *ihram.* Once the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) was in a garden, and came out from its door, and Qutbah ibn 'Amir al-Ansari came out with him.

The people said, 'O Messenger of Allah! Verily Qutbah ibn 'Amir is a sinner, he came out with you from the door.' The Prophet asked him: 'Why did you do so?'

He replied: 'I saw you doing it, so I did as you did.' The Prophet said: 'I am an *ahmas* (i.e. Qurayshite).' He said: 'But my religion is your religion.' Then Allah sent down:

it is not righteousness that you should enter the houses from their backs. [*ibid.*]

The author says: Other traditions of nearly the same meaning have been narrated from other chains. *Hums* (الحمس) *is* the plural of *ahmas* (الاحمس) from *himasah* (الحماسة) which means "hardiness".

The tribe of Quraysh was called *hums* (الحمس) because of their zeal in the matter of their religion, or because of their bravery and strength.

Apparently, this tradition shows that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) had allowed the continuation of that custom by non-Qurayshites before this incident; and that is why he admonished him in these words: "Why did you do so?"

If we accept this view then this verse was revealed to abrogate a rule which was enforced not by a verse but by the order of the Prophet. But you already know that the verse does not support this view.

It says, ***it is not righteousness that you should enter ...*** It is unimaginable that Allah or His Apostle on divine command enforced a rule and then Allah at the time of its abrogation condemned and criticised it as being against righteousness.

al-Baqir (a.s.) said about the word of Allah, *and enter the houses by their doors*: "Allah means that every affair, whatever it may be, should be approached in its (proper) way". [*al-Mahasin*]

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "The Imams (*al-awsiya'*) are the doors of Allah, from which Allah is approached; and had they not been there, Allah would not have been known; and it is through them that Allah has established His proof over His creatures." [*al-Kafi*]

The author says: This tradition gives an example of the general meaning of this verse, which has been explained in the previous one. There is no doubt that the verse is general in its meaning, even if it was sent down on a particular occasion.

The Imam said: "had they not been there, Allah would not have been known". This refers to the true explanation of religion and the complete Call (Mission of the Prophet) which are with them.

This sentence has a deeper meaning also; maybe we shall explain it later on. There are numerous

traditions of the same meaning as given in these two.

Suratul Baqarah: Verse 190-194

١٩٠) وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ)

١٩١) وَاقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَخْرِجُوهُم مِّنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجُوكُمْ ۚ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ ۚ وَلَا تُقَاتِلُوهُمْ عِندَ
الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتَّىٰ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِيهِ ۖ فَإِن قَاتَلُوكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ)

١٩٢) فَإِنِ انتَهَوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ)

١٩٣) وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّىٰ لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ ۖ فَإِنِ انتَهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ)

١٩٤) الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمَاتُ قِصَاصٌ ۚ فَمَنِ اعْتَدَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدَىٰ)
عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you and do not exceed the limits. Verily, Allah loves not those who exceed the limit. **(190)**

And kill them wherever you find them and drive them out from whence they drove you out; and mischief **(disbelief)** ***is more grievous than slaughter; and do not fight with them at the Sacred Mosque until they fight with you therein; but if they do fight you than slay them; such is the recompense of the unbelievers.*** **(191)**

But if they desist, then verily Allah is forgiving, Merciful. **(192)**

And fight with them until there is no **(more)** ***mischief*** **(disbelief),** ***and religion be only for Allah; but if they desist then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors.*** **(193)**

The sacred month for the sacred month and reprisal **(is lawful)** ***in all sacred things; whoever then acts aggressively against you, inflict the like aggression on him as he has inflicted on you,. and fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who guard*** **(against evil). (194)**

***And spend in the way of Allah and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands*; *and do good*; *verily Allah loves those who do good*. (195)**

General Comment

The context of the verses shows that they were revealed together. The whole talk has only one aim; permission, for the first time, of fighting with the polytheists of Mecca.

These verses refer to driving them out from whence they drove the believers out, to disbelief and to reprisal; they prohibit fighting with them at the Sacred Mosque unless they fight the believers in it.

All these matters were connected with the polytheists of Mecca. Also, the sentence: ***fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you,*** deserves more attention. It is not a condition, i.e., it does not mean, "fight with them if they fight with you".

Nor is it a restrictive clause (as some people think) meaning, "fight with the men, and not with their women and children who are not in a position to fight with you", because nobody "fights" with those who are unable to fight back.

Had it been the aim of the sentence, it would have been proper to say "do not kill them". Therefore, the words *those who fight with you* only refer to a fact — fight those who are presently engaged in fighting against you. And it points to the polytheists of Mecca.

The verses have the same significance as the following verses:

***Permission* (to fight) *is given to those upon whom war is made, for they have been oppressed, and most surely Allah is able to help them; those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say, Our Lord is Allah* (22:39—40).**

These verses also contain the initial (but unconditional) permission to fight with the fighting polytheists.

These five verses together promulgate a single law covering all its limits and details.

And fight in the way of Allah is the basic law; ***and do not exceed the limit*** puts disciplinary restriction on it; ***And kill them. wherever you find them*** defines the limits of pressure; ***and do not fight with them at the Sacred Mosque until they fight with you therein*** puts a restriction according to the place; ***and fight with them until there is no more mischief*** (dis-belief) shows its duration; ***The sacred month for the sacred month, and reprisal* (is lawful) *in all sacred things*** explains that this legislation is based on the principle of retaliation in fighting and killing, it is paying them in their own coin; ***And spend in the way of Allah*** makes the believers responsible for the financial preparations for war: they must spend for their own preparation and for that of others.

Therefore, it seems that all the five verses were sent down together about one subject. It is wrong to say

(as some have done) that some of these verses abrogate the others; or that they were revealed separately on different occasions. In fact, the aim of all these verses is one: permission to fight against the polytheists of Mecca who were fighting the believers.

Commentary

Qur'an: ***And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you*:**

qital (**القتال**) means attempting to kill someone who is attempting to kill you. This fight was ***in the way of Allah*** because its aim was to establish the religion and to raise the belief of monotheism.

It was an act of worship done to gain the favour of Allah, and not to usurp the property of people or to damage their dignity. War in Islam is basically defensive; it protects the right of humanity sanctioned by nature, as will be explained later.

Defence is by nature a limited venture; that is why Allah said soon after this permission, ***and do not exceed the limit.***

Qur'an: ***and do not exceed the limit. Verily, Allah loves not those who exceed the limit:***

i'tida' (**الاعتداء**) means going beyond the boundary. The Arabs say *'ada* (**عدا**) and *i'tada* (**اعتدى**) when someone goes beyond the boundary.

This prohibitory order is general and covers all the situations where one may be said to exceed the limit, like fighting someone before calling him to follow the path of truth, or starting a war, or killing women and children, or not desisting from war when ordered; its other examples are explained in the traditions of the Prophet.

Qur'an: ***And kill them wherever ... than slaughter thiqafah*** (**ثقافة**) means "to find".

This sentence is similar to the verse:

then slay the polytheists wherever you find them **(9:6).**

Fitnah (**الفتنة**) is the means of testing a thing. It is also used for the test itself as well as its related things like difficulty and hardship. It is also used for punishment, and the crimes and sins which bring that punishment in their wake, like polytheism, disbelief and going astray. The Qur'an has used this word in various places in all these meanings.

In this verse the word means ascribing a partner to Allah and disbelieving in His Messenger and persecuting and oppressing the Messenger of Allah and the believers as was done by the polytheists of Mecca before and after the Hijrah.

The verse says: Put the utmost pressure on the polytheists by killing them wherever they are found until they are compelled to go out of their town and emigrate from their land, as they did to you.

And whatever they did to you was more grievous, because it was simply a mischief and an act of infidelity; and mischief and infidelity are more grievous than killing.

Killing only terminates the life of this world while infidelity terminates this life as well as the next one and destroys both worlds.

Qur'an: ***and do not fight with them ... recompense of the disbelievers.***

It prohibits fighting with them at the Sacred Mosque (*Masjidu 'l –Haram*), to protect its sanctity, as long as they respect that sanctity. ***Therein*** refers to the Sacred Mosque.

Qur'an: ***Then if they desist, then verily Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.***

Intiha' (**الانتهاء**) means to desist from, to abstain from. ***If they desist*** means "if they desist from fighting near the Sacred Mosque", because the sentence is mentioned immediately after that topic.

It does not mean desisting from fighting altogether by accepting Islam and obeying its commands. However this topic comes soon after it and then Allah will refer to it in these words, ***but if they desist then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors.***

Thus the two sentences refer to two completely different matters, and there is no repetition.

Then verily Allah is forgiving, Merciful. This sentence puts the cause in the place of the effect. The full meaning is: "But if they desist from fighting at the Sacred Mosque, then you must desist from it, because Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."

Qur'an: ***And fight with them until there is no more mischief*** **(disbelief)** ***and the religion be only for Allah.***

This defines the time–limit of the fighting. *Fitnah* (**الفتنة**) (translated here as' disbelief ' and 'mischief ') means here 'ascribing a partner to Allah and worshipping idols', as was the custom of the polytheists of Mecca, who compelled others to do likewise.

This meaning is inferred from the next sentence, ***and religion be only for Allah.*** This verse is similar to the verse:

And fight with them until there is no mischief **(disbelief),** ***and the religion be only for Allah; but if they desist, then verily Allah sees what they do. And if they turn back, then know that Allah is your Master; The Most Excellent Master and the Most Excellent Helper*** **(8:39–40).**

This verse shows that it is obligatory to call them to the right path before the war. If they accept the call,

there will be no fighting; but if they reject it then there is no Master except Allah, and He is the most excellent Master and the most excellent Helper; He helps his believing servants.

It is known that fighting is prescribed so that the religion be only for Allah. Such a fighting cannot be started until the adversaries are first invited to come onto the right path, i.e. the religion based upon monotheism.

Some people wrote that this verse was abrogated by the verse:

Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Apostle have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, from among those who were given the Book, until they pay the jizyah **(tributory tax)** ***with their hand while they are in a state of subjection*** **(9:29).**

But there is no question of either verse abrogating the other, because they deal with different subjects. The verse under discussion is, as explained earlier, about the Meccan polytheists and does not cover the People of the Book who are referred to inverse 9:29.

And the religion be only for Allah means that idol-worship be abolished and the oneness of Allah be accepted. The people of the Book do believe in One Creator.

We know their belief is in reality disbelief as Allah says that they:

do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Apostle have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth.

But Islam is content with their mere profession of monotheism. Fighting with them was ordained not to make them believe in monotheism, but simply so that they might pay tribute to the Muslims, thus raising the true creed above their creed and making Islam victorious over all religions.

Qur'an: ***but if they desist then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors.***

If they desist from disbelief in what you believe in, then cease fighting with them, because there is no hostility except against the oppressors.

In this verse also, the cause has been mentioned in place of the effect. Instead of saying "then cease fighting with them" it points out the cause that ***there should be no hostility except against the oppressors.*** It is like the verse:

But if they repent and establish the prayer and pay the zakat, then they are your brethren in faith **(9:11).**

Qur'an: ***The sacred month for the sacred month and reprisal*** **(is lawful)** ***in all sacred things.***

Hurumat (sacred things, الحرمات) refers to the sanctity of the sacred month, the sanctity of the "boundary" (*haram*) of Mecca, and the sanctity of the Sacred Mosque.

If the Meccan polytheists disregard the sanctity of the sacred month by fighting in it — and they did violate its sanctity when they prevented the Prophet and his companions from pilgrimage (*'umrah*) in the years of Hudaybiyah (6 A.H.), and attacked them with arrows and stones — then the believers are allowed to fight them in that month and it would not be deemed disrespectful towards it.

The believers are fighting in the way of Allah and are obeying His Command to raise up His word. Like-wise, if the infidels violate the sanctity of the boundary of Mecca or the Sacred Mosque by fighting in it or in that area then the believers may hit back at them in that place and that area.

The sacred month for the sacred month describes a particular example, followed by a general observation, ***and reprisal*** **(is lawful)** ***in all sacred things.***

This in its turn is followed by even more general principle***, whoever then acts aggressively against you, inflict the like aggression on him as he has inflicted on you.***

The meaning, thus, will be: Allah has sanctioned reprisal in the sacred month because He has sanctioned it for all sacred things. And He has sanctioned reprisal for all sacred things because He has made it lawful for His servants to inflict aggression equal to the aggression inflicted upon them.

Then He exhorts them to remain steadfastly cautious when inflicting aggression in reprisal, lest they trespass the limit. After all, punishing an oppressor seems sweet, and all animal instincts are roused when one is engaged in taking revenge.

There are more chances of deviation from justice, by the use of excessive force, and by disregard of the limits put by the religion. But the fact has already been mentioned that ***Allah loves not those who exceed the limit.***

And the believers are most in need of the love of Allah, His patronage and His help. Therefore, they are told to ***fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who guard*** **(against evil)**.

The question arises: Why Allah sanctioned acting aggressively when He does not love those who act aggressively (or, as translated above, exceed the limit)?

Of course, acting aggressively is to be condemned, but only when it is not in response to an aggression. But if it is in reprisal of an aggression, then it is not "exceeding the limit" or "acting aggressively".

It is defending one-self from degradation, and liberating oneself from the fetters of slavery, oppression and injustice. It is like showing pride before a proud man, or the open utterance of evil in speech by the one who has been wronged.

Qur'an: ***And spend in the way of Allah and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands.***

It is the command to spend wealth for waging war in the way of Allah. The clause, ***in the way of Allah*** attached to "spending" has the same significance as when attached to "fighting" in 2:190.

"With your hands" (*biaydikum,* بايديكم); with (*b…,* ب) here is extra, added for emphasis. The meaning is "and cast not your hands in perdition".

The hand is a symbol of power, ability and strength; and the verse says: do not nullify or waste your strength by not spending money in preparation for war.

Another interpretation: "with" (*b…* ب) signifies the cause or means; and the object of the verb is yourselves (*anfusakum,* انفسكم) which is deleted but understood. Accordingly, the meaning will be as translated above: *and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands.*

Tahlukah (التّهلكة) and *hilak* (الهلاك) are synonymous; both mean to perish, to fall in perdition. When man becomes in such a condition that he does not know where he is, this word is used.

Tahlukah (التّهلكة) is with the paradigm of *taf'ulah* (تفعله). There is no other infinitive verb in Arabic with this paradigm.

The order is, anyhow, general; and it prohibits any commission or omission which may cause perdition, whether it is on the side of excess or deficiency.

For example, miserliness and avarice when preparing for war would weaken the fighters and make the army of Islam the target of the enemy, and many would be killed.

On the other hand, extravagance in expenditure would bring poverty and misery to such a spender, degrade him in society and make life unbearable. Both these actions are prohibited by this verse.

Allah finished this talk on "doing good", and said:

and do good; verily Allah loves the doers of good.

Doing good does not mean desisting from fighting, or clemency in killing the enemies of the religion, etc. It means doing a wok in its proper way: Fight when fighting is required; restrain yourselves when restraint is preferred; be strict where strictness is demanded by reason, and forgive where forgiveness will not embolden the enemy.

In short, repulsing the oppressor by the most reasonable means is to do good for humanity, because this repulsion guarantees humanity its due right, and defends the religion which would improve man's condition in both worlds.

Further, desisting from exceeding the limits while obtaining the due right is another good action. And love of Allah is the final good of the religion; and it is essential for every follower of religion to be worthy of the love of Allah by obeying His command and following His Apostle. Allah says in the Qur'an:

Say "if you love Allah then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive your sins" **(3:30).**

These five verses — and they are about fighting — began with the prohibition of exceeding the limit and that:

Verily Allah loves not those who exceed the limit,

and ended with the command to do good and that:

Verily Allah loves those who do good.

Its delicacy and subtlety need no explanation.

The War, As Ordained By The Qur'an

The Qur'an ordered the Muslims to desist from fighting and patiently bear all persecutions in the way of Allah. See, for example, the following verses:

Say: "O unbelievers! I do not worship that which you worship, nor do you worship Him whom I worship; nor am I going to worship that which you worship; nor are you going to worship Him whom I worship. Unto you be your religion, and unto me my religion." **(Ch. 109)**

And bear patiently what they say. **(73:10)**

Have you not seen those to whom it was said: Withhold your hands and establish prayer and pay the poor-rate (zakat), but when fighting was prescribed for them ... **(4:77)**

This last verse refers to the following:

Many of the people of the Book wish that they could turn you back into unbelievers after you had believed, out of envy on their part, **(even)** ***after the truth has become manifest unto them. But pardon and forgive*** **(them) so** ***that Allah should bring about His command. Verily, Allah is Powerful over all things. And establish prayer and give the poor-rate ...*** **(2:109—110)**

Then came the verses of fighting. Among them are the verses sanctioning fighting with the polytheists of Mecca and their allies:

Permission **(to fight)** ***is given to those upon whom war is made, for they have been oppressed, and surely Allah is able to help them; those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah*** **(22:39-40).**

This verse might have been revealed to allow the Muslims to defend themselves at Badr, etc.

And fight with them until there is no mischief **(disbelief),** ***and the religion be only for Allah; but if they desist, then verily Allah sees what they do. And if they turn back, then know that Allah is your Master; the Most Excellent Master and the Most Excellent Helper*** **(8:39—40).**

And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you, and do not exceed the limit. Verily, Allah loves not those who exceed the limit **(2:190).**

And among them are the verses permitting fighting with the people of the Book:

Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Apostle have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, from among those who were given the Book, until they pay the jizyah **(tributory tax)** ***with their hand while they are in a state of subjection*** **(9:29).**

Also among them are the verses for fighting against the poly-theists in general, and here, this word covers all unbelievers except the people of the Book:

Then slay the polytheists wherever you find them **(9:6).**

And fight the polytheists all together as they fight you altogether **(9:36).**

And finally there are the verses allowing the fight against the unbelievers in general:

Fight those of the unbelievers who are near to you and let them find in you hardiness **(9:123).**

In short, the Qur'an says that Islam — the religion of monotheism, is based on the foundation of true nature, and is responsible for the well-being of humanity in this life. Allah says:

Then set your face uprightly for the **(right)** ***religion — the nature made by Allah in which He has made men*****;** ***there is no alteration*** **(by anyone else)** ***in the creation of Allah*****;** ***that is the established*** **(or the custodian)** ***religion, but most people do not know*** **(30:30).**

Therefore, establishing and maintaining this religion is the most important right for humanity which has been laid down. Allah says:

He has prescribed for you of the religion what He enjoined upon Nūh and that which We have revealed unto you and that which we enjoined upon Ibrahim and Mūsa and 'Isa, then establish the religion and be not divided therein **(42:13).**

And to defend this prescribed natural right is another natural right. Allah says:

And had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, certainly would have been

pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered. And surely Allah will help him who helps Him **(i.e. His cause),** ***most verily Allah is Strong, Mighty*** **(22:40).**

It is, thus, made clear that the religion of monotheism can stand on its feet and remain alive only if there is proper arrangement for its defence against enemies, as Allah says:

And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth certainly would be in a state of disorder **(2:251).**

Also, He says in the chapter of al-Anfal in the middle of the topic of fighting:

That He may establish the truth of what was true and bring to naught what was false, though the guilty ones disliked **(8:8).**

After some verses, He says:

O you who believe! Answer **(the call of)** ***Allah and His Apostle when he calls you to that which gives you life*** **(8:24).**

Here the war and fighting, to which the believers are called, has been termed as something giving them life. It means that fighting — whether waged for the defence of the Muslims, or that of the Islamic territory or even that which is initiated — is in reality in defence of the right of humanity in this life.

Polytheism is the death of humanity and, a corruption of nature, and it is the defence of its right that resurrects it and gives it a new lease of life.

An intelligent observer will realize at this juncture that Islam should have had a parallel defensive system to cleanse the earth from polytheism of every shade and to purify the faith of all those who believe in one Creator.

After all, the fighting mentioned in the above verses has only two aims: Removing noticeable polytheism, that is idol-worship, and raising the word of truth above the creeds of the people of the Book by compelling them to pay *jizyah.*

But it does not remove less noticeable polytheism; even the people of the Book are not true believers in One God. The same verse (9:29), which allows them to pay *jizyah,* declares that they do not believe in Allah or His Apostle and do not follow the religion of truth.

Therefore, they are in reality polytheists even though they profess to believe in one God; their polytheism is hidden behind their declared monotheism.

And if the Muslims were to defend the natural right of humanity, they should bring them into the fold of Islam — the true religion.

The Qur'an does not give such an order in clear words, but it promises them the final victory over their enemies; and the promised victory is of such a nature that it cannot be achieved with out waging this kind of war, a war to establish pure monotheistic belief. Allah says:

He it is Who sent His Apostle with the guidance and the religion of truth so that He may make it triumph over all the religions, though the polytheists may be averse **(61:9).**

And clearer than this is the verse,

And certainly, We did write in the Zabur after the Reminder that the earth, shall inherit it my righteous servants **(21:105).**

Even far more clear is the verse,

Allah has promised unto those of you who believe and do good deeds that He will certainly make them Successors in the earth as He made Successors those before them, and that He will certainly establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them, and that He will certainly, after their fear, give them security in exchange; they shall worship **Me,** ***not associating aught with Me*** **(24:55).**

The words, ***they shall worship Me*** means sincere worship with the real faith, as may be inferred by the following clause, ***not associating aught with Me.***

We should remember that, in the eyes of Allah, even some professed faith is in reality polytheism, as He says,

And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating others **(with Him) (12:106).**

So, it is the promise of Allah that He will cleanse the earth from every type of polytheism, and reserve it for the true believers, and then none shall be worshipped but Allah.

Perhaps someone may say:

That promise is of divine help; Allah shall fulfil it through a divine reformer without using manifest means like war, etc.

But this objection cannot be upheld in view of the words, ***He will certainly make them Successors.*** Successors clearly means that someone is removed from his place and another one is put therein. This implies war.

Also there is the following verse:

O you who believe! Whoever of you turns away from his religion, then soon Allah will bring a people that He will love them and they will love Him, humble before the believers and mighty

against the unbelievers, they shall strive hard **(shall fight)** ***in the way of Allah and will not fear censure of any censurer*** **(5:57).**

This verse implies a call to the Truth and a religious movement which will happen by divine command; and it supports the view that this promise shall be fulfilled after the call of fighting in the way of Allah.

From the above, we may know the reply to a very common criticism of Islam. The Christian missionaries call it the religion of the sword and blood; some say that it is the religion of force and compulsion.

All this is said, because Islam has sanctioned *jihad* (war in the way of Allah). They say that it is totally against the character of the religious movements of the previous prophets. The previous religions relied not on the sword but on persuasion and guidance.

The above is the gist of that criticism. But the Qur'an has explained that Islam is based on the judgement of true human nature. Humanity can only achieve its perfection if it accepts that judgement.

And that nature has decreed that all individual and collective affairs should be governed by the laws which are based on the belief in one Allah. To defend this basic principle is a prescribed right of humanity.

It can only be defended by spreading it among people and protecting it from disorder and destruction. And this right must be safeguarded by all possible means.

Even then, moderation is the key-word in this entire venture. It begins with the Call, and patiently enduring the persecution by enemies. Then comes the defence of the lives of the Muslims and Islamic territory.

Lastly comes the war started by order of the divine representative to defend the above mentioned human right and protect the Creed of the Oneness of God.

Whatever the type of fighting, it must be preceded by calling them to come to the right path, and that Call should be based on reason and understanding, as the Prophet used to do. Allah says:

Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and kindly exhortation**;** ***and have disputation*** **(discussion)** ***with them in the manner which is the best*** **(16:125).**

This verse is unconditional. Also, Allah says:

That he who would perish might perish after a clear proof, and he who would live might live after a clear proof **(8:42).**

There is no need to feel alarmed if *jihad* has in it an element of compulsion. When explanations, discussions and exhortations fail to bring a group of people onto the right path, and humanity is in disorder and turmoil because of that group's disregard for the basic right mentioned above, then there is

no way but to compel them to come onto the right path of truth.

This is the strategy adopted by all societies and states throughout the world. The outlaws who flout the laws of the state are first called to accept the authority of the state and obey its laws.

Then, if they do not listen, they are compelled by all possible means to do so, even if it leads to killing and fighting.

A point to ponder: The compulsion will remain for one generation only. Coming generations will be so taught and trained that they will gladly accept the Religion of nature and the creed of the Oneness of God.

It is not objectionable if one generation is compelled to see reason, if by that action all coming generations will gladly follow the right path till the end of the world.

The claim, that all the previous prophets adopted verbal persuasion as their only instrument of guidance, shows an ignorance of the facts. Most of the prophets had neither the opportunity nor the power to wage war.

Read, for example, the lives of N□h, H□d and Salih (peace be on them all); they were under pressure from their enemies on all sides. The same was the case with 'Isa (a.s.) when he was among his people, trying to spread his call. His call did not spread until it was too late; it spread when the period of its validity was coming to its end, near the advent of Islam.

On the other hand, the Old Testament contains the lives of many prophets who waged war in the way of Allah. The Qur'an also mentions some of them. Allah says:

And how many a prophet fought with whom were myriads of Godly men; so they did not lose heart at what befell them in the way of Allah nor did they weaken nor did they abase themselves. And Allah loves the steadfast ones. And their saying was nothing but that they prayed, "Our Lord! forgive us our sins, and our excesses in our affairs and make our feet firm and help us against the unbeliever people **(3:146-147).**

And He says, *inter alia,* describing what happened when M□sa called the Israilites to fight against the Palestinians:

And **(remember)** ***when M□sa said unto his people: ... "O my people! Enter you the holy land which Allah has assigned for you; and turn not on your backs, for then you will return*** **(as)** ***losers" ... They said, "O M□sa! Verily we shall never enter it at all, while they remain therein. Go you and your Lord and fight you two, surely, we shall stay here sitting*** **(5:22-27).**

There is another story about the fighting of Saul and Goliath which begins with the words:

Have you not seen the chiefs of the children of Isra'il, after Mūsa, when they spoke to a prophet unto them **(saying),** ***"raise up for us a king, so that we may fight in the way of Allah ...*** **(2:246—251).**

Then there is the story of the prophet Sulayman and the queen of Sheba, in which Sulayman writes to her:

That exalt not yourselves against me and come unto me in submission.

After receiving her ambassador, he threatened him,

return unto them; for we will certainly come to them with hosts which they shall have no power to resist, and we will certainly expell them out therefrom with abasement while they shall be in a state of ignominy **(27:20–44).**

See how Sulayman (a.s.) called them unto right path; and when the result was not as he had expected, he threatened them to initiate a war.

From The Sociological Point Of View

There is no doubt that every society — human beings as well as some animals — are based on the natural urge to save itself from extinction. Nature gave each species a right to make use of every thing which may help in keeping it alive.

Man takes advantage of inorganic substances, plants, animals and even other human beings in every possible manner, even if it clashes with the rights of those animals or prevents organic and inorganic substances from reaching the point of their perfection.

Likewise, animals make use of plants and other animals and their instinct tells them that they have a right to do so.

In the same way, nature gave them a right to defend the above right, because the right of use would not be complete without the right of defence.

After all, it is an over–crowded place where every thing is in continuous struggle for its survival. Every species which is endowed with sense and movement feels that it has a natural right to protect its rights, and is sure this defence is as lawful as the basic right itself.

For proof, see how the animals defend themselves, when in conflict with others, with their armaments: horns, teeth, claws, hooves, stings, beaks, etc. Those who are not gifted with such weapons protect themselves by fleeing or hiding or pretending to be dead. Others, like monkeys and foxes save themselves by being cunning and through deception.

Man has been given the power of thinking, by which he can employ other things for this defence. His nature issues commands and pronounces judgements.

And one of those judgements is that man has a basic right of use and also a right to defend that basic right. It is this second right which prompts him to fight and quarrel on all occasions when he feels that his right is in danger.

The basic right of taking advantage of other things is bridled by the realization that it is not only he who wants to make use of others but others also want to exercise the same right over all others.

These conflicting demands counterbalance each other and man is forced to come to terms with society and to realize that he also has to serve others as he wants others to serve him. This exchange of services has to be done on the scale fixed by the society.

It is clear from the above that the conflict and struggle to defend his rights is not based on the right to use other things, because this right of use was moderated and balanced by man himself as soon as he entered society; he had to agree that he would take advantage of others only according to the service which he himself was prepared to offer to others.

As a result of this mutual understanding there was no place for fighting. Fighting is based on the second right, that is the right to defend his interests. Man believes that he has a right in some thing: when he sees that that presumed right is endangered, he stands up to defend and protect it.

Thus all wars are in reality defensive. Even kings and emperors assume that they have a certain right, let us say the right to rule; they believe that they deserve to reign.

Others feel that the solution to increasing population or the economic difficulties of their country depends on the annexation of additional territories; and they believe that they have a right to do this.

However absurd these pretexts may seem to others, the man who advances them really believes in them.

Once he, in his mind, gives that right to himself, he is ready to defend it, even if it means attacking others, shedding blood, creating disorder in the country and destroying land and people.

Thus the defence of the human rights is a right laid down in nature which a man is entitled to exercise. But the preceding paragraphs have made it clear that it is only a secondary right. The primary and basic right is the one of taking advantage of others.

If we have to decide whether a certain defensive action was proper, we should, first of all, see how important or proper the defended right was. We must be satisfied that the damage to society by our defensive action would not cancel or maybe even exceed the benefit of the defended right.

The Qur'an has established that the most important human right is the belief in the oneness of God and the laws based on the divine revelation. Also, society unanimously believes that the most important was the right to live under such laws which protect the well-being of individuals.

As these two rights are the most important ones, their defence takes precedence over all other considerations.

Traditions

Ibn 'Abbas said about the verse, ***And fight in the way of Allah ...***: "This verse was revealed about the treaty of Hudaybiyah. And it was like this:

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) and his companions came out in the year when they wanted to perform *'umrah.* They were one thousand and four hundred persons.

They proceeded till they reached Hudaybiyah. There the polytheists prevented them from reaching the Sacred House. Therefore, they slaughtered their sacrificial animals at Hudaybiyah.

The polytheists made an agreement with them that they were to go back that year, they would return for *'umrah* next year when they would be allowed to enter and remain in Mecca for three days to perform *tawaf* and whatever religious rites they wished.

"The (Messenger of Allah) thereon returned to Medina. Next year the Prophet and his companions made preparations for the *'umrah* which had become *qadha* the previous year.

At the same time, they were afraid that the Qurayshites would not honour the agreement and would again prevent them from reaching the Sacred House and would fight.

The Messenger of Allah did not like the idea of fighting with them in the Sacred month within the sacred boundary of Mecca. Then Allah sent down this verse." [*Majma'u 'l-bayan*]

The author says: Similar traditions have been written in *ad-Durru 'l-manthr* with various chains from Ibn 'Abbas and others.

Another tradition from ar-Rabi' ibn Anas and 'Abdu 'r-Rahman ibn Zayd ibn Aslam said: This is the first verse revealed about fighting.

When it was revealed, the Messenger of Allah used to fight with those who fought with him and desisted from fighting those who refrained from fighting, until was revealed the verses, ***Kill the polytheists wherever you find them.*** Thus the above verse was abrogated. [*Majma'u 'l-bayan*]

The author says: It is their own opinion. You know that the verse:

Kill the polytheists wherever you find them does not abrogate the verse ***And fight in the way of Allah …*** Rather it generalizes an order which was specific.

About the verse, ***and kill them wherever you find them …***: This verse was revealed because one of the companions killed an infidel in the sacred month.

The believers condemned him for it. Then Allah made it clear that mischief in religion, i.e. polytheism, is more grievous than killing polytheists in the sacred month, even though it was not allowed. [*Majma'u 'l-bayan*]

The author says: You know that the singleness of the context and inter-relationship of all the five verses obviously proves that they were revealed all together, not piecemeal.

There is a tradition from various chains, from Qatadah. He said: ***"And fight with them until there is no more mischief,*** **i.e. polytheism,** ***and the religion be only for Allah."***

He said: "till it is said, 'there is none to be worshipped except Allah.' It is this cause which the Messenger of Allah fought for, and called the people to.

And we are told that the Prophet used to say, 'Verily Allah ordered me to fight the people till they say, "there is none to be worshipped except Allah", then, if they desisted (from polytheism), there should be no hostility except against the oppressors."

He said: "And verily the oppressor, who refuses to say 'there is none to be worshipped except Allah' shall be fought with till he says 'there is none to be worshipped except Allah'."[*ad-Durru 'l-manthr*]

The author says: The sentence "And verily the oppressor …" is the saying of Qatadah; he has inferred it from the saying of the Prophet and it is a fine inference.

A similar interpretation has been reported from 'Ikrimah.

al-Bukhari, Abu sh-Shaykh and Ibn Mardawayh have narrated from Ibn 'Umar that two persons came to him during the *fitnah* (mischief) of Ibn az-Zubayr and told him:

"Verily, people have done (what they have done) and you are the son of 'Umar and a companion of the Prophet; then why do you not come out?" He (Ibn 'Umar) said:

"It prevents me (from coming out) that Allah has forbidden (shedding) the blood of my (Muslim) brother." They said: "Has not Allah said, ***fight with them until there is no*** **(more)** ***mischief***?"

He said: "We fought until there was no more mischief and the religion became only of Allah; but you want to fight until there he mischief and the religion be for other than Allah." [*ad-Durru 'l -manthr*]

The author says: He was mistaken in the meaning of *fitnah* (الفتنة) and also the two questioners were

mistaken. The meaning of *fitnah* (الفتنة) has already been explained.

The event of Ibn az-Zubayr was not "polytheism or disbelief ", it was an example of disorder on earth, or fighting with one another without any just cause; and believers were not allowed to remain silent about it.

There is in *Majma'u 'l-bayan,* under the verse, ***and fight with them until there is no*** **(more)** ***mischief***: "That is polytheism", and the author of *Majma'u 'l-bayan* said: "And it is narrated from Abū 'Abdillah (a.s.)."

There is a *hadith* in the *Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi about the words of Allah: ***The sacred month for the sacred month;*** al-'Ula' ibn al-Fudhayl said: "I asked him (the Imam) whether it was allowed to the Muslims to start fighting with the polytheists in the sacred month.

He said: 'If the polytheists start the fight with them by (practically) making it lawful (to fight in the month), then the Muslims will see how they can overcome the polytheists (and do it).

And it is the word of Allah, ***The sacred month for the sacred month*** and reprisal (is lawful) in all sacred things.' "

Ahmad and Ibn Jarir, and an-Nahhas in his *Nasikh,* have narrated from Jabir ibn 'Abdullah that he said:

"The Messenger of Allah did not fight in the sacred month until he was fought with, and if ever he was in a fight and the sacred month began, he would desist (from fighting) until it came to an end." [*ad-Durru 'l-manthūr*]

Mu'awiyah ibn 'Ammar said: "I asked Abū 'Abdillah (a.s.) about a man who killed another man, outside the sacred territory and then entered the sacred territory.

The Imam (a.s.) said: 'He will not be killed (therein), but he will not be given anything to eat or drink, and will not be sold anything until he comes out of the sacred territory; then he will be given the punishment of his crime'."

The narrator said that he then asked the Imam (a.s.) "Then what do you say about a man who killed someone in the sacred territory or stole therein. He (the Imam) said:

'He will be punished inside the sacred territory because he himself did not maintain respect of it. And Allah has said, ***whoever then acts aggressively against you, inflict the like aggression on him.'***

(The Imam said) 'This is the law about the sacred territory; and Allah said, ***there should be no hostility except against the aggressors'."*** [*al-Kafi*]

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allah, ***and cast not yourselves into perdition***: "If a man spent in the way of Allah all that he had, he would not have done good and God would not lead him to success.

Does Allah not say:

and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands; and do good; Verily Allah loves those who do good,

i.e., who are economical.'' [*ibid.*]

as-Sadq has narrated from Thabit ibn Anas that he said: ''The Messenger of Allah said: 'Obedience to the ruler is obligatory; and one who has left the obedience to the ruler has not obeyed Allah and has entered into His prohibition, as He says:

and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands'.''

It is narrated in *ad-Durru 'l -manthr* with numerous chains, from Aslam Abi 'Imran that he said: ''We were (fighting) at Constantinople; 'Aqbah ibn 'Amir commanded the Egyptians, and Fudhalah ibn 'Ubayd led the Syrians.

There came out a big row of the Romans, and we stood in row against them. Then a man from our side attacked the Roman row until he entered in its midst.

The people (Muslims) cried out, 'Glory be to Allah! He is casting himself in perdition with his own hands!' Then Abu Ayyub, the companion of the Messenger of Allah, stood up and said:

'O people! You are interpreting this verse in this way, while (the fact is that) it was sent down about us, the group of the Helpers. Verily, when Allah made His religion powerful, and its helpers increased in number, some of us told others, keeping it secret from the Messenger of Allah,

''Verily, our properties are ruined, and (now) Allah had made Islam powerful and its helpers have increased. Therefore, (it would be better) if we stayed in our properties and mended what had been damaged therein.''

Then Allah revealed to his prophet, refuting what we had said, ***And spend in the way of Allah and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands.*** So, perdition meant our staying in our properties and repairing them by leaving fighting (in the way of Allah)'.''

The author says: The difference of the traditions in interpreting the meaning of this verse supports what we have said that this verse is general and covers both extremes (extravagance and miserliness) in spending, and that it is not confined to spending only, but covers other aspects also where ''casting oneself into perdition'' can be applied.

Suratul Baqarah: Verses 196-203

١٩٦) وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ أُحْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ ۖ وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا رُءُوسَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ
مَحِلَّهُ ۚ فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ بِهِ أَذًى مِّن رَّأْسِهِ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِّن صِيَامٍ أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسُكٍ ۚ فَإِذَا أَمِنتُمْ فَمَن تَمَتَّعَ
بِالْعُمْرَةِ إِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ ۚ فَمَن لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجِّ وَسَبْعَةٍ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ ۗ تِلْكَ عَشَرَةٌ
كَامِلَةٌ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَن لَّمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلُهُ حَاضِرِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

١٩٧) الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُومَاتٌ ۚ فَمَن فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ الْحَجَّ فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِي الْحَجِّ ۗ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ
يَعْلَمْهُ اللَّهُ ۗ وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَىٰ ۚ وَاتَّقُونِ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

١٩٨) لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَن تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ۚ فَإِذَا أَفَضْتُم مِّنْ عَرَفَاتٍ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ عِندَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ ۖ
وَاذْكُرُوهُ كَمَا هَدَاكُمْ وَإِن كُنتُم مِّن قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الضَّالِّينَ

١٩٩) ثُمَّ أَفِيضُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَفَاضَ النَّاسُ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

٢٠٠) فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُم مَّنَاسِكَكُمْ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَذِكْرِكُمْ آبَاءَكُمْ أَوْ أَشَدَّ ذِكْرًا ۗ فَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا
وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَاقٍ

٢٠١) وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

٢٠٢) أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا ۚ وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

٢٠٣) وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ۚ فَمَن تَعَجَّلَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ وَمَن تَأَخَّرَ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۙ لِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ ۗ
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ

And complete the hajj **(pilgrimage)** ***and 'umrah for Allah, but if you be prevented, then*** **(send)** ***whatever offering*** **(sacrificial animal)** ***is easy to obtain, and do not Shave your heads until the offering reaches its destination; but whoever among you is sick or has an affliction in his head, then*** **(he should effect)** ***a redemption by fasting, or alms, or sacrifice. But when you are secure*** **(from the hindrance)** ***then whoever enjoys by the 'umrah for the hajj,*** **(he should offer)** ***whatever***

offering **(sacrificial animal)** ***is easy to obtain; but he who cannot find*** **(any offering)** ***should fast for three days during the hajj*** **(pilgrimage)** ***and for seven days when you return; these*** **(make)** ***ten*** **(days)** ***perfect; this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque; and fear Allah and know that Allah is severe in requiting*** **(evil).** **(196).**

Hajj is the months well-known; so whoever determines **(to perform)** ***the hajj therein, then there shall be no sexual intercourse, nor bad language, nor quarrelling during the hajj; and whatever good you do, Allah knows it; and make provision, for surely the best provision is piety*** **(guarding oneself against evil)*****; and fear Me, O people of understanding!*** **(197)**

There is no blame on you if you seek bounty from your Lord; then when you march from 'Arafat, remember Allah near the Holy Monument, and remember Him as He has guided you, although before this you were surely of those who had gone astray. **(198)**

Then march on from whence the people march on, and ask for the forgiveness of Allah; verily, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. **(199)**

So, when you have performed your rites, then remember Allah as you remember your fathers, rather a more Intense remembrance. For, of men there is he who says, "Our Lord! give us in this world", and for him there shall be no portion in the Hereafter. **(200)**

And among them there is he who says, "Our Lord! give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and save us from the chastisement of the Fire" **(201)**

They shall have **(their)** ***portion of what they have earned; and Allah is quick in reckoning.*** **(202)**

And remember Allah during the counted number of days; then whoever hastens off in two days, there is no sin on him, and whoever tarries **(there)** ***there is no sin on him;*** **(this is)** ***for him who guards*** **(himself);** ***and fear Allah, and know that you*** **(all)** ***shall be gathered together unto Him.*** **(203)**

Commentary

These verses were revealed during the last pilgrimage (*hajjatu 'l-wida'* حجّةّ الوداع) performed by the Messenger of Allah. They promulgated the pilgrimage of enjoyment (*hajju 't-tamattu',* حجّ التّمتع)

Qur'an: ***And complete the hall and 'umrah for Allah:***

Completeness (*tamam,* التّمام) of a thing is the final part, when added to the other parts it makes that thing whole, the thing becomes itself; and then the expected effects follow.

When a thing is started and some of its parts are assembled and then the final part is added, it is called *itmam* (completion, to complete, الاتمام). Perfection (*kamal,* الكمال) is a condition, virtue or characteristic

which creates such an effect in a complete thing which would not be found in it without that perfection.

When a human foetus receives all its limbs and organs, it is its completion. When he is called knowledgeable, courageous or chaste it is his perfection.

Sometimes, completion (*tamam,* التّمام) is used metaphorically in place of perfection (*kamal,* الكمال) to show the extreme importance of that virtue or characteristic; the speaker implies that that virtue or is not something extra or external, it is an integral part without which the thing would remain incomplete.

In this verse, the completion of *hajj* and *'umrah* has been used in the first (literal) sense; and it is proved by the following sentence, ***but if you be prevented.***

Obviously, this means prevented 'from carrying on the *hajj* and *'umrah* to their last rite'; in other words, 'from completing them'. It cannot mean 'prevented from perfecting them'.

Hajj is a well-known Islamic act of worship, started by the Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.). It continued among the Arabs, and Allah promulgated it for this *ummah* as a law which would continue upto the Day of Resurrection.

This action begins with *ihram* and the stay in 'Arafat and then in the Sacred Monument. The pilgrims sacrifice an animal each at Mina, throw stones on the three Stone-pillars, circumambulate around the Ka'bah, pray, and march between the Safa and the Marwah. There are some other obligations as well.

Hajj is of three kinds: *hajju 'l-ifrad, hajju 'l-qiran* and *hajju 't-tamattu.* This last one was ordained in the last days of the Messenger of Allah.

'Umrah is another act of worship. In *'umrah,* the pilgrims visit the House of Allah after putting on *ihram* from one of the appointed places. Then they go round the Ka'bah, pray, and march between the Safa and the Marwah and finally cut off some nails or hair.

Hajj and *'umrah* are acts of worship and cannot be complete except when they are done for the sake of Allah, as is seen in the sentence:

And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah.

Qur'an: ***but if you be prevented ... offering reaches its destination:***

ihsar (الأحصار) means to prevent, to obstruct. The verse refers to being prevented from completing the *hajj* or *'umrah,* after *ihram,* because of an ailment or enemy.

Istisar (الأستيسار) of a thing means its becoming easy, not difficult; this paradigm implies that the thing acquires easiness for itself . *Hady* (الهدى) means the animal presented by one man to another or to a place, to seek someone's pleasure with it.

It is derived from *hadyah* (gift, present, الهدية); or from *huda* (to lead to destination,). It is used in both masculine and feminine forms, *hady* (الهدى) and *hadyah* (الهدية) like *tamr* (التّمر) and *tamrah* (date, التّمرة).

Here it means the animals brought or led by the pilgrims for sacrifice during the *hajj.*

Qur'an: *but whoever among you be sick … or sacrifices:*

This sentence is an offshoot of the preceding one, ***do not shave your heads …*** It implies that the sickness refers to only that one in which the man would suffer if his head were not shaved.

or has an affliction in his head:

The conjunctive "or" shows that the affliction here means a suffering other than sickness, like vermin. It figuratively means to be afflicted with vermin, e.g., lice.

These two things (sickness and lice) make it lawful to shave the head; but redemption should be affected by any of the three ways: fast, alms or sacrifice.

It is narrated in a tradition that the fast is for three days; the alms are to feed six poor persons, and the sacrifice is one goat.

Qur'an: *But when you are secure* (from the hindrance), *then whoever enjoys by the 'umrah for the hajj*: It is an offshoot of the sentence: *if you be prevented.*

The meaning is: When you are safe from all hindrances like sickness, an enemy or other such things, *then whoever enjoys by 'umrah for the hajj* — i.e. enjoys because of *'umrah.*

How does one enjoy because of 'umrah? It is because '*umrah* is completed and the restrictions of *ihram* are lifted until the time comes to wear *ihram* again for *hajj.*

Therefore, by (*bi,* ب) in by *'umrah* (*bi 'l–'umrah,* بالعمرة) is causative. How does *'umrah* cause enjoyment? It is because when *'umrah* is completed, the restrictions of *ihram* like women, perfume, etc. are lifted, and one may enjoy them till the time comes for the *ihram* of *hajj.*

Qur'an: (he should offer) *whatever offering is easy to obtain*:

Obviously, the sacrifice of the animal is an independent rite. It is not a substitute to make up for not wearing *ihram* of *hajj* from an appointed place as it puts un–called for strain on the mind to infer such a meaning from this verse.

Someone might say: (he should offer) *whatever offering is easy to obtain* is based on: ***then whoever enjoys by the 'umrah,*** just as an effect is based on its condition.

In other words, the offering of the sacrifice is prescribed because of the enjoyment. Moreoever, the word ***enjoyment*** mentioned in the conditional clause hints that the sacrifice is a recompense of that enjoyment which was allowed to lighten the burden and hardship of pilgrims, and the sacrifice compensates for it.

The author says: The above argument is refuted by the phrase, ***by the 'umrah,*** i.e. because the enjoyment is allowed after the *'umrah* comes to its end.

The argument of lightening the burden could be advanced only if the enjoyments were allowed during the *'umrah.* But how can the words ***lightening the burden*** be used in this case when the *'umrah* is already completed and the restrictions of *ihram* terminated; and when the *ihram* of hajj is yet to start?

And if there is any hint, it is only that the sacrificing of the animal has been prescribed because of the ordination of enjoyment by the *'umrah for the hajj.*

There is no hint whatsoever in it that the sacrifice is to compensate for not doing *ihram* of *hajj* from the appointed place (*miqat,* **الميقات**) outside Mecca.

Apparently the verse, ***then whoever enjoys by the 'umrah for the hajj,*** (**he should offer**) ***whatever offering is easy to obtain,*** mentions *hajju 't-tamattu'* (**حجّ التّمتّع**) as an already prescribed act of worship.

It is not the original and initial ordination. It mentions enjoyment (*tamattu',* **التّمتّع**) as an established fact and then, on the basis of it, prescribes the sacrifice of the animal.

It says, ***whosoever performs hajju't-tamattu', shall offer a sacrifice.*** It does not say, "performs *hajju't-tamattu'* and offer a sacrifice."

The original and initial prescription of *tamattu'* comes in the verse which comes later, ***this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque.***

Qur'an: ***but he who cannot find*** (**any offering**) ***should fast for three days during the hajj and for seven days when you return.***

Hajj is mentioned as the time of the fast because the time and place of both are the same. The time of *hajj* — from the *ihram* of *hajj to* the returning from it — is the very time of the three days' fast.

There are traditions from the Imams of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* that the time of this fast is before the Day of Sacrifice (10th *Dhu 'l-hijjah*) or, if one could not fast at that time then, after the 13th of *Dhu 'l-hijjah,* or, as a last alternative, at the time of returning to one's home.

The time of the seven-day fast is after returning to one's home, as is clear from the words, ***when you return.*** It should be noted that Allah did not say, "at the time of returning".

Moreover, the change of pronoun from the (previously used) third person to the second person in ***when you return*** is a hint that the hearer is now present – at home.

Qur'an: ***these*** **(make)** ***ten*** **(days)** ***perfect*****:** Three and seven together make ten perfect days. The seven days make perfect the previous three days; they do not complete it.

The difference between perfection and completion has been explained in the beginning of the verse; and it means that both groups of three and seven days have separate identities with separate rules.

The fast of three days is a complete act in itself; it depends on the fast of seven days for its perfection, not completion.

Qur'an: ***this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque:***

This order of ***enjoying by the 'umrah for the hajj*** is for the non-resident, i.e. the person who dwells not less than twelve miles away from the Sacred Mosque.

His family (*ahluh,* اهله) here means his dependents, like his wife and children. The non-resident has been described as he ***whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque****.*

It is a very fine way of expression as it not only promulgates the law but explains its reason also; and that reason is to lighten the burden. The pilgrims who come from far off places for the *hajj* have to undergo all kinds of troubles, hardships and difficulties during the journey; and when they reach Mecca, they are tired and worn out.

They naturally need a place to rest and recuperate. Usually, one gets this rest with his family, but here is a pilgrim ***whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque****.*

Therefore, Allah ordained for him enjoyment (*tamattu',* التّمتّع); he may enjoy himself after completing the *'umrah* upto the time of *hajj* and then may raise his voice in *talbiyah* (التّلبيه), i.e. he may wear the *ihram* of *hajj* from the Sacred Mosque without going back to an appointed place for that purpose.

It has been explained earlier that it is this sentence that promulgates *hajju 't-tamattu';* it is a general ordinance, and is not limited to a particular time, or to a particular person, or to a particular situation. It is for all the non-resident pilgrims, for all times, and for all situations.

Qur'an: ***and fear Allah and know that Allah is severe in requiting*****:**

This extreme severity in this humiliating way shows that there was a likelihood of the audience rejecting this order or hesitating to follow it. And this is what actually happened.

Of all the laws of Islam, *hajj* had already been practised by the Arabs since the days of Ibrahim and all its rites were well-known to, and performed by, them.

They were used to those rites, and when Islam came, it let it be, as it was, until the last days of the Prophet's life. Therefore, it was not an easy thing to make any change in its method; they were not expected to accept any change in it willingly.

That is why they protested against the law of ***enjoyment by 'umrah*** and, as the traditions show, many of them did not welcome that order.

So much so that the Prophet felt a pressing need to deliver a lecture telling them that the authority was from Allah only, He ordains as He wishes, and that it was a general order, nobody was exempted from it – neither the Prophet nor the *ummah.*

This explains why the verse ended on such a harsh note, ordering them to fear Allah and threatening them with the chastisement of Allah.

Qur'an: ***hajj is the months well-known; ... nor quarrelling during the hajj:***

hajj at the beginning of the verse means "the time of *hajj".* "Well-known", i.e., to the Muslims; and the *sunnah* has explained it as *Shawwal, Dhu 'l-qa'dah* and *Dhu 'l-hijjah.*

So far as *Dhu 'l-hijjah* is concerned, it is only about a half of the month which is the time of *hajj;* but there is no objection to counting it as one of the "months" of *hajj.*

We say: "The time of our reaching Mecca is Friday," but we reach there at a certain hour and minute, not during the whole day.

The noun *hajj* has been repeated three times in this verse. Why was the pronoun not used, which could have shortened the sentence?

The fact is that the sentence has been shortened by using the noun instead of the pronouns: ***hajj is the months ...*** means "the time of *hajj";* ***whoever determines the hajj*** means the action itself**;** ***nor quarrelling during the hajj*** refers to "the duration and place of *hajj."*

If the noun had not been repeated, it would have been necessary to lengthen the sentence to make the meaning clear.

so whoever determines the hajj therein: *faradha fi hinna 'l-hajj* (**فرضفيهنّ الحجّ**) literally means 'makes *hajj* obligatory therein'; and it implies, "makes *hajj* obligatory for himself by beginning its rites", because Allah says, ***And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah.*** Therefore, once one starts the *hajj,* it is obligatory on one to complete it.

Rafath (**الرّفث**) as mentioned in an earlier verse, literally means to say clearly such words which are generally unmentionable: *fus□q* (**الفسوق**) means "disobedience" and *jidal* (**الجدال**) is "disputation in the talk".

But *sunnah* has explained that in this verse *rafath* (الرّفث) means sexual intercourse; *fusq* (الفسوق) is lie; and *jidal* (الجدال) is swearing by the name of Allah — 'No, by God','Yes, by God'.

Qur'an: ***and whatever you do, Allah knows it*:**

It is a reminder that one's actions are not hidden from Allah; it calls one to piety and fear of Allah, so that one's acts of worship might not be devoid of the spirit of devotion; so that one might not go through the external rites of worship with one's mind absent and one's heart forgetful.

This is, generally, the style of the Qur'an in all subjects. You will find it explaining the fundamentals of the faith, narrating the stories of previous peoples, or promulgating laws; but whatever the subject, it is invariably followed by a lesson and an admonition so that knowledge is not without practice.

Knowledge without practice has no value in Islam. That is why this exhortation to piety and fear of God was immediately followed by the words,

and fear Me, O people of understanding.

In the preceding sentence the name of Allah was mentioned in the third person (***Allah knows it***) but immediately it is changed to the first person (***fear Me***) — it is to show the utmost importance of piety, and to imply that the pious person has not reached nearer to Allah and is now directly addressed by Him.

Qur'an: ***There is no blame on you if you seek bounty from your Lord:***

It is like the words of Allah:

O you who believe! when the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading … And when the prayer is ended then disperse in the land and seek of the grace of Allah… **(62:9—10).**

The ***trading*** of the first verse was changed to the ***seeking of bounty of Allah*** in the next one, showing that both are the same. That is why the sunnah has interpreted the words, ***seek the bounty of Allah*** in the verse under discussion as "the trading". This verse proves that trading during the pilgrimage is lawful.

Qur'an: ***then when you march from 'Arafat, remember Allah near to the Holy Monument:***

ifadhah (الافاضة) means going out from a place in a group. This verse, therefore, describes the stay at 'Arafat as well as the stay at the Sacred Monument, i.e. *al–muzdalafah* (المزدلفة).

Qur'an: ***and remember Him as He has guided you …***

Remember Him intensely enough to be like His guidance to you, although before His guidance you were

surely of those who had gone astray.

Qur'an: ***Then march on from whence the people march on:***

The verse makes it compulsory to march on as "the people" were doing, and obliges the immediate audience to follow "the people".

This supports the reports that the Qurayshites and their allies (together known as *hums,* **الحمس**) did not stay at 'Arafat; instead they went direct to *al-muzdalafah* and stayed therein, claiming that they were the people of the sacred territory of Allah and, therefore, they would not leave that boundary.

Allah, therefore, ordered them to march on (to *al-muzdalafah*) from whence the other people march on, i.e. from 'Arafat. In other words, the Qurayshites also must stay at 'Arafat and then march on from there with others.

That being the case, why did Allah mention this order after the order to march from 'Arafat, and begin it with then (*thumma,* **ثمّ**)?

This sentence has been figuratively written as a sort of *istidrak* (to catch up what had escaped, **استدراک**). The meaning thus, will be: "The rules of *hajj* are as mentioned above, except that you are obliged to stay at, and march on from, 'Arafat, not *al-muzdalafah."*

Qur'an: ***So, when you have performed ... intense remembrance:***

It is a call to remember Allah with utmost intensity. The pilgrim should remember Him as he remembers his forefathers, or even more intensely.

The grace of Allah on him (i.e. the grace of guidance, as He mentioned it just above, ***remember Him as He has guided you***) *is* far greater than the right of his forefathers upon him.

It has been said that the Arabs, in the days of ignorance, used to stay at Mina after the rites of *hajj* to boast vainly about their forefathers, in lectures and poetry. Allah by this verse changed it to His own remembrance.

Aw (or, **أو**) in *aw ashadda dhikran* (or a more intense remembrance, **أو اشدّ ذکرا**) is used in the meaning of "rather". The ***remembrance*** should be "tense".

Remembrance may be intense (in quality) or frequent (in quantity). See, for example, the following verses where the adjective of quantity *kathiran* (much, frequently, **کثیرا**) has been used:

remember Allah, remembering frequently, **(33:35);**

and the men who remember Allah much **(33:35).**

Remembrance of Allah, in reality, is not by words alone. It is a thing concerned with the heart and mind; words are merely a demonstration of that feeling.

Therefore, it may be described as frequent (in quantity), if one remembers Allah most of the time, as the Qur'an says:

Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and reclining on their sides ... **(3:191).**

And it may be described as intense (in quality) at some other times. As remembrance was ordered for a time (***when you have finished your rites***) when one is liable to divert one's attention from Allah and forget Him, it was appropriate to use the adjective "more intense" rather than "more frequent".

Qur'an: ***For, of men there is he who says ... what they have earned.***

It is based on the sentence:

then remember Allah as you remember your fathers, rather a more intense remembrance.

Nas (men, people, النّاس) is general; it describes all human beings, the unbelievers as well as the believer — the unbelievers who only remembers his forefathers.

In other words, he only wants the vainglories of this world, only seeks material greatness, and has no concern with the Hereafter. And there is the believer who only seeks the pleasure of Allah, and even when he wants something from this world, he wants only that which his Lord is pleased to bestow upon him.

In view of above explanations, it is clear that the word *says* in both places does not mean asking or saying in so many Words. It means 'wanting' by one's state and inner feeling.

Thus, the verses mean that some people do not "want" anything except this world, and they shall have no portion in the Here after; and there are others who do not seek anything except what Allah is pleased to give them whether it be in this world or in the Hereafter; and they shall have their portion in the Hereafter.

Good (*hasanah,* الحسنة) *is* mentioned in the saying of the believers but not in that of the unbelievers. It is no secret that the one who wants this world, does not care whether it is good in the eyes of Allah or not.

The whole world is sweet and good, in his thinking, if it satisfies his desire and if he can enjoy it. It is diametrically opposed to the thinking of the believer who wants the Hereafter. As the Hereafter will be either good or bad, he only wants and only asks for, the good, and not the bad.

The contrast between the sentences ***and for him there shall be no portion in the Hereafter*** **and** ***they shall have*** **(their)** ***portion of what they have earned,*** shows that the deeds of the first groups (but not of the second) shall be void and forfeited.

Allah has said;

And We will proceed to what they have done of deeds, so We shall render them like dust scattered in air, **(25:23);**

And on the day when those who disbelieve shall be brought before the fire: You did away with your good things in your life of the world and you took your fill of pleasure in them ... **(46:20);**

so their deeds become void and We will not assign to them any weight on the Day of Resurrection **(18:105).**

Qur'an: ***and Allah is quick in reckoning****: sari'u 'l-hisab* (quick of reckoning, **سريع الحساب**) is one of the names of Allah. Its generality suggests that it covers this world as well as the Hereafter.

Even now the reckoning is in progress; whenever a man does any good or bad deed, Allah gives him its full recompense.

In short, the purpose of these two verses is to exhort people to remember Allah. Men are of two types: some want this world, and do not know or remember anything else; such persons have no portion in the Hereafter.

And there are others who want what God is pleased to give them; they shall have their share in the Hereafter; and Allah is quick in reckoning – He quickly reckons what His servant wants, and recompenses him according to his wish.

Therefore, you should remember Allah so that you may be among those who will get their portion in the Hereafter; do not join that group which does not remember Allah and, therefore, will have no portion. Otherwise, you will be disappointed on that day.

Qur'an: ***And remember Allah during the counted number of days****:* The counted days are the days of brightness, i.e., the 11th, 12th and 13th of *Dhu 'l-hijjah.*

The proof that these counted days are after the 10th of *Dhu 'l-hijjah is* that this order has been given when all the rites of *hajj* have already been mentioned.

The proof that they are three days may be found in the next sentence, ***then whoever hastens off in two days****.* One may "hasten off" in two days only when the original number of days is three.

And the traditions also have interpreted it in the same way.

Qur'an: ***then whoever hastens ... him who guards*** **(himself):**

No (*la,* **لا**) here is for negation of a genus. There is no sin on him (*la ithma 'alayh* **لا اثم عليه**) mentioned in the two sentences means that the pilgrim is free from the genus of sin, i.e. from all sin.

Had Allah meant to say that there would be no sin on the pilgrim in hastening off or in tarrying therein, the sentences would have contained some words to show it; but they are unconditional.

Therefore, the verse means that the pilgrim who performs the rites of *hajj* is forgiven all his sins, there remains no sin on him whether he hastens off in two days or tarries therein.

It appears from the above that the aim of this verse is not to show that the pilgrim has an option between hastening off and tarrying; its purpose is to declare that all the sins of the pilgrim are forgiven in either case.

The words: (**this is**) ***for him who guards*** (**himself**), are not related to the forgiveness of sins; otherwise it would have been "on him who guards (himself)", not "for him".

Apparently it is like a previous sentence, ***this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque.*** As that sentence pointed to the group which shall be governed by the law of ***enjoying by 'umrah,*** likewise, the words, ***for him who guards,*** specify those who have the option of hastening off or tarrying therein.

This option is for him who guards himself; if someone did not guard himself, then it is not for him. It follows that the guarding here is confined to guarding against those things which Allah has forbidden during *hajj.*

In other words, the meaning is this: This choice is given to him who guards himself from the things forbidden during the *ihram.*

If he was not careful then he must stay a full three days at Mina and remember Allah in those counted days. This meaning has been given in some of the traditions of the Imams of *Ahlu 'l–bayt.*

Qur'an: ***and fear Allah ... gathered together unto Him:***

The topic ends on the order to fear Allah and on the reminder that all shall be resurrected and gathered unto Him. Piety and fear of Allah cannot be complete, and sins not avoided, unless one remembers the Day of Recompense.

Allah says:

Those who go astray from the path of Allah, for them shall surely be a severe punishment, because they forgot the Day of Reckoning (**38:26**).

The choice *of* the word *tuhsharūn* (you shall be gathered together, **تحشرون**) at the end of the topic of *hajj* (where people assemble and gather together from all parts of the world) is highly suitable.

Also, it gives a hint that when the pilgrim, at the time of his *hajj,* sees the gathering and marching together, he should remember the Day when Allah will gather them together and will not leave any one

of them behind.

Traditions

There is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the words of Allah, ***And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah.*** He said: "They are obligatory." [*at-Tahdhib* and al-'Ayyashi]

There is a tradition narrated by Zurarah, Himran and Muhammad ibn Muslim from Ab Ja'far and Ab 'Abdillah (peace be on them). They said:

"We asked both Imams about the words of Allah, ***And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah.*** Both replied: 'Verily, it is the completion of *hajj* that one should not indulge in sexual intercourse, nor in bad language nor in quarrelling'." [al-'Ayyashi]

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said in a tradition, *inter alia:* "(Allah) means by their (*hajj's* and *'umrah's*) completion, performing them and guarding oneself from the things which a pilgrim in condition of *ihram* should guard against." [*al-Kafi*]

The author says: There is no conflict in these traditions and the meaning *of* completion (*itmam,* **الاتمام**) explained by us in the beginning, because their being obligatory and their performance is the same as completing them.

al-Halabi narrates from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said: "Verily, when the Messenger of Allah performed the last pilgrimage (*hajj*), he proceeded (from Medina) on the 26th of *Dhu 'l-qa'dah,* until he reached (the Mosque of) Shajarah (which is the *miqat* (الميقات) i.e. appointed place of *ihram* for pilgrims from Medina) and prayed there.

Then he led his camel till he reached the desert (i.e. open space) and he re-affirmed the intention (*niyyah,* **النية**) of the *ihram* there and said *labbayk Allahumma labbayk ...*(*talbiyah,* **التّلبية**) of *hajj,* and drove a hundred camels (*of* sacrifice); and (likewise) all the people put on the *ihram* of *hajj;* they did not have the intention of *'umrah,* and knew nothing about *mut'ah* (enjoyment of *'umrah,* **المتعة**).

When the Messenger of Allah reached Mecca, he circumambulated the House and the people circumambulated with him; then he prayed two *rak'ah* near the Stand of Ibrahim and kissed the (Black) Stone.

Then he said: 'I begin with what Allah has begun with'. So, he came to (the hill of) Safa and began from there and went between Safa and Marwah seven times. When he finished his perambulation at Marwah, he stood up before them to give a lecture.

(In that lecture he ordered them to end their *ihram,* and treat it (the rites performed so far) as *'umrah;* and that it was a system ordained by Allah. So the people ended their *ihram.*

The Messenger of Allah told them that had he advanced from his affairs what he had delayed (i.e. had he known this system before) he also would have done as they were doing but he could not do so because he had led his sacrificial animals with him and Allah had said:

and do not shave your heads till the offering reaches its destination.

Suraqah ibn Ja'tham al-Kinani said: 'We have learned our religion as though we were born today. Do you think that this system which you have taught us is only for this year or for every year?' The Messenger of Allah said:

'No. It is for eternity.' And another man stood up and said: 'O Messenger of Allah! Shall we go out for *hajj* (on 8th of *Dhu 'l-hijjah*) and our heads shall be wet (by obligatory bath) because of going unto our women?' The Messenger of Allah said: 'Verily, you shall never believe in it'."

The Imam said: "Then 'Ali (a.s.) proceeded from Yemen till he reached (Mecca near the time of) *hajj;* and found that Fatimah had ended her *ihram,* and felt the smell of perfume.

So, he went to the Messenger of Allah, to enquire about it. The Messenger of Allah asked him: 'O 'Ali! On what did you raise your voice in *talbiyah* (التّلبية) (i.e. what was the intention of your *hajj*)?'

He said: '(My intention was) according to the intention of the Prophet.' So, the Messenger of Allah told him: 'Then you do not end your *ihram'.*

Then the Prophet gave him a share in his sacrificial animals, he gave him thirty seven and sacrificed himself sixty-three, slaughtering them by his own hand.

He took a portion from each sacrifice, put all portions in one pot, and ordered it to be cooked. He ate from it and sipped a little of its soup and said:

'Now we have eaten from all of them. And *hajju 't-tamattu'* (*mut'ah,* المتعة) is better than *hajju 'l-qiran* in which the pilgrim leads his sacrificial animal, and better than *hajju 'l-ifrad.' "*

The narrator says: "I asked the Imam whether the Messenger of Allah began his *ihram* at night in the day-time.The Imam said: 'At day-time'. Then I asked, at what time. The Imam said 'At the prayer of noon (*zuhr*, الظّهر)!' [*al-Kafi*]

The author says: This matter has been reported in *Majma'u 'l-bayan* and other books also.

There is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said: "The *'umrah* has entered into *hajj* upto the Day of Resurrection. Then whoever enjoys by *'umrah* for the *hajj* (he should offer) whatever offering (sacrificial animal) is easy to obtain.

Now, no one has any option but to perform *hajju 't-tamattu ',* because Allah sent it down in his book and it was started by the traditions of the Messenger of Allah."[*at-Tahdhib*]

There is from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the word of Allah, ***whatever offering is easy to obtain,*** that it is "a goat". [*al-Kafi*]

There is from the same Imam that he was asked what was the one doing *hajj al-tamattu'* to do if he did not get a goat. He said:

"He will fast before the day of *tarwiyah* (8th of *Dhu 'l-hijjah,* التّروية) and on the day of the *tarwiyah* and the day of *'arafah* (9th of *Dhu 'l-hijjah,* العرفة)"

He was told: "(Suppose) he reached there on the very day of *tarwiyah."* He replied: "He shall fast three days after *tashriq* (i.e. after 13th, التّشريق)"

He was asked: "What if his camel-driver did not stay there?" The Imam said: "He shall fast on the day of *hasabah* (الحصبة) and the following two days".

It was asked: "And what is *hasabah*?" He said: "The day of his (return) journey." It was said: "Will he fast when he is on a journey?" He said:

"Yes. Is he not on journey on the day of *'arafah* (العرفة)? Verily, we the *Ahlu 'l-bayt* say so. Allah says, ***should fast for three days during the hajj.*** Allah means in *Dhu 'l-hijjah."* [*ibid.*]

ash-Shaykh has narrated from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said: "Whatever is after the *miqat* upto Mecca, (its inhabitants) is the dweller of the Sacred Mosque and for him there is no *hajju 't-tamattu* ' (*mut'ah,* المتعة).*"*

The author says: It means that the residence of the area from the appointed place of *ihram* up to Mecca come under the term "dwellers of the Sacred Mosque" and they cannot do *hajju 't-tamattu'.* And there are numerous traditions of the same meaning from the Imams of *Ahlu 'l-bayt.*

There is a tradition from al-Baqir (a.s.) about the word of Allah: ***hajj is the months well-known,*** that he said: *"Hajj* is in the months well-known, *Shawwal* and *Dhu 'l-qad'dah* and *Dhu 'l-hijjah.* Nobody can perform *hajj* in other months." [*al-Kafi*]

And there is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the words of Allah: ***so whoever determines*** **(to perform)** ***hajj therein, that fardh*** (obligation, determination, الفرض) ***is*** (by) *talbiyah* (labbayk Allahumma labbayk, التّلبية) ***and ish'ar*** (putting some recognised signs on the sacrificial animals,الاشعار) ***and taqlid*** (putting a string on its neck, التّقليد).

Whichever of these the pilgrim does, he determines to perform the *hajj."* [*ibid.*]

And there is in the same book from the same Imam under the word of Allah, ***There shall be no uttering unmentionable words...*** that *rafath* (الرّفث) means sexual intercourse, *fus*□*q* (الفسوق) means a lie or abuse and *jidal* (الجدال) is saying, 'No, by God'; 'Yes, by God'.

It is narrated from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the words of Allah, ***There is no blame on you if you seek bounty from your Lord,*** that the bounty (*fadhl,* **الفضل**) here means sustenance.

When the pilgrim has ended his *ihram* and performed his rites then he may purchase and sell in that season. [al-'Ayyashi]

The author says: It is said that according to their belief, trading during the season of *hajj* was a sin; so Allah removed this misunderstanding with this verse.

"And it is said that it means that there is no blame on you if you seek forgiveness from your Lord. This meaning has been narrated by Jabir from Abū Ja'far (a.s.)." [*Majma'u 'l-bayan*]

The author says: This tradition looks at "bounty" in its generality and interprets it with its best example.

There is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the word of Allah, ***Then march on from whence the people march on.***

He said: "Verily, the people of the *haram* (the Q-uraysh) used to stay at the Sacred Mosque and other people used to stay at 'Arafat, and (the Quraysh) did not march on from there until the people of 'Arafat came in sight (coming from 'Arafat).

There was a man, with the patronymic, Abū Sayyar; he had a fast donkey and always went ahead of the people of 'Arafat. When he came into sight they said, 'Here is Abū Sayyar' and then started marching on.

So, Allah ordered them (i.e. the people of *haram*) that they must stay at 'Arafat and march on from there." [al-'Ayyashi]

The author says: There are other traditions with this meaning.

There is a tradition from the same Imam about the words of Allah:

Our Lord! give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter.

He said: "The pleasure of Allah and the Garden in the Hereafter, and increase in sustenance and good disposition in this world."

And also he said: "The pleasure of Allah, and increase in sustenance and good company; and in the Hereafter, the Garden."

And 'Ali (a.s.) said: "Good in this world is a virtuous wife and good in the Hereafter is the hour; and the chastisement of the Fire is a bad (ill-tempered) wife." [*ibid.*]

The author says: These traditions give some examples; otherwise the verse is general. The pleasure of

Allah can be got even in this world, although its complete manifestation will be in the Hereafter.

That is why it may be counted as a good in this world (1st tradition) as well as in the Hereafter (2nd tradition).

There is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the word of Allah, ***and remember Allah during the counted number of days***.

He said: "and they are the days of brightness (*tashriq,* **التشريق**) (the 11th, 12th and 13th of Lunar month). When the Arabs stayed at Mina after sacrificing the animals, they used to boast against one another.

One would say: 'My father used to do this and that.' So Allah said:

when you have performed your rites, then remember Allah as you remember your fathers, rather a more intense remembrance."

He further said: "And the *takbir is Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar, la ilaha illallahu wa'llahu akbar, wa lillahi 'l-hamd, Allahu akbar 'ala ma hadana, Allahu akbar 'ala ma razaqana min bahimati 'l-an'am."* [*al-Kafi*]

The same Imam said: "And the *takbir* is in the days of brightness from the prayer of noon on the day of sacrifice till the prayer of dawn on the third day. And in (other) towns *takbir* would be (recited) after ten prayers." [*ibid.*]

About the word of Allah, ***then whoever hastens off in two days, there is no sin on him, and whoever tarries*** **(there)** ***there is no sin on him,*** that as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked about it, and he said:

"It does not mean that he has the option to do like this if he wishes. But it means that he returns (from *hajj*) and his sins are forgiven, there is no sin on him. " [*Man la yahdhuruhu 'l faqih*]

And there is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said: "He returns and his sins are forgiven, there is no sin on him, (this is) for him who guards (himself)." [al-'Ayyashi]

And there is in *al-Faqih* from the same Imam about the word of Allah, **(this is)** ***for him who guards*** **(Himself)**. He said: *"*He shall guard himself against hunting till the people of Mina return (from it)."

And al-Baqir (a.s.) said: "(This is) for him who guards himself against sexual intercourse and bad language and quarrelling and those things which Allah has forbidden in *ihram."*

Also he said: "for him who fears Allah."

And as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "for him who guards himself against big sins."

The author says: The meaning of the sentence has already been explained. But it is possible to interpret *taqwa* (piety, fear of Allah, **التّقوى**) in its general meaning, as has been done in the last two

traditions.

Traditions On Mut‘atu ’l-Hajj

al-Bukhari and al-Bayhaqi have narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas that he was asked about *hajju ’t-tamattu‘* (*mut‘atu ’l-hajj,* متعة الحجّ).

He said: “The Emigrants (*muhajirin*) and the Helpers (*ansar*) and the wives of the Prophet raised their voices in *talbiyah* (i.e. put on *ihram*) in the last pilgrimage, and we did likewise.

When we reached Mecca, the Messenger of Allah said: ‘Make (i.e. change) your intention of *hajj* into that of *‘umrah,* except the one who has put string on his sacrificial animal.’

So we circumambulated the House and (arched) between Safa and Marwah; (then we ended our *ihram*) and went to the women and put on (sewn) clothes.

And the prophet said: ‘He who put string on the sacrificial animal shall not end his *ihram* until the sacrifice reaches (its destination).’ Then he ordered us on the eve of *tarwiyah* (8th of *Dhu ’1-hijjah*) to raise our voice in *talbiyah* to wear the *ihram* of *hajj.*

When we finished the rites (upto Mina), we came and circumambulated the House and (marched) between Safa and Marwah, and our *hajj* was completed. And on us was a sacrifice, as Allah said:

Whatever offering is easy to obtain, but he who cannot find should fast for three days during the hajj and for seven days when you return to your towns; and a goat is enough.

Thus the pilgrims combined the two rites, *hajj* and *‘umrah,* in one year. For, verily Allah sent it down in His Book, and His prophet promulgated it and made it lawful for all people except the people of Mecca.

Allah has said:

this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque.

And the months of *hajj,* which Allah has mentioned, are *Shawwal, Dhu ’l-qa‘dah* and *Dhu ’l -hijjah.* Therefore, he who performs *mut‘atu ’l-hajj* in these months, on him is a sacrifice or the (10 days’) fast.

And *rafath* (الرّفث) is sexual intercourse, and *fusq* (الفسوق) is sins and *jidal* (الجدال) is quarrelling.” [*ad-Durru ’l-manthr*]

al-Bukhari and Muslim have narrated from Ibn ‘Umar tha he said: “The Messenger of Allah, in the last pilgrimage, enjoye (by the *‘umrah* for the *hajj,* and offered the sacrifice.

He led the sacrificial animals with him from *Dhu ’l-halifah.* And the Messenger of Allah began and raised his voice in *talbiyah* (i.e. put on *ihram*) of *‘umrah.*

Later on, he raised his voice in *talbiyah* (i.e. put on *ihram*) of *hajj.* And the people enjoyed with the Prophet by the *'umrah* for the *hajj.* Some people had taken their sacrificial animals with them, others had not done so.

When the Prophet reached Mecca he told the people: 'Anyone of you who has led his sacrificial animal with him, (shall not end his *ihram* and) no such thing, which was forbidden for him, shall be allowed to him until he performs his *hajj.*

And he who has not taken his sacrifice with him, he will go around the House, and (march) between Safa and Marwah, and cut some hair or nails, and his *ihram* will come to end; then later he will raise his voice in *talbiyah* (i.e. will put on *ihram*) *of hajj;* and if he cannot find an offering, he will fast for three days during the *hajj* and for seven (days) when he returns to his family.' " [*ibid.*]

al-Hakim has narrated (and said that it is "correct") through Mujahid and 'Ata', from Jabir that he said: "There are many people talking (without knowing the facts).

We came out (from Medina) for *hajj.* When only a few days remained for our *ihram* to come to an end, we were ordered to (then and there) finish our *ihram.*

We said, 'Well, shall one go to 'Arafat (at the beginning of *hajj*) with one's penis dripping semen?' This talk reached the Messenger of Allah, so he stood up to deliver a lecture, and said:

'O people! Do you (want to) teach me about Allah? For, by Allah, I am the most knowledgeable of you about Allah, and the most God-fearing of you.

And had I advanced my affair which I kept behind, I would not have taken any sacrifice with me and would have ended my *ihram* as they had done.

Then (at the time of *hajj*) he who did not have any sacrificial animal would fast for three days in the *hajj* and for seven (days) when he returns to his family; and he who had found animal would slaughter it.

Thus, we slaughtered animals for seven days.'" Ata' said that Ibn 'Abbas said: "Surely, the Messenger of Allah distributed sheep and goats among his companions that day; and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas received a he-goat and slaughtered it on his own behalf."[*ibid.*]

Ibn Abi Shaybah, al-Bukhari and Muslim have narrated from 'Imran ibn Hasin that he said:

"The verse of *mut'ah* came down in the Book of Allah and we did it in the company of the Messenger of Allah, then there did not come down any verse to abrogate the verse of the *mut'atu 'l-hajj,* nor did (the Messenger of Allah) forbid it till he died. (And then) one man said by his own opinion what he wished." [*ibid.*]

The author says: This tradition has been narrated (in another place) with different words but the same

meaning.

There is a tradition from Mutrif that he said: " 'Imran ibn Hasin sent for me in his illness in which he died, and said: 'I was narrating to you some traditions so that Allah may benefit you by them. Now, if I remain alive, keep them as my secret, and if I die, then narrate them on my authority, because then I will be safe.

And know that the Prophet of Allah combined the *hajj* and the *'umrah;* then nothing was sent down on this subject in the Book of Allah, nor was it forbidden by the Prophet of Allah. (But) one man said about it by his own opinion what he wished.' " [Muslim; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *as-Sunan,* an-Nasa'i]

It is reported that 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar was asked about *mut'atu 'l-hajj.* He said: "It is *halal* (lawful)." The questioner told him: "Surely, your father forbade it!"

He said: "If my father forbade it and the Messenger of Allah performed it then what do you think I should do? Should I follow the order of my father or the order of the Messenger of Allah?"

The man said: "Rather, the order of the Messenger of Allah." He said: "Surely the Messenger of Allah performed it." [at-Tirmidhi, *Zadu 'l-ma'ad*]

And there is from Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah that he heard Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas and Dahhak ibn Qays, (in the year when Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan performed his *hajj*) talking about enjoyment by *'umrah* for *hajj.*

Dahhak said: "Nobody shall do it except he who is ignorant of the command of Allah." Sa'd replied: "What evil did you utter, O my nephew!"

Dahhak said: "But surely 'Umar ibn al-Khattab forbade it." Sa'd said: "Surely, the Messenger of Allah did it and we did it in his company." [at-Tirmidhi, *as-Sunan,* an-Nasa'i; *as-Sunan al-kubra*; *al-Muwatta'* and *al-Umm*]

al-Bukhari, Muslim and al-Nasa'i have narrated from Ab M sa that he said: "I came to the Messenger of Allah while he was in al-Batha'. He said:

'Did you raise your voice in *talbiyah* (Did you put on *ihram*)?' I said: 'I raised my voice as the Prophet did.' He asked me: 'Have you brought any sacrificial animal?' I said: 'No,'

The Prophet said: 'Go around the House and (march) between Safa and Marwah, then end your *ihram.'* So I went around the House and (marched) between Safa and Marwah.

Then (after ending the *ihram*) I went to a woman from my people, she combed my head and I washed my head. Thereafter, I used to give religious decisions during the rule of Ab Bakr and 'Umar.

Once I was standing in the season (of *hajj*) when a man came to me and said: 'You do not know what

the leader of the faithful (‘Umar) has invented concerning the rites (of *hajj*).’

So I said: ‘O people! Whoever we might have given him our decision, let him wait, because this leader of the faithful is coming to you concerning it.’

When he (‘Umar) arrived, I asked him: ‘What have you invented concerning the rites?’ He said: ‘If we take the Book of Allah, then Allah says:

And complet the hajj and ‘umrah for Allah, and if we take the tradition of our Prophet, then he did not end his *ihram* until he slaughtered the offering.’ ” [*ad–Durru ’l–manthr*]

Muslim has narrated from Abu Nadhrah that he said: “Ibn ‘Abbas used to order *mut‘ah* and Ibn az–Zubayr used to forbid it. This was reported to Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah; so he said: ‘On my hand the talk progressed.

We did *mut‘ah* in the company of the Messenger of Allah; then when ‘Umar stood up (became caliph) he said: “Surely, Allah used to make lawful for the Messenger of Allah whatever He wished from whatever He wished.

And surely the Qur’an came down gradually. Therefore, complete the *hajj* and *‘umrah* as Allah has ordered you, and separate your *hajj* from your *‘umrah,* as it is more completing for your *hajj* and more completing for your *‘umrah”.’ ”* [*ibid.*]

And there is from Abu Musa that ‘Umar said: “It (i.e. *mut‘ah*) is the *sunnah* (custom) of the Messenger of Allah. But I am afraid that they will sleep with them (i.e. the women) under the trees and then proceed with them as pilgrims.” [Ahmad ibn Hanbal]

There is a tradition from Sa‘id ibn Musayyab (that he said) that ‘Umar ibn al–Khattab forbade Mut‘ah in the months of *hajj* and said: “I performed it in the company of the Messenger of Allah and I forbid it.

And it is because one of you comes from a far away place dishevelled, worn out, having the intention of *‘umrah* in the months of *hajj.* And his dishevelment, and tiredness and *talbiyah* are only for his *‘umrah.*

Then he arrives and goes around the House, and ends his *ihram* and wears (sewn clothes) and uses perfume and sleeps with his wife if she is with him.

Thereafter, when the day of *tarwiyah* comes he raises his voice in *talbiyah* of *hajj* and proceeds to Mina, saying *talbiyah* of *hajj* in which there is neither dishevelment, nor tiredness nor *talbiyah* except for one day only.

And the *hajj* is better than *‘umrah.* If we leave them on this system, they shall embrace them (i.e. the women) under the trees. Moreover, the people of the House (i.e. Meccans) have neither any cattle nor any crop, and their spring is only those who stay with them.” [*Jam‘u ’l jawami‘*]

There is from Muslim from Ab□ Nadhrah from Jabir. (Ab□ Nadhrah) said: "I said: 'Verily, Ibn az-Zubayr forbids *mut'ah* and Ibn 'Abbas orders it.'

He (Jabir) said: 'On my hand the talk progressed. We did *mut'ah* in the company of the Messenger of Allah and in the company of Ab□ Bakr. When 'Umar became ruler, he delivered a lecture before the people and said:

"Verily, the Messenger of Allah is this Messenger, and the Qur'an is this Qur'an. And, surely, there were two *mut'ah's* in the days of the Messenger of Allah, and I forbid them and shall inflict punishment for them; one of them is the *mut'ah* of women; and I will not get hold of a man who marries a woman for a period, but that I shall eliminate him with stones; and the second is the *mut'ah* of *hajj*." ' " [*as-Sunan al-kubra*]

There is a tradition from Ibn 'Abbas that he said that he heard 'Umar saying: "By Allah, verily I forbid you the *mut'ah,* and surely it is in the Book of Allah and surely the Messenger of Allah performed it." He meant *'umrah* in the *hajj.* [*as-Sunan,* an-Nasa'i]

Muslim has narrated from 'Abdullah ibn Shaqiq that he said: " 'Uthman used to forbid the *mut'ah* and 'Ali used to order it. So, 'Uthman said something to 'Ali and 'Ali said:

'Surely, you know that we performed *mut'ah* in the company of the Messenger of Allah.' 'Uthman said: 'But we were afraid'." [*ad-Durru 'l-manth□r*]

Ibn Abi Shaybah and Muslim have narrated from Ab□ Dharr: *"Mut'ah* in the *hajj* was (prescribed) especially for the companions of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.)." [*ibid*]

Muslim has narrated from Ab□ Dharr that: "The two *mut'ah's* are not suitable but for us especially." He meant the *mut'ah* of women and *mut'ah* of *hajj.* [*ibid.*]

The author says: The traditions of this meaning are very numerous, but we have quoted only what was relevant to the scope of our discussion, and that is to discuss the prohibition of *mut'atu 'l-hajj* from the point of view of the *Tafsir.*

Sometimes, the argument about it is to see whether the man who prohibited it was right or not, or whether had any excuse for it or not. But such a discussion comes under *'ilmu 'l-kalam* (Theology); it is outside the limits of our book.

And sometimes, the arguments are to see what reasoning has been advanced in the traditions concerning this subject, with special reference to the Qur'an and the *sunnah.*

Such a discussion is based on the meaning of the Qur'an and the traditions. And it is relevant to the subject of this book of ours.

Therefore, we shall look, one by one, into the arguments put in these traditions:

First Argument: It is claimed that the words of Allah, ***And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah*** show that *hajju 't-tamattu'* is not lawful, and that *hajju 't-tamattu'* was especially allowed for the Messenger of Allah.

This argument has been put in the tradition of Abū Nadhrah from Jabir that 'Umar said: "Surely, Allah used to make lawful for the Messenger of Allah whatever He wished from wahtever He wished.

And surely the Qur'an came down gradually. Therefore, complete the *hajj* and *'umrah* as Allah has ordered you."

Reply: You very well know that the words of Allah, ***And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah*** *...* do not say anything except that it is obligatory to complete the *hajj* and *'umrah* after one determines to perform them.

For a further proof, see the next sentence, ***but if you are prevented,*** i.e. from completing them.

Complete the hajj and 'umrah cannot, by any stretch of imagination, mean that *'umrah* and *hajj* should not be combined.

Likewise, there is not even an iota of proof that combining the *'umrah* and the *hajj* was an order given especially to the Prophet only, or to him and his companions on the last pilgrimage only.

By saying that it was an order especially for the Prophet and/ or his companions, one has to accept that it was a system/established by the Messenger of Allah.

See the tradition of an-Nasa'i from Ibn 'Abbas that he heard 'Umar saying: "By Allah, verily I forbid you the *mut'ah,* and surely it is in the Book of Allah and surely the Messenger of Allah performed it."

Second Argument: *Mut'atu 'l-hajj* was forbidden on the basis of the Book of Allah and the tradition of the Prophet.

This argument is seen in the tradition of Abū Mūsa, where 'Umar told him : "If we take the Book of Allah, then Allah says, ***And complete the hajj*** **and** ***'umrah for Allah,*** and if we take the tradition of our Prophet then (we find that) he did not end the *ihram* until he slaughtered the offering."

Replies: So far as the Book of Allah is concerned, it has just been shown that it goes against his claim.

His reference to the tradition of the Prophet is equally weak:

First, he contradicts himself in this claim. He has already said in other traditions (some of which have been quoted earlier) that "surely the Messenger of Allah performed it."

Second: The traditions loudly say that the Messenger of Allah performed it; and that once he raised his voice in *talbiyah* of *'umrah* and later on raised his voice in *talbiyah* of *hajj;* and that he admonished the people, saying, "Do you (want to) teach me about Allah?"

The claim of Ibn Taymiyyah at this juncture that the Messenger of Allah had performed *hajju 'l-qiran* that year is a very astonishing thing. Even more amusing is his claim that *hajju 'l-qiran* was called *mut'atu 'l-hajj*!!

Third: What the traditions say is that the Prophet did not shave his head after performing the *'umrah,* because his sacrificial animals had not yet reached their destination.

But it does not mean that he had not ended his *ihram* of *'umrah* or that he went to *hajj* with the same *ihram.* The verse clearly says that the pilgrim who leads his offerings with him, is not to shave his head until the offering reaches its destination.

Also, it clearly says that the one whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque shall do *mut'atu 'l-hajj.* If a non-resident pilgrim brings his offering with him, he is obliged to perform *mut'atu 'l-hajj* (because he is non-resident) and at the same time, not to shave his head (because the offering is yet to reach its destination.)

Merely not shaving the head does not mean that one has not ended one's *ihram* of *'umrah.*

Fourth: Let us accept, for the sake of argument, that the Messenger of Allah himself did not perform *mut'atu 'l-hajj.* But it is universally accepted that he ordered all his companions and family members to perform their *hajj* according to the newly established system of *mut'atu 'l-hajj.*

Now which of the two could be called the system promulgated by the Prophet for his *ummah*? The one which was especially meant for his own self? Or the other which he ordered his *ummah* to follow and which was also supported by the Qur'an?

Third Argument: It was claimed, that *mutatu'l '-hajj* creates a situation which is not suitable for the pilgrims. After *'umrah* and before *hajj,* he is allowed to wear beautiful clothes, use perfume and sleep with the women. And it is against the dignity of *hajj.*

This claim is found in the traditions of Abū Mūsa in which 'Umar is reported as saying: "But I am afraid that they will sleep with them (women) under the trees and then proceed with them as pilgrims."

And as he said, according to another tradition: "Surely I know that the Prophet and his companions did it. But I did not like them sleeping with them (i.e. with their women) under the trees and then proceeding to *hajj* with the water dropping from their heads" (because of the obligatory bath).

Replies: It is preferring one's own opinion against a clear order of Allah. Allah and His Messenger had clearly promulgated the system of *mut'atu 'l-hajj;* and Allah and His Messenger knew very well that this

system would lead to this supposedly undesireable effect.

Still they thought it good for the Muslims. Then why should ‘Umar be afraid of this effect?

It is interesting to note that the relevant verse of the Qur’an gives the same reason for the promulgation of this system which he is using to show his displeasure and dislike.

Allah says:

then whoever enjoys by the ‘umrah for hajj.

What is the meaning of enjoyment if not ‘taking one’s fill of the pleasure’, ‘sleeping one self with sexual activities, fine clothes, etc.’ So, Allah mentions it approvingly and ‘Umar disliked it and was displeased with it!!

We are even more astonished when we see that the companions had offered the same criticism against Allah and His Prophet (when the verse was revealed and the Prophet ordered them to adopt the system of *mut‘atu ’l-hajj*) which ‘Umar used as the basis of his prohibition.

See the tradition reported in *ad-Durru ’l-manthr* through al-Hakim from Jabir in which he says: “We said: ‘Well, shall one go to ‘Arafat with one’s penis dripping semen?’

This talk reached the Messenger of Allah, so he stood up to deliver a lecture” and replied to their objection and again ordered to perform *mut‘atu ’l-hajj* as he had ordered them the first time. Was that reply not enough to bury such displeasure for ever?

Fourth Argument: It is said that this system badly affects the market of Mecca. We see this argument in the tradition of al-Suyti from Sa‘id ibn Musayyab, in which ‘Umar says:

“The people of the House have neither any cattle nor any crop, and their spring is only those who stay with them.”

Replies: This also is preferring one’s own opinion against a clear order of Allah.

Moreover, Allah has refuted such claims in a similar situation where He says:

O you who believe! Verily, the idolators are unclean, so they shall not approach the Sacred Mosque after this very year; and if you fear poverty, then soon Allah will enrich you through His grace, if He please; Surely Allah is All-knowing, All-wise. **(9:28)**

Fifth Argument: It is claimed that *mut‘atu ’l-hajj* is allowed when one is afraid, and when there is no fear there should be no *mut‘atu ’l-hajj.* It is seen in the tradition of Muslim from ‘Abdullah ibn Shaqiq that ‘Uthman said to ‘Ali:

"But we were afraid." Also it is written in *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr* that Ibn Abi Shaybah, Ibn Jarir and Ibn al-Mundhir have reported from Ibn az-Zubayr that he said in a lecture:

"O people! By Allah, enjoying by *'umrah* for *hajj* is not as you do. It is for the men who raises his voice in *talbiyah* of *hajj,* then he is prevented by an enemy or illness or fracture or any other reasons till the days of *hajj* are gone, then he reaches (Mecca); so he shall change it to *'umrah,* and go on enjoying until the next year; then he shall perform *hajj* and offer sacrifice. This is the meaning of enjoyment by *'umrah* to *hajj."*

Replies: The verse is general and unconditional; it covers those who are afraid as well as those who are not afraid. It has been explained earlier that the sentence which promulgates *mut'atu 'l-hajj* is the verse:

this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque.

And it is without any condition.

Moreover, the traditions clearly. say that the Prophet performed his last pilgrimage as *hajju 't-tamattu'* and he did the intention (*niyyah ,*النّيّة) of *ihram* twice — first for *'umrah* and later for *hajj.* And nobody can say that at that time there was any risk or danger for the Muslims.

Sixth Argument: It is claimed in the two traditions of Abū Dharr, reported in *ad Durru 'l-manthūr,* that *mut'atu 'l-hajj* was a system meant especially for the companions of the Prophet.

Replies: If it means what 'Uthman and Ibn az-Zubayr claimed that they were at that time in danger and, therefore, it was allowed to them, then the reply given to the fifth argument applies here also.

But if it means that it was a special rule made for them only, then it is refuted by the words of Allah:

this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque.

It does not say, "this is for the companions of Muhammad only".

Moreover, if it was meant especially for the companions of the Prophet, then why did some of the companions, like 'Umar, 'Uthman, Ibn az-Zubayr, Abū Mūsa, Mu'awiyah, and, according to a report, Abū Bakr reject it?

Seventh Argument: Some people say that 'Umar prohibited it by his own authority as he was Master of the Affairs (*khalifah*) (*waliyu 'l-amr,* ولىّ الامر) and Allah has made it obligatory on the Muslims to obey the Masters of the Affairs, as He says:

Obey Allah, and obey the Apostle and the Masters of the affair from among you. **(4:59)**

Replies: The authority vested in the Masters of the Affairs does not cover this case. There are very many verses in the Qur'an which show that.

It is compulsory to obey and follow what Allah has revealed to His Prophet:

Follow what has been sent down to you from your Lord ... **(7:3)**

Whatever was ordained and promulgated by the Prophet was according to the command of Allah, as may be understood from the verses:

....nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Apostle have prohibited ... **(9:29),**

... and whatever the Apostle gives you, accept it, and from whatever he forbids you keep back ... **(59:7).**

The meaning of *gives you* is 'orders you', because it is used here as the opposite of "forbids you". It is obligatory to obey Allah and His Apostle by doing what he orders and keeping back from what he forbids.

Likewise, the judgement and decision must be according to the revelation sent down by Allah:

and whoso judges not by what Allah has sent down, these then are the unjust. **(5:45)**

and whoso judges not by what Allah has sent down, these then are the transgressors. **(5:47);**

and whoso judges not by what Allah has sent down these then are infidels. **(5:44).**

Again Allah says: And it is not for a believer man or woman to have any choice in their affair when Allah and His Apostle have decided a matter; and whoever disobeys Allah and His Apostle, indeed he has strayed off a manifest straying **(33:36)*;***

And thy Lord creates whatever He pleases, and chooses too; it is not theirs to choose ... **(28:68).**

Choosing means judging and legislating, or else it is general in meaning which includes judging and legislating too.

The Qur'an has openly declared that it is a Book not to be abrogated and that its laws will remain as they are upto the Day of Resurrection.

And surely it is Mighty Book. Falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it; a revelation from the All-wise, the Most Praised One. **(41:41-42).**

The verse is general and the "falsehood" includes abrogation also, which is rejected by this verse.

In short, whatever has been ordained by Allah and His Prophet, or whatever has been decided by Allah and His Prophet must be obeyed and followed by the whole *ummah,* the rulers as well as the ruled.

It is obvious from above that the word of Allah, ***Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and the Masters of***

the Affair from among you, gives "the Master of Affairs" authority in other than the *shari'ah.*

Because protecting and following the *shari'ah* is obligatory on the rulers as well as the others; nay! it is more binding on the rulers.

The authority of the Masters of Affair (*ulu 'l–amr,* **اولو الامر**) is confined to giving orders which they think to be in the interest of the *ummah* provided that the command of Allah concerning that matter is protected and followed. It is only then that the *ummah is* expected to obey them.

A man has an option to eat on a certain day and abstain from food next day, while he accepts that it is lawful to him to eat from his own money.

He is free to sell or buy at any time, or not to do so, if he so wishes, while the basic matter — trade — is lawful. If someone quarrels with him about his property, he may appeal to the judge to protect his right; on the other hand, he may refrain from doing so; but the basic *shari'ah* will remain in force that it is his right to bring the matter before the judge.

It all depends on his own choice on what he thinks to be in his best interest. But the basic rules remain intact, that it is lawful for him to eat, sell and buy, or to put his case before the judge.

But he has no right to drink liquor, or take interest or usurp other's property, even if he thought that it was in his best interest. Why? Because it directly conflicts with the laws ordained by Allah.

The above were the examples of personal affairs. In the same way the ruler has the authority to manage the affairs of the state according to the best interest of the *ummah,* but always protecting and preserving the laws of Allah as He has ordained.

For example, he may decide to defend a frontier of the Islamic state at a certain time, or to retreat from it if it is more advantageous. He may announce a public holiday on a certain day and things like that, as he, in his best judgement, thinks beneficial for the *ummah.* But he cannot change the *shari'ah.*

In short, as an individual has a right to take a decision in his personal or family affairs, keeping within the limits imposed by the relevant laws, so also, a ruler appointed by the authority of the Messenger of Allah has the authority to take a decision in the affairs of the state and the *ummah,* keeping within the relevant laws ordained by Allah.

Had a ruler been given authority to manipulate the laws of the divine *shari'ah,* if he thought that the manipulation was in the interest of *ummah,* no rule and no law could remain intact; the talk that the *shari'ah* of Islam was to continue upto the Day of Resurrection would become meaningless.

What is the difference between the three statements appended below?

"The law of enjoying the good things of life is not suitable for the pilgrim who was expected to spend his

time in devotion and worship. Therefore, this law must be abolished.''

''The laws legalizing slavery are not suitable for the modern world which stands for general freedom. Therefore, these laws must be abolished.''

''The penal code of Islam cannot be tolerated by the advanced human society of modern times, nor is that code in conformity with current codes. Therefore, this code must be abolished.''

Why should the first statement be accepted and the others rejected?

Some traditions on this subject show that this basic principle was raised during that controversy. Ishaq ibn Ra'wiyah (in his *al-Musnad*) and Ahmad have narrated from Hasan:

''Verily, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab wanted to prohibit *mut'atu 'l-hajj.* Ubay ibn Ka'b stood up and said: 'You have no right to do so.

Surely, the Book of Allah came with it (i.e., it was promulgated by the Qur'an) and we did *'umrah* (of *tamattu'*) with the Messenger of Allah.' There upon, 'Umar came down.'' [*ad-Durru 'l-manthr*]

Suratul Baqarah: Verses 204-207

٢٠٤) وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهِدُ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ وَهُوَ أَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ)

٢٠٥) وَإِذَا تَوَلَّىٰ سَعَىٰ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَسَادَ)

٢٠٦) وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْإِثْمِ ۚ فَحَسْبُهُ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ وَلَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ)

٢٠٧) وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ)

And among men is he whose talk in the life of this world pleases you, and takes Allah to witness as to what is in his heart, yet he is the most violent of adversaries **(204).**

And when he becomes ruler, he strives on earth that he may cause mischief therein and destroy the crop and the progeny; and Allah does not love mischief **(205).**

And when it is said to him, fear Allah, he is overcome by honour **(pride)** ***by sin; so enough for him is Hell*****;** ***and certainly it is an evil abode*** **(206)**

and Among men is he who sells his self **(soul)** ***to seek the pleasure of Allah*****;** ***and Allah is Affectionate to the servants*** **(207).**

Commentary

This is another classification of men according to their character. As the preceding verses (200—202) classified them according to their want of this world or the Hereafter, these verses do so from the point of view of their hypocrisy or the sincerity of their faith. And this is the link between these and the preceding verses.

Qur'an: ***And among men ... most violent of adversaries*****:**

a'jabahu (اعجبه) means gave him pleasure, delighted him. The words, ***in the life of this world*** are connected with ***pleases you.*** The meaning is: his talk pleases you in this life, because in this life one has to rely on appearances.

The deeper traits and inner feelings are hidden behind a curtain which cannot be lifted at all, although sometimes some clues are found which help one to surmise what lies behind the curtain.

Then come the words:

and takes Allah to witness as to what is in his heart.

He talks in a way that pleases you: he seems eager to protect the way of the truth, appears keen to do good for the people, looks enthusiastic for the advancement of the cause of the religion and the *ummah.*

And to show that his voice comes from the depth of his heart, he calls on Allah to be his witness. But, in reality he is the most virulent enemy of the truth.

Aladd (الدّ) is the adjective in superlative degree, derived from *ladda ludۥdan* (he became a very violent adversary, لدّ لدودا) *khisam* (الخصام.) is plural of *khasm* (الخصم) by the paradigm of *sa'b:si'ab* (: صعب صعاب) and *ka'b:ki'ab* (كعب : كعاب).

Also it is said that it is an infinitive verb, and that *aladdu 'l–khisam* (الدّ الخصام) means "most violent in enmity".

Qur'an: ***And when he become ruler he strives on earth that he may cause mischief therein:***

tawalli (التّولىّ) means to get authority and power. Further support of this meaning comes from the next verse:

he is overcome by honour* (pride) *by sin.

It shows that he has got an honour (i.e., a cause of pride) earned with sin. (The sin is committed by his heart that does not conform with his tongue.)

Sa'y (السّعی) means to strive, to walk hurriedly. Thus the verse means: When this hypocrite, this most violent of adversaries, gets a chance to do something, and is given authority and rules over the people, he hastens hither and thither and strives to create mischief in the land.

Tawalli (التّولّی) may also mean to turn back, to be out of sight. In that case the verse would mean: "And when he turns back (from you), his actions in your absence belie his talk in your presence."

The enthusiasm for the common welfare and the good of the *ummah* turns into striving in the land to create mischief and evil.

Qur'an: *and destroy the crop and the progeny*:

Apparently it is a description of the mischief. He creates mischief by destroying the crop and the progeny. The continued existence of the human species depends on food and procreation.

These are the two most essential things which the human species cannot do without. Procreation is clear from the word 'progeny'. So far as food is concerned, man acquires it from the animal and the plant; animals again acquire it from plants.

Thus, the basis of food is the plant which is obtained from crops. That is why the mischief and destruction has been explained in terms of crops and progeny. The verse means that he creates mischief and destruction in the earth by eliminating through the destruction of crop and progeny.

Qur'an: *and Allah does not love mischief*:

fasad (الفساد) literally means deterioration, corruption, decay, negation, immorality; here it has been translated as mischief.

Fasad (الفساد) in this sentence does not refer to the physical decay or destruction in this world. This universe is based on such a system that every destruction leads to a subsequent construction.

A struggle for survival is continuously going on; every existence is followed by extinction, every life by death. Both are found in this natural cosmos side by side. This is the system created by Allah; and how can He hate a thing which He Himself has created and decreed?

It follows that the "mischief" here refers to corruption in the *shari'ah* and legislation.

Allah ordained the laws of religion for the betterment of the actions of His servants; these laws will improve their character and traits; they will keep human society and human beings on the straight path,

on the path of moderation.

Thereupon, they will find happiness and prosperity in this life as well as in the lfie Hereafter. (This will be further explained under the verse 2:213)

Then this man appears on the scene whose words belie his inner feelings; he starts running hither and thither to create immorality and mischief on the earth.

He pretends to improve society, but in reality he destroys. He alters the words of Allah by giving them a wrong meaning; he changes the laws ordained by Allah; he manipulates the teachings of the religion.

All this leads to depravity of character and perennial controversy in religion and society. And, in this manner, the religion is negated, humanity is eliminated and the whole world is ruined.

To appreciate how true these verses are, look at the history of Islam and see how unauthorised people took the reins of the state in their hands, how they imposed themselves on the Muslim *ummah* and how they corruptly conducted the affairs of religion and state.

They did what they did and the losers were the religion (which got nothing but evil results), the Muslims (who are always in decline and decadence) and the *ummah* (which is perennially plagued with internal strife and dispute.)

The religion is now a ball in the hands of anyone who wants to play with; and human values a toy to be treasured and then discarded at the whim of the child.

The result of this striving of that hypocrite is decay and deterioration on the earth; first, he corrupted religion and then destroyed humanity. That is why in some traditions ***and destroy the crops and progeny*** has been interpreted as the destruction of religion and humanity.

Qur'an: ***And when it is said to him, fear Allah, he is overcome by honour*** **(pride)** ***by sin; so enough for is Hell, and certainly it is an ill abode.***

'Izzah (العزّة) means honour, *mihad* (المهاد) is the paved way, abode. Apparently, the words *by sin* qualify the word, ***the honour,*** and have no connection with ***he is overcome.***

The verse says that when he is told to fear Allah, he is overcome by the apparent honour which he has earned through his sins and hypocrisy.

The real honour comes from Allah as He says:

and Thou exaltest whom Thou pleasest and abasest whom Thou pleasest **(3:26);**

and to Allah belongs the honour and to His Apostle and to the believer **(63:8);**

Do they seek honour from them? Then, surely all honour belongs to Allah **(4:139).**

Honour is a status which Allah attributes to Himself and declares that it is only He who bestows it on His chosen creatures. Such a thing cannot be a source of sin or evil.

It naturally follows that the honour mentioned in this verse is not real honour which is given by Allah. It is only a masquerade which deceives none except the ignorant people who mistakenly accept it as honour.

The preposition "by" (*b ...,* ب) in "by sin" (*bi 'l-ithm,* **بالاثم**) has no connection with the verb ***he is overcome;*** the word "sin" is neither the object of "is overcome", nor its cause.

In other words, the verse does not say that his honour or pride drives him to sin and to rejection of the advice to fear Allah, or incites him to answer back the said advisor in unbecoming language.

Nor does it mean that sin drives him to pride. As mentioned above, the word ***by sin*** qualifies the word ***honour*** (or pride), and indicates the honour or pride gained by sin.

Had the word ***honour*** been left unconditional, it would have meant that Allah recognised it as real honour (which comes from Allah). And in that case it could not be said to create, or be created by, sin or pride.

That is why we say that it is conditional and means an apparent honour which is earned through sin and hypocrisy.

There is another verse where the word honour (*'izzah,* **العزّة**) has been used for the unbelievers. But there, also, the context shows that it means only an appearance of honour, not real honour.

Allah says:

Nay, those who disbelieve are **(steeped)** ***in self-exaltation*** (*'izzatin,* **عزّة**) ***and opposition. How many did We destroy of the generations before them, then they cried but there was no longer any escape*** **(38:2—3).**

Here the word *'izzatin* (**عزّة**) (translated above as "self-exaltation") is a common noun, it does not have any definite article before it, and the next verse describes the destruction of people like them.

These points clearly show that here also it is only an appearance of honour, a passing shadow which will not last long.

Qur'an: ***And among the man is he who sells his self*** **(soul)** ***to seek the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is Affectionate to the servants:***

This verse is in contrast to the preceding three ones. On one side there is a man priding himself in his sins, boasting and self-exalting, showing the doing of good to people, hiding his hypocrisy behind a

mask of charming words; and religion and humanity cannot expect of him anything except ruin and destruction.

On the other side is a man who has sold his soul to Allah, he wants nothing except what Allah wishes; he desires nothing for his self; his honour and strength come only from Allah, and he seeks nothing but the pleasure of Allah.

By his presence, religious and worldly affairs re-acquire their correct shape, the truth is revived, humanity enjoys a happy life and the good effects of Islam reach every one.

This also shows the connection of the end of the verse, ***and Allah is Affectionate to the servants,*** with its beginning. Surely, the presence of such a man is a great mercy from Allah to His servants.

Had there not been such virtuous people to counteract the designs of those others (whose stock-in-trade is hypocrisy and mischief), the structure of religion would have fallen into ruins, and the foundation of righteousness and goodness would have been destroyed.

But it is the method chosen by Allah that He removes that wrong by this truth, and repairs the damage inflicted by His enemies with the good spread by His beloved and chosen servants. He has said:

And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth certainly would be in a state of disorder **(2:251);**

And had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, certainly would have been pulled down cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered **(22:40);**

therefore if these disbelievers in it, We have already entrusted it with a people who are not disbelievers in it **(6:89).**

The decadance brought upon the religion and the world by those who love nothing but their own selves cannot be removed except through the good overflowing from those who have sold their souls to Allah, who love nothing except Allah and who desire nothing except that the world and the people of the world may become virtuous.

This deal has been praised by Allah in many verses, one of which is as follows:

Surely Allah has bought from the believers their selves and their properties, for this that their's be the Garden; they fight in Allah's way, so they slay and are slain; **(this is)** ***a promise which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Injil and the Qur'an*****;** ***and who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah? Therefore, rejoice in the trade that you have transacted; and that is the great achievement*** **(9:111).**

Traditions

It is reported from as-Suddi about the verses, ***And among the men is he whose talk ... an evil abode,*** that they were revealed about Akhnas ibn Shariq ath-Thaqafi, an ally of Ban Zuhrah.

He came to the Prophet in Medina and said: "I have come seeking Islam, and Allah knows that surely I am truthful." The Prophet was pleased with that talk.

The words of Allah, ***and takes Allah to witness as to what is in his heart*** refer to this aspect. Then he went out and passed by an agricultural field and some donkeys belonging to some Muslims.

He burnt the filth and wounded and killed the donkeys. It was about that that the verse was revealed,

and when he turns away **(from you)** ***he runs hither and thither on earth so that he may cause mischief therein and destroy the tillage and the stock.*** [*ad-Durru 'l-manthr*]

It is narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that the three verses were revealed about the hypocrites because he shows what is opposed to what he hides in his heart. The author of *al-Majma'* (said that the same was also narrated from as-Sadiq (as.). [*Majma'u 'l-bayan*]

The author says: But this interpretation does not fit the apparent meaning of the verse.

It is written in some traditions narrated from the Imams of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* that these verses were revealed about their enemies.

It is narrated from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the words of Allah, ***and destroy the crop and progeny,*** that crop means religion, and progeny, humanity. [*Majma'u 'l-bayan*]

The author says: This tradition has already been explained earlier. In another tradition ***the crop*** has been interpreted as 'progeny and crop'. It is easy to see how this also may fit the earlier explanation.

ash-Shaykh has narrated in his *al-Amali* a tradition from 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.), about the verse: ***And among men is he who sells ... Affectionate to the servants,*** that he said:

"It was revealed about 'Ali (a.s.) when he slept (on the night of *hijrah*) on the bed of the Messenger of Allah."

The author says: There are innumerable traditions from both Shi'ah and Sunni chains that this verse was revealed about 'Ali concerning his sacrifice on the night of *hijrah. Tafsir al-burhan* gives five of those chains from ath-Tha'labi and others.

Ibn Marduwayh has narrated from Suhayb that he said: "When I intended to emigrate from Mecca to the Prophet in Medina, the Qurayshites told me, 'O Suhayb! You came to us and you had no wealth.

Now you want to emigrate with all this wealth of yours. By God, this can't be.' So I said to them, 'What do you think? Would you leave me if I gave you all my wealth?'

They said: 'Yes!' Thereupon I gave them my wealth and they left me. I came out till I reached Medina. This incident was reported to the Prophet and he said: 'Suhayb profited twice.' " [*ad-Durru 'l-manthr*]

The author says: He has narrated it from some other chains also, some of which add: and then the verse was revealed:

And among men is he who sells his soul ...

Some other traditions say that it was revealed about Suhayb and Abr Dharr because they purchased themselves by giving away their properties.

But the verse does not say, "he who purchases ...", it says, ***he who sells.*** And the interpretation of the verses does not agree with the meaning of "purchase".

There is a tradition from 'Ali (a.s.) that this verse refers to a man who is killed because of enjoining to do good and forbidding to do bad. [*Majma'u 'l-bayan*]

The author says: It is one example of the general meaning of the verse. There is no difficulty in explaining the meaning of the verse in general terms, though it was sent down on a particular occasion for a particular person.

Suratul Baqarah: Verses 208-210

٢٠٨) يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ۚ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ)

٢٠٩) فَإِن زَلَلْتُم مِّن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْكُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ)

٢١٠) هَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَن يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِّنَ الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ ۚ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ)

***O you who believe! Enter you one and all into submission wholly and do not follow the footsteps of Satan*; *surely he is to you an open enemy*. (208)**

***But if you slip after clear signs have come to you, then know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.* (209)**

***Do they await aught but that Allah should come to them in the canopies of bright cloud and the angels; and the matter is decreed away*; *and all matters are returned to Allah*. (210)**

Commentary

These three verses, together with the four that follow them, guide us as how to preserve religious unity in human society: To enter into total submission, to limit oneself to the word spoken by Allah and to that deed whose path is shown by Allah.

They declare that religious unity was never disintegrated, nor was the happiness of both worlds turned into misery with disaster visited upon the territory of a people, except when they left submission, manipulated the signs of Allah by altering them and putting them into the wrong place.

This had happened to the children of Israel and other people, and will surely happen to this *ummah* also. But in the end Allah promises them His help,

Surely the help of Allah is near.

Qur'an: *O you who believe! Enter you one and all into submission wholly*:

slim (submission, السّلم), *islam* (الاسلام) and *taslim* (التّسليم) all are the same. *Kaffatan* (كافّة) is for emphasis and means 'all', 'wholly'.

As the verse is addressed to the believers, and they are ordered to enter into submission "wholly" the command covers the whole group as well as every individual.

It is obligatory on each and every believer, as it is on the whole of Muslim society not to contravene this command and to submit all matters to Allah and His Apostle. Hence the phrase ***one and all*** in the translation.

Again, as the hearers are already believers the submission called for means total submission to Allah after believing in Him. Hence the word ***wholly*** in the translation.

It follows that the believers must submit all their affairs to Allah, they should not decide themselves what was good for them and what was not, they should not prepare or select any path for themselves without the guidance of Allah and His Apostle.

They must remember that no people were destroyed except that they followed their own views and desires, and talked without true knowledge; and no people forfeited the right of life and happiness except that they became disunited.

It is clear from the above that following the footsteps of Satan does not mean following him in all the falsehood which he invites to, because a believer cannot follow Satan in all satanic schemes.

Rather, it means to follow him in the matters of religion. Satan furnishes some paths of untruth with the signposts of truth; in this way, he puts into religion what is not from religion. Thus, a believer is deceived into following that path without realizing his error.

One way of becoming aware of such an interpolation is to find out whether Allah and His Apostle have ever mentioned it in their teachings of the religion.

The context and words of the verses also show what has been explained above. "Footsteps" are found in a trodden path. The believer is proceeding on that path; therefore, it must be the path of true religion.

But Satan has put his marks thereon. So, the ***footsteps of Satan*** should refer to Satanic ways within the highway of true faith. The believer is obliged to enter into submission.

Therefore, wherever he proceeds without wholly submitting himself to Allah and His Apostle, it must be in the footsteps of Satan; if he goes on to that path, he is following Satan's footsteps.

This verse is similar to some others. For example:

O men! Eat of what is in the earth lawful and good, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan; surely he is to you an open enemy. He only enjoins you evil and indecency, and that you should say against Allah what you do not know **(2:168—169);**

O you who believe! Do not follow the footsteps of Satan; and whoever follows the footsteps of Satan, then surely he enjoins indecency and evil. **(24:21);**

Eat of what Allah has given you and do not follow the footsteps of Satan, then surely he enjoins indecency and evil. **(24:21);**

Eat of what Allah has given you and do not follow the footsteps of Satan; surely he is your open enemy. **(6:142).**

The difference between the verse under discussion and those quoted above is that this verse addresses the group as a whole, as it contains the word *kaffatan* (all, wholly, كافّةً); but those other verses are general.

Accordingly, this verse implies the same meaning as the verses,

And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together and be not divided. **(3:103);**

And surely this My path is straight one, so follow it; and do not follow the **(other)** ***ways, for they will scatter you from His path.*** **(6:153).**

The verse implies that Islam guarantees that it contains all kind of laws and knowledge which are needed by the human beings for their welfare and good.

Qur'an: ***But if you slip … Mighty, Wise:***

zallah (الزّلّة) means a slip, a falling. The verse says: If you did not enter one and all into submission, wholly and slipped – and the slip refers to following the footsteps of Satan — then know that Allah is Mighty, Who is not prevailed upon in His orders, and Wise, Who decides in your affairs according to His Wisdom.

Thus He shall decide about you according to His Wisdom and shall enforce it upon you and nobody will be able to hinder it.

Qur'an: ***Do they await aught but that Allah should come to them in the canopies of bright cloud and the angels:***

zulal (الظّلل) is plural of *zullah* (الظّلّة) which means "anything used for shade", like canopy, awring, or tent.

Apparently, the word "angels" is in conjunction with the divine name "Allah".

The preceding two verses were addressed to the believers (in the second person). This one dramatically changes it to third person and starts addressing the Apostle of Allah; implying that those who slip up and follow the footsteps of Satan are not worthy of direct address from Allah.

It appears as though they are awaiting a decree by their following the footsteps of Satan and by their disunity and division.

And that decree should be that Allah and the angels come unto them in canopies of cloud, and the matter be decided while they are still unaware of it, or without having any pity on them and on their plight; all matters are returned to Allah; there is no escape from His judgement and decree.

The context shows that ***Do they await aught …*** is the description of the threat implied in the previous sentence, ***then know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.***

It is self-evident truth, which is also proved by the Qur'an and the *sunnah,* that attributes of the body cannot be used for Allah, nor can He be described with adjectives of transient things.

No such word, phrase or sentence can be used for Him that implies transience, need, deficiency or want. Allah says:

Nothing whatsoever **(is there)** ***like the like of Him.*** **(42:11);**

and Allah is He Who is Self-sufficient **(35:15);**

Allah is the Creator of everything **(39:62).**

There are numerous such verses, and all of them are confirmed and decisive ones to which the ambiguous verses should be referred. It is these confirmed verses which guide us towards the correct interpretation of the ambiguous ones.

If any verse apparently attributes to Allah, an action or a characteristic of transient things, then it must be referred to the confirmed verses and interpreted in a way which is not below His dignity nor opposed to His beautiful names.

Now here is a verse which attributes the action of "coming" to Allah. A few other verses also have used this word for Him.

And comes your Lord with the angels arrayed in ranks **(89:22);**

then came upon them Allah from whence they did not expect **(59:2);**

so Allah came upon their structure from the foundations **(16:26).**

In all such verses, it is necessary to interpret them with such meanings which are worthy of Divine sublimity. We may give them the meaning of, let us say, sending His chastisement upon them, surrounding them with His power or wrath.

Accordingly, the meaning of ***Allah should come to them*** in this verse shall be "Allah should surround them with His power for enforcing His decree on them".

Further, whenever Allah is pleased to show that the apparent means and the intermediate causes are not independent of the order of Allah, He discards attributing the action to such causes and means; instead He attributes it to Himself or to His order.

He says in one place:

Allah takes the souls at the time of their death **(39:42);**

while in other places He attributes this action to the angel of death or the angels;

Say, the angel of death ... shall cause you to die **(32:11);**

Until when death comes to one of you, Our messengers **(i.e. angels)** ***take him away*** **(6:61).**

To make it more clear, look how He has declared about the angels that:

only according to His command do they act **(21:27).**

Likewise, He says,

Surely your Lord will judge between them **(10:93),**

and

when the order of Allah came, judgement was given with truth **(40:78).**

And the same is the case with the verse under discussion

(***Do they await aught but that Allah should come to them in the canopies of bright cloud and the angels***)

and the verse

Do they await aught but that the angels should come to them or that the order of your Lord should come **(16:33).**

The above verse proves that the verse under discussion, ***Allah should come,*** also means "the order of Allah should come".

Likewise, in every place where the action attributed to Allah is below His power and dignity, we may safely say that the word 'order' or 'command' is implied, as the above verses have shown.

This explanation has been accepted by the majority of the commentators of the Qur'an and it is correct. But there is even a deeper and finer meaning which can be understood if one ponders on the Qur'an.

A characteristic which is accompanied by a deficiency, want or imperfection is not attributable to Allah.

But if that characteristic could be separated from that deficiency, want or imperfection, then there is no reason why it cannot be attributed to Allah, provided it is suitable for His sublimity and perfection.

The word "coming" creates in our mind a picture of a body gradually moving and shortening the distance between itself and another body till it reaches quite near to that.

If we can remove the material characteristics from this meaning, there will remain the idea of "nearness", with the disappearance of any obstruction in between.

In that case, it would be quite correct to use this word for Allah literally, not metaphorically. Accordingly, ***Allah should come to them*** would mean that there would remain no curtain between His creatures and His judgement about them.

Anyhow, this verse contains the threat which was implied in the preceding sentence, ***then know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.***

This threat may be about the chastisement awaiting them in the Hereafter, as it is in the similar verse:

Do they await aught but that the angels should come to them or that the order of your Lord should come **(16:33),**

which, as its context shows, is clearly about the events of the Hereafter.

Or, it may be about something expected to happen in this world, as may be seen in the verses of *sūrah* Yūnus:

so when their apostle came, the matter was decided with justice, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly. And they say, 'when this promise will come to pass, if you are truthful ...' Say, Do you see if His chastisement overtakes you by night or by day, what is there of it that the guilty hasten for? **(10:47-50).**

The same is the implication of the verses, 30:30-36, and the verse,

How many a town, which was unjust, We did destroy and We raised another people after it? **(21:11).**

The chastisement of this world is because this world is a foretaste of the life Hereafter, where every aspect of this world would appear more perfectly and completely.

And it is possible that the promised punishment would be in both worlds together.

In any case, the words, ***in the canopies of bright cloud*** would be interpreted according to the place where the promised punishment would be meted out.

Qur'an: ***and the matter is decreed away; and all matters are returned to Allah*****:**

The matter is decreed away by Allah, but His name is not mentioned to show His Greatness. There are many examples of such deletions in the Qur'an.

Traditions

Many traditions have been written concerning verse 2:168

(*O men! Eat the lawful and good things out of what is in the earth; and do not follow the footsteps of Satan ...*)

which support the meaning given by us of *following the footsteps of Satan.*

Some traditions say that "submission" means the love and obedience of the Prophet and his progeny (*wilayah,* **الولاية**). Such traditions give an example of a general meaning.

There is a tradition from ar-Ridha (a.s.) about the words of Allah,

Do they await aught but that Allah should come to them in the canopies of bright cloud and the angels:

He said: ‘‘Allah says: ‘Do they wait aught but that Allah should come to them with the angels in the canopies of bright clouds’; like this it was revealed.’’ And he said, about the word of Allah;

And comes your Lord with the angels arranged in ranks **(89:22),**

that : ‘‘Surely, Allah cannot be described with attributes of coming and going. Elevated is He from transferring from one place to another. Verily, it means, ‘And comes the command of your Lord with the angels arranged in ranks’.’’ [*at-Tawhid* and *Ma‘ani al-akhbar*]

The author says: The words of the Imam at the beginning of the interpretation, ‘‘Allah says’’, do not mean the actual word or recitation of the verse.

The word ‘‘says’’ here stands for ‘‘means’’. The interpretation given in this tradition is the same which we have already explained, that ‘‘coming of Allah’’ means coming of His command.

The Angels do whatever they do, and come down whenever they come down, by the command of Allah. He says about angels:

Nay! They are honoured servants; they do not precede Him in speech and **(only)** ***according to His commandment do they act.*** **(21:27),**

and

He sends down the angels with the spirit by His commandment **(16:2).**

The verse begins with an interrogation which here stands for denial and disapproval. It means that ‘‘they do not await’’ or ‘‘they should not await’’.

But some people have said that this denial and disapproval is comprehensive and refutes not only their awaiting but even the thing awaited.

In other words, it means that they do not await aught but an impossible thing — that Allah should come to them in the canopies of cloud as one body comes to another body, and that the angels should come with Him and He should order them and forbid them.

Obviously such a thing is impossible; and the aim of the verse would be to hint that these people cannot mend their ways by these exhortations and sermons.

But this meaning does not agree with the context of the verse. It has been explained that all these verses have one context. Therefore, this verse also is about the condition of the believers.

And the believers cannot be condemned in the suggested manner. Apart from that if Allah had meant to show that the thing awaited was impossible or beneath His sublimity, He would have followed it with some words to show that it was so.

And we find that it is the custom of the Qur'an everywhere on such occasions. For example:

And those who do not hope of our meeting say: "Why have not angels been sent down upon us, or **(why)** ***do we not see our Lord?" Certainly they think too high of themselves and have revolted*** **(in)** ***a great revolt*****. (25:21);**

And they say: "The Beneficent **(God)** ***has taken to Himself a son!" Glory be to Him!*** **(21:26).**

Apart from that, what would be, in this case, the significance of the words, ***in the canopies of bright cloud?*** And what would the subsequent words mean?

Other Traditions

This last verse has variously been interpreted in the traditions of the Imams of *Ahlu'l-bayt* as referring to the Day of Resurrection (al-'Ayyashi from al-Baqir — a.s.) or the Day of Return (the *raj'ah,* [1] الرّجعة) (as-Sad□q from as-Sadiq — a.s.) or the Reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) (al-'Ayyashi from al-Baqir [a.s.] with two chains.)

And there are many such cases where a verse has been interpreted by them as referring to the Day of Resurrection in one tradition, and to the Day of Return in another, and to the Reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) in yet another one.

It is because all these meanings are inter-related, so much so that they can be said to be basically one. As the people have not gone deep into the subject of the Resurrection and have not looked into it in the light of the Qur'an they have gone their separate ways about these traditions.

Some have discarded them altogether, even though there are probably more than five hundred traditions on its various aspects; some have interpreted them according to their own views even though the wordings of the traditions are very clear and explicit.

A third group quotes these traditions and refrains from giving any opinion - these people are the most reasonable of all.

The non-Shi'ah Muslims believe that Imam al-Mahdi will appear; they have narrated *mutawatir* traditions about it from the Prophet, but they reject the idea of the *raj'ah* and say that this belief is a peculiarity of the Shi'ahs.

And in these days some people, claiming to be Shi'ah, also have rejected this belief, saying that it has been foisted into Shi'ism by the Jews and some nominal Muslims like 'Abdullah ibn Saba' [2]and his companions. One of them tried to refute this belief by intellectual argument, the gist of which is as follows:

"It is a special grace of Allah that a living person is not given death until he reaches the perfection of the

life and all his potentialities are converted into achievements.

If after death he is again sent back to this world it would be retrogression, a backward step from accomplishment to potentiality, and it is impossible, except when a truthful informer tells us about it, i.e., Allah or any of His Representatives, as He has informed us concerning the events of Musa, 'Isa, Ibrahim (peace be on them all) and others.

But we have not been told by Him or them anything about *ar–raj'ah.* And the evidence put by the believers in *ar–raj'ah* is not complete."

After saying this he went on to claim about each and every tradition that it was weak — without knowing the difference between the correct ones and the defective ones.

The poor man did not realize that this argument is not a rational one at all. Its first part refutes its second part. If some thing is impossible by nature it would remain inpossible without any exception.

An "impossible" idea would not be turned into "possible" just because a truthful informer said so. Anybody who said about an impossibility that it became a possibility, would not be "truthful".

And if he was supposed to be really truthful then that thing would not have been an impossibility in the first place. Would we say that he was truthful if he were to say that one is not a half of two, or that a truthful person was at the same time a liar?

This much about the consistency of his argument.

Now, we come to his argument that (1) All people die when they reach the perfection of the life, and when their potentialities are converted into achievements; (2) What has attained achievement cannot be turned back to potentiality; (3) Therefore, a dead man cannot be returned to this life.

In this argument, the second premise is correct; the first is not. It is not "all" people, but only "some", who die after attaining perfection and converting their potentialities into achievements.

A man, who completes his natural span of life and dies from old age, may be said to have reached the last stage of his perfection. But what about another man who prematurely dies of an epidemic or fatal sickness, or is killed?

Can it be claimed that he had already reached the last stage of his potential perfection? The answer is 'No'. Therefore, it cannot be said that it is impossible for such persons to be returned to the life of this world.

Now it is obvious that his argument is neither comprehensive nor correct. We can think of many cases where it might be possible for a dead person (even if he had died after attaining his perfection) to be sent back to this world; for example, a man in his first life had a potential for a perfection which was not

available at that time; he died; then by the progress of society, that perfectness became possible.

What is there to prevent his return to this world to achieve that perfection for which he had a potential in the first life? Because it will not be a step backward from perfection to potentiality; it will be progress from potential to perfection.

There are other examples, but this is not the place to go into the details of this subject.

As regards his argument against individual traditions, it has two serious defects:

(1) These traditions are *mutawatir,* in their meaning, from the Imams of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* — so much so that non-Shi'ite Muslims have counted the belief of *ar-raj'ah,* from the very early days of Islam, as one of the special beliefs of the Shi'ah and their Imams - and a *mutawatir* matter cannot be refuted even if the individual traditions be really defective, or weak, or arguable.

(2) There are many verses revealed on this subject and many traditions which are complete in their meaning and reliable in their chains. We shall mention them when we come to the relevant verses like:

And on the day when We will gather from every people a party from among those who rejected Our signs, then they shall be formed into groups **(27:83).**

There are other verses to prove this belief.

Apart from these specific verses, there are others which imply this meaning. For example, the words of Allah which come shortly after the verse under discussion:

Or do you think that you will enter the Garden while yet has not come upon the like of which came upon those who have passed before you **(2:214).**

And one of the things which came upon previous nations was that some of their dead were resurrected, and lived again in this world, as the Qur'an narrates concerning the stories of Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa, 'Uzayr, Armia and others.

And the Messenger of Allah has said: "By Him in Whose hand is my soul! Most certainly you shall follow the traditions of those who were before you, as in a pair of shoes the one tallies with the other, and as one flea looks like another, until you will not miss their path, nor will they miss yours; (and this means) the traditions of the Israelites."

Moreover, these matters are among the reports of the great events of the latter days, foretold by the Imams of *Ahlu 'l-bayt;* these prophecies were preserved by reporters and narrators in books which were written and copied centuries before the events; and every day we see some of its parts fulfilled in exactly the same way without any addition or subtraction.

This compels us to believe that the remaining part of those prophecies (including *ar-raj'ah*) must be true.

Now we come back to the topic in hand. We were discussing why a single verse is sometimes explained as referring to the Day of Resurrection and sometimes as describing *ar-raj'ah* or the re-appearance of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.).

It appears from the characteristics and details of the Day of Resurrection, mentioned in the Qur'an, that it will be a day when no intermediate cause will hinder one from the signs of Allah; there will remain no veil on the face of truth.

All illusions will vanish and the signs of Allah will appear in their perfect manifestation.

That day could exist side by side with this world, but it is obvious from the Qur'an and *sunnah* that human beings, i.e., this species of homo sapiens who are descended from Adam and his wife, will become extinct in this world and only then will this great day dawn upon them.

The life of this world and the life of the Resurrection can exist side by side for different groups and species. The life of the period between death and the Day of Resurrection (*barzakh,* **البرزخ**) exists for our dead side by side with our life on this earth; neither does our life interfere with theirs, nor theirs with ours.

Allah says:

By Allah! Most certainly We sent **(apostles)** ***to nations before you, but Satan made their deeds fair seeming to them; so he is their guardian today and for them is a painful punishment*** **(16:63).**

This, therefore, is the reality of the Day of Resurrection, "the Day on which men shall stand before the Lord of the worlds" "the Day when they shall come forth; nothing concerning them remains hidden from Allah".

That is why sometimes even death is called Resurrection, because the veil of intermediate causes is lifted from the imagination of the dead person. 'Ali (a.s.) has said: "Whoever dies his resurrection begins." This subject will be explained, God willing in its appropriate place.

The traditions which prove *ar-raj'ah* in spite of their large number, are one in their essence.

They show that the world is proceeding towards a day when the signs of Allah will appear in their perfect manifestation; man will not disobey Allah, but shall worship Him with a sincere and pure heart, untainted by the desires of this world; and he will not be deceived by Satan.

At that time some dead persons — some friends of Allah and some of His enemies — shall be returned to the world again, and the truth will be separated from the falsehood.

It appears from above that the Day of Return shall be one of the stages of the Day of Resurrection. But it will be a lesser manifestation, because there shall remain, at that time, the possibility, to a certain extent, of evil and mischief, which will be impossible on the Day of Resurrection.

And that is the reason why in some traditions the same verses have been said to be related concerning the re-appearance of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.). It is because at his re-appearance also the truth will be manifested perfectly, though it will be less than on the Day of "Return".

There are traditions narrated from the Imams of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* that "The days of Allah are three: the Day of re-appearance, and the Day of Return, and the Day of Resurrection."

Some of them say that "The days of Allah are three: the Day of Death, and the Day of Return, and the Day of Resurrection."

The three days are one in their nature but different in degrees. It is because of this oneness of essence that a single verse is at different times interpreted by all three days.

The above discussion clearly shows that the Day of Return is not only possible, but a reality; and those who reject it have no reason to refute it.

1. ar Raj'ah (return) means that after the re-appearance of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) and before the Day of Judgement some confirmed friends of Allah and some of His confirmed enemies shall be returned to this world again to live under the rule of the Representative of Allah.
2. 'Abdullah ibn Saba' is a mythical personality, who did not exist outside the imagination of some story-tellers. See 'Abdullah ibn Saba' wa asatir ukhra (عبد الله ابن سبا) by as-Sayyid Murtada al-'Askari of Tehran.

Suratul Baqarah: Verses 211-212

٢١١) سَلْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ كَمْ آتَيْنَاهُم مِّنْ آيَةٍ بَيِّنَةٍ ۗ وَمَن يُبَدِّلْ نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ)

٢١٢) زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۘ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَن يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ)

Ask the children of Israel how many a clear sign We gave them; and whoever changes the favour of Allah after it has come to him, then surely Allah is severe in requiting **(evil) (211).**

The life of this world is made to seem fair to those who disbelieve; and they mock those who believe; but those who guard **(against evil)** ***shall be above them on the Day of Resurrection; and Allah provides with sustenance whom He pleases without measure*** **(212).**

Commentary

Qur'an: ***Ask the children of Israel … severs in requiting*** **(evil):**

It reconfirms and emphasizes the threat contained in (2:209), that Allah shall seize the sinners, in the manner of the One who is Mighty and Powerful.

It says: these Israelites are within your sight and hearing. They were the people to whom Allah gave the Book and the rule and prophethood and territory, and provided them with good things and made them excel other nations.

Ask them how many a clear sign We gave them; and then see from when they started and where they went.

They changed the words of Allah from their places; they followed some self-invented things in opposition to Allah, His Book and His signs. And all this was done in revolt after they were given the knowledge.

Then Allah punished them with the most severe punishment: They went astray, became disunited, disagreed among themselves; they unlawfully ate the property of their brethren; their power was gone, their happiness vanished; and humiliation and wretchedness were stamped upon them in this world, and the chastisement of the Hereafter is more humiliating and then they shall not get any help.

This is the tradition of Allah: whoever changes the favour of Allah and uses it wrongfully, Allah surely chastises him and of course Allah is severe in chastisement.

The sentence, ***whoever changes the favour of Allah … then surely Allah is severe in requiting*** gives the general principle and describes the unchangeable habit of Allah, so that the hearers may know the firm decree of Allah in such cases.

Qur'an: ***The life … make those who believe:***

It explains the reason why the Israelites and the people like them went astray. The main reason is that the life of this world seems alluring to them.

When materialism allures someone, it encourages him to fulfill the lust and desire of his heart and to satisfy his sensuous appetite; it makes him forget all truth and reality.

The only aim of such a man remains to get whatever he can from this world status, dignity, wealth, beauty, and so forth. He makes use of everything to reach this goal — and 'everything' includes religion.

Thus, he misuses religion to gain privilege and distinction. Religion becomes a means of honouring the leaders and the bosses and bestowing on them the prestige befitting their status and place in the world; it encourages the common man to seek nearness to those leaders, not to Allah; it allows them to find

ways to seek the favours of these nobles and leaders.

This we see in the Muslim *ummah* today, just as it was seen in the Israelites before.

Those who disbelieve *kufr* (translated here as disbelief, **الكفر**) is apparently used in the Qur'an in its literal meaning, i.e. to hide. In this general meaning it is comprehensive; it includes "disbelief " as well as "hiding the truth".

The life of this world is made to seem fair not to the disbelievers only but to them also who hide any religious truth or change any religious favours.

Accordingly, such a man also is hider of truth (*kafir,* **الكافر**) who has been allured by the beauty of this life, and he also should prepare himself for the severe punishment.

Qur'an: *but those who guard* (against evil) *shall be above them ... without measure*:

"Those who believe" of the preceding sentence has been changed in this sentence to ***those who guard themselves*** (against evil). It is to emphasize that mere belief (*iman,* **الايمان**) without *taqwa* (guarding oneself against evil; piety, fear of Allah, **التّقوى**) is of no use.

Suratul Baqarah: Verses 213

(٢١٣ كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيمَا
اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ ۚ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَا
اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَن يَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ

Mankind was but one people*; *so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with the truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed. And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves; whereupon Allah guided, by His will, those who believed to the truth about which they differed. And Allah guides whom He pleases to the straight path. **(213)**

General Comment

This verse explains why religion was promulgated and mankind obliged to follow it, and why differences occurred in it.

Mankind, having been created with a natural urge to remain together and cooperate with each other, were in the beginning one single group. Then occurred differences about the acquisition of the necessities of life.

These differences could only be settled by creating laws to give each one his right and to make him respect the rights of others.

Allah has ordained the law and sent it down as religion, accompanied by good tidings of reward for those who obey and a warning of punishment for the offenders.

This religion was made perfect by the institution of worship. All this was accomplished by sending the prophets and the apostles.

After that, people differed again — this time about the knowledge of religion, or about matters concerning the beginning and end of mankind. Thus, religious unity was disrupted and various groups appeared on the scene, and their differences contaminated the other aspects of life.

These second differences only occurred because of the revolt of the very people who were given the book, after the fundamentals and characteristics of religion had been fully explained to them and the proof of Allah had been completed for them.

It is clear that there were two differences: First, the difference about worldly gains, which was but natural; second, the difference about matters of religion which was based, not on nature, but on the revolt of mischief-makers.

Then Allah guided the believers to the truth about which they differed; and this guidance was done by His Will; and Allah guides whomsoever He pleases to the straight path.

The divine religion is the only means of happiness and felicity for the human species, and it keeps life in order. It creates a balance between various human instincts and urges, and keeps them on the middle path, preventing them from going towards either extreme.

Thus, there appears the best system and the highest discipline in the human life both of this world and of the Hereafter, the material as well as the spiritual.

This is an outline of the social and religious history of human beings, as given in this verse. The details may be seen in various verses throughout the Qur'an.

How Mankind Came Into Being

It appears from various verses, found in various places in the Qur'an, that mankind did not developed from any other species - neither from any animal nor from any plant.

It is a species which was created by Allah directly from the earth. There was a time when the sky existed and earth existed with the things of the earth; but there was no man.

Then Allah created a couple, male and female, of this species, and all present human beings are descended from that couple.

Allah says:

O men! Surely We created you of a male and a female, and made you into tribes and families, so that you may recognise each other ... **(49:13);**

and He says:

He it is who created you from a single being and of the same **(kind)** ***did He make his mate.*** **(7:189);**

again He says:

as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust ... **(3:59)**

The theory of scientists that one species changed into another, and that homo sapiens developed from some kind of ape or, going further back, originated from some water animal, is just a hypothesis.

A hypothesis is not a definite fact; it is just a supposition made as a basis for reasoning, or as a starting point for academic investigation. There is no harm in treating it as a reality or as a possibility, because its only function is to provide a basis for scientific research, and to find out whether it can explain the causes and effects of a given matter.

It has no more value than that. We discuss this subject fully under the verse (3:59),

Surely the likeness of 'Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him 'Be' and he became.

His Composition From Soul And Body

When Allah created this species, He created it composed of two parts; a material substance, the body, and a non-material one, the soul or spirit.

Man's body and soul remain together during his life in this world; then the body dies, the living soul departs, and thus man returns to his Creator.
Allah says:

And certainly We created man of an extract of clay, then We made him sperm, in a firm resting place, then We made the sperm a clot, then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made **(in)**

***the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We did grow it into another creation, so Blessed by Allah, the Best of the creators. Then after that you will most surely die; then surely on the Day of Resurrection you shall be raised*. (23:12-16).**

(See at what stage Allah says ***did grow it into another creation.*** The same meaning is found in the verse, ***So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down making obedience to him*** **(38:72)**.

Then we come to the words of Allah, where He describes the creation of man goes on to say:

And they said: What! when we have become lost in the earth, shall we **(even)** ***then be*** **(returned)** ***into a new creation? Nay! They are disbelievers in the meeting of their Lord. Say: The angel of death, who is given charge of you, shall cause you to die then to your Lord you shall be brought back*** **(32:10-11)**.

In this verse, Allah first mentions the 'argument' of the unbelievers that there was no possibility of being raised to life again because all the limbs and organs of the body disintegrated and turned to dust after death.

Then comes the reply that the angel of death causes them to die and fully takes hold of them; they are something different from the mere body; the bodies are lost in the earth but "they", i.e. their souls, are neither lost, disintegrated nor dead.

We shall explain in a proper place the teaching of the Qur'an about the soul of man.

His Perception And Connection With Other Things

Allah made man and gave him perception, and created in him hearing, sight and the heart (wisdom). He has been given the quality of mind which is known as intelligence and thinking power.

By those faculties, he looks at the present, finds out about the past and surmises about the future; he has a sort of comprehensive knowledge of the things around him. Allah says:

(Allah) ***taught man what he know not*** **(96:5);**

And Allah brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers, you did not know anything, and He gave you hearing and sight and the hearts **(wisdom)** ***so that you may give thanks*** **(16:78);**

And He taught Adam all the names ... **(2:31)**.

Allah has given him such faculties so that he can establish a relation and connection with all things and can derive benefit from all of them; he can establish that connection either directly or through instruments and machines, the aim all the time being to use them to his own advantage.

Look at the innumerable discoveries and inventions, and you will know how Allah has made everything subservient to man. For example, He says:

He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth **(2:29);**

And He has made subservient to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all, from Himself **(45:13).**

His Practical Knowledge

The two faculties — intelligence and the ability to exploit other things — produced a third wonderful faculty: to find out new avenues of knowledge and perception, so as to use them in his exploitation of other things to his advantage.

Suppose you were looking at this species of homo sapiens for the first time. You would be overwhelmingly astonished to see how each member of this species used an unlimited amount of knowledge and ideas to make his life comfortable.

That knowledge and those ideas were acquired, analysed, compared and developed either through the five senses, which provided knowledge of the external world, or through the five faculties of the mind, or through the power of thought, using and re-using the knowledge acquired by those senses.

Then if you were to look at that knowledge and perception, you would find that they could easily be divided into two groups.

First, that knowledge which had no direct bearing on man's own actions; for example, the perceiving of the earth, the sky, men, horses, etc. or that four was an even number, or that water was a liquid.

Such percepts are acquired by man's reaction to the world outside his own being. To acquire those percepts, man does not have to have any intention or action on his own part; they are just information of the outside world for which he is not obliged to do anything.

The second group is opposite to the first one. You will hear him saying: This is good; that is bad; this should be done; that must be avoided; justice is good; injustice is evil.

Then, also, you might find him thinking about the ideas of ruling and subjection; of mastership and slavery. Such thoughts and percepts have a direct bearing on his actions and activities.

All his intentional actions depend on those percepts and knowledge. And, unlike the first group, these percepts do not originate outside his being; they are formed in his mind either involuntarily, by his instinct, or voluntarily, through his own thinking, or feeling.

For example, he has a system for digestion and nourishment and another for reproduction. These

systems are governed by some inner motivating forces which make him desire what helps in these functions and dislike what hinders him in pursuit of those pleasures.

This inner reaction creates in him such emotions and feelings as love, hate, inclination and desire.

These emotions and feelings compel him to think about what is good and what is bad, what is desirable and what is undesirable, what is compulsory and what is permissible, etc.

Then taking such ideas as a base, he decides his course of action and uses the things around him accordingly.

It is clear from the above that those ideas, morals or ethics (whatever you call them) have no value unless and until they are acted upon. As mere ideas they are worthless. Therefore, we may call them practical knowledge.

As mentioned above, Allah inspired man with these morals to prepare him for action and make him ready to exploit the hidden forces of the world: "in order that Allah might bring about a matter which was to be done."

Allah says:

Our Lord is He who gave to everything its creation, then guided it **(to its goal.) (20:50);**

Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High, Who created, then made complete, and Who made **(things)** ***according to a measure, then guided*** **(them to their goal.) (87:1—3)**

The guidance, mentioned in these verses, is the general guidance bestowed on every creature, sentient as well as insentient, to lead it to the perfection of its being, and to encourage it to act for its own protection and maintenance.

Allah says, especially about the man:

And **(I swear by)** ***the soul as it is made perfect, and He inspired unto it*** **(about)** ***its vices and its piety.*** **(91:7—8)**

It shows that man knows about vice and virtue through a divine inspiration which is implanted in his nature.

These two percepts — 'should do' and 'should not do' — have no existence outside his mind; and perhaps that is why Allah used the pronoun "Its" (i.e. soul's) about vices and piety.

Also, Allah says:

And this life of the world is nothing but a vain sport and play; and surely the abode of the

Hereafter is certainly the life, if they but know (**29:64**).

Sport or play is in the attitude of the mind only. If the same action were done as a responsibility or as a job, it would loose its charm. Likewise, the aspect of this life — prestige, riches, progress, backwardness, mastership, servitude — are only in the mind of man.

These aspects do not exist outside the mind. For example, we say, 'a man who is president' or 'a cloth which is possessed'.

Now, 'a man' and 'a cloth' are the things which exist outside the mind of the speaker; but that man's 'presidency' and that cloth's being 'possessed' are not so. These aspects are in the mind only.

His Exploitation Of Other Things

To make a long story short, one of these ideas is the belief that men must take all necessary steps to preserve his own life; and because of this belief he makes use of all the materials available to him.

He exploits matter to fulfil his needs — the knife to cut, the needle to sew, pots to keep water, ladders to climb and innumerable such tools and machines for their benefit.

Likewise, he uses plants and vegetables for food, clothing, housing, etc. And subjugates animals to support his own existence; and takes advantage of their meat, blood, hide; hair, wool, tusks, horns, excrement, milk, bones and other such things.

He benefits not only from the parts of their bodies, but also from their actions, as he rides a horse or uses the oxen for pulling carts and ploughs.

Man's exploitation does not end here. He goes further and exploits his own kind, subjugating other human beings, or taking advantage of them in other manners, as much as he can.

Man Is Social By Nature

But man found, to his chagrin that other men in their turn wanted to subjugate him in the same way as he was thinking about them. The result was a mutual understanding that they would take advantage of him as much as he benefited from them.

This "give-and-take" prompted men to live in society and to cooperate with each other in their affairs. It necessitated the safeguarding of the rights of every member of that society to keep a balance between their rights and their duties. This is called social justice.

Society and social justice were founded on the unavoidable compulsion of the above-mentioned situation. Had it not been for that compulsion, man would not have agreed to it at all.

This is the reality behind the claim that man is social by nature and that he follows the dictates of social justice! The fact is that this sociability and social justice came into being under the compulsion of the mutual tendency to exploit each other.

That is why whenever a man acquires power over his fellows, the dictates of social justice are forgotten; and the mighty one ignores the rights of weaker ones.

It is as truer in the case of individuals as in that of nations and states; and this has been going on from the early history of mankind until the present, which is called the age of civilisation and freedom!

This has been hinted in the verses:

***Surely he* (i.e. man) *is unjust, ignorant* (33:72);**

***Surely man is created avaricious* (70:19);**

***Surely man is very unjust, very ungrateful* (14:34);**

***Nay! Verily man is wont to rebel as he sees himself free from want* (96:6–7).**

Had social justice been the primary urge of his nature, most of society would have been overwhelmingly just and equitable. But what we see is always opposite to that.

Always the demonstration of 'might is right' comes in front of our eyes; powerful ones coerce weaker ones into subjugation; victors humiliate the vanquished, and exploit them for their own advantage.

Difference Among Human Beings

So, there is the natural instinct to take advantage of others. Then there are the necessary differences among individuals in bodily physique, in habitat, habits, character and things like that, which in their turn create a difference in strength; some become stronger, others weaker.

At this stage, the stronger men start ignoring the dictates of social justice and they no longer pay attention to the common weal of the society.

The mighty one exploits the weaker one and gives him little in exchange; the victor takes advantage of the vanquished without giving him any benefit in return.

The weak person makes it up by deception and trickery, always waiting for a chance to get the upper hand. And as soon as he gets a chance he avenges himself with a most severe reprisal.

Thus the difference leads to chaos, disorder and disturbance. Humanity comes near to extinction, and happiness and felicity depart from society.

It is this aspect to which the verse under discussion as well as some other verses refer:

And men were naught but a single people then they differed **(10:19);**

and they shall continue to differ except those on whom your Lord has mercy **(11:118-119).**

This disunity and difference was bound to occur in society. As has already been mentioned, men were different in the built of their bodies and the bent of their minds.

Of course, they were all human beings, and to a certain extent their activities and thinking were similar, but at the same time, their feelings, character and condition were different from each other.

That resulted in a difference in their ambitions, sins and goals of life, which in its turn motivated them to different types of actions, and finally led to the disruption of the social system.

That disruption and disturbance made it necessary to legislate such comprehensive and fundamental laws that could remove the disturbance, difference and disagreement by giving each one his due right. Also, it was essential to make people obey those laws.

Nowadays, societies use one of two methods to enforce the law:

1) Compelling the people to obey laws (which are legislated to make all people share in the means of livelihood and to give everyone what could take him to the perfection of his life) and discarding religious tenets like belief in God and higher moral values.

Faith in God is completely eradicated, and morality is made to follow the trends of society. Whatever is liked by a sizeable section of the community is accepted as virtue.

One day chastity is held in high regard, the next day it is ridiculed and debauchery becomes the norm of the time. One day, truth is respected; the next day falsity is glorified. One day trustworthiness favoured the next day embezzlement and so on.

2) Making people obey laws by character-building and by training them to respect the laws — but after removing religion and religious teachings from the training programs.

The first method uses the sheer force of the rulers, the second, combines force with moral teaching. Apart from the rot that sets into society as a result, both methods are based on ignorance and negate the reality of human existence.

Man is created by Allah; his existence depends on his Master; he came from Allah and to Him he will return. On his departure from this world, his life will continue in the next world forever and ever without disruption.

But the quality of the next life will depend upon this life — how he behaved here, how he maintained his

relation with his Creator and which characteristics he developed and which qualities he acquired.

If a man builds his life here on the foundation of the rejection of the divinity, he will surely destroy his "self" and ruin his next life.

Let us take the example of a caravan. The company of travellers start for a far away place with sufficient provision for the journey. They camp in a caravanserai for a while, no sooner are they lodged for the night then they start quarrelling among themselves.

They do not stop at any misdeed; they fight with each other, murder and defame one another, plunder belongings and commit many other atrocities.

Then, appalled by the carnage, they sit together to find a way to save their lives and property. Someone says: "Let us jointly use, and benefit from, all these provisions, and allow every individual a right to enjoy them according to his service to the group.

We have nowhere to go from this place. Anyone opposing this scheme will be severely punished."

Another person says: "Let us make a law to remove this difference; each of us shall concentrate on building his character; we must behave with kindness towards our companions, we should not deviate from the path of love, gallantry and nobility.

Therefore, we should jointly enjoy the provisions which we have. After all, the provisions are for our own use in this very place."

There is no need to point out that both advisers are mistaken. They forget that the whole caravan is still on its way; and that the traveller, in all conditions and at all times, should remember his final destination and manage the affairs of his journey with only one goal in view: "What is the best way of his reaching home?"

If he forgets this fundamental truth, there will be nothing left for him but becoming lost in the wilderness, and disaster and death.

A sensible adviser would have advised them with these words: "Use these provisions according to what you need of tonight; save the rest for other stopping places on the way; because your final destination is still very far and you must think to save some of the provisions for use after reaching home."

Religion Removes The Difference

This is why Allah created laws, basing them on the belief of the oneness of Allah, on true faith, on fine character and good deeds.

In other words, these laws were made to teach people the reality of life, from the beginning upto its final

destination; to make them realise that this life should be spent keeping the next life in view, and that this short life is but a preparation for the next one which will last forever and ever.

It is clear that it is only divine law which is based on knowledge. No other law was ever built on that foundation. Allah says:

Judgement is not but Allah's; He has commanded that you worship not but Him; this is the right religion, but most people do not know. **(12:40)**

And He says in the verse under discussion:

so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners and He sent down with them the book with the truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed.

Here the sending of the prophets to bring good tiding and to warn has been joined with sending down the book which contains the laws and rules, so as to remove their differences.

Another verse says:

And they say: "There is nothing but our life in this world; we die and live and destroys us not but time "; and they have no knowledge of that, they only conjecture. **(45:24)**

This insistence of theirs was not only to refute belief *in* the hereafter; its real motive was to wriggle out from the responsibilities which result from that belief.

Reason says that, if you believe in the life hereafter, you must make this life subservient to that one; you must worship the Creator and obey the laws ordained by Him which will guide you in all the spheres of life: worship, social dealings, and the penal law.

In short, belief in the hereafter makes it obligatory to follow the dictates of religion, to always keep the improvement of the next life in view. That was the reason why the unbelievers rejected that belief and based their social norms on the assumption that there was nothing beyond life in this world.

Again Allah says:

they do not follow anything but conjecture, and surely conjecture does not avail against the truth at all. Therefore, turn aside from him who turns his back upon Our reminder and does not desire anything but the life of this world. That is the **(last)** ***reach of their knowledge ...*** **(53:28—30)**

In this verse Allah makes it clear that they base their lives on conjecture and ignorance, while Allah invites them to the Abode of Peace and His religion is based on truth and knowledges, and which the Prophet calls them towards what gives them life.

Allah says:

O you who believe! Answer **(the call of)** ***Allah and the Apostle when he calls you to that which gives you life ...*** **(8:24).**

Life which is mentioned in this verse has been explained in the following verses:

Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like unto him whose similitude is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth**? (6:122)**

Is then he who knows that what has been sent down to you from your Lord is the truth, like unto him who is blind? Only those possessed of understanding shall bear in mind. **(13:19)**

Say, this is my way. I invite **(*you*)** ***unto Allah; with clear sight*** **(are)** ***I and and he who follows me; and glory be to Allah, and I am not of polytheists.*** **(12:108)**

Say, are those who know and those who do not know alike? Only those possessed of understanding shall bear in mind. **(39:9)**

... an Apostle from among themselves who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them ... **(2:129)**

There are many verses like these in the Qur'an extolling the virtues of understanding, calling people to acquire knowledge and follow the path of wisdom. It attaches so much importance to knowledge that it has named the pre-Islamic days "the period of Ignorance".

With this background, you will realise how unjust is the claim that religion is based on blind faith and ignorance, and is opposed to knowledge and learning.

This allegation was laid by some scientists. They spent their time in the natural and social sciences and they did not find in these physical sciences anything which could prove anything metaphysical.

And they thought that the "non-existence of a proof" is a "proof of non-existence". It is obvious that they were mistaken in that conjecture.

Going further, they looked at some myths which some entrenched interests had imposed on the masses in their countries, claiming that it was religion, and which in fact was nothing but polytheism — and Allah and His Apostle repudiate the polytheists.

Then they heard the preaching of priests exhorting the public to accept, without any questioning, the dogma and tenets of that mythical religion.

All these factors led them to declare that religion was against knowledge. But the true religion is too

great to encourage ignorance or blind faith, or to exhort to act without understanding.

The true religion never uttered a word without proper guidance or without an illuminating book.

***And who is more unjust than the one who forges a lie against Allah or gives the lie to the truth when it has come to him*? (29:68)**

Difference In Religion Itself

Allah informs us in this verse that differences and disunity in the affairs of society and worldly life were removed for the first time by religion. If there are any laws which are apparently non-religious, they too are based on that first religious teaching.

Then Allah informs us that later on there occurred differences in the religion itself. These differences were created by the followers of the religion, who were given the clear book and who possessed knowledge of it.

It happened because of their revolt, injustice and rebellion. Allah says:

***He has prescribed for you the religion which He enjoined upon N□h, and that which We have revealed to you, and that which We enjoined upon Ibrahim and M□sa and Isa, to establish the religion and be not divided there in ... And they did not become divided until after the knowledge had come to them, out of rivalry among themselves; and had not a word gone forth from your Lord till an appointed time, certainly the affair would have been decided between them ...* (42:13-14).**

Also He says:

***And mankind was not but a single people, then they differed and had not a word already gone forth from your Lord, the matter would certainly have been decided between them in respect of that concerning which they disagree.* (10:19)**

The word which had gone forth was the promise given to Adam:

***and for you there is in earth an abode and a provision for a* (fixed) *time.* (7:24)**

This difference among the followers of religion was based on rebellion and revolt, not on any dictate of nature. The divine religion is based on nature and normally people cannot go astray in *a* natural thing.

Nor can the demand of nature change. Allah says:

Then set your face upright for religion, in natural devotion* (to the truth) *- the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no change in the creation of Allah; that is the right

(**established**) ***religion ...*** (**30:30**)

This in short is the foundation upon which this verse is based.

Man After This World

Then Allah informs us that man shall soon depart from this world and his intermediate station will be a place called *barzakh* (barrier, **البرزخ**), and the final destination is a place called the Hereafter.

His life, after this life, is an individualistic one; there will be no social cooperation, mutual help or partnership. Man shall leave this physical world behind, returning to his Lord and Creator.

There shall be no room there for that knowledge which we named earlier 'practical knowledge'. There will be no exploitation or taking advantage of others; no civilisation, social "give-and-take", nor any other of the paraphernalia connected with the life of this world.

His only companion will be his deeds which he did in this world; he will see the good or bad results of his actions. Reality will become clear to him, and he will clearly know the Great News about which they had differed.

Allah says:

And We will inherit of him what he says and he shall come to Us alone (**19:80**)

And certainly you have come to Us alone as We created you at first, and you have left behind your backs the things which We gave you; and We do not see with you your intercessors about whom you asserted that they were (**Allah's**) ***associates in respect to you; certainly the ties between you are now cut off and what you asserted is gone from you*** (**6:94**)

There shall every soul become acquainted with what it sent before and they shall be brought back to Allah, their true Master and what they did fabricate shall escape from them. (**10:30**)

What is the matter with you that you do not help each other? Nay! On this day they are submissive. (**37:25—26**)

On the day when the earth shall be changed into a different earth, and the heavens (**as well**); ***and they shall come forth before Allah, the One, the Subduer***. (**14:48**)

And that there is not for man (**aught**) ***except what he strives for; and that his striving shall soon be seen; then shall he be recompensed for the fullest recompense***. (**53:39-41**)

These and many such verses clearly show that man's system of life shall change after death. There shall be no cooperation and no striving. There he shall see the result of his striving and the fruits of his

actions. All his striving shall appear before him in its true colour and he shall be recompensed for it with the fullest measure.

Commentary

Qur'an: ***Mankind was but one people*:**

nas (النّاس) translated here as 'mankind', literally means 'men'. *Ummah* (الامّة) translated here as 'people', means 'a group of men'. Sometimes it is used for only one man, as in the verses:

Surely Ibrahim was a (*ummatan,* امّةً) *people,* (devoutly) ***obedient to Allah*** **(16:120)**;

sometimes for a long period, as in the verse:

and remembered after an (*ummatin,* امّة) ***a long time*** **(12:45)**

and in the verse:

And if We hold back from them the punishment until (*ummatin ma'dudatin,* امّة معدودة) ***stated period of time*** **(11:8).**

A fourth usage is for religion, as in the verse:

And surely this (*ummatukum ummatan wahidah,* امّتكم امّة واحدة) ***your religion is one religion and I am your Lord, therefore, fear*** **Me (23:52)**

and,

Surely this your religion is one 'religion' and I am your Lord, therefore worship Me. **(21:92)**

In both these verses, according to some commentators, the word *ummah* (الامّة) has been used for 'religion'.

The word *ummah* (الامّةً) is derived from *amma* (he had an aim, امّ); thus it is used for a company of people — not every company, but that which has a single aim, a single goal and a single ambition, and that unity of aim unites all the members, and makes them one people.

That is why it is correct to use it for one man as well as for many; the other usages mentioned above are based on that basic meaning.

Anyhow, the sentence obviously refers to the beginning of humanity, when they were united, and lived a simple life and had simple thoughts.

There were no differences or any tug-of-war in matters of life or livelihood, nor was there any disagreement about religion or religious matters.

That at that time there was no difference about matters of life is evident from the next sentence, ***so Allah sent the prophets ... so that it*** (**the book**) ***might judge between the people in that in which they had differed***, as it shows that the prophets were sent and the book was revealed to remove differences, because earlier they were one people.

Thus the difference in matters of life occurred after the unity. And the proof that at that time there was no difference about matters of religion is seen in the following sentences,

And none differed about it but the very people who were given it ... revolting among themselves, as it shows that the disagreement about religion was started by those who were given the book, which obviously means that it started after the book was revealed.

Experience also supports this. Mankind is continuously climbing the heights of knowledge and thought and ever progressing along the path of learning and culture, year after year, and generation after generation.

Thus civilisation goes forward day by day, new ways are found to fulfil even the slightest needs, natural and physical obstacles are removed and ever newer instruments are invented to make life more and more comfortable.

On the other hand, if we retrace our steps, going back towards the early days of humanity, every step will take us to people less and less acquainted with the secrets of life and the mysteries of nature, till we reach early man who knew almost nothing of the possibilities of life except those facts that were self-evident, and who used only a little imagination to gather his means of livelihood by the simplest methods.

His food consisted of plants and meat which he obtained by hunting; he lived in caves, and defended himself with sticks and stones.

It is clear that people who lived such a primitive life would not become entangled in any considerable disagreement; nor could there occur among them any lasting differences.

They were in a way like a flock of sheep, everyone following the others, all remaining together for the purposes of food and abode.

This was in the very beginning. But, as we have described earlier, man had the natural urge to take advantage of others. And although the need to cooperate with each other in gathering the necessities of life compelled people to remain together, it did not prevent them from quarrelling with, and getting better of, each other.

And every day man acquired new skills, and every new experience added to his store of knowledge. Whenever he used a newly-acquired expertise, it opened new avenues of progress and dexterity for him.

Also, because of the dictates of nature, some individuals were stronger while others were weaker. Those who were stronger in body or mind tried to reduce others to virtual subjugation, taking more from them than they gave them in return.

That was the beginning of the differences, which was only natural as it was based on the natural urge to take advantage of others, although it had been the same urge which had led to the creation of society.

It may seem strange that the same natural urge compelled men to remain together, on one hand, and led them to quarrel and find differences, on the other.

But there is nothing objectionable in the conflict between two natural demands, provided there is a third faculty above them to judge and decide, and to create a balance between them.

For example, there is hunger which urges man to fill his stomach with whatever he can, even when the digestive system cannot tolerate it. There is a conflict between hunger and the power of digestion, but always there is the mind and reason to judge and decide between these two demands.

It gives to each power only that which does not hinder the activities of the other.

The conflict between the two natural urges of marshalling others to one's service and cooperating with others as a single society is of the same category, because, Allah decreed to remove that conflict by sending the prophets and revealing to them the book to decide and judge in the matters of their differences and contentions.

This is the correct interpretation of this verse. Unfortunately, some commentators have interpreted it in various other ways, but none of those interpretations conform to the meaning of the verse.

One of them has said: The verse says that all men were on the right path, because the differences began only when the book was sent down to them, and the followers of the book differed, revolting among themselves.

This man did not realize that the verse describes two conflicts, not one; and we have already explained this.

Also he did not pause to think that if all men were already on the right path and there was no difference, then what was the justification of sending the prophets and revealing the book and thus giving them an opportunity to differ among themselves by revolt, and thus creating chaos in the world, sowing the seed of unbelief and sin, debauchery and immorality?

Another one has said: Mankind was one group in the meaning that all had gone astray. Otherwise, Allah would not have said,

so Allah sent the prophets ...

This man did not ponder upon the verse with a clear mind. This going astray, to which he referred in this interpretation, has been indicated by Allah in His words,

whereupon Allah guided ... those who believed to the truth about which they differed.

It means that this difference and going astray had started because of the bad motives of the followers of the book and the scholars of religion after the book was revealed and its signs were clarified for people.

If people had already gone astray, if they had already been treading the path of disbelief, hypocrisy, sin and immorality, before the coming of the prophets and the book, how could it be attributed to the followers of the book and the scholars of religion?

A third interpretation: Mankind (*nas,* **النّاس**) in this verse refers to the Israelites only. Allah says somewhere else about them:

but they did not differ until after knowledge had come to them, revolting among themselves. **(45:17)**

As the same words have been used in the verse under discussion, it means that the people referred to are the same.

But it is proof which has no validity at all. If in one verse, a virtue or vice is attributed to a certain nation, it does not mean that that characteristic is confined to that nation or is its special characteristic.

Even more worthless is the fourth interpretation: Mankind means Adam; and the verse says that Adam (a.s.) was one group on the right path; then his descendants differed among themselves, so Allah sent the prophets ...

But the context of the whole verse disagrees with such a meaning. It is not possible to accept even a part of this interpretation, let along the whole.

A fifth interpreter said: "Was" (*kana,* **كان**) in this sentence should not be taken as a past tense; rather it stands for "is" and shows a continuously existing reality, as in the words of Allah:

and Allah is (*kana,* **كان**) ***Mighty, Wise*** **(48:19).**

In short, it means that mankind is by nature one group, because people are dictated by nature to remain together, and as cooperation and sociability is their natural urge, they have to live together in a society.

But this togetherness breeds difference and conflicts. Therefore, Allah sent the prophets and revealed the book to judge about that difference.

There are three defects in this interpretation:

First: It supposes that sociability and cooperation is the primary natural urge. But it has been explained that it is not so. The primary urge is to take advantage of others and use them for one's own benefit.

It is only when a man finds out that others have the same design about him that he comes to a compromise with them, and this "give-and-take" results in cooperation.

So this cooperation is based on compromise, not on any natural urge. The Qur'an also goes against that supposition, as has been explained earlier.

Second: The mere fact that man is "social by nature", does not justify sending the prophets and revealing the book, unless it is mentioned that this "natural sociability" leads to conflict and disturbance.

In other words, this interpretation makes it necessary to read this verse in this way: "Mankind is but one people (but that oneness breeds conflict) so Allah sent the prophets ..." But the said interpreter does not accept that 'conflict' is implied in this sentence.

Third: This interpretation mentions only one conflict. But the verse clearly shows two conflicts — first, before the revelation of the book, when the differences were common to all people (***so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed***); and, second, after its revelation, which was confined to the religious scholars, and not common to all people (***And none differed about it*** – i.e. about the book – ***but the very people who were given it ... revolting among themselves***.)

Thus there were two differences, one was after receiving the knowledge and based on revolt, the other was not so.

Qur'an: ***so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners:***

Ba'th (البعث) literally means to revive, to awaken, to bring back to life. Its past tense, *ba'atha* (بعث) has been translated here as `sent down', only to make the meaning clear; otherwise, 'sent down' is the translation of *arsala* (ارسل), not of *ba'atha* (بعث).

Why did Allah use here the word *ba'atha* (awakened, revived, بعث) here and not *arsala* (sent down, ارسل)? The early period of mankind, which is being discussed in this sentence, was a period of quietness and inactivity.

And it was more relevant to say that they were awakened and revived than that someone was sent to them.

Perhaps that is also the reason why those representatives of Allah are here referred to as prophets (*nabiyyin,* النبيّين) and not apostles (*mursalin,* المرسلين).

It has been described in the first volume that the purpose of raising the prophets and revealing the books was to explain the truth to people, and to teach them the realities of their existence, making them aware

of the fact that they have been created by their Lord, Allah Who has no colleague or partner in His divinity or power; and that they are to return to Him and then shall be resurrected and brought back to life on a great day; that presently they have halted in a mid way station which has no more reality than a sport or play.

Having realised this basic fact, they must keep it before their eyes in all situation and all their actions, always bearing in mind where they have come from, where they are, and what is their destination.

This waking up to the realities of life is more appropriately described by the word *nabiyyin* (prophets, **النبيّين**) because *nabi* (**النّبى**) means "one who has the news (*naba',* **النّبأ**)".

Allah sent the prophets: The authority and responsibility for sending the prophets is on Allah alone. It is only He Who sends them. It proves their sinlessness in receiving the revelation and explaining it to the people. (This topic is described in detail at the end of this commentary).

The prophets were sent ***as bearers of good tidings and as warners.*** They brought the good news of the mercy of Allah, and His pleasure and paradise for those who believe in Him and guard themselves against evil.

And they gave the warning of the chastisement from Allah, and His displeasure and Fire, to those who reject the truth and commit sins.

The two aspects of prophethood — good tidings and warnings — are the most effective ways of keeping an average person on right path and making the prophetic mission a success, although some righteous servants of Allah do good and desist from evil only for the sake of their Lord without thinking about any reward or punishment.

Qur'an: ***and He sent down with them the book with the truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed:***

kitab (**الكتاب**) is on the paradigm of *fi'al* (**فعال**) and means 'the written'. The word generally refers to anything written by pen.

But as the covenants and decrees are confirmed through writing, it is not infrequently used for compulsory and obligatory commands, and for every confirmed fact or idea which is irrefutable.

And it has been used in this meaning in numerous verses of the Qur'an. The Qur'an itself is called the book (*kitab,* **الكتاب**) with this very meaning; otherwise, it is the talk. of Allah.

It is said in the Qur'an:

(It is) ***a "book" which We revealed to you, abounding in blessings ...*** **(38:29);**

Surely, prayer is **(compulsory)** ***on the believers*** (*kitaban mawaq⍰ta,* **كتبا موقوتا**) ***a timed ordinance.***

(4:103).

The words, ***in that in which they had differed*** show that the meaning is, "Mankind was but one people, then they differed, so Allah sent the prophets ..."

The definite article "the" (*al*, **ال**) in 'the book' (*al–kitab,* **الكتاب**) indicates either the genus of book (and, accordingly refer to all divine books revealed to the prophets) or a known (and implied) book.

In later case, it would refer to the book of N□h (a.s.), because Allah says in the Qur'an:

He has prescribed for you of the religion what He enjoined upon N□h and .that which We have revealed unto you and that which We enjoined upon Ibrahim and M□sa and 'Isa ... **(42:13).**

This verse describes the grace .and favour of Allah by saying that the *shari'ah* (Law) sent down to the Muslims combines in itself what was given piecemeal to the previous prophets and over and above it contains many new features revealed to the prophet of Islam.

It means that the Law was given only to those great prophets who are named here: N□h, Ibrahim, M□sa, 'Isa and Muhammad (peace be on them all).

Now, the verse under discussion (***He sent down with them the book ...***) clearly says that the *shari'ah* was given in written form. Look at these two verses together and you will see that:

First: N□h (a.s.) was given a book containing the Law, and that book is surely referred to in this verse, ***He sent down with them the book*** either alone (if "the" is for a known and implied book) or with other divine books (if "the" denotes the genus of the book).

Second: The book of N□h was the first divine book containing the *shari'ah.* Had there been any other such book before him it would have contained a Law to judge between the people, and Allah would have mentioned that *shari'ah* in verse (42:13).

Third: The period referred to in the sentence, ***Mankind was but one people*** was the era before the mission of N□h (a.s.) and his book decided and judged between the people in their differences.

Qur'an: ***And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves*****:**

It has been explained that it refers to the difference about the matters of religion among the followers of the religion.

As the religion is based on the nature of man as created by Allah (***Then set your face uprightly for the*** **(right)** ***religion — the nature made by Allah in which He had made men*** **— 30:30**), Allah attributed these differences to the revolt of the followers and the scholars of the religion.

The words ***but the very people who were given it*** indicate the origin of the religious differences about the meaning of the book. It does not say that every one who goes astray or follows a false religion is a rebel, although it is true that he has lost his way.

Allah would not accept the excuses of a rebel; but He might accept the entreaties of those who were confused and could not find the right path. Allah says:

The way **(to blame)** ***is only against those who do injustice to the people and revolt in the earth unjustly ...*** **(42:42);**

And others have confessed evil **(one);** ***may be Allah will turn to them*** **(in mercy);** ***surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful ... And others are made to wait Allah's command — whether He will chastise them or whether He will turn*** **(in mercy),** ***to them; And Allah is All-knowing, All-wise*** **(9:102—106)*;***

Except the weakened ones from among the men and the women and the children who have not in their power the means nor do they find a way; so these, it may be, Allah will pardon them, and Allah is the Clement, Oft forgiving **(4:98—99)**

Moreover, nature may go hand in hand with forgetfulness or doubt, but it cannot with revolt and intentional transgression. That is why the verse uses the words of revolt especially for those who knew the book and for whom the signs were made clear.

Allah says:

And **(as to)** ***those who disbelieve in and reject My signs, they are the inmates of the Fire, in it they shall abide.*** **(2:39)**

There are numerous verses of this meaning in the Qur'an; and in all of them the disbelief has been made conditional on the rejection of the signs of Allah and then it is followed by the threat of punishment.

In short, this sentence shows that the second differences began because of the rebellion of the scholars of the book, after they were given knowledge of it.

Qur'an: ***whereupon Allah guided, by His will, those who believed to the truth about which they differed. And Allah guides whom He pleases to the straight path.***

the truth about which they differed explains the subjects of the differences and that it was the truth with which the book was sent down ("the book with the truth").

At this juncture, Allah guided the believers to the truth in both differences: differences in affairs of this life, and differences in the matters of religion.

The guidance of the believers was ***by His will,*** because they could not make it binding upon Allah to guide them, for the simple reason that there is none to impose upon Him.

It is only He Himself who takes upon Himself whatever He pleases. Therefore, the guidance was by His will; if He were not pleased, He would not have willed and would not have guided.

Accordingly, the sentence, ***And Allah guides whom He pleases to the straight path*** gives the reason of "by His will". He guided them because it is His discretion to guide whom He pleases, nobody can impose upon Him to guide this or to guide that. And He surely willed to guide the believers to the straight path.

Looking at the verses as a whole, we come to know the following:

First: The definition of religion: Religion is a way of life which contains the good of this world in a manner that ensures perfection of the next life – the life that is the real and eternal one near to Allah.

It means that the *shari'ah* must contain the necessary laws for this worldly life and one's livelihood.

Second: Originally religion was promulgated to remove natural differences; then it was perfected to remove both types of differences; then it was perfected to remove both types of difference — the natural ones and the un-natural ones emanating from the rebellion of religious scholars.

Third: Religion goes on perfecting itself until its laws cover all the possible needs and eventualities of life. When it reaches that stage of perfection it is finalised and no other religion comes after it.

Conversely, if a religion is the final one, it must be comprehensive enough to cover all eventualities and fulfil all the needs of life. Allah said:

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Last of the prophets... **(33:40);**

and We revealed unto you the book, explaining clearly everything ... **(16:89)*;***

and most surely it is a mighty book; falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor f r o m behind it ... **(41:41-42).**

Fourth: Every succeeding *shari'ah* was more perfect than the preceding one.

Fifth: Why were the prophets sent and the books revealed? In other words, what was the reason for the prophetic mission? Man, by his nature, develops towards differences in matters of life, as much as he progresses towards social cooperation.

As it is nature itself which leads to differences, it is not capable of removing them. How can it repel a thing when it is forcefully pulling it towards itself?

Therefore, Allah took it upon Himself to remove that conflict; and He sent the prophets with the laws to lead men to their perfection — real perfection which is a part of their creation. Allah says:

Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it **(to its goal) (20:50)**

It shows that Allah completes the creation of everything and guides it to its perfection. The creation of man is completed when he is guided to his perfection in both lives. Also He says:

All do We aid — these as well as those — out of the bounty of your Lord; and the bounty of your Lord is not confined **(17:20)**.

It means that Allah aids out of His bounty everyone who is in need of His aid in his life and existence; He gives him what he deserves. His bounty is neither confined nor limited, so far as Allah is concerned. If there is any limitation, it is from man's side, not from his Creator's.

Obviously, man cannot perfect himself, because it is his own nature which is the case of this defect.

As it is nature which leads to the conflict, and as that nature is unable to mend what it has damaged, the reform (if there is to be any) must come from somewhere outside nature — it must come from the Creator; and it came in the form of prophethood guided by divine revelation.

The sending of the prophets for this reform and removal of conflict has been given the name of *ba'th* (awakening, revival, **البعث**); and never has this verb been attributed, in the Qur'an, to anyone except Allah, although the prophetic calls, like everything else, have some connection with their place and time.

Prophethood is a divine (say, if you will, unseen) condition which has the same relation to general human perception and activity as wakefulness has to sleep.

The prophet receives the knowledge by which the conflicts and differences of human life can be removed. This perception received from the unseen is called, in the language of the Qur'an 'revelation'; and the quality and condition of receiving that revelation is called 'prophethood'.

Therefore, the reason for initiating the prophetic mission rests on the following factors:

(1) Human nature leads man to social cooperation;

(2) At the same time it creates friction and conflict;

(3) Nature itself cannot remove that conflict;

(4) Therefore, a force outside of nature, should intervene to remove that conflict;

(5) Allah completes creation and in His mercy, has taken it upon Himself to guide everything to its perfection;

(6) As a result of that undertaking, He sent prophets and revealed to them the book to reform human society.

All these factors are proved by reason and experience.

Never has man desisted from exploiting others to his advantage; never has that exploitation, after action and reaction, failed to created a society; never has any society been free from conflict; never has that conflict been removed without social laws; and never has human wisdom been able to make such laws which could cut away all the roots of conflict.

Look at the present world. See the chaos in human society, the degradation of moral values, the never-ending chain of wars, the destruction of crops and cattle, the fightings which exterminate millions and millions of people, the autocracies, the subjugation of nations, the abasing of the human spirit, the usurping of lives and property; you will find all these and much more.

And it is happening in this, the twentieth century, the century of civilisation, the age of progress, the era of culture and science. What could have been the situation in the old day — the age of ignorance and darkness?

That the teaching and training of religion, emanating from the prophets and revelation, have the ability to eradicate this conflict is proved by reason and experience.

Reason: Religion calls people to real knowledge, high ethics, and noble deeds. Humanity can reach the highest peak of perfection by following such teachings.

Experience: Islam has proved it during the short period when it had control over Muslim society, as will be explained, God willing, in a proper place.

Sixth: The religion, which has been sent as the last of all religions, proves that humanity has reached the final stage of its completion and perfection.

That is why the Qur'an has decreed that prophethood has come to its end with Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). His religion will never be abrogated, and his *shari'ah* will remain in force till the end of the world.

It means that human perfection, individual as well as collective, shall always remain within the limits of the laws ordained by Islam. There can never arise a situation for which Islam has no guidance.

It is a prophecy of the Qur'an confirmed by the history of humanity in the last fourteen centuries. Mankind has, in this period, progressed tremendously, and reached unimaginable heights in the field of the material and. physical sciences.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about his ethics and morality. It has not progressed even one step since that time. Rather, it could be claimed that in this respect it has taken many steps backwards.

Thus humanity has not progressed as a whole. It is a lop-sided development. Man has strengthened his body, neglecting his soul, which has become weaker.

It is clear from above that the laws of Islam have as much relevance in this era as they had fourteen centuries ago. And they will not lose their relevancy even in the future.

Some people say: The laws of religion were made for the reform of man and the good of society. If society changes and climbs further towards the summit of perfection, religion and its law also must change, to stay in step with the changing society.

It is no secret that the difference between this age and that when the Qur'an came down and Islamic laws were promulgated is far greater than the difference between the times of Mūsa and 'Isa (a.s.) and that of the Prophet of Islam.

This vast difference demands the abrogation of the laws of Islam, so that other laws, more appropriate to a modern progressive society, can be ordained.

Reply: Religion does not aim only at the material and physical perfection of man but it looks at the human being as a whole, and seeks to make him perfect both physically and spiritually, so that he may attain both material and spiritual bliss.

Its deal is the social man who is perfect from the above-mentioned point of view, not a social man who might be perfect in technology and politics but bankrupt in other aspects of humanity.

These people looked at societies based on materialism. Matter is always in change, climbing up the ladder of perfection, and the same is true of materialistic societies.

These people thought that a society based on religion would also always be subject to change and abrogation. But they over-looked the fundamental difference between the two societies.

They forgot that Islam does not aim at a lop-sided development of man; instead, it seeks well-balanced development, where man becomes perfect as a whole, both in body and soul.

Before demanding the abrogation of Islam, they should produce an individual or a society which combines religious tenets and material progress.

Then they should say what deficiency has been left therein which should be completed by a new *shari'ah,* or what weakness is there which needs a new law.

Unless and until they produce such a society to point to the supposed defects, they have no justification in claiming that Islam should be abrogated.

Seventh: The prophets (peace be on them all) were sinless and protected from error and sin.

Sinlessness Of The Prophets

'Ismah (العصمة) which is generally translated as "sinlessness", literally means 'protection'. The 'protection' with which we are concerned here, is of three kinds:

(1) protection from error in receiving the revelation,

(2) protection from error in communicating and imparting that revelation to the people, and

(3) protection from sins. Sin here means any thing or action which goes against the obligatory command of Allah, and thus becomes a disgrace for the man. In other words, any word or action which is against the dictates of the servitude, homage and devoutness of man towards his Lord.

'Ismah (العصمة) in religious terminology, means the presence, in the man concerned, of a quality which protects him from committing anything unlawful, any error or sin.

So far as *'ismah* from extraneous things (i.e. other than receiving revelation and its communication, and sins) is concerned — for example, mistakes in perception by any of the five senses, or misjudging the benefit or harm of a medicine, food or other such thing, etc. — it is not relevant to this verse which we are now discussing.

Anyhow, the Qur'an definitely proves that every prophet was *ma's*ؤ*m* (sinless, protected from mistakes, المعصوم) in all the above mentioned three aspects.

'Ismah from error in receiving the revelation and in its communication to the people: The following sentences, in the verse under discussion, prove these two aspects:

so Allah sent the prophets, as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with the truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed. And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves; whereupon Allah guided, by His will, those who believed to the truth about which they differed.

These words show that Allah sent them to bring the good tidings and to warn; and sent the book with them (and this was the "revelation"), so that they might guide the people to true belief and true deeds.

This was the aim and object of Allah in appointing the prophets. And He says:

errs not my Lord, nor does He forget. **(20:52)**

It proves that Allah errs not in His action, and makes no mistakes in His affairs; when He wills a thing, He wills it in its proper way which creates the desired effect without fail; when He proceeds with a work, the result is produced without any mistake.

It is as it should be, because in His hand is creation and command, and for Him is power and judgement.

And He sends prophets by revealing to them the true knowledge of religion and teaching it to them — and without fail it must be so; of necessity the prophets must receive and understand the revelation correctly; and He sends them to communicate that revelation to their people, and without fail it must be so; without any error or mistake they must communicate it as Allah has willed.

Allah says:

Surely Allah attains His purpose; Allah indeed has made a measure for everything **(65:3);**

and Allah is predominant over His affair. **(12:21)**

Another verse which proves these two types of *'ismah* is as follows:

The Knower of the Unseen; so He does not reveal His secrets to any except to him whom He chooses for an apostle; for surely He makes a guard to march before him and after him, so that He may know that they have indeed delivered the messages of their Lord, and He encompasses what is with them and He takes account of everything. **(72:26—28)**

It is clear that Allah reserves His revelation for His messengers; so He reveals His secrets to them and supports them by guarding them from in front of them and behind them; and encompasses what is with them to protect the revelation from decay and alteration, whether that alteration comes from Satan or others; and it is done to make sure that they have indeed correctly delivered the messages of their Lord.

Another verse reports the words of the angels of revelation:

and we do not come down but by the command of your Lord; His is whatever is before us and whatever is behind us and whatever is between these; and your Lord is not forgetful. **(19:64)**

These verses prove that the revelation right from the start of its descent, to its reaching down to the prophets and up to its communication and delivery to the people is duly protected and guarded against change and alteration, from whatever source it might come.

These two verses prove the *'ismah* of the prophets in receiving and delivering the revelation only; but they may also be used, with the addition of one rational premises, to prove their *'ismah* from sins.

For an average man, actions speaks as loudly as, if not louder than, words. If someone does a certain thing, his action proves that in his eyes that work is good and lawful; it is as if he was announcing its legality and virtue in so many words.

If a prophet committed a sin, while he forbade it to his people, it would mean that he was preaching two contradictory things: his action allowed a thing, while his words forbade it.

Thus he would be preaching two things contradictory to each other. And preaching contradictory things is against the preaching of truth, because one order would belie and invalidate the other.

One who reports two contradictory items cannot be said to be reporting the truth. Therefore, *'ismah* of the prophet in delivering the message of Allah totally depends upon his *'ismah* from the sins.

There are many other verses which prove *'ismah* of the prophets in all its aspects:

(a) ***These are they whom Allah has guided; therefore, follow their guidance.*** **(6:90)**

All the prophets were decidedly guided by Allah. And Allah says:

and whomsoever Allah lets go astray, there is no guide for him; and whom Allah guides, there is none that can lead him astray; is not Allah Mighty, the Lord of retribution? **(39:36—37)**

Also He says:

whomsoever Allah guides, he is the rightly guided one. **(18:17)**

According to these verses those who are guided by Allah can never be led astray by any misleading agency. In other words, they are free from all misguidance; and every sin is a misguidance, as is shown by the words of Allah,

Did I not enjoin on you, O children of Adam! that you should not worship the Satan? Surely he is your open enemy, and that you should worship Me; this is the right way. And certainly he led astray a great multitude from among you. What! could not then understand? **(36:60—62)**

In this verse, Allah counts every sin as going astray, a misguidance as a result of the agency of Satan; at the same time regarding it as the worship of Satan. Looking at all the above verses we find that:

Allah guided all the prophets by His guidance.

Anyone guided by Allah's guidance can never be misled, can never go astray.

Every sin is a misguidance; every sin is straying from the right path.

It follows that the prophets of Allah were sinless, free from every sin and protected from every mistake in receiving and delivering the revelation of Allah.

(b) ***And whoever obeys Allah and the Apostle these are with those upon whom Allah has bestowed the favours of the prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the righteous ones; and excellent are these as companions!*** **(4:69)**

Also He says:

Keep us on the right path, the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours, not **(the path)** ***of those inflicted with Thy wrath, nor*** **(of those)** ***gone astray.*** **(1:5—7)**

The prophets are described as of those upon whom Allah has bestowed His favours; and those upon whom Allah's favours have been bestowed are other than those who have gone astray.

It means that the prophets never went astray. If they had committed a sin, they would have gone astray (as explained above). Also, if they had committed any error or mistake in receiving or communicating the revelation, they would have gone astray. There fore, the two verses together prove the *'ismah* of the prophets in all these aspects.

(c) ***These are they on whom Allah bestowed favours, of the prophets of the posterity of Adam, and of those whom We carried with N□h, and of the posterity of Ibrahim and Israel, and of those whom We guided and chose. When the signs of the Beneficent*** **(God)** ***were recited to them, they fell down prostrating*** **(in obedience)** ***and weeping. But there followed after them an evil generation, who neglected prayer and followed sensual desires, so they shall soon meet*** **(*the result of their*)** ***sin.*** **(19:58—59)**

This verse attributes two virtues to the prophets: first, the bestowing of favours (***upon whom Allah bestowed favours***); second, guidance (***whom We guided and chose***).

Then it goes on praising them for the highest degree of obedience, devoutness and humility before Allah. Afterwards, it condemns the unworthy following generation for their evil traits.

Obviously, we see here two opposite groups: one, the praiseworthy ones deserving to be honoured by Allah; the other, the condemned ones. This second group has been described as those who followed sensual desires and who will soon see the result of their sins.

It clearly means that the first group, i.e. the prophets, did not follow their desires and will not be overtaken by sin. Such sincere servants of Allah could not commit any sin, even before their appointment as prophets.

Had they committed any sin even before their receiving prophethood, they would have surely come under the condemnation, ***neglected prayer and followed sensual desires, so they shall soon meet*** (the result of their) ***sin.***

But, as we explained, theirs is a group of diametrically opposite to the condemned ones.

This Qur'anic proof is somewhat similar to the rational proof given for the *'ismah* of the prophets, which is as follows:

The sending of the prophets and the showing of miracles in their hands is the confirmation of their words. It means that they cannot tell a lie. Also, it is an endorsement that they have the ability to

communicate the message of Allah to their people.

But a man who indulges in sins and such actions as would harm a project, cannot be said to be qualified to preach the usefulness of that project or to invite the people to participate in it.

Therefore, when Allah showed miracles in the hands of the prophets it not only authenticated their claim of prophethood, but also confirmed that they could not commit error in receiving and delivering the divine revelation, and that they faithfully obeyed all the commands of Allah and desisted from all such things which were disliked by Allah.

In other words, they were sinless in all its aspects.

Question: All intelligent people take help, in all varieties of social needs and communications, from those who may discharge their duties to a certain extent, even if their delivery of the message or their performance in that social work is not quite perfect.

What is wrong if Allah sends prophets who are capable of doing His work to a certain extent, even if occasionally they indulged in sin?

Reply: Men overlook such defects in their agents for one of two reasons: either they do not mind a little short-coming and deficiency, or their aim is to get only that amount of service which the agent is qualified for.

But both these alternatives are unacceptable for a divine scheme. These alternatives show the deficiency and shortcoming of not only the agents but also of the principal. Allah cannot be like us mortals.

An Objection: Allah says,

why should not then a company from every party from among them go forth that they may acquire **(proper)** ***understanding in religion, and that they may warn their people when they come back to them, so that they may be cautious?*** **(9:122)**

Here Allah has entrusted Muslim scholars with the task of warning their people, and those scholars are not sinless.

Reply: Muslim scholars (admittedly not sinless) have been allowed by this verse to communicate to their people what they have learned about religion.

It does not say that Allah confirms their words of warning, nor that their words are recognised by Allah as a divine proof over people. It is this divine confirmation and recognition which is the basic characteristic of prophethood, not mere warning.

(d) ***And We did not send any apostle but that he should be obeyed by Allah's permission ...*** **(4:64)**

The aim of sending an apostle is that he be obeyed, and the verse confines the aim to only this one thing. People should obey the apostle in both his words and actions, because preaching is done in both ways.

And both these aspects of obedience are covered by Allah's permission. If an apostle erred in understanding the revelation or in its delivery, it would still be Allah's will, according to this verse, that people should obey and follow him.

But Allah only permits truth. How can His permission be related to an error or mistake? Thus, it is clear that an apostle cannot err in receiving or delivering a revelation.

Likewise, if an apostle were to commit a sin, in words or actions, an impossible situation would arise. Sin is disliked by Allah, forbidden by Him. But the verse enjoins people to obey and follow their apostle.

Thus that same sin would, at the same time, be for the people an act of obedience which they would be required to follow and copy.

It would mean that Allah had, at one and the same time, willed it and not willed it, ordered it and forbade it; liked it and disliked it! As explained earlier, it would be an impossible order.

We do not mean an order to do an impossible work (which, some do say, can be given by Allah!); we mean that giving such an order is in itself an impossibility, because it would be, at one and the same time, an order and a non-order, a will and non-will, a liking and non-liking, a praise and non-praise, a condemnation and non-condemnation!!

(e) ***so that there may not remain any argument for people against Allah, after the apostles ...*** **(4:165)**

It is clear that Allah wills to intercept the excuse which people might think of for their sins and disobedience; and that the only way of dismissing such excuse is by sending the apostles to them.

The coming of the apostles could cut their excuse short only if the apostles themselves desisted from all those things which Allah does not like — be it in word or action.

Otherwise, people could easily give their apostles' sins and mistakes as their excuse, and that argument would be valid against Allah. Therefore, if Allah had sent a non-*ma'sūm* apostle, He would have defeated His own purpose.

Question: It is accepted that the verses prove that the prophets do not commit any mistake or sin. But this does not prove that they had *'ismah.*

'Ismah, as defined by scholars, does not mean merely 'not committing any sin'; it is "a faculty which protects a man from committing any sin or mistake".

Doing or not doing a work does not prove that the man concerned possesses the faculty, or characteristic, of that doing or not doing. The verses prove that they did not commit any sin; while to prove *'ismah* it should be proved that they could not commit any.

Answer: What is needed for proving the subject matter of this verse, is only the fact that the prophets did not commit any sin or mistake. And the questioner accepts that the verses prove it.

To prove that this fact was based on a characteristic or faculty of the prophets, look up the subject of 'miracle' in the first volume. There it was shown that the verse,

Surely my Lord is on the straight path **(11:56),**

and

Surely Allah attains His purpose; Allah indeed has made a measure for every thing **(65:3)** prove that every happening depends on a cause which brings it into being.

Now in the case of a prophet, we see that all his actions throughout his life are invariably correct, proper and in obedience to Allah.

This firm and unchanging characteristic shows that there must be a faculty in his soul which protects him from committing any sin or mistakes, and causes all his actions to be in accordance with the commands of Allah. And that faculty is *'ismah.*

It is accepted that all actions of a prophet occur by his own will, as do our own actions. But his actions are always in obedience to Allah, while our actions are sometimes in obedience and sometimes in disobedience.

An action is said to occur by our will when it is based on our knowledge and discretion. Our actions differ in obedience and disobedience because of a difference in the knowledge and will from which they emanate.

If our knowledge and will demand to fulfil the dictates of servitude by obeying the divine command, obedience comes into being. If, on the other hand, our knowledge and will prefer the pursuit of pleasure and the satisfaction of lust, then disobedience and sin occur.

In short, the difference in the quality of our actions, obedience or disobedience, is caused by the difference in our knowledge and will.

Had our knowledge and will remained unchanged throughout our life, all our actions would have been of one type only – either a life-long obedience to Allah, or, God forbid, an unbroken chain of sins.

As the actions of a prophet are invariably according to the dictates of piety and in obedience to Allah, it follows that the knowledge and will from which his actions emanate are healthy ones, invariably good

and virtuous.

In other words, it is ingrained in his mind and soul that he must always serve and obey Allah. It is this firmly-rooted knowledge which is called a faculty, characteristics or trait, like the faculty of chastity, of bravery, of justice, and so on.

When we admit that a prophet always obeys Allah and never commits any sin, we accept that he possesses a spiritual quality or faculty which always keeps him on right path and protects him from sin and mistakes. And that faculty is *'ismah.*

Also, we have shown that a prophet does not commit any error or mistake in receiving or delivering the divine revelation. It means that he possesses a spiritual quality which protects him from such mistakes.

If we say that a prophet does not have this spiritual faculty or characteristic (while it is known that he does not commit any sin or mistake) then it would mean that this unchanging habit (i.e. always following the divine command and desisting from mistake and sin) is not related to any spiritual or psychological trait of his own - in other words, it is caused directly by the will of Allah, and that the prophet has no choice, option or will of his own in his actions; in short his actions are not caused by his knowledge and will.

But it is already admitted that the actions of the prophet are based on his knowledge and will just like those of other human beings.

'Ismah comes from Allah; He creates in the prophet a cause from which all his actions emanate — the actions which are done by his own will and are always in obedience to Allah; and that cause is the firmly-rooted knowledge — in other words, the characteristic, trait or faculty.

About Prophethood

Allah uses two words for those who received His revelations so as to guide people to the right path. These words are *rasl* (apostle, messenger, الرّسول) and *nabi* (prophet, النّبىّ), which divide, or almost divide, them into two groups, Allah says:

... and the prophets and the witnesses shall be brought up ... **(39:69);**

On the day when Allah will assemble the apostles, then say: What answer were you given? **(5:109)**

Rasl (الرّسول) means the one who brings the message (*risalah,* الرّسالة); *nabi* (النبى) is the one who brings the news (*naba',* النّبأ) *Rasl* (الرسول) has the distinction of being an intercessor (or intermediary) between Allah and His creatures.

Nabi (النبى) has the distinction of having the knowledge of Allah and from Allah.

It is said that *rasl* (الرّسول) is the one who is sent by Allah and commissioned to convey the divine message to the people; and *nabi* (النّبىّ) is the one who is sent by Allah, whether he is told to convey the message or not.

According to this interpretation, the relationship between the Apostle and Prophet is such that all apostles are prophets but not all the prophets are apostles.

But the words of Allah do not support this view. For example, Allah says:

***And remember Musa in the Book; surely he was one purified and was an apostle, a prophet* (19:51).**

The aim of this verse is to praise Musa and show his greatness and in such a context the adjectives should progress from general to distinctive and not *vice versa.*

Also at another place, Allah says:

***And We did not send before you any apostle or prophet but ...* (22:52)**

This verse joins the apostles and the prophets together and then uses the verb "to send" (*irsal*, الارسال) for both, making all of them apostle (*mursal,* (المرسل)

But there are other verses which apparently show that everyone who was sent by Allah to people was a prophet. See, for example,

***... and the book shall be laid down, and the prophets and the witnesses shall be brought up ...* (39:69);**

***... but he is the Apostle of Allah and the Last of the prophets ...* (33:40);**

and also the verse under discussion,

... so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners ...

All these verses show that the prophets were sent with a divine message to people. Then what is the significance of the verse mentioned above,

... and was an apostle and a prophet?

Probably, the two words have been used here in their literal sense: Musa was a Messenger of Allah and had the knowledge and information of the signs of Allah and His secrets.

Likewise, the next-mentioned verse (***And We did not send before you any apostle or prophet but ....***) may be taken to mean that the prophet and the apostle both are sent to the people, but the prophet is sent to convey to them information of the unseen, as he knows the divine secrets, and the apostle is

sent to bring them something more than a prophetic communication.

This may be inferred from the verses, like:

And every people had an apostle; so when their apostle came, the matter was decided between them with justice ... **(10:47)**

and

nor we chastise until We raise an apostle. **(17:15)**

Accordingly, the prophet explains to people what is good for their lives in this world and in the hereafter, the roots of the religion and its branches, as the mercy of Allah decides to guide the people to their bliss and felicity; and the apostle brings to people a special message to complete the proof over them, a message, rejection of which brings destruction and chastisement in its wake. Allah says:

... that there may not remain any argument for people against Allah after the apostles**. (4:165)**

In short, the words of Allah do not show any difference between the two except what appears from their literal meaning. And it leads us to the same conclusion which we have mentioned earlier, i.e., apostle has the distinction of being an intercessor (or intermediary) between Allah and His creatures, and the prophet has the distinction of having the knowledge of Allah and from Allah.

We shall later quote the traditions of the Imams of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* about the difference between an apostle and a prophet.

The Qur'an very clearly says that there were numerous prophets, and that Allah has not described all of them in His Book. For example, Allah says:

And certainly We sent apostles before you: there are some of them that We have mentioned to you and there are others whom We have not mentioned to you ... **(40:78)**

There are twenty odd prophets mentioned by name in the Book of Allah: 'Adam, N[illegible]h, Idris, H[illegible]d, Salih, Ibrahim, L[illegible]t, Isma'il, Alyasa', Dhu '1-kifl, Ilyas, Y[illegible]nus, Ishaq, Ya'q[illegible]b, Shu'ayb, M[illegible]sa, Har[illegible]n, Daw[illegible]d, Sulayman, Zakariyya, Yahya, Isma'il Sadiqu '1-wa'd[1], 'Isa, and Muhammad, May Allah bless them all.

Some other prophets have been mentioned, but not by name. Allah says:

Did you not look at the chiefs of the children of Israel after M[illegible]sa, when they said to a prophet of theirs; Raise up for us a king ... **(2:246);**

Or like him who passed by a town, and it had fallen down ... **(2:259);**

When We sent to them two, and they rejected both of them, so We strengthened **(them)** ***with a***

third **….(36:14);**

Then they found one from among Our servants whom We had granted mercy from Us and whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves **(18:65);**

the grandchildren **(2:136).**

There are some about whom it is not clear whether they were prophets or not, like the boy (disciple) of M□sa (***And when M□sa said to his boy*** **— 18:60**), Dhu 'l–Qarnayn, 'Imran (father of Maryam) and 'Uzayr.

(The first one is mentioned in the Qur'an by an adjective and the other by name).

The Qur'an has not mentioned how many prophets there were all together. The traditions giving their number are not *mutawatir* and differ among themselves. The most well–known is the tradition of Ab□ Dharr that the prophet told him that there were one hundred and twenty–four thousand prophets; three hundred and thirteen of them were apostles.

The chiefs of all the prophets are the ones endowed with fortitude (*ulu'l–'azm* **اولوالعزم**); and they are N□h, Ibrahim, M□sa, 'Isa and Muhammad (blessings of Allah be on him and them all!)

Allah says:

Therefore bear up patiently as did the apostles endowed with fortitude bear up with patience… **(46:35)**

It will be explained later on that *'azm* (fortitude, determination, firm resolve, **العزم**) in this context means that they firmly upheld the first covenant they made with Allah, and they never forgot it.

Allah says:

And when We made a covenant with the prophets and with you, and with N□h and Ibrahim and M□sa and 'Isa, son of Maryam, and We took from them a firm covenant. **(33:7).**

Also He says:

And certainly We had covenanted unto Adam before, but he forgot and We did not find in him any determination. **(20:115).**

Each of these five apostles brought a new law and a book. Allah says:

He has prescribed for you of the religion what He enjoined upon N□h and that which We have revealed unto you, and that which We enjoined upon Ibrahim and M□sa and 'Isa … **(42:13);**

Most surely this is in the earlier scriptures, the scriptures of Ibrahim and M□sa. **(87:18—19);**

Surely We sent down the Torah in which was guidance and light; with it the prophets ... were judging **(matters)** ... ***And We sent after them in their footsteps 'Isa, son of Maryam, verifying what was before him of the Torah ... And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth, verifying what is before it of the Book and a guardian over it; therefore, judge between them by what Allah has revealed and do not follow their desires*** **(to turn away)** ***from the truth that has come to you; for every one of you did We appoint a law and a way, and if Allah had pleased He would have made you*** **(all)** ***a single people, but that He might try you in what He gave you ...*** **(5:44—48)**

These verses clearly show that these five *ulu 'l-'azm* prophets had been given laws, and that Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa and Muhammad (peace be on them all) were given books.

So far as the book of Nuh is concerned, we have already explained that the verse under discussion, read together with verse 42:13, proves that he was given a book. All these books contained a law and a *shari'ah.*

The Qur'an says that Dawud (a.s.) was given a book (***And We gave Dawud the Zabur*** **(4:163)**), and according to the traditions Adam, Shith and Idris also were given books. But we are not concerned here with those books, because they did not contain any law or *shari'ah.*

Revelation is essential for prophethood. Revelation is a sort of talk of Allah, and prophethood depends upon it. Allah says:

Surely We have revealed to you as We revealed to Nuh and the prophets after him ... **(4:163).**

A full discussion of revelation will be given, God willing, in the chapter of *ash-Shura.*

Traditions

al-Baqir (a.s.) said: "The men before Nuh, were one people, on the creation of Allah, neither rightly guided nor gone astray, then Allah raised the prophets." [*Majma'u 'l-bayan*]

There is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said about this verse:

And it was before Nuh.

He was asked whether they were on the right path. He said: "Rather they were astray. When Adam and his good children died, his successor, Shith, was unable to expound the religion of Allah which was followed by Adam and his good children.

It was so because Qabil had threatened to kill him as he had killed his brother, Habil. Therefore, Shith lived among them in fear, keeping his religion secret. Their straying increased day by day until nobody remained with them on the earth except those who had already passed away.

And the successor (of Adam) settled in an island to worship Allah. Then Allah decided to raise the apostles. And if these ignorant ones were asked they would say that He (Allah) had finished the matter; but they are liars; verily it is thing about which Allah decrees every year."

Then the Imam recited:

***Therein every wise affair is made distinct*. (44:4).**

(Then he said:) "So Allah decrees what should happen during the year, hardship or abundance or rain or other such things." The narrator asked whether before the prophet they had gone astray or were on the right path.

The Imam said: "They were not on guidance. They were on the creation of Allah upon which they were created. There is no change in the creation of Allah.

And they were not to be guided until Allah guided them. Do you not hear the words of Ibrahim,

***Had not my Lord guided me, I would certainly have been of the erring people*. (6:77)**

i.e., forgetful of the covenant." [al 'Ayyashi]

The author says: The words, ***They were not on guidance. They were on creation of Allah,*** explain the words ***they were astray*** which have been used in the beginning of the tradition.

It means that they were not guided in detail to the divine knowledge, but had its rudimentary knowledge. And such guidance may be termed straying in the meaning of ignorance of details.

The first tradition, quoted from *Majma'u 'l-bayan,* mentions it in these words: "on the creation of Allah, neither rightly guided nor gone astray."

The last words of this tradition, "forgetful of the covenant" also explain the straying mentioned earlier.

Guidance is the remembrance of the covenant in its reality (as is the case with the perfect believers), or the carrying on like those who remember the covenant, even if one oneself does not remember it in reality (as is the case of most of the believers); and giving the name of guidance to this second group is only because of the mercy of Allah.

Hisham ibn al-Hakam narrates that an atheist came to Ab ‘Abdillah (a.s.), and asked him, "From whre did you prove the prophets and apostles?"

The Imam said: "When we proved that there is a Creator and Maker who is elevated above us and above all the created things, and that that Creator is wise, and that it is not possible for His creatures to see Him or touch Him; and that He cannot live with them nor they with Him, and He cannot have discussion with them nor they argue with Him; then it is proved that He must have in His creation some

envoys to guide the people to their advantage and interest and to that on which depends their existence and the neglect of which brings their destruction.

Thus it is proved that there should be some people to enjoin (good) and forbid (evil) on behalf of the (Creator who is) wise and Cognizant of His creation.

It all proves that He has his interpreters, and they are the prophets, His chosen ones from among His creation, wise, well-trained in erudition, sent (to the people) with that (wisdom); not like the people in their conditions though they are like them in physique and the make-up of the body; supported by the Wise, the All-knowing with wisdom and proofs and arguments and evidence, like raising up the dead and healing the blind and the leper.

So, the earth of Allah cannot remain empty from a proof (of Allah) with whom should be a sign to show that he is truthful in his words, and it is essential for him to be on justice." [*at-Tawhid*]

The author says: Evidently, this tradition contains three proofs about three subjects of prophethood:

First: A reason to prove the necessity of prophethood in general; on deep consideration you will find it in conformity with what we have inferred from the verse under discussion.

Second: The proof that it is necessary that the prophet be supported with miracles. It conforms with what we said about miracles under the verse (2:23)

And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it ...

Third: The proof that there should always be a representative of Allah on this earth, be he a prophet or an Imam. And we shall explain this, God willing, in a suitable place.

There is a tradition narrated by 'Utbah al-Laythi from Ab Dharr (May Allah have mercy on him) that he said: "I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! How many prophets were there?'

The Prophet said: 'One hundred and twenty-four thousand.' I said: 'How many of them were apostles?' He said: 'Three hundred and thirteen, a large crowd!' I said: 'Who was first of the prophets?'

He said: 'Adam.' I said: 'Was he an apostle from among the prophets?' He said: 'Yes. Allah made him by His hand (power) and breathed into him of His spirit.'

Then the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said: 'O Ab Dharr! Four of the prophets were Syrians: Adam, Shith, Ukhn kh i.e. Idris (and he was the first to write with the pen) and N h; and four of them were Arabs: H d, Salih, Shu'ayb and your prophet, Muhammad (s.a.w.a.); and the first prophet among the children of Israel was M sa, and the last of them was 'Isa and (between them were) six hundred prophets.'

I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! How many books were sent down by Allah?' He said: 'One hundred and

four books.

Allah sent down fifty books unto Shith, and thirty books unto Idris, and twenty books unto Ibrahim, and He sent down the Torah, and the Injil, and that Zab□r, and al-Furqan.' " [*al-Khisal* and *Ma'ani al-akhbar*]

The author says: This tradition, and especially its first part describing the number of the prophets and the apostles, is famous, and it has been narrated by Shi'ahs and Sunnis in their books.

And as-Sad□q has narrated a tradition of the same meaning in *al-Khisal* and *al-Amali,* from ar-Rida (a.s.) through his forefathers from the Prophet; and (another tradition) from Zayd ibn 'Ali through his father and grandfather from 'Ali (a.s.); and similar traditions have been reported by Ibn Qawlawayh in *Kamilu 'z-ziyarah* and by as-Sayyid in *al-Iqbal* from as-Sajjad (a.s.) and in *al-Basa'ir* from al-Baqir (a.s.).

There is a tradition from al-Baqir (a.s.) about the words of Allah:

***and he was an apostle, a prophet* (19:51),**

that he said: "The prophet is the one who sees in his dream and hears the voice but does not see the angel; and the apostle is the one who hears the voice, and does not see in dreams, and sees the angel."[*al-Kafi*]

The author says: There are other traditions with this meaning. Possibly, their meaning may be inferred from such verses as,

***therefore, send Thou to Har□n* (26:13).**

This tradition does not say that the apostle means the one to whom the angel of revelation is sent. It simply says that prophethood and apostleship are two ranks, the speciality of the one is seeing in the dream, and of the other is seeing the angel of revelation.

Sometimes, both ranks are combined in one person, then the two specialities are found together; and sometimes prophethood is found without apostleship.

Therefore, apostleship is more particular than prophethood, in practice, but not in meaning. See for example, the tradition of Ab□ Dharr, mentioned above, in which he asks, "how many of the prophets were apostles?"

Therefore, it is clear that every apostle is a prophet but not *vice versa.* This clear explanation provides the answer to the misunderstanding of some people who say that the Holy Prophet of Islam was not the last apostle, though he was the last prophet. Their "argument" is as follows:

Allah says:

but he **(i.e. Muhammad)** ***is the Apostle of Allah and the last of the prophets*** **(33:40).**

The verse says that he was the last of the prophets, but does not say that he was the last of the apostles.''

Reply: Prophethood is, in fact, more general and comprehensive than apostleship. When a general item is negated its particular groups are automatically negated.

And so far as the traditions are concerned they have never said that apostleship can be found without prophethood. As you have seen they clearly say that all apostles were prophets, but not all prophets were apostles.

Abu 'l-Hasan ar-Ridha (a.s.) said: The *ulu 'l-'azm* prophets were given this name because they were people of firm determination and (brought a new) law.

It was like this: Every prophet coming after N□h was on his *shari'ah* and his way, and followed his (N□h's) book upto the time of Ibrahim, the friend (of Allah).

And every prophet from the time of Ibrahim was on the *shari'ah* of Ibrahim and his way and followed his book upto the time of M□sa. And every prophet from the time of M□sa was on the *shari'ah* of M□sa and his way and followed his book upto the time of 'Isa.

And every prophet who was in the time of 'Isa and after him, was on the *shari'ah* of 'Isa and his way and followed his book upto the time of our prophet, Muhammad (s.a.w.a.).

So, these five are *ulu 'l-'azm,* and they are the best of the prophets and apostles (peace be on them all). And the *shari'ah* of Muhammad will not be abrogated till the Day of Resurrection.

Therefore, anyone who makes a claim to prophethood after him or to bringing a book after the Qur'an, his blood is allowed (i.e. it is allowed to kill him) to anyone who hears this (claim) from him.'' [*'Uy□nu 'l-akhbar*]

The author says: A tradition of similar meaning is reported from as-Sadiq (a.s.) in *Qisasu'l-anbiya'.*

About the verse:

Therefore, bear up patiently as did the apostles endowed with fortitude bear up with patience,

that the apostles referred to here are N□h, Ibrahim, M□sa and 'Isa (peace be on them all). And the meaning of ''endowed with fortitude'' is that they were the first of all prophets in believing in Allah, and they believed in every prophet who was before them or came after them; and they were determined to remain patient even when they were rejected (by their people) and tormented. [*at-Tafsir,* al-Qummi]

The author says: It has been narrated by Sunni chains from Ibn 'Abbas and Qatadah that the prophets

endowed with patience were five: N□h, Ibrahim, M□sa, ‘Isa and Muhammad (s.a.w.a.).

It is the same as narrated in the traditions of *Ahlu ’l-bayt.* There are other views attributed to some Sunni scholars. One said that they were six: N□h, Ibrahim, Ishaq, Ya‘q□b, Y□suf and Ayy□b.

Another said that they were the prophets who were given the order to fight in the way of Allah, and thus waged war. Some one said that they were four: Ibrahim, N□h, H□d, and the fourth was Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). But all these sayings are without any proof.

There is a tradition narrated by ath-Thumali from al-Baqir (a.s.), that he said: “The prophets between Adam and N□h were concealed, and that is why they were not mentioned in the Qur’an nor were they named therein as were named those prophets who declared themselves (before their people).” [al-‘Ayyashi]

The author says: This meaning has been narrated from the Imams of *Ahlu ’l-bayt* by numerous chains.

Tafsir of as-Safi quotes from *Majma‘u ’l-bayan* a tradition of ‘Ali (a.s.) that Allah raised a black prophet whose story He did not reveal to us.

In the first of *Nahju ’l-balaghah,*‘Ali (a.s.) says, mentioning Adam (a.s.):

“Then (Allah) sent him down to the place of trial and procreation of progeny. And from his progeny Allah chose prophets and took their pledge for (His) revelation and for carrying (His) message as their trust.

In the course of time, many people changed the covenant which Allah had made with them; thus they ignored His right, and took partners along with Him.

And Satan turned them away from knowing Him and cut them off from His worship. Then Allah raised among them His apostles, and sent to them His prophets one after another, to exhort the people to fulfil the covenant of His creation; and to remind them of His bounties which were forgotten; and to argue with them by communicating (to them revelation), and to bring out for them the buried (treasures of) wisdom, and to show the signs of His omnipotence: namely, the roof (i.e. sky) which is raised over them, and the floor (i.e. earth) which is placed beneath them, and the means of livelihood that sustain them, and the deaths that make them die, and the ailments that turn them old, and the happenings that successively betake them.

And Allah never allowed His creation to remain without a prophet sent (by Him), or a book sent down (from Him), or a binding proof, or a laid-down highway — the apostles who were not discouraged by the smallness of their (followers’) number or largeness of their rejectors.

Among them was a predecessor who was told the name of his follower, or a follower introduced by his predecessor.

In this way, ages passed by, and the times rolled on, and the fathers passed away while the sons took their place, till Allah raised Muhammad in fulfilment of His promise and to finalize His prophethood."

The author says: "In fulfilment of His promise" refers to the promise made by Allah to sending His Apostle, Muhammad; and good tiding of him were brought by 'Isa and other prophets (peace be on them), as Allah says:

And the word of your Lord has been accomplished truly and justly ... **(6:115)**

There is a tradition narrated by 'Abdullah ibn al-Walid from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said: "Allah said about Musa:

And We wrote for him in the tablets admonition from everything ... **(7:145)**

So, we know that He did not write for Musa everything (but only a portion 'from everything'). And He said quoting 'Isa:

so that I may make clear to you part of what you differ in ... **(43:63).**

And He said to Muhammad (s.a.w.a.)

... and **(will)** ***bring you as a witness against these*****;** ***and We revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything ...*** **(16:89)**" [al-'Ayyashi]

The author says: The same meaning has been narrated in *Basa'iru 'd-darajat* from 'Abdullah ibn al-Walid by two chains.

The words of the Imam, "Allah said about Musa..." point out that the words of Allah, ***in the tablets ... from every thing*** explain the immediately following words about the Torah, ***and clear explanation of all things***.

If Allah had meant a comprehensive description of every thing, He would not have said, ***from everything*** which refers only to a portion, not to the whole. This "from" shows that the "explanation of everything" means only a partial, not a comprehensive, explanation of everything.

Prophethood: From A Philosophical Point Of View

Prophethood, *per se, is* primarily a theological, not a philosophical, subject.

It is concerned with ordained laws which have no independent physical existence; while philosophy is concerned with those things which exist outside the imagination, which have existence independent of the mind of the beholder.

Even then, looking from a different angle, we may say that it is also a philosophical subject.

Religious teachings — its fundamental beliefs and moral and practical laws — have a strong relation with the human soul; they etch on the mind firm knowledge and qualities which, in their turn, create firmly ingrained characteristics and abilities.

This knowledge and these characteristics give a distinct identity to the human soul and decide its path, either towards bliss and nearness to Allah, or towards perdition and distance from Him.

Man, if he has true and correct beliefs and acts righteously, acquires those perfections which bring him nearer to Allah and His pleasure and take him to paradise.

On the other hand, if he has wrong beliefs and does evil acts, his soul will acquire an ugly face; he will have no other goal except this transitory world and its trinkets, and, as a result, after departing from this world, he will enter hell and perdition.

This journey of human soul — to paradise or to hell — is not a thing confined into mind; it is a fact and a reality existing independent of human imagination. Accordingly it becomes a philosophical subject; and we may philosophically prove the institution of prophethood as follows:

The earlier-mentioned abilities and characteristics of the human soul take him on the road to perfection. Man is a species existing in reality, and he is the cause of many effects which also exist in reality.

Experience shows that all existing things have been given the ability to reach their perfection. And Allah is the absolute Benefactor and there is no limit for His beneficence, so far as He is concerned.

Therefore, every soul must have been given what it needs to reach its perfection, and to turn its abilities into accomplishments — the accomplishments which are called bliss if they contain good attributes and virtuous characteristics, and perdition if they take the shape of bad habits and evil characteristics.

These characteristics are acquired by those of man's actions which are done of his own will and choice. That choice is based on his belief that a certain thing is good and another bad. He has been given the instincts of love and fear.

He loves what he thinks beneficial for him and fears what, in his thinking, is harmful. Love and fear are the only two instincts from which the actions of comman man emanate.

Therefore, the beneficence of Allah also should make use of these two faculties of man. Allah should call man to follow the right path and live a virtuous life; and that call should be accompanied by love and fear, good tidings and warnings.

In this way, true believers will reach their perfection of bliss and felicity; and unbelievers and the unjust will reach the perfection of misery and unhappiness.

And the call needs a caller to communicate the divine message to human beings. And that caller is the

prophet sent by Allah.

Question: The faculty of reason and wisdom is enough to exhort man to follow the truth in belief and action and to lead him to excellence and piety. So, what is the need of sending the prophets?

Answer: It has been explained earlier that there is a pure and spiritual wisdom which perceives the real nature of things. Also, there is practical wisdom which says, 'this is good' and 'that is bad'.

It is this practical wisdom which invites man to follow the truth in belief and action. This wisdom bases its judgement on human feelings and emotions; and in the beginning, the only emotions that exist in man are desire and fear.

The faculty of pure spiritual wisdom and intellect, which can control these emotions, remains only a potentiality.

It has been explained at length that it is this desire and fear, this emotion and feeling which lead man to conflict and difference. If man were left under the control of these emotions, his intellect and other potentialities would never turn into accomplishments.

It does not take long for an individual or a nation, when they have been deprived of good training, to return to barbarism and savagery, even though they have the practical wisdom and are governed by natural instincts.

Therefore, there is always need of divine help in the form of prophethood to strengthen the intellect and pure spiritual wisdom.

Sociological Arguments About Prophethood

Question: It may be accepted that human wisdom cannot act independently in all situations concerning an individual or a nation. But nature always progresses towards its good, and also society, which is based on nature, follows it and moves towards the good of its individual members, and finally acquires an ideal form which ensures the happiness of all its members.

This principle is called the effect of the environment. Conflicting faculties and powers, after action and reaction, ultimately create a noble society, befitting human life.

History and experience show that all societies are always in search of their perfection; they aspire for the common weal and are progressing towards a felicity and happiness which are the final ambition of every man.

Some societies, like Switzerland, have already attained that goal, while others are on the way, and may be nearer to, or farther from, it.

Answer: Nobody can deny that nature always strives to attain perfection and happiness; and that society, which is based on nature, is also like that.

But it should be remembered that its desired perfection and bliss is not real perfection and bliss. What nature possesses at the moment are the instincts of love and fear, not intellect.

But it is the intellect which is the foundation of real perfection and bliss. Even the evidence offered in the question shows this fact. The perfection and happiness found in some countries and desired by others is only material perfection and the happiness of the body.

But man is not body only; he is made of both body and soul. The body's perfection is not man's perfection. The body dies while the spirit lives forever. Perfecting only one side and neglecting the other (and that also the one which is to last forever) is not perfection at all.

Historical and sociological evidence strengthens our view that society, by trial and error, can only progress towards material perfection and physical happiness if any society wants to lead its members to the perfection of the total being, then it cannot do so without prophetic help and divine guidance.

Question: If it is true that the prophetic call has a connection with divine creative guidance which leads everything to its goal of perfection, then it must have a clear and existing influence on human societies.

We see that not only man but everything is naturally guided to the matters of its advantage and benefit without fail. If the prophetic call had been a source of guidance like that, it would have been influential in all human societies and man would not have been able to ignore it, just as he is unable to ignore other natural calls.

But we know that it is not so. So how can it be called a true reformation when it is not accepted by societies? So, the theory that the prophetic mission is necessary to remove the differences in society and life is just a theory which cannot be proved by facts.

Answer: First: (a.) The effects, of the religious call are there for every one to see and appreciate. Only an obstinate contender can deny it.

Since its foundation and appearance, it has trained thousands and thousands leading them to bliss, and has condemned several times more to perdition and unhappiness — depending on their acceptance or rejection, submission or arrogance and belief or disbelief. Such an effective thing cannot be said to have had no effect.

(b) Some societies have from time to time been established based on religion, and they have shown what may be achieved by following this path.

(c) This world is still alive; the human species is not yet extinct. It is possible that one of these days human society will turn into a virtuous society founded on religion — a society which will guarantee the

true happiness of man, and real excellence of character and morality.

It will be a day when none shall be worshipped except Allah, and justice and virtue shall be the norm of the day. Such a magnificent effect cannot be ignored or belittled.

Second: Sociology, psychology and moral science prove that our actions have a dual relationship with our characteristics: they come into being because of psychological factors, and they in their turn have an influence on psychological factors.

The actions are the effects of soul and psyche; and they affect the psyche in its characteristics. It is this principle which has given birth to two principles: the principle that man is influenced in his character and morals by society, and the principle that he inherits many characteristics from his forefathers.

In short, these actions increase their scope horizontally through the environment, and continue from generation to generation vertically through heredity.

Now, it is known that the divinely appointed prophetic mission has remained with human societies since the dawn of humanity, not only in historical, but even in pre-historical, days.

Nobody can deny that such a mission, such a call, must have deeply affected man's social characteristics and high morals. This religious call must have influenced man's psyche very deeply, even if he does not believe in that call.

We would be justified in asserting that all the good qualities of present-day nations and societies are the effects of prophethood and religion, which they have acquired through heredity or the environment.

Religion, since its inception, has been accepted and followed by many great societies and groups. And do not forget that religion is the only institution which calls man to the true faith, to noble character, justice and common welfare.

Whatever good traits are found today in nations (however little they may be) are the residue of the effects of religion and its results.

Societies can be managed in any of three ways - there is no fourth alternative.

First is the system of tyranny; it turns human beings into the slaves of the tyrant (or tyrants) in all aspects of their lives.

Second is the system based on civil laws; these laws control overt actions only; they do not touch other aspects of the human personality, like character and ethics.

Third is religion which controls and rules over the whole being — beliefs, ethics, and actions — and calls to keep all of them on right path, with truth and virtue.

It is clear from the above that if there is any good in this world or any happiness and bliss for man, it must be attributed to religion and its effects, because no other system aspires to give any guidance on these matters.

Look, for further proof, at the nations that have built their societies on materialism and have neglected religion and morality. They soon lost the virtue, love, mercy and purity of heart and forgot all probity and ethical excellence.

It all happened while they were following the dictates of nature. Had nature, *per se,* been enough, and had those characteristics not been a legacy of religion inherited from the ancients, they would not have lost those noble virtues.

History says that the Christians, during and after the Wars of the Crusades, adopted important points of Islamic law and acted upon them.

Now they have advanced, while the Muslims, who did not follow their own religion, have been left behind.

To make a long story short, heredity and environment have let the spirit of religion permeate human society, as they do with other things. Therefore, it is wrong to say that religion has had no impact on humanity.

Question: Well then, what is the role of nature in this scheme? It appears from the above that nature is of no use, and that happiness and bliss are in the hands of the prophethood. If that is so, then why should the prophethood claim that the *shari'ah* is based on nature?

Answer: One has only to refer to what we have written on the relationship of the nature to man's felicity and bliss to realize that this objection is baseless.

The happiness and perfection brought by prophethood is not something alien to the human species nor is it separate from man's nature. It is nature which finds its way towards that bliss, but it cannot find it alone without outside help; and that help (i.e. prophethood) also is not something separate from humanity and its perfection.

In other words, prophethood is not like a stone put beside a man; otherwise, it would not have meant any credit to the prophet — that stone does not increase the weight of the man.

The fact is that prophethood is the perfection of human nature; it is a special perception and a particular conception which is hidden in human nature; but only those few individuals can be led to find it whom the Grace of Allah has specially chosen for it.

An analogy may be given — though it is beneath the dignity of prophethood — to the pleasure of the sexual act which only mature persons can feel; minors cannot know it, even when that instinct which

both adults and minors equally share is ingrained in human nature.

In short, neither is the reality of prophethood something extraneous from the humanity of the man, who is the prophet, nor is the bliss which it brings to people who follow it anything separate from their humanity and nature. Otherwise, it could not be perfection for the prophet or a bliss for his people.

Question: In that case, the objection is turned against prophethood. What the above explanation says is that nature by itself is enough, and prophethood is not separate from nature.

It appears that the human species is social by nature and has diversity in its unity; that some individuals excel others in all good aspects: their nature is true, their intelligence free from imaginary things and lust, their character purified from undesirable traits.

Those highly distinguished persons are guided by their straight-forward character and discriminating wisdom to what contains the good of society and the happiness of man. Then they legislate laws which ensure the common weal and prosperity of this world and the hereafter.

Accordingly, the prophet is a virtuous man who is a social genius.

Answer: Not at all. It is an interpretation which does not fit with the reality of prophethood nor with its accompanying factors:

First: It is a hypothesis invented by some sociologists who had no knowledge of religious matters and knew nothing about the Creator or the final destination of man.

It was their theory that a prophet is a genius who has a straight forward character and healthy, wisdom. Such a genius ponders over the social condition of his time and thinks how his chaotic society may be reformed and how the members of society may find happiness and bliss.

According to this theory, that genius is 'the prophet'; the good healthy thought which flows from the fountain-head of his thinking power is 'the revelation'; the laws made by him for the reform of the society are `the religion'; his pure spirit which showers these thoughts on his thinking power, and does not deceive the human world by following lustful desires is 'the Trustworthy Spirit' i.e. Jibril; the real inspirer of that revelation is 'God'; the book containing his lofty and pure thoughts is 'the heavenly book'; the natural powers or factors which call towards good are 'the angels'; the soul which incites to evil or the powers and factors inviting to bad deeds are 'Satan'; and so on.

It is a totally invalid theory, and I have mentioned under the subject of 'miracles' that prophethood with this meaning would be better called a political toy rather than divine prophethood.

Also it has already been explained that this thinking, which they have named genius, is a particular phase of practical wisdom, which distinguishes between good and bad according to its benefit or harm, and is commonly found in all human beings.

Also, it has been described that it is that wisdom which is the cause of all the conflicts and differences among human beings; and as such it cannot remove that difference itself.

Surely, it needs another power to complete its work. And we have said just above that that power is a special type of perception which is found, by the Grace of Allah, only in a few chosen persons who are called prophets.

Obviously, this special spiritual perception is totally different, in its reality, from the perception which comes through thinking. The results to which man reaches through thinking, logic and reasoning are completely unlike those which he perceives through the prophetic faculty.

Not only the results, but even the ways to obtain those results, are diametrically opposed to each other.

Psychologists are sure that man has an inner source of perception which occasionally manifests itself in some individuals. Then a door is opened before the eyes of this individual and he sees a world beyond this world and is given knowledge of astonishing facts and realities beyond the purview of reason and thinking.

This fact is vouched for by all ancient psychologists as well as a group of modern European scholars.

In short the way of prophetic revelation is different from reasoning and thinking. And prophethood cannot be given the meaning invented by these people. The same is the case with the *shari'ah,* religion, the heavenly Book, the angels, and Satan.

Second: What is recorded of the speech of the prophets who claimed they had received prophethood and revelation, like Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), 'Isa, Mūsa, Ibrahim, Nūh and others (peace be on them all), and what is extant from their books (like the Qur'an) clearly refutes the interpretations which these people have invented for prophethood, revelation, the sending of books, angels and the other realities of religion.

The book of Allah, the traditions of the Holy Prophet of Islam and the sayings of the earlier prophets (peace be on them all) clearly say that these realities and their effects are beyond the sphere of matter and nature, and they are not a part of natural phenomena and cannot be perceived by any of the human senses.

With this background, the interpretation which tries to bring these prophetic realities within the jurisdiction of the physical world and under natural laws is a futile attempt which does not conform to the context and nature of the above meanings and sayings.

It has been mentioned earlier that the factor which removes conflict in the human society is this inner spiritual perception which is independent of that perception which comes through the agency of thinking.

Question: It would mean that this inner perception is something extraordinary and abnormal. It is not a

common experience; only a few persons have ever claimed to have had it.

How can such a rare experience lead the whole of society to reform and to the removal of conflict and difference? How can it guide them to their true happiness?

You have already said that the factor which will lead the people to bliss and happiness must be related to and connected with, their nature; it should not be some thing extraneous like a stone at the side of a man.

Answer: There is no doubt whatsoever that prophethood is an extraordinary thing; and that it is an inner spiritual perception unknown to the five senses.

But reason does not deny that extraordinary and abnormal things and things hidden from our senses do exist in the world. What it denies is the existence of something which is impossible.

Reason has its ways to verify whether a thing claimed to be abnormal and hidden from the senses really exists. It can prove its existence through its causes (deduction) or through its effects or its accompanying factors (induction).

Prophethood may be proved by one of two methods.

(1) Through its effects — the religion brought by the prophet ensures the happiness of man in this world and in the hereafter.

(2) Through its accompanying factors — the claimant of prophethood claims an abnormal thing that Allah talks with him through revelation; therefore, if his claim is true he should be able to produce some other abnormal signs, which are called miracles.

Therefore we have these two ways to verify a claim of prophethood, the good quality of the religion brought by the prophet, and miracles.

Question: It may be agreed that the conflicts of society can be removed by this inner perception which is called prophetic revelation.

It may also be agreed that the prophet can prove it through miracles, and then it will be obligatory on people to accept and follow the religion promulgated by him.

But what is the guarantee that the prophet cannot commit any mistake in the promulgation of the *shari'ah*? After all, he is a human being like everyone else, and every one by nature commits mistakes.

If an error occurred at this stage of promulgating the law and removing differences, the same process would have to be started again.

Answer: Previous explanations are enough to answer this question. The divine revelation does not

come through human thinking, which might commit mistakes. It exists independently of human thought and imagination.

There is a law of creation, decreed by the Creator, that He, after creating a thing, guides it to its perfection. See the verse:

Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it **(to its goal).** (20:50)

The thing created does exist in reality; it is a fact. There is no mistake or falsehood in a fact. Mistake and falsehood may occur when the man starts the process of his thinking and tries to acquire knowledge.

Then what conforms with the fact is called truth and what does not conform is false hood. Thus it is human thought which may be contaminated by lies and falsehood, and not the divine creation, which is a fact, a reality.

Now, the Creator made man and He guides him to his bliss and happiness, to his perfection, through a guidance which is called revelation.

That revelation is a thing created by Him; it is a fact and a reality. And no falsehood can be attributed to a fact and a reality. A fact is a fact; a reality is a reality.

As this guiding agency is a fact and creation of Allah, not a result of human thinking, there can never be any mistake or error or falsehood in it.

Nor can there be any such possibility in perceiving or communicating that revelation, because this also is done through the creative guidance of Allah.

Neither does the creative power make any mistake in putting that prophetic spirit and spiritual perception (i.e. revelation) in the person of the prophet nor does that agency of divine guidance, i.e. the spiritual conception, make any mistake in discriminating between what is good for the humanity and what is bad for it.

That is why Allah does not bestow prophethood on anyone without creating in him the faculty of *'ismah,* the *'ismah* from mistake in receiving and communicating the revelation and *'ismah* in all matters connected with religion and promulgation of the *shari'ah.* This *'ismah* is other than *'ismah* from sin.

Question: Why is this inner perception not subject to change, deterioration and feebleness like human reason and thinking? Human thinking power is something other than matter.

But, because it has a connection with matter (as it passes through the brain) it is subject to all types of changes.

It can be strong or feeble; it may exist or cease to exist completely, as in the case of lunacy; also there are variations in its degree, as in the cases of idiots, the feeble-minded or the mentally-retarded, or in

senile people.

Now, this inner perception also has a connection with the body of the prophet, and, as such it may also be subject to changes, deterioration and other defects. In that case all the previously mentioned difficulties would arise afresh.

Answer: We have already said that this guidance of human beings to their true happiness is done, not by human thinking, but by the hands of the Creator who brings that agency of guidance into being; that agency is a truly existing thing, and there is no question of any mistake in an existing thing or 'fact'.

It is not accepted that every perception, having any relation with body, is liable to change and deterioration.

What is accepted is that perception based on reason and logic is liable to such change and deterioration; but it is known that this inner perception, i.e. prophetic revelation does not come under this heading.

For example, man has a perception of his own person, and this knowledge cannot change, disappear or deteriorate, because it is a self-evident knowledge, not based on reasoning or logic.

Now, we may sum up this long discussion as follows:

First: Mankind proceeds towards a social life and its differences.

Second: These differences, which cut at the root of the happiness of the species, are not, and cannot be, removed by the laws made by human wisdom which acts through reason and logic and are liable to mistake.

Third: The differences can only be removed by prophetic perception, which is created by Allah in some chosen human beings.

Fourth: The basis of this inner perception, found in the prophets, is totally different from the basis of human thinking, common to all sane men and women.

Fifth: This inner perception never makes any mistake in perceiving the beliefs and laws which are communicated to it by Allah for the betterment of the human species in its true happiness.

Sixth: These conclusions (and the last mentioned three are the most important: the essentiality of sending the prophets, the basic difference between the perception of revelation and perception based on reasons, and the *'ismah* of the prophet in receiving and communicating the revelation) are in conformity with the general scheme of things in this physical world.

Every species in this world is progressing towards its perfection guided by the Creator who gave it the means to progress along the road to final perfection and bliss.

Man is one of those species; and he has also been given the faculties by which he can acquire right beliefs and noble virtues, and can do good acts in a good and noble society.

Therefore, it is necessary that the Creator should make arrangement to bring that potential bliss into real existence; that He should guide him with His creative guidance which is free from mistake or error.

1. This is as it appears in the Arabic original, but it is in fact the same prophet as the Ism‘ﷺl appearing earlier in the list.

Suratul Baqarah: Verse 214

٢١٤) أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَن تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُم مَّثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِن قَبْلِكُم ۖ مَّسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَّاءُ وَزُلْزِلُوا حَتَّىٰ
يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَىٰ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ

Or do you think that you would enter the Garden while yet the like of those who have passed away before you has not come upon you; distress and affliction befell them and they were shaken violently, so that the apostle and those who believed with him said: When will the help of Allah come? Now, surely the help of Allah is nigh! **(2:214)**

Commentary

It has already been mentioned that these verses (from 2:208 to 2:214) are in one context and related to each other.

Qur'an: ***Or do you think that you would enter the Garden:***

It concludes what was described in the previous verse: Religion is a guidance from Allah to lead mankind to what contains their prosperity and happiness in this world and the hereafter; and it is a grace of Allah bestowed upon them.

Therefore, it is essential for them to submit themselves to this religion, without following in the footsteps of Satan. They should not create differences in it and should not turn the medicine itself into a disease; they should not change the bounty of Allah into disbelief and ingratitude, by following their lust and desire, and seeking the trinkets of this world and its decorations.

If they do so, they will incur the wrath of Allah, as happened in the case of the Israelites when they perverted the bounty of Allah given to them. They must remember that the trial is continuing and the test is in progress.

They also will be tested as the previous people were put to test; and no one will get the bliss of religion and nearness to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, except through fortitude and complete submission to His commands.

The first two verses were addressed directly to the believers, then the style was changed, treating them in the third person, finally in this verse they are again addressed in the second person, treating them as present.

The fact is that the whole talk is with them and they are the real audience. But the style was changed in the middle verses for some good reasons (for example, those verses contained the topics of chastisement and punishment.) When the purpose was served, once again a direct address was resumed.

The word *am* (or, أم) gives here the meaning of "but". It is made for "or", but the context of the verses gives it the following meaning: Do you intend to devote yourselves solely to what I have told you — to submit to Me, to believe in Me and to remain steadfast on the right path of religion, maintaining unity and cooperation — Or do you not; but think that you would enter the Garden ...

Qur'an: ***while yet the like of those who have passed away before you has not come to you.***

mathal (المثل) and *mithl* (المثل) are used for that likeness which creates a picture of the thing for which it is used in the mind of the hearer.

Mathal (adage, المثل) is generally used for a saying or story which brings to mind the intended meaning in the shape of an illustrative metaphor, as Allah says:

The similitude [*mathal,* المثل] ***of those who were placed under the Torah then they did not hold it, is as the similitude of the donkey bearing books ...*** **(62:5)**

Also, *mathal* (المثل) is used in the meaning of adjectives, as Allah says:

See how they coin comparisons [*amthal*, الأمثال] ***for you ...*** **(25:9)**

They were using for him (s.a.w.a.) adjectives like insane, bewitching, lying, etc.

In this verse, the word *mathal* (المثل) is used in the first meaning, because the similitude is explained in the words, ***distress and affliction befell them ...***

Qur'an: ***distress and affliction befell them and they were shaken violently*:**

When a short reference was made to "the like of those who have passed away before you", the audience became anxious to know what had befallen them. Then Allah described it in detail in these words, ***distress and affliction befell them ...***

Distress (*ba'sa'*, الباسآء) is that hardship which befalls a man outside his person, like to property, prestige, family or in the general law and order of the society.

Affliction (*dharr',* الضرّآء) means that hardship which befalls him in his person, like a wound, murder, sickness, etc. *Zalzalah* (الزّلزلة) and *zilzal* (الزّلزال) means an earthquake. Its root is *zalla* (زلّ) which means 'slipped up', 'stumbled'.

The root word is repeated in this verb to imply repeated stumbling and slipping up. Anyhow the word is metaphorically used for being agitated and disturbed, and that is why we have translated it "were shaken violently".

Qur'an: ***so that the apostle and those who believe with him said. When will the help of Allah come?***

Apparently it was the saying of the apostle and the believers together. There can be no objection as to why the apostle should utter such words. He might have exclaimed so to seek the help of Allah which He had promised in these verses:

And certainly Our word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the apostles, most surely they shall be the assisted ones. **(37:171—172)**

Also He said,

Allah has written down: I will most certainly prevail, I and my apostles. **(58:21)**

Allah says:

Until when the apostles despaired and deemed they were indeed told a lie, Our help came to them ... **(12:110)**

We may see that the tone of this verse is far harsher than the verse under discussion.

Qur'an: ***Now, surely the help of Allah is nigh:***

Apparently this is Allah's answer to the call of the apostle and the believers.

It has already been mentioned that the verse proves that the test and trial of the people will continue in this nation also as it did for the previous ones.

Also, it shows that if the same actions and attitudes appear again, the same consequences will follow. It is true in the religion also as historians say that the history repeats itself.

Suratul Baqarah: Verse 215

(٢١٥ يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنفِقُونَ ۖ قُلْ مَا أَنفَقْتُم مِّنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ ۗ وَمَا
تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ

They ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever of good you spend, it is for the parents, and the near of kin, and the orphans, and the poor, and the wayfarer; and whatever of good you do Allah surely knows it. **(2:215)**

Commentary

Qur'an: ***They ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever of good you spend ...***

The scholars say that the style of this verse is one of philosophy. The questioners had asked about what they should spend. But that question was foolish, because one does not need divine revelation to know that what is spent is wealth in all its various shapes.

Rather, they should have asked: Whom the wealth should be spent for. Therefore, Allah mentioned, instead, the deserving beneficiaries, which the questioners should have asked in the first place.

It is good reasoning; but those scholars have left out one important point. Even though the verse did not reply to their question directly, it has touched on it, and has hinted at the reply in two places:

Whatever of good you spend **and** ***whatever of good you do.***

The verse, therefore, shows that the thing to be spent is wealth, irrespective of its shape and quantity; and that spending it on worthy beneficiaries is a good deed and Allah knows it very well; then it makes them aware that they should rather have asked the names of the beneficiaries, and guides them in this respect by giving the list: the parents, the near relatives, the orphans, the poor and the way-farer.

One finds in the commentaries of the Qur'an some strange explanations of this verse:

One of them says: "what" (*ma,* ما) in ***what they should spend*** was not used by the questioners to enquire about the quiddity and essence of the thing which should be spent, because it is from the terminology of logic, and is not worthy of any literary speech of eloquent style, let alone the Qur'an which is the purest of the Arabic literature.

Rather the word "what" was used for "how"; they wanted to know how they should spend their wealth and on whom. Accordingly, the verse answered that question.

The reply, therefore, is according to the question, and the reasoning of the scholars of eloquence (given earlier) is out of place.

Someone else went a step further. He said: It is true that "what" is used to ask about the essence; even then, the questioners' aim was to ask as to "how" they should spend.

It was known that "what" is spent is wealth. As this was well-known, there was no risk of their being misunderstood; the hearer was bound to understand that they wanted to ask about "how". It is like the verse:

***they said**: "Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is, for surely to us all the cows are alike ... "* **(2:70)**

They knew that the cow is an animal having such shape and such characteristics. Therefore, the words ***what she is*** could not be taken to mean that they wanted to know its quiddity — its genus and species.

The only possible meaning, thus, was that they wanted to know the particulars of that cow so that they might distinguish it from the others. That is why they were given the reply,

He* (M□sa) *said**: "He* (Allah) ***says, surely she is a cow not made submissive that she should plough the land ..." **(2:71)**

Both the commentators seem confused. It is true that *ma* (what, ما) is not used in language to ask about the quiddity of a thing, according to the terminology of logic — for a definition made up of the nearest genus and species.

But it does not mean that it is made for the question about "how". It would be a linguistic mistake for the one who wants to ask, "for whom should I spend?" to say "what should I spend?"

Ma (what, ما) is made so as to ask for the factors which might distinguish one thing from others. The reply may be given by a logical definition using the nearest genus and species, or by describing such other distinctive characteristics and qualities by which that thing may easily be recognised.

The word "what" is, therefore, general and includes the logical term, but is not different from it. And certainly it is not made to ask "how". The question about the cow and its reply (2:70—71) was asked and given correctly according to the language.

There was no deviation in either from the real meaning of "what" — the question was about distinguishing factors of a thing.

A third one said: As the quiddity and essence was well-known, there was no alternative but to divert the word "what" to mean "how".

It is a manifest error. That the answer is well-known, is no justification for changing the meaning of a

word to mean something quite different.

There is one more strange explanation: The questioners had asked both questions — what should they spend, and where. The Qur'an mentioned only the first question and omitted the second, because the reply pointed to it. What nonsense!

Now, we come back to the verse. There is no doubt that there is here a diversion, in the main reply, from the asked question, to remind the people that the question worthy of asking was "where", not "what", they should spend, because it was no secret that spending is done from wealth and riches.

We find in the Qur'an that it often diverts its speech from one meaning to another, to point out that the new topic is more worthy of attention. It is a style of beauty which is difficult to find in other books. See for example:

And the parable of those who disbelieve is the parable of one who shouts to that which hears not but a call and a cry … **(2:17)**

(Here the parable has been diverted to a satire against the idols.)

The likeness of what they spend in the life of this world is as the likeness of a wind in which is intense cold, **(that)** ***smote upon the tillage of a people who had done injustice to their souls, and destroyed it.*** **(3:117)**

(The parable is diverted from the wealth spent to its ultimate forfeiture.)

The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears, in every ear there are a hundred grains; and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases; … **(2:261)**

(The parable is diverted from those who spend in the way of Allah to the manifold increase in its reward.)

The day on which neither property will avail nor sons, except him who comes to Allah with a heart free **(from evil). (26:88—89)**

(Instead of praising the heart, free from evil, the believer is praised who has got that heart, to show the importance of the believer.)

Say: I do not ask you aught of recompense for it, except that he who will, may take the way to his Lord. **(25:57)**

Glory be to Allah **(for freedom)** ***from what they describe, except the servants of Allah, the purified ones.*** **(37:159—160)**

There are many such verses.

Qur'an: ***and whatever of good you do, Allah surely knows it*:**

The word spending has been changed here to "doing good"; likewise, in the beginning of the verse "wealth" was changed to "good" ("whatever of good you spend").

This change guides us to two principles:

First: It is very much recommended that one should spend one's wealth on the recognised beneficiaries — it does not matter whether the amount is small or large.

But what matters is that the thing spent should be "good", desirable and likeable. Allah says:

Never shall you attain to righteousness until you spend **(benevolently)** ***out of what you love*** **(3:91);**

O you who believe! Spend **(benevolently)** ***out of the good things that you have earned and what We have brought forth for you out of the earth; and do not aim at what is bad that you may spend of it*** **(in charity)** ***while you would not take it yourselves unless you connive at it ...*** **(2:267)**

Second: The spending should not be in a bad manner. The spending should be without reminding the receiver reproachfully of it or injuring his feelings. Allah says:

... then do not follow up what they have spent with obligation **(reproach)** ***or injury ...*** **(2:262);**

And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever can be spared ... **(2:219)**

Traditions

There is a saying of Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "I did not see any people better than the companions of Muhammad. They did not ask him except thirteen questions till he was taken away (from this world), all of those (questions) are in the Qur'an.

Among them are: 'They ask you about the intoxicants and games of chance'; 'They ask you about the sacred month'; 'They ask you about the orphans'; 'They ask you about the menses'; 'They ask you about the booty'; 'They ask you as to what they should spend'.

They never asked but what was of (practical) to them." [*ad-Durru'l-manthūr*]

It is written in *Majma'u 'l-bayan* that this verse was revealed about 'Amr ibn al-Jamūh; he was a very old man of great wealth. He said: "O Messenger of Allah! What should I give in charity and to whom?" Then Allah revealed this verse.

The author says: This tradition has also been narrated in *ad-Durru'l-manthūr* through Ibn al-Mundhir from Ibn Hayyan. But the scholars have said that this tradition is weak.

Apart from the weakness in the chain of narrators, it is not in conformity with the verse, because the verse mentions only one question as to what should be spent, and not on whom.

Similarly, two other traditions reported in that book do not conform with the verse. The first is narrated through Ibn Jarir and Ibn al-Mundhir from Ibn Jarih that he said: "The believers asked the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) where they should put (i.e. spend) their wealth.

So, the verse was revealed:

They ask you as to what they should spend. Say: 'Whatever of good you spend ... '

This, then, is voluntary (non-obligatory) expenditure; and *zakat is* different from all of it."

The second one is narrated from as-Suddi that he said: The day when this verse was revealed, there was no *zakat.* It is (about) the spending what one does on one's family and the alms one gives away. Then (the law of) *zakat* abrogated it.

The author says: It is clear that the relation between the verse of *zakat*

(***Take alms out of their wealth* — 9:103**)

and this verse is not of abrogation at all. Or does the word "abrogation" mean something else in their language?

Suratul Baqarah: Verses 216-218

٢١٦) كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ وَعَسَىٰ أَن تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ وَعَسَىٰ أَن تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ
لَّكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

٢١٧) يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ قِتَالٍ فِيهِ ۖ قُلْ قِتَالٌ فِيهِ كَبِيرٌ ۖ وَصَدٌّ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَكُفْرٌ بِهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ
وَإِخْرَاجُ أَهْلِهِ مِنْهُ أَكْبَرُ عِندَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَكْبَرُ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ ۗ وَلَا يَزَالُونَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَن دِينِكُمْ إِنِ
اسْتَطَاعُوا ۚ وَمَن يَرْتَدِدْ مِنكُمْ عَن دِينِهِ فَيَمُتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ
أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

٢١٨) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

Fighting has been prescribed for you, and it is **(an object of)** ***dislike to you; and it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you love a thing while it is evil for you; and Allah knows, while you do not know.*** **(216)**

They ask you concerning the sacred month about fighting in it. Say: Fighting in it is a grave matter; and hindering **(men)** ***from Allah's way and denying it, and*** **(hindering men from)** ***the Sacred Mosque and turning its people out of it are still graver with Allah, and the mischief is graver than the killing; and they will go on fighting with you so that they may turn you back from your religion if they can; and whoever of you turns back from his religion, then dies while an unbeliever – these it is whose deeds are forfeited in this world and the hereafter; and they are the inmates of the fire; therein shall they abide.*** **(217)**

Surely those who believed and those who fled **(their home)** ***and strove hard in the way of Allah, these hope for the mercy of Allah; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.*** **(218)**

Commentary

Qur'an: ***Fighting has been prescribed for you, and it is*** **(an object of)** ***dislike to you:***

It has repeatedly been explained that *kitabah* (writing, الكتابة), which has been translated here as prescription, means an obligatory command, if used in the matter of legislation, and a firm decree, if used in the matter of creation.

This verse, therefore, shows that fighting in the way of Allah is compulsory for all believers (as the verse is addressed to them) except those who are exempted by other verses or traditions. For example:

There is no blame **(in staying behind)** ***on the weak, nor on the sick, nor on those who do not find what they should spend, so long as they are sincere to Allah and His Apostle ... nor on those who when they came to you that you might carry them, you said: I cannot find that on which to carry you ...*** **(9:91—92)**

The verb, *kutiba* (has been written, اكتب) is in the passive voice, because it is followed by the phrase, ***and it is*** **(an object of)** ***dislike to you.***

It was not proper to mention clearly the name of the writer (i.e. Allah) of a writing which was to be an object of dislike to the believers. By not using the active voice, the verse protected the sanctity of the divine name and removed every chance of slight to it.

Kurh (dislike, ألكره) is the hardship felt by man in his self, naturally or otherwise. *Karh* (compulsion, ألكره) is the hardship forced upon him by extraneous agencies as when he is forced to do a work which he does not like to do. Allah says:

... it is not lawful for you that you should take women as heritage against **(their)** *will ...* **(4:19);**

... so He said to it and to the earth: Come both, willingly or unwillingly ... **(4:11)**

Why was the ordained fighting to be an object of dislike to the believers? Three explanations have been given for it:

1) Fighting entails loss of limbs and lives, economic hard ship, monetary loss and the deterioration of law and order; goods necessary for life disappear from the market and become scarce; and many other things crop up in society which man dislikes by nature.

Allah has praised the believers in His book and said that a group of them were sincere in their faith and successful in their endeavours. But, at the same time, He has admonished another group of them because of their shaky belief and crooked thinking, as may be seen in the verses revealed about the battles of Badr, Uhud and Khandaq etc.

The people addressed by this verse were, therefore, of two types: One, steadfast in their faith, who could not dislike any command of Allah; the other, those who might dislike them, and this second group was more numerous.

Therefore, it was quite in order to describe such a mixed group as disliking an order, especially when those disliking it were in the majority.

2) The believers were aware that the unbelievers were well-prepared for fighting and had more strength and material support than the Muslims.

3) They, therefore, thought that fighting at that particular time would not be in the interests of the Muslims; hence, the order to fight should be delayed for some other suitable time.

This postponement would give them time to increase their manpower, war-material and martial strength.

Allah told them in this verse that they were mistaken in this view, because Allah in this affair has a purpose which shall surely be attained; He knows the hidden reality of everything while their knowledge is confined only to the apparent facts.

4) The believers were well-trained by the Qur'an, and, accordingly, they felt clemency towards the creatures of Allah, and mercy and pity had become second nature to them.

They did not like fighting with the unbelievers, as it meant that a number of their adversaries would die in disbelief, and the believers were not pleased about that.

They would have liked to deal with those adversaries with good humour, and live with them with nobleness and gentleness, inviting them to Islam with good exhortation, hoping that they would come to the right path.

They thought that in this way, they would protect themselves from death, and the unbelievers from dying in disbelief and entering into eternal fire.

Allah, in this verse, made it clear that this thought of theirs was not correct. Allah, Who ordained the fighting knew very well that the call of truth would have no effect on those misguided souls who were spiritually a total failure.

The true religion could not expect any good from them either in this world or in the next. They were in humanity like a totally degenerated limb which will certainly infect other organs if not removed from the body by a surgical operation.

These are the explanations given for the words of Allah, ***and it is*** **(an object of)** ***dislike to you.***

But the first one is the most appropriate, especially if we look at the verses admonishing a group of believers (referred to in the explanation) and keep in view the passive voice of the verb, ***has been written on you,*** i.e., has been prescribed for you.

Qur'an: ***and it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you*****:** It has already been explained that the words like "may be" and "perhaps", when used in divine speech, mean "it is hoped".

This hope is related not to the speaker (Allah) but to the hearers. In other words, when Allah says: ***may be it is so*** it does not mean that He hopes it will be so (Elevated be He from such uncertainties!); rather it means that the hearers should hope or expect it in this way.

The repetition of "may be" in this sentence and the following one

(***and it may be that you love a thing while it is evil for you***)

means that the believers disliked fighting and loved peace; so Allah told them that they were mistaken in both. If the sentence is framed without repeating the word "may be" (i.e. 'and it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you or love a thing while it is evil for you') it will convey the idea that "your dislike and love have no significance, because such feelings are often misplaced."

Such a sentence is addressed to the one who has erred in something, for example, if one dislikes meeting a certain person. But if he has erred in two things — e.g., he dislikes mixing with the people and loves seclusion — then the norms of elocution demand that he should be warned against both tendencies, e.g. 'you are neither justified in your dislike, nor are you right in your love; it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you love a thing and it is evil for you; because you do not know the unseen, and, therefore, you cannot find your way towards the hidden realities of any thing.'

As the believers, in addition to their dislike of fighting, also loved peace and ease (as is implied in the previous verse:

or do you think that you would enter the Garden while yet the like of those who passed away before you has not come upon you).

Allah pointed to both mistakes in two separate sentences:

it may be that you dislike ...

and

it may be that you lave ...

Qur'an: ***and Allah knows while you do not know***:

This is the final step in making their mistake known to them. Allah has gradually made them realise that they were in manifest error. To begin with, He told them that it was possible that they were mistaken in their dislike of the fighting

(***it may be that you dislike ...***).

Their minds accepted the implication of those two sentences; and thus they were freed from their compound ignorance, as now they felt doubtful about the correctness of their views.

When that stage was reached, Allah told them clearly that the order which you dislike is ordained by Him who is not unaware of the hidden realities of the things, while your views are based on your psyche which knows only that much which it has been allowed by Allah to know.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon you to leave all such decisions into His hand.

The verse proves that knowledge, in its reality and totality, is Allah's only; and others have no knowledge of their own at all. This reality is explained in many other verses:

Allah, surely nothing is hidden from Him ... **(3:5),**

and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases... **(2:255).**

And some explanation about fighting has been given in the verse 2:190,

And fight in the way of Allah...

Qur'an: ***They ask you concerning the sacred month about fighting in it:***

The verse contains the prohibition of fighting in the sacred month. Then it goes on to say that disbelief and turning the people of the Sacred Mosque out of it are far graver sins and that the mischief is graver than the killing.

These sentences show that there must have occurred some incident which prompted the believers to ask the question, and that there was some killing in that incident, but that killing was not intentional. (See the last verse:

Surely those who believed … these hope for the mercy of Allah.)

All these pointers confirm what has been described in the traditions that some believers had killed an unbeliever unknowingly in the sacred month in a battle, and that the unbelievers had ridiculed the Muslims for it. The incident was that of 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh and his companions.

Qur'an: ***Say, fighting, in it is a grave matter; and hindering*** **(men)** ***from Allah's way and denying it and*** **(hindering men from)** ***the Sacred Mosque …*** **:**

"Allah's way" means worship and virtuous actions and especially the pilgrimage (*hajj*). Apparently the pronoun "it" in "denying it" refers to "Allah's way"; thus it would mean denial in practice, not in faith.

And "the Sacred Mosque" is in conjunction with "Allah's way", and means 'hindering from Allah's way and the Sacred Mosque'.

The verse clearly shows that fighting in the sacred month is forbidden.

It has been said that this verse was abrogated by the verse:

then slay the idolaters wherever you find them **(9:5)**

but this view is not correct, and some explanation about it have been given in the commentary of the verses of fighting.

Qur'an: ***and turning its people out of it are still graver with Allah, and the mischief is graver than the killing:***

What the idolators had done — turning the Apostle of Allah and the believers out of the Sacred Mosque (and they were truly the people of the Sacred Mosque) — is far graver than fighting.

And the mischief done by them in rebuking the believers, and calling them back to disbelief is graver than killing. Therefore, they have no right to reprove the believers for killing when they themselves had committed far graver sins.

So far as the believers are concerned, they still hope for the mercy of Allah, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Qur'an : ***and they will go on fighting with you so that they may turn you back …*** :

hatta (حتّى) means "till"; but here it signifies cause or purpose. That is why it has been translated here as

"so that".

Qur'an: ***and whoever of you turns back ... these it is whose dees are forfeited ... and they are inmates of fire*:**

It threatens apostates with the forfeiture of their deeds and an eternal abode in the Fire.

Forfeiture of Deeds

Forfeiture (*habt,* الحبط) means nullification of a deed and invalidity of its effects. Whenever this word is used in the Qur'an, it is always related to deeds; for example,

Surely, if you associate **(others with Allah),** ***your deed will certainly be forfeit and you will certainly be of the losers*. (39:65)**

Surely those who disbelieve and turn away from Allah's way and oppose the Apostle, after that guidance has become clear to them, cannot harm Allah in any way, and He shall make null their deeds. O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the, Apostle, and do not make your deeds of no effect. **(47:32—33)**

If we compare the last phrases of both verses, we shall see that the nullifying of the deeds is the same as the deeds being of no effect. This meaning is more clearly seen in the verse:

and what they wrought in it shall be forfeit, and vain **(null and void)** ***is what they do.*** **(11:16)**

and nearer to it is the word of Allah,

And We will proceed to what they have done of deeds, so We shall render them as scattered floating dust. **(25:23)**

In short, *habt* (.الحبط) of deeds means their coming to nothing and their being of no effect. It has been said that it is derived from *habata* (حبط) which is used when an animal over-eats and its stomach distends, often resulting in its death.

The effect of forfeiture (*habt,* الحبط) as described by Allah, is nullification of the deed in both worlds, here as well as in the hereafter. Forfeiture has a connection with the deeds and it affects the life hereafter.

The faith beautifies this world's life as well as it makes the life hereafter a pleasant one. Allah says:

Whoever does good, whether male or female, and he is a believer, We will most certainly make him live a happy life, and We shall most certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did **(16:97).**

Also it is clear, without any shadow of doubt, that the endeavours of the unbeliever are lost and his

deeds are of no effect in this world; and it is especially true in the case of the man who turns back towards infidelity, leaving the true faith.

His heart cuts itself away from its anchor in this stormy life — the anchor being belief in the One and only God. He has nowhere to turn — where he can express his joyful thanks when blessed with a bounty, find solace when confronted with a misfortune, and to whom he can pray when in need of something. Allah says:

***Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth*? (6:123)**

This verse shows that the believer has in this world a good life and a light in his actions which the disbeliever does not possess. Also Allah says:

***... then whoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy. And whoever turns away from My remembrance, his shall surely be a straitened life, and We will raise him, on the day of resurrection, blind.* (20:124)**

This verse also proves that the life of the unbeliever in this world is a straitened one, full of difficulties, and that a believer's life, in contrast, is a blessed, happy and pleasant one.

All this explanation, together with the cause of both groups' happiness and unhappiness respectively, is given in this short verse:

***That is because Allah is the Master of those who believe, and because the unbelievers have no master for them.* (47:11)**

It appears from the above details that deeds (*a'mal,* **الأعمال**) here means all the actions done by a man so as to attain happiness in life. The meaning of "deeds" in this context is not confined to the apostate's acts of worship and other virtuous deeds done by him when he was a Muslim.

Moreover, the forfeiture of deeds has been mentioned even in connection with those who do not perform any act of worship, for example, disbelievers and hypocrites. It clearly proves that it is not only acts of worship which are forfeited. See, for example, the verses:

***O you who believe! If you help* (the cause of) *Allah He will help you and make firm your feet. And* (as for) *those who disbelieve, for them is destruction, and He has let their deeds go astray. That is because they disliked what Allah revealed, so He rendered their deeds null* (47:7—9);**

Surely* (as for) *those who disbelieve in the signs of Allah and slay the prophets unjustly and slay those among men who enjoin justice, announce to them a painful chastisement. Those are they whose deeds shall become null in this world, as well as the hereafter, and they shall have no

helpers. **(3:21—22)**

There are many verses like these.

The gist of the verse under discussion, like other verses of forfeiture, is that disbelief and apostasy make the deeds ineffective, i.e., such deeds lose their power to make life blissful.

On the other hand, true faith and belief give life to the deeds and they create felicity, bliss and happiness in life. If someone acquires true faith after disbelief, his deeds are given a new life and they become effective in making life blessed and happy (although they were forfeit and ineffective before).

Likewise, if he apostatizes after having been a believer, all his deeds become dead, null and void; they cannot make life in this world or in the here after happy.

Thereafter, if he leaves his apostasy and comes back to the fold of Islam, it is hoped that his deeds will be revived; but if he dies in the apostasy, the forfeiture will have been confirmed and misery and unhappiness will be written down for him.

This explanation is enough to show that the controversy about the forfeiture of the deeds of an apostate — whether it is affected at the time of apostasy or at his death — is baseless. That controversy is as follows:

Some people say that those deeds of an apostate which were done before his apostasy remain preserved until his death, and that if he does not return to the true faith before his death, they will become forfeit on his death.

Their argument is based on this very verse which is under discussion:

and whoever of you turns back from his religion, then dies while an unbeliever — these it is whose deeds are forfeited in this world and the hereafter ...

They also bring in their support the verse:

On the day when they shall see the angels ... And We will proceed to what they have done of deeds, so we shall render them as scattered floating dust. **(25:22—23)**

This verse describes the condition of unbelievers at the time of death; and it implies that if the apostate had returned to the true belief, those deeds which he had done before apostasy would have remained valid.

Others say that apostasy nullifies deeds completely; and they do not return to him even if he comes back to the true belief. Of course, the deeds done after his return to the true belief do belong to him.

According to them, the verse contains the words, “then dies while an unbeliever” because it purports to

show the condition of all his actions done during his life in this world.

But the explanation given by us shows that there is no ground here at all for any such controversy. The verse in fact conveys the meaning that all his actions and deeds become ineffective in the meaning that they cannot bring any bliss, felicity or happiness in his life.

There are two other questions here, somewhat related with the above one: The first is the theory of *ihbat* (**الاحباط**). It is the theory that good and evil deeds cancel each other.

Some people said that actions cancel and invalidate each other. These people are further divided in two groups: One says that every subsequent evil deed cancels the preceeding good one, and vice versa.

It means that at any given time a man has in his account either good only or evil only. The other group says that there is a system of counterbalancing good and evil deeds; the weight of the lighter side is deducted from the weightier side, the balance remaining on account.

This theory, like the previous one, means that at the end there remains in the man's account only good or only evil actions — if any balance is left after the said counter balancing.

Both these views are wrong, because:

First: Allah says in the Qur'an;

And others have confessed their faults, they have mingled a good deed and an evil one, maybe Allah will turn to them **(mercifully);** ***surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.*** **(9:102)**

This verse clearly says that there are some good deeds and some evil ones, and that they will remain written in the account of the doer in their original form until the mercy of Allah decides about them. This cuts away the roots of the theory of cancellation with all its interpretations.

Second: Allah uses the same system of reward and punishment that is used by reasonable men in this world — rewarding the good deed and punishing the evil one, each separate from the other.

Of course, if one commits a sin that cuts away the relationship between Master and servant (e.g. disbelief or idolatory), then all his deeds become forfeit. There are numerous verses to prove it; and there is no need to quote them here.

The second related question is the theory of *takfir* (**التّكفير**). *Takfir* (**التّكفير**) is the belief that the actions do not cancel each other; every action is preserved — a good action has its own effect and an evil one its own.

But, as clearly mentioned in the Qur'an, a good deed sometimes atones for, and removes, an evil one. Allah says:

O you who believe! If you fear Allah, He will grant you a distinction and remove from you your evil ... **(8:29);**

then whoever hastens off in two days, there is no sin on him, and whoever tarries **(there)** ***there is no sin on him*** **(2:203);**

If you avoid the great sins which you are forbidden, We will expiate from you your **(small)** ***sins ...*** **(4:31).**

Not only this, but some good deeds change an evil action into a good one, as Allah says:

Except him who repents and believes and does a good deed; so these are they of whom Allah changes the evil deeds to good ones; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. **(25:70)**

There is another matter which is like the basis of all these questions: When and where does the doer become entitled to recompense? Some have said: it is the time of the action.

Others have said: the time of death. Still others have said: the hereafter. And a fourth group has said: it is the time of the action but only if the doer continues in the same condition upto his death.

Every group offers various verses of the Qur'an in support of its view, and some add some rational argument too.

Let us say that reward and punishment, forfeiture and atonement are the effects of the deeds themselves (as we have explained in our commentary of verse 2:26).

It follows that the human soul, as long as it is connected with the body, is subject to changes in its qualities. When man does something good, there appears in his soul a spiritual quality which entitles it to receive the reward; and when he commits a sin, the spiritual quality appearing in his soul entitles it to receive chastisement.

As man in this world is subject to change from one condition to other, (because he continues to mingle good deeds with evil ones), his present spiritual quality may possibly be changed to its opposite as a result of his subsequent deeds. This goes on till death overtakes him.

The soul departs from the body, actions stop, changes cease, potentialities come to an end, and qualities acquired upto that time are firmly established in his soul in a way that it no longer accepts any change or alteration (except through the mercy of Allah or intercession by His chosen servants).

Or let us say, as we have said earlier, that Allah uses the same system of recompense as is used by reasonable men in this world. It means that obedience or disobedience to divine laws and their recompense follows the same method which is seen in social laws.

Reasonable people praise and commend the law-abiding and obedient man as soon as he does

something good, and condemn a disobedient man as soon as he does something wrong.

But, at the same time, they know that the said commendation or condemnation may be changed in the future, because the man concerned may alter his ways.

In short, the praise or condemnation is offered at once, but its continuation depends on the man's continuing in the same way in the future.

But an ever-lasting praise or ever-lasting condemnation, not subject to any further change, will attach to him when there is no longer any possibility of change in his quality, i.e. by death or by the loss of potentiality.

These explanations are enough to show that all the above mentioned views on this subject have, in one way or the other, deviated from the truth, because they have based their discourse on wrong premises.

The truth is as follows:

First: A man becomes entitled to reward or punishment as soon as he does whatever he does; but that reward or punishment is still subject to change or alteration. It is only on death that it is confirmed without any possibility of alteration, as we have described above.

Second: The same is the case with the forfeiture of deeds as a result of disbelief, etc. The deeds become forfeited as soon as the man disbelieves, etc. But the forfeiture is confirmed at death.

Third: Forfeiture applies not only to the deeds related to the hereafter, but to those connected with this world also.

Fourth: *Ihbat* (الاحباط) i.e., the theory of good and evil deeds cancelling each other is wrong. But *takfir* (التّكفير) is correct — the belief that good actions sometimes expiate evil ones.

An Essay On The Rules Governing Actions

A) About Their Reward And Punishment

There are various rules about the actions of man and their recompense, which are enumerated here:

1) There are some sins which cause the forfeiture of good deeds in this world and the hereafter. One is apostasy. Allah says in the verse under discussion:

and whoever of you turns back from his religion then dies while an unbeliever, these it is whose deeds are forfeited in this world and the hereafter.

2) Other such sin is disbelief in the signs of Allah and enmity towards them. Allah says:

Surely **(as for)** ***those who disbelieve in the signs of Allah and slay the prophets unjustly and slay those among men who enjoin justice, announce to them a painful chastisement. Those are they whose works shall become null in this world as well as the hereafter ...*** **(3:20—21)**

Likewise, there are some acts of obedience, like (submission to) Islam and repentance, that expiate the evil deeds of this world as well as the hereafter; Allah says:

Say: O My servants! Who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not des pair of the mercy of Allah; Surely Allah forgives the faults **(sins)** ***altogether; surely He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. And return to your Lord*** **(repent before Him)** ***and submit to Him before there comes to you the punishment, then you shall not be helped. And follow the best that has been revealed to you from your Lord ...*** **(39:53—55).**

Also, **he says...** ***then whoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy. And whoever turns away from My remembrance, his shall surely be a straitened life, and We will raise him, on the day of resurrection, blind.*** **(20:123—124)**

3) There are some sins which cause the forfeiture of some of good deeds. Such, for example, is opposition to the Prophet. Allah says:

Surely those who disbelieve and turn away from Allah's way and oppose the Apostle after that guidance has become clear to them, cannot harm Allah in any way, and He shall make null their deeds. O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle, and do not make your deeds of no effect **(null and void). (47:32—33)**

A comparison between the two sentences implies that the order of "obedience" of the Apostle is the same as the prohibition of his opposition, and *ibtal* (nullification of the deed, **الابطال**) is its forfeiture.

Another such sin is raising one's voice above the voice of the Prophet. Allah says:

O you who believe! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, and do not speak loud to him as you speak loud to one another, lest your deeds become null while you do not perceive. **(49:2)**

Likewise, there are some acts of obedience which expiate and atone some sins. Such are the obligatory prayers, *hajj* and the avoidance of great sins. Allah says:

About prayer:

And establish prayer in the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night; surely good deeds take away the evil deeds; this is reminder to the mindful. **(11:114)**

About *hajj*:

then whoever hastens off in two days, there is no sin on him, and whoever tarries **(there)**, ***there is no sin on him.*** **(2:203)**

About avoidance of great sins:

If you avoid the great sins which you are forbidden, We will expiate from you your **(small)** ***sins ...*** **(4:31)**

Those who avoid the great sins and the indecencies except small sins **(or just passing thoughts); *surely your Lord is liberal in forgiving.*** **(53:32)**

3) There are some sins which transfer the good deeds from their doer to someone else. Murder is one of those sins. Allah says:

Verily I intend that you bear my sin and **(also)** ***your sin ...*** **(5:29)**

Other such sins, according to the traditions of the Prophet and the Imams of *Ahlu 'l–bayt* are backbiting and calumny, and others.

There are, likewise, some acts of obedience which transfer the evil deeds from the doer to someone else, as will be explained later.

4) There are some sins which transfer to the doer evil deeds similar to those committed by another person. Allah says:

That they may bear their own burdens entirely on the day of resurrection and also of the burdens of those whom they lead astray without knowledge. **(16:25)**

And most certainly they shall carry their own burdens, and other –burdens with their own burdens. **(29:13)**

In the same way, some acts of obedience transfer to the doer good deeds similar to those done by another person. Allah says:

and We write down what they have sent before and their foot prints ... **(36:12)**

5) Some sins cause double punishment. Allah says:

In that case We would certainly have made you to taste a double **(punishment)** ***in this life and a double*** **(punishment)** ***after death ...*** **(17:75);**

....the punishment shall be increased to her doubly **(33:30)**

On the other hand, there are some good deeds which bring double reward or even more. Allah says about spending in the way of Allah:

The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is as parable of a grain growing seven ears, in every ear there are a hundred grain; and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases. **(2:261).**

Also He says;

These shall be granted their reward twice **(28:54);**

He will give you two portions of His mercy, and make for you a light with which you will walk, and forgive you. **(57:28)**

Moreover all good deeds get their rewards multiplied manifold, as Allah says:

Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it... **(6:161)**

6) Some good actions change the evil deeds into good ones. Allah says:

Except him who repents and believes and does a good deed; so these are they of whom Allah changes the evil deeds to good ones ... **(25:70)**

7) There are some good deeds whose like is given to other than the doer (without the doer losing it or its reward). Allah says:

And **(as for)** ***those who believe and their offspring follow them in faith, We will unite with them their offspring and We will not diminish to them aught of their work ...*** **(52:21)**

The same may happen about some evil deeds. For example, if one oppresses orphans it brings the same type of oppression on his own children after his death. Allah says:

And let those fear who, should they leave behind them weakly offspring, would fear on their account ... **(4:9)**

8) Some good deeds transfer the evil deeds of the doer (let us call him Zayd) to another person (Bakr), and the good deeds of Bakr to Zayd. Likewise, some evil deeds transfer the good deeds of the doer, Zayd, to Bakr, and the evil deeds of Bakr to Zayd.

This is a surprising factor in reward and recompense, and we shall explain it in detail under verse 8:37:

So that Allah may separate the impure from the pure, and put the impure, some of it upon the other, and pile it up together, then cast it into hell ...

There are many traditions explaining the situations where the above-mentioned changes and exchanges may occur, and we shall quote them in the commentaries of these verses, God willing.

If we ponder on the various verses quoted above, we shall see that the system of the recompense of

actions (their effectiveness in bringing about happiness and unhappiness) is entirely different from the system of their physical effect.

For example, eating is a work which by various actions and reactions affects the eater and satisfies his hunger, but that satiation is not carried on to someone else, nor is it transferred from the eater to another person.

Also, the object of the said eating is the food eaten; the eating changes the food stage by stage into various forms. But that eating cannot affect other food, nor can that food be changed or exchanged with other eaters, nor can the nature of the food be changed to something else.

In the same way, if Zayd beats 'Umar, the action is beating, not something else; the beater is Zayd, not someone else; and the beaten one is 'Umar, not another person.

But when it comes to the effectiveness of the same actions in happiness or unhappiness, the system completely changes. Allah says

... and they did not do Us any harm but they did harm their own souls ... **(2:57);**

... and the evil plan does not beset any save the authors of it. **(35:43);**

See how they lied against their own souls ... **(6:24);**

Then shall it be said to them: Where is that which you used to set up besides Allah? They shall say: They are gone away from us, nay, we used not to call upon anything before. Thus does Allah confound the unbelievers. **(40:73—74)**

In short, in the world of "recompense", one action is sometimes changed to another, sometimes transferred to someone other than the doer, sometimes given an opposite effect. In other words, the system of recompense is quite different from physical causes and effects.

Question: In that case, there will be no place for reason in the world of actions and their effects, and the rule of wisdom will come to an end; nothing will remain in its real form.

Answer: It is not correct to say that reason and wisdom have no place in this scheme. Allah and His angels, as He has described in His Book, do offer intellectual arguments against the sinners at the time of death and in Barzakh; and they will offer the same type of proofs against them on the day of resurrection and in Paradise and Hell. Allah says:

And the trumpet shall be blown, so all those that are in the heavens and all those that are in the earth shall swoon, except such as Allah please; then it shall be blown again, then Lo! they shall stand up awaiting. And the earth shall beam with the light of its Lord, and the Book shall be laid down, and the prophets and the witnesses shall be brought up, and judgement shall be given

between them with justice, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly. And every soul shall be paid back fully what it has done, and He knows best what they do. **(39:68–70)**.

The Qur'an repeatedly says that Allah shall decide on the day of resurrection between the people with justice in that which they differed in. For example, it narrates the argument which Satan will put forth on that day:

And Satan shall say after the affair is decided: Surely Allah promised you the promise of truth, and I gave you promises then failed to keep them to you; and I had no authority over you, except that I called you and you obeyed me; therefore do not blame me but blame yourselves: I cannot be your aider (now) nor can you be my aiders; surely I disbelieved in your associating me with Allah before; surely it is the unjust that shall have the painful punishment. **(14:22)**

All such verses clearly show that rational arguments and proofs are not, and shall not be, abolished in the world of recompense, although that place is entirely different from this physical world.

Question: But how, then, to reconcile the two claims: that the world of recompense has its own system of reward and punishment, totally different from this world, and that reason also rules in that world?

Answer: The fact is that Allah has talked with people, in guiding them, in their own language, and has used the expressions of social wisdom while addressing them, and has based His speech on the principles and rules of mastership and servitude.

He calls Himself Master, the men are His slaves, the prophets are His messengers to them, He continuously maintains contact with them through commands and prohibitions, prophetic missions and admonishments, good tidings and warnings, promises and threats, and all related matters like punishment and forgiveness, and so forth.

This is the style of the Qur'an when it talks with mankind. But it has made it clear that the real affair is far above human thinking and imagination.

People cannot understand it, nor can their limited intellects comprehend it. That is why it has been brought down to the level of their mental power and clothed in a language which they can understand.

In this way, it has been made possible for them to know as much of the sublime truth as was necessary for their happiness and bliss. Allah says:

(I swear) ***by the book that makes manifest*** **(the truth):** ***surely We made it an Arabic Qur'an so that you may understand. And surely it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom.*** **(43:2—4)**

It is for this reason that the Qur'an has based its description of the rules of recompense, and all related matters, on the fundamentals of social laws which are known to reasonable men and which are based

on social good and evil.

It is really wonderful how those sublime realities, which are so much higher than the level of the common human intellect, can still be explained in terms of that very intellect.

For example, practical social wisdom does not reject the idea of giving a harder punishment to a wrong-doer by holding him responsible for all the social evil resulting from his misdeed.

Thus, a murderer may be held responsible for the loss of all social benefits and rights resulting from the death of the slain person. And a person starting an evil custom may be punished for the like misdeeds of his followers.

In the first example, it may be decreed that the wrongs done apparently by the slain person, were done by the murderer; and in the second example, it may be decided that the like of the misdeeds done by the followers were also done by the initiator of that misdeed, while the followers are not free from the blame in any way — thus the deeds of the followers are the deeds of the initiator as well, and both shall be punished for them.

Similarly, there are situations in which it may be decreed that the doer of an action was not its doer, or that a particular action is in reality some other action, or that the good deeds of someone else belong to this man, or that this man shall have the like of the good deeds done by the other.

The Qur'an offers reasons for all such changes and exchanges in the world of recompense and explains them in terms of the social laws found in human society, bringing these sublime realities down to the level of the human mind, although the system of that world is totally different from this physical one, and although our social laws have a limited scope and are not valid beyond this life.

It is only on the day of resurrection that those hidden realities will manifest themselves before the eyes of man. Allah says:

And certainly We have brought them a book which We have explained with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for the people who believe. Do they wait for aught but its final interpretation? On the day when its final interpretation comes about, those who neglected it before will say: Indeed the apostle of our Lord had brought the truth **...(7:52—53)**

Also, He says:

And this Qur'an is not such as could be forged by those besides Allah, but is a verification of that which is before it and a clear explanation of the book ... Nay, they rejected that of which they have no comprehensive knowledge, and its final interpretation has not yet come to them ... **(10:37—39)**

Question: These verses, describing such a strange system of recompense, are in conflict with other

verses which say that everyone will be responsible for his own action. See for example the following verses:

So, he who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it. And he who has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it. (**99:78**)

... and no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another ... (**6:164**)

...every man is responsible for what he has wrought. (**52:21**)

And that man shall have nothing but what he strives for. (**53:39**)

Surely Allah does not do any injustice to men, but men do injustice to themselves. (**10:44**)

There are numerous such verses, and they are diametrically opposed to the earlier-mentioned verses about this system of recompense.

Answer: Not at all. The earlier mentioned verses have decreed that the misdeeds done by a man who was slain unjustly were actually done by the unjust murderer.

Now if the murderer is punished for those misdeeds, he is punished not for the deeds of the other person, but for those done by himself.

Similarly, they have decided that if a man follows another in a sinful act, that action was not done by the follower alone; it is the work of the follower as well as the leader.

Thus, there are two sins here, one of the follower, and another of the leader. And the leader will be punished, not for the sin of the follower, but for his own.

In the same way, those verses have judged that if someone aids an oppressor in his oppression or follows a leader on the wrong path, then the said helper or follower is a partner in those misdeeds; and whatever wrong is done by that oppressor or leader, the said helper or follower is its doer to the same degree.

Thus, these people and others like them are literally and completely governed by the verses quoted in the question, such as "no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another".

Such cases are not outside the sphere of such verses; they are not in conflict with them, nor are they as an exception from the rule.

The same fact is hinted at in the verse,

...and judgement shall be given between them with justice, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly. And every soul shall be paid back fully what it has done, and He knows best what they

do. **(39:69—70)**

The sentence, ***He knows best what they do*** shows, or hints at, the fact that this paying back fully what every soul has done will be done according to the knowledge of Allah, and according to His, not their, reckoning.

The sinners have no knowledge and no wisdom. Allah has deprived them of reason in this world, as He narrates the confession of the people of the Fire:

And they shall say: Had we but listened or pondered **(or, understood),** ***we would not have been among the inmates of the burring fire.*** **(67:10).**

The same will be the case in the hereafter, as Allah says:

And whoever is blind in this **(world),** ***he shall also be blind in the hereafter, and more erring from the way.*** **(17:72);**

also He says,

It is the fire kindled by Allah, which rises above the hearts. **(104:6—7).**

This deprivation is confirmed in the verse

... until when they have all come up with one another into it, the last of them shall say with regard to the foremost of them: Our Lord! these led us astray, therefore, give them a double chastisement of the fire. He will say: Every one shall have double but you do not know. **(7:38)**

This verse proves that both the leaders and the followers shall be given double punishment — the leaders, because they went astray and misled others into error; and the followers, because they went astray and kept the path of error open by walking in it. Then the verse says that they do not know.

Question: These verses, which say that the sinners are deprived of knowledge in this world as well as in the hereafter, contradict other verses which say that they do possess knowledge.

For example, Allah says:

A book of which the verses are made plain, an Arabic Qur'an for people who know. **(41:3)**

Add to it the verses which offer arguments against them: how can one argue with someone who has no knowledge and cannot understand reasoning.

Moreover, these verses themselves contain a sort of argument against them in the hereafter. All these things compel us to believe that sinners will possess knowledge and reason in the hereafter.

Apart from this, there are some verses which specifically say that they will possess knowledge and

certainty in the hereafter. For example:

Certainly you were heedless of it, but now We have removed from you your veil, so your sight today is sharp **(50:22);**

And could you but see when the guilty shall hang down their heads before their Lord! Our Lord! We saw and we heard, therefore send us back, so that we may do good**; *surely*** **(now)** ***we are certain.*** **(32:12)**

Answer: When it is said that sinners have no knowledge in this world, it means that they do not act according to their knowledge. And when it is said that they shall have no knowledge in the hereafter, it means that they cannot escape from the effects of the foolish acts which they have done in this world, and that foolishness will continue to torment them in the hereafter.

For example:

And We have made every man's actions to cling to his neck, and We will bring forth to him on the resurrection day a book which he will find wide open **(17:13);**

Until when he comes to Us, he says **(to Satan): O** ***would that between me and thee there were the distance of the east and the west ...*** **(43:38).**

There are many verses which support this interpretation, and we shall explain this matter fully in the commentary of the verse 2:242:

Then Allah makes clear to you His signs so that you may under stand.

Imam al-Ghazali has explained the matter of the transfer of deeds in a different way in one of his books. The gist of his discourse is as follows:

"The exchange and transfer of good and evil deeds because of injustice and sin is affected in this world as soon as that injustice and sin occurs; but it will be known (only) on the day of resurrection.

Then the oppressor will find his good deeds in the accounts of the oppressed. But that transfer had already been affected in this life. Then Allah will say on that day,

To whom belongs the kingdom this day**?** ***To Allah, the One, the Subduer*** **(of all). (40:16)**

Thus Allah will declare in the hereafter that the kingdom belongs to Him. But that kingdom will not come to Him on that day; it is His always and will remain His forever, although this reality will not manifest itself to His creatures before the day of resurrection.

And what a man does not know is for him non-existant, even if in reality it exists; when he comes to know of it, it is as though it came into existence just then.

“Some people say that “action” is an immaterial, incorporeal thing. It is not a substance which could be transferred from one person to another in this life.

And it is equally impossible to transfer it in the hereafter; because after death the action ceases to exist, and a non-existent thing cannot be brought back to existence.

Therefore, it is difficult to see how a good or evil deed can be transferred from one person to another, either in this life or in the hereafter.

“But this objection is not correct. When we say that a good deed is transferred, we mean that its reward is transferred. Just as the acts of obedience are done to obtain their reward, so the transfer of the reward, i.e. the effect, was metaphorically mentioned as the transfer of the cause, i.e. the good deed itself.

That reward or effect is not something separate from the human soul; it is a quality ingrained in it. When the soul is brought back in the body, it will return with all its qualities, including the effects of good or evil deeds.

“When a man does a good deed, i.e. an act of obedience, a light appears in his heart. In the same way a sin or misdeed causes darkness to appear therein.

The light of obedience connects the heart with the sublime world of divine light, knowledge and perception. On the contrary, misdeed and oppression remove the heart away from that world.

The effects of good and evil actions are opposed to each other; each tries to weaken or eradicate the other. Allah has said:

Surely good deeds take away the evil deeds. **(11:114)**

The Prophet has said: ‘If you commit any evil deed, follow it up with a good deed, so that it may eradicate it.’ Every ill or hurt removes the effects of some sins.

That is why the Prophet has said: ‘Verily, man is rewarded even for a thorn which pricks his foot.’ Also he said: ‘The punishments are atonements.’

“When an oppressor oppresses someone, his action creates in his own heart darkness and hardness which cause the eradication of the effects of the light (that had appeared in his heart because of the previously-done good deeds).

And his victim feels pain and hurt, and thereby his lust and base feelings are weakened and it causes the obliteration from his heart of the effects of the evil deeds done previously. Darkness gives way to light.

“In this way the light which was in the heart of the oppressor is transferred to the heart of the oppressed;

and the darkness in the heart of the oppressed goes to the heart of the oppressor. This is the meaning of the transfer or exchange of the good and evil deeds.

"It can be said that it is not the real transfer. What it actually means is that the light of the oppressor's heart is extinguished, and a new light is created in the heart of his victim.

And the darkness of his victim's heart is removed and a new darkness is created in the heart of the oppressor. And it is not the real interchange.

"The above observation is correct, but the use of this word is still justified. We say: 'The shadow moved from here to there', or 'The light of the sun or of the lamp moved from the floor to the wall'.

Such sentences are quite in order, as they are based on metaphor. And there is a double metaphor in our saying that good deeds are transferred from one man to another.

First, the reward of the good deed is called a good deed, using the name of the cause for its effect; then the eradication of a feature at one place and the creation of its like at other place is called the exchange or transfer of the feature.

Such figures of speech are common in every language and it could be proved by logical proofs. The evidence from the Qur'an and traditions is in addition to that."

This was the gist of the views expressed by Imam al-Ghazali. As he himself has said, his explanation reduces this belief to a double metaphor, or a metaphor in metaphor.

If we were to extend this interpretation, then all the rules mentioned in this essary would become metaphors. We have written earlier that Allah has based the system of recompense on social practical wisdom.

And there is no doubt that reason treats these laws as a reality, not as a metaphor. Therefore, the system of recompense should also be treated as a reality, not as a metaphor.

This is true so far as this world of practical wisdom is concerned. Of course, if one were to look at the spiritual world, then this whole material world would be seen to be just a metaphor. But here the discussion is not in that context.

Now, we return to the details about deeds:

B) Actions Preserved, Written And Embodied

Deeds are preserved and written; and assume the form of a body. Allah has said:

On the day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good, and what it has done of evil, it shall wish that between it and that **(evil)** ***there were a long duration ...*** **(3:30)**

And We have made every man's actions to cling to his neck, and We will bring forth to him on the resurrection day a book which he will find wide open. (**17:13**)

... and We write down what they have sent before and their footprints, and We have fully recorded everything in a clear writing. (**36:12**)

Certainly you were heedless of it, but now We have removed from you your evil, so your sight today is sharp. (**50:22**)

This subject has already been discussed in the first volume.

C) Relation Between Actions And "Natural" Phenomena

There is a relation between actions and happenings outside. By "actions" we do not mean here physical movements; what we mean is good and evil deeds. Allah says:

And whatever affliction befalls you, it is on account of what your hands have wrought, and (**yet**) ***He pardons most*** (**of your faults**). (**42:30**)

Surely Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition; ***and when Allah intends evil to a people, there is no averting it***. (**13:11**)

This is because Allah was never to change a favour which He has conferred upon a people until they change their own condition ... (**8:53**)

These verses clearly show that there is a relation between our actions and the happenings around us, whether good or bad.

This matter is concisely put in two Qur'anic verses:

And if the people of the town had believed and guarded (**against evil**), ***We would certainly have opened up for them blessings from the heaven and the earth***; ***but they rejected, so We overtook them for what they had earned***. (**7:96**)

Mischief has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, so that they may return. (**30:41**)

Obviously, natural phenomena are somehow related to human deeds. If humanity remains obedient to the commandments of Allah and walks on His chosen path, happiness and goodness follow and the doors of bliss are opened.

On the other hand if he strays from the path of obedience and continues in his error, mischief and bad faith, chaos appears in the land and on the sea, nations are destroyed because of the injustice prevalent

in them, the state of law and order deteriorates, conflict and war become the norm of the day; in short, happiness becomes a scarce commodity and unhappiness reigns in the land.

Not only this, natural calamities and disasters appear, like flood, earthquakes, lightening, cyclones, etc. Allah has mentioned the deluge of the dam of Ma'arib, the flood of N□h, the lightening of Tham□d and the gale of 'Ad as some examples of phenomenon.

When a wicked nation is submerged in depravity, vice and evil, Allah makes it taste the bad consequences of its misdeeds, and this leads to its decline, fall and destruction. Allah says:

Have they not travelled in the earth and seen how was the end of those who were before them? Mightier than these were they in strength and in fortifications in the land, but Allah destroyed them for their sins; and there was not for them any defender against Allah. **(40:21)**

And when We wish to destroy a town, We send our Commandment to the people of it who lead easy lives; thus the word proves true against it, so We destroy it with utter destruction. **(17:16)**

Then We sent Our apostles one after another; whenever there came to a people their apostles, they called him a liar; so We made some of them follow others and We made them stories; so away with a people who do not believe. **(23:44)**

So this is the story of evil people. Diametrically opposed to it is the story of good and virtuous nations.

Individuals, like groups and nations, are taken over by the effects of their good and evil deeds, by calamities and misfortunes.

In addition to this, an individual is sometimes blessed with the blessings given to his forefathers, and is also sometimes overtaken by the results of his ancestors' misdeeds and oppression.

Allah quotes Ya'q□b (a.s.) as saying to Y□suf (a.s.):

And thus will your Lord choose you and teach you the interpretation of sayings and make His favour complete to you and to the children of Ya'q□b as He made it complete before to your fathers, Ibrahim and Ishaq ... **(12:6)**

The favours mentioned in this verse refer to the kingdom, honour, etc. which Allah gave to Y□suf.

Thus We made the earth to swallow up him and his abode... **(28:81)**

....and We assigned to him a lofty tongue of truthfulness. **(19:50)**

Probably this "lofty tongue of truthfulness" means good and righteous offspring, as Allah says in another place;

And He made it a word to continue in his posterity ... **(43:28)**

And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure belonging to them, and their father was a righteous man; so your Lord desired that they should attain their maturity and take out their treasure ... **(18:82)**

And let those fear who, should they leave behind weakly offspring, would fear on their account ... **(4:9)**

It hints that the offspring may be overtaken by the effects of the injustice of their forefathers.

When Allah bestows a bounty on a nation (or an individual), and that nation (or individual) is righteous, then that bounty is a blessing — and at the same time it is a trial to test its (or his) faith.

Allah says about Sulayman (a.s.) that:

he said: This is of the grace of my Lord that He may try me whether I am grateful or ungrateful; and whoever is grateful, he is grateful only for his own self, and whoever is ungrateful, then surely my Lord is Self-sufficient, Honoured. **(27:40)**

Again Allah says:

If you are grateful, I would certainly give you more, and if you are ungrateful, My chastisement is truly severe. **(14:7)**

These two verses prove that thank fullness to Allah is in itself a good deed which brings about the blessings of Allah.

If that blessed nation (or individual) is unrighteous and wicked then that blessing is a devise of Allah to lead it step by step to its ruin, or a respite given to it to complete the proof of Allah against it. Allah says:

... and they devise plans and Allah too arranges a plan; and Allah is the best of planners. **(8:30).**

We will lead them on by steps from whence they perceive not; and yet I respite them; surely My plan is firm. **(68:44-45);**

And certainly we tried before them the people of Pharaoh... **(44:17)**

And if misfortune comes to a nation (or individual), and trouble and travail plague them, and they are righteous people, then that affliction is a test and trial by which Allah separates his good servants from the evil ones.

They come out of that suffering more purified, like gold when it is melted in the fire. Allah says:

Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, We believe, and not be tried? And certainly

We tried those before them, so Allah will certainly know those who are true and He will certainly know the liars. Or do they who work evil think that they will escape Us? Evil is it that they judge **(29:2—4);**

... and We bring these days to men by turns, and that Allah may know those who believe and take witness from among you... **(3:140)**

And if the people undergoing hardship are wicked, then that hardship is the chastisement of their misdeeds and a sign of the wrath of Allah. Earlier-mentioned verses are enough to show this aspect.

So this is the story of actions which happen in the world and ultimately returns to their doer.

It is necessary to mention here that the following verse has no connection with the subject under discussion:

And were it not that all people would have been of one way of life, We would certainly have assigned to those who disbelieve in the Beneficent God **(to make)** ***of silver the roofs of their houses and the stairs by which they ascend, and the doors of their houses and the couches on which they recline; and*** **(other)** ***embellishments of gold*****;** ***and all this is naught but provision of this world's life, and the hereafter is with your Lord only for those who guard*** **(against evil). (43:33—35)**

The purpose of this verse is to condemn this world and its paraphernalia, and to show that it has no value or importance in the eyes of Allah, and that is why He bestows it even on the disbelievers.

And had it not been misleading to the people, He would have reserved all the ease and comfort of this world for the disbelievers.

Question: Calamities, whether common to all or particular to a group or an individual, like floods, earthquakes, epidemics, wars, famines, and so on occur because of their well-known physical or natural causes.

When the causes appear, the results follow, and it makes no difference whether the nation or individual is good or wicked. Therefore, there is no reason to say that such phenomena occur because of good or evil deeds.

Such a claim is just a theory invented by religion which is not supported by facts or experience.

Answer: We will discuss this philosophical question in detail in the commentary of the verse 7:96,

And if the people of the towns had believed and guarded **(against evil),** ***We would certainly have opened up for them blessings from the heaven and the earth.***

But a short reply is appended below:

This objection arises because the meaning of the discourse of the Qur'an is not understood properly. When the people of the Qur'an say that

good or bad actions bring out similar good or bad happenings in the world,

they do not mean that there are no natural or physical causes for those happenings, or that those causes have lost their effectiveness in such incidents.

Also, they do not say that those good or evil deeds are, together with natural causes, joint causes of those happenings.

For example, when we say that there is a Creator for this world, we do not mean to negate the system of cause and effect which is found in the universe, nor do we say that these causes are partners with Allah in the creation of the world.

What we say is that there is a cause over and above all other apparent causes. Likewise, when we say that good or evil actions result in good or evil incidents in the world, we do not deny the effectiveness of natural causes; we only mean that there is a higher and more powerful cause, i.e. the good or evil deeds of human beings which serve as the motive power of the natural causes.

When a man writes, it is the pen which draws the letters on the paper; but the pen moves not on its own account but by the movement of the hand; and a man with open eyes will not stop even there — he will see the person who moves his hand.

When he says that that person writes, he does not negate the effect and force of the hand or the pen; but he knows who the real writer is.

Experience and observation have shown that creation has given every species the means to avert damage or deterioration. Why should homo sapiens alone be an exception to this rule?

Also every species is confronted by one or more opposing forces to sharpen its own defensive powers, and in this way it continues from strength to strength till it reaches its perfection.

Why should man not be provided with this means of reaching the height of his perfection?

Allah says:

And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in sport. We did not create them both but with the truth, but most of them do not know. **(44:38—39);**

And We did not create the heaven and the earth and what is between them in vain; that is the opinion of those who disbelieve … **(38:27)**

If a maker makes anything without any purpose just in sport, there remains no further relation between

him and the thing made; he does not care what happens to that thing.

But if he makes it for a purpose, he looks after it; if any snag appears in its proper functioning, he mends and repairs it by adding or subtracting something or by dismantling and re-assembling it.

The same is the case with the creation of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, including human beings. Allah did not create all these in vain or in sport; He created them with a purpose and they have to return to Him, as He has said:

What! Did you then think that We had created you in vain and that you shall not be returned to Us? **(23:115);**

And that to your Lord is the end goal. **(53:42).**

With this background, it is exceedingly clear that God's Providence should be concerned with leading mankind to the goal of its perfection, first by calling them to come to the right path and guiding them to it; then through test and trial; and finally by destroying those about whom there is no hope at all that they may attain the goal of their creation.

It is only in this way that the creative goal of individuals and the whole of the species can be achieved; and damaged, nay, damaging parts can be discarded and thrown into perdition, giving relief and respite to the other parts. Allah says:

And your Lord is the Self-sufficient One, the Lord of mercy**;** ***if He pleases, He may take you off, and make whom He pleases successors of you, even as he raised you up from the seed of another people*****. (6:133)**

(Ponder upon the place and significance of the sentence,

And your Lord is the Self-sufficient One, the Lord of mercy.)

To make a long story short, this divine system of trial and retribution is, as declared by Allah, an insuperable, invincible and irresistible force which no one can control or subdue. Allah says:

And whatever affliction befalls you it is on account of what your hands have wrought, and **(yet)** ***He pardons most*** **(of your faults).** ***And you cannot escape in the earth, and you shall not have a guardian or a helper besides Allah*****. (42:30—31)**

Also He says:

And certainly Our word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the apostles. Most surely they shall be the assisted ones, and most surely Our host alone shall be the victorious ones **(37:171-173).**

D) Actions With Reference To Happiness And Misery

Those actions causing happiness will always be victorious over those causing misery. Every good quality belongs to actions causing happiness: victory, steadfastness, stability, peace, hope, eternity, etc.

Its opposite factors, destruction, nullity, shakiness, fear, decline and defeat, belong to actions causing misery.

There are numerous Qur'anic verses declaring the above fact. See, for example, the following parable:

Have you not seen how Allah sets forth a parable of a good word **(being)** ***like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and whose branches are in heaven, yielding its fruit on every moment by the permission of its Lord? And Allah sets forth parables for men that they may reflect. And the parable of an evil word is as an evil tree pulled up from the earth's surface; it has no stability. Allah confirms those who believe with the sure word in this world's life and in the hereafter, and Allah lets the unjust go astray, and Allah does what He pleases*****. (14:24—27)**

Also Allah says:

That He may manifest the truth of what was true and show the falsehood of what was false, even though the guilty ones disliked **(8:8);** ***... and the*** **(good)** ***end is for guarding*** **(against evil) (20:132);**

And certainly Our word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the apostles. Most surely they shall be the assisted ones, and most surely Our host alone shall be the victorious ones **(37:171—173);**

...and Allah is predominant over His affair, but most people do not know **(12:21).**

There are other similar verses.

The last words of the last-mentioned verse, ***but most people do not know,*** show that this predominance and victory is not as people think, because most of them are unaware of this victory.

Had it been material victory which could be perceived by everyone, the majority would not have remained ignorant of it. This ignorance and unawareness results from two factors:

First: The thinking power of man is limited; his eyes see only those things which are near to him; he talks about the present and is unaware of what the future has in store.

His kingdom is of this day, and his predominance is of this moment. He measures the whole of existence according to the scale of his short span of life and its small possessions. But Allah is the Master of time and space and the Ruler of this world as well as the hereafter.

He has power and authority over everything. When He judges, He separates the right from the wrong;

when He decrees, it is done with truth. This world and the hereafter are but one in His sight; He is not afraid that anything will escape away from His authority.

He, therefore, makes no haste in any affair. It is possible (rather, it is a fact) that He may decree a single day's disturbance to establish peace and order for a long time; or the tragedy of one individual as a means of happiness for the whole nation.

Now the ignorant man thinks that Allah was helpless and could not remove that disturbance or tragedy. (How evil is what he thinks!) But, the fact is that Allah sees the whole chain of time even as He sees a single link of it; He judges about His whole creation as He judges about a single person.

One affair does not make him oblivious of another affair; and the preservation of both does not tire Him; and He is the High, the Great. Allah says:

Let it not deceive you that those who disbelieve go to and fro in the cities **(fearlessly)**. ***A brief enjoyment! Then their abode is hell, and evil is the resting place!*** **(3:195—196)**

Second: A spiritual victory is not the same as a material one. A material victory and predominance means that the victor controls the actions of the vanquished, by depriving them of their freedom of choice, and by compelling them to do what they do not like.

It is enough to look at colonial and imperial powers: at how they gave themselves licence to kill and enslave the weaker people and how they ruled on them as it suited their whim and fancy.

But experience shows that tyranny and compulsion cannot last long; and, that therefore, a colonial authority cannot rule over its colonies forever — it is but a passing show.

A spiritual victory, on the other hand, depends on capturing hearts and minds; it trains people who believe in the cause and are ready to sacrifice themselves to make the cause succeed.

There is no grade above perfect faith, and no fortress stronger than belief. When one believes in a cause it is bound to manifest itself one day, even if, for the present, it remains hidden from the public eye.

It is for this reason that the great powers and living societies put such a great emphasis on the dissemination of their views throughout the world. Sometimes, they spend more time and energy on such propaganda than on arms and ammunition.

It is because they know that faith in a cause is more powerful than guns and tanks. If this is correct about these illusionary causes of politics, it must be far more correct about the eternal truth to which Allah invites the mankind.

Nothing stands in opposition to truth, per se, except falsehood. And what is there after truth except error

and falsehood? It is known that falsehood cannot stand against truth. It is bound to fall, and truth is bound to vanquish error and falsehood.

Truth, in its effectiveness, as well as in its conveyance to the destination, is not inconsistent nor does it fail to bring about its result. If a believer overcomes an enemy of the truth, in this life, then he is the victor and also gets the good reward for it in the hereafter.

If, on the other hand, he is defeated by the enemy of the truth, and the enemy compels him to adopt things which are disliked by Allah, it is his duty to act accordingly and save his life — and Allah will be pleased with that apparently irreligious behaviour.

Allah says:

...except **(when)** ***you guard yourselves against*** **(them)** ***for fear from them*** **(3:28).**

And if the enemy kills him, then it will be for him an everlasting pleasant life, not death. Allah says:

And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead**;** ***nay,*** **(they are)** ***alive, but you do not perceive*** **(2:154).**

In this way, the believer is never vanquished; he is always victorious — either both apparently and in reality, or only in reality. Allah refers to this aspect in the verse,

Say**:** ***Do you await for us but one of the two most excellent things ...*** **(9:52)**

The truth, therefore, is always victorious in this world.

Nature, i.e. creation, is leading the human species towards truth and felicity — it is leading it creatively — and certainly it will reach its goal.

The apparent victory of falsehood which we experience from time to time is not worthy of our attention: these are stepping stones for the truth to reach its height.

Why should we worry? 'Time' has yet to come to its end, the world still exists, and the system of creation is still all powerful. There is enough time for truth to overpower falsehood, this much about the victory of truth in appearance.

There is no need to explain in so many words about its victory in reality: we all know that the truth is always victorious.

Why did we say in the beginning that every good characteristic, such as permanence, stability and beauty, belongs to the true word and deed; and every evil characteristic, such as instability, infirmity, evil and ugliness, belongs to the false word and deed?

We have mentioned previously the following verses:

***That is Allah, your Lord, the Creator of every thing*; *there is no god but He*; *whence are you then turned away?* (40:62);**

***Who made good everything that He has created ...* (32:7);**

***Whatever benefit comes to you, it is from Allah, and whatever misfortune befalls you, it is from yourself*. (6:79)**

All these verses show that wrongs and evils are "non-existence"; and as such they cannot be attributed to Allah who is the Creator, Originator and Bestower of existence.

The case of the good is just the opposite. It is, therefore, attributed to Allah. And it is because of this that good words and good deeds are the source of every beauty and elegance, and the origin of every virtue and felicity (like stability and permanence, blessing and benefit), in contrast to evil words and deeds. Allah says:

***He sends down water from the heavens, then the valleys flow according to their measure, and the torrent bears along the swelling foam*; *and from what they melt in the fire, for the sake of* (making) *ornaments or apparatus, arises a scum like it*; *thus does Allah compare truth and falsehood; then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing*; *and as for that which profits the people, it remains in the earth*; *thus does Allah set forth parables*. (13:17)**

E) Actions With Reference To Reason

Good words and deeds conform with the dictates of reason, in contrast with the evil words and deeds. It has already been explained that Allah has made his laws on the foundation of reason.

By reason we mean that faculty by which man perceives right and wrong, and distinguishes between good and bad.

It is for this reason that Allah commanded man to follow his reason, and forbade everything which deranges the reason or throws it into confusion, like drinking alcoholic liquids, gambling, uttering vain words, adultery, cheating, and so on.

He also forbade lying, slandering, false accusation, embezzlement, murder, and, in short, all such things which throw reason out of gear and lead it to a wrong judgement.

Human life is built on the basis of correct perception and proper thinking, in all its affairs – individual as well as social. If you analyse the personal and collective ills of humanity, you will find that they spring from actions which disturb and confuse the reason.

This subject will be explained, God willing, in another place.

Traditions

Ibn Jarir has narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas that he said: “I was riding (on a camel) behind the Messenger of Allah.

He said: ‘O Ibn ‘Abbas! Be satisfied with what Allah (*qaddara,* قدّر) has measured (decreed) for you even if it is against your wishes; because it is so written in the Book of Allah.’

I said: ‘O Messenger of Allah! And where is it, and I have read the Qur’an?’ He said: ‘and it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you love a thing while it is evil for you; and Allah knows, while you do not know.’ ” [*ad-Durru ’l-manthr*]

The author says: This tradition implies that *taqdir* (measure, decree, التّقدير) is a general word, covering both legislation and creation, and that its meaning varies according to the context.

But this tradition does not show that *‘asa* (may be, عسى) can be used to mean obligation; it has been explained that this word is used in the Qur’an in its literal meaning, and that is “may-be”, expectation.

Therefore, the opinion expressed by a commentator that wherever the word *‘asa* (عسى) has been used in the Qur’an, the “may-be” of Allah implies compulsion is not worthy of consideration.

Even more strange is the view of another that wherever “may-be” comes in the Qur’an it indicates compulsion (obligation) except in two verses, one in the chapter of *at-Tahrim*

(***Maybe if he divorces you ...***),

and the other in the chapter of *al-‘Isra*

(***It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you...***)

There is a tradition narrated by Ibn Jarir from the chain of as-Suddi: The Messenger of Allah sent a company consisting of seven of his companions, under the command of ‘Abdullah ibn Jahsh al-Asadi.

The other members were: ‘Ammar ibn Yasir, Abu Hudhayfah ibn ‘Utbah ibn Rabi‘ah, Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqas, ‘Utbah ibn Ghazwan as-Sulami (an ally of Bani Nawfal), Sahl ibn Baydha’, ‘Amir ibn Fuhayrah and Waqid ibn ‘Abdullah al-Yarbu‘i (an ally of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab).

The Prophet wrote a letter and gave it to ‘Abdullah ibn Jahsh telling him not to read it until he camped at Malal. When ‘Abdullah camped at the valley of Malal, he opened the letter.

Written in it was: “Proceed till you camp in the valley of Nakhlah.” On reading it he told his companions: “Anyone who is ready to die let him proceed (with me) and make his will, because I am making my will

and proceeding as ordered by the Messenger of Allah."

So he went on, and only Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas and 'Utbah ibn Ghazwan remained behind because they had lost their camel. And 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh went forward, and lo! they unexpectedly met al-Hakam ibn Kaysan, 'Abdullah ibn al-Mughirah ibn 'Uthman and 'Amr al-Hadhrami.

They fought and arrested al-Hakam ibn Kaysan and 'Abdullah ibn al-Mughirah; and al-Mughirah fled away; and 'Amr al-Hadhrami was killed by Waqid ibn 'Abdullah. And it was the first booty taken by the companions of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.).

When they returned to Medina with the two captives and the booty, the polytheists said: "Muhammad thinks that he follows the commands of Allah and he is the first to desecrate the sacred month." Then Allah sent down the verse:

They ask you concerning the sacred month about fighting in it. Say: Fighting in it is a grave matter;

is not allowed. And what you did, O polytheists! is still graver than killing in the sacred month, because you disbelieved in Allah, and hindered Muhammad from Allah's way; and the mischief, that is polytheism, is graver before Allah than the killing.

And this is the saying of Allah,

and hindering **(men)** ***from Allah's way and denying it ...*** [*ad-Durru 'l-manthūr*]

The author says: The traditions giving this and similar meanings are numerous from Sunni chains. And this meaning is also narrated in *Majma'u 'l-bayan*; and some traditions say that the company consisted of eight persons, the ninth being their leader.

Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim and al-Bayhaqi have narrated from the chain of Yazid ibn Rawman from 'Urwah, that he said: "The Messenger of Allah sent 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh to Nakhlah, and told him: 'Stay there until you bring to us some news about (the activities and intentions of) the Quraysh.'

And he did not order him to fight. And it was in the sacred month. And he (i.e. the Messenger of Allah) wrote for him a letter before informing him about the journey, and told him: 'Go out with your companions; when you have travelled two days, open (this) your letter and look into it and proceed to do what I have ordered you in it.

And do not force any of your companions to go with you (against his wishes)' When he travelled for two days, he opened the letter and found in it (the words): 'Proceed further until you camp at Nakhlah, and bring for us whatever information reaches you about the Quraysh.'

When he ('Abdullah ibn Jahsh) read the order, he told his companions: 'Hearing and obeying! Whoever

among you desires martyrdom, should come with me, for I am proceeding on the order of the Messenger of Allah.

And whoever among you dislikes it let him go back, because the Messenger of Allah has forbidden me to compel anyone of you (against his wishes).'

The whole group proceeded with him until they reached Najran where Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas and 'Utbah ibn Ghazwan lost a camel which they rode alternately.

They, therefore, remained behind to search for it; and the others went forward till they camped at Nakhlah. Then passed by them 'Amr al-Hadhrami, al-Hakam ibn Kaysan, 'Uthman and al-Mughirah ibn 'Abdullah; with them was the merchandise which they had brought from at-Ta'if: condiments and oil.

When they saw them, Waqid ibn 'Abdullah rose high to show himself to them, and he had shaved his head. When they saw him with shaved head, 'Amr said: 'No harm will befall you from him.'

And the companions of the Messenger of Allah consulted with one another about the polytheists; and it was the last day of *Jumada 'l-ukhra.* They thought: if we kill them it will be in the sacred month, and if we leave them, they will enter Mecca this night and they will be on guard.

At last, they all decided to kill them. Waqid ibn 'Abdullah at-Tamimi shot an arrow at 'Amr al-Hadhrami and killed him. 'Uthman ibn 'Abdullah and al-Hakam ibn Kaysan were captured, and al-Mughirah ran away and they could not catch him.

And they took the caravan and came with it to the Messenger of Allah. He told them: 'By God! I had not ordered you to fight in the sacred month.' And he kept the matter of the goods and the captives in suspense and did not accept anything from it.

When the Messenger of Allah said to them what he said, they felt ashamed and thought that they had fallen into perdition; and their brethren, the Muslims, upbraided them harshly.

When the report of the incident reached the Quraysh, they said: 'Muhammad spilled unlawful blood, and took property, and arrested men and desecrated the sacred month."

Then Allah sent down the verse:

They ask you concerning the sacred month about fighting in it ...

When it was revealed, the Messenger of Allah retained the merchandise and freed the two captives on ransom. The Muslims asked: 'O Messenger of Allah! Do you hope that it will be (counted as) a *jihad* (religious war) for us?

Then Allah revealed the verse:

Surely those who believed and those who fled **(their home)** ***and strove hard in the way of Allah these hope for the mercy of Allah*****;** ***and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.***

And they were eight people, and the ninth was their leader, ‘Abdullah ibn Jahsh.” [*ad–Durru ’l–manthr*]

The author says: There are other traditions showing that this verse: ***Surely those who believed … Merciful,*** was revealed about the group of ‘Abdullah ibn Jahsh.

This verse proves that if someone performs an act of obedience, with the intention of coming nearer to Allah, but it turns out to be a mistake, not a good deed, then he is not counted as a sinner because he did it inadvertently.

Also, the last sentence of the verse, mentioning the forgiveness of Allah, shows that divine forgiveness covers even those situations where there was no sin or error.

Therefore, the use of the word “forgiveness” or its derivatives does not necessarily mean that the recipient of the divine forgiveness had committed a sin.

The traditions imply that “They ask” refers to the Muslims, not the polytheists who ridiculed the Muslims. This view is supported by the tradition of Ibn ‘Abbas mentioned under the preceding verse: “I did not see any people better than the companions of Muhammad.

They did not ask him except thirteen questions till he was taken away (from this world), all of those questions are in the Qur’an. Among them are:

They ask you about the intoxicants and games of chance**;** ***They ask you about the sacred month …***

Also, the context of the verse supports it, as the words:

and they will go on fighting with you … ,

are addressed to the believers.

Suratul Baqarah: Verses 219–220

٢١٩) يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ ۖ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِن نَّفْعِهِمَا ۗ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا
يُنفِقُونَ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ

٢٢٠) فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۗ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْيَتَامَىٰ ۖ قُلْ إِصْلَاحٌ لَّهُمْ خَيْرٌ ۖ وَإِن تُخَالِطُوهُمْ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ
الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَعْنَتَكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

***They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance, Say: In both of them there is a great sin and* (some) *profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit. And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever can be spared. Thus does Allah make clear to you the signs, that you may ponder.* (219)**

***About this world and the hereafter. And they ask you concerning the orphans. Say: To set right for them* (their affairs) *is good; and if you mingle with them, they are your brethren; and Allah knows the mischief maker from the well-doer; and if Allah had willed, He would certainly have made it hard for you; surely Allah is Mighty, Wise.* (220)**

Commentary

Qur'an: *They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance*:

According to the language, intoxicant (*khamr,* **الخمر**) is every liquid which is made to intoxicate.

The root word, *khamr* (**الخمر**) means to "to hide". The liquor is called (*khamr***الخمر**) because it hides reason and does not allow it to discriminate between right and wrong, between good and bad.

From the same root is derived *khimar* (**الخمار**) i.e., the veil which covers the head of a woman. *Khammartu 'l-'ina'* (**خمّرت الانآء**) ; means "I covered the opening of the pot".

When yeast is added to dough, they say *ikhmarrati 'l-'ajin* (**اخمرّتالعجين**). And the yeast itself is called *khamirah* (**الخميرة**), because when it is mixed with flour, it covers the flour when it rises and ferments.

The Arabs did not know any alcoholic beverages except those made from grapes, dates and barley. Gradually, new kinds were invented and now its types and kinds are innumerable, with varying grades of intoxication.

But all are intoxicant (*khamr,* **الخمر**). *Maysir* (**الميسر**), according to the language, is gambling. The gambler is called *yasir* (**الياسر**).

The root word, (*yusr* **اليسر**) means ease. Gambling was called *maysir* (**الميسر**) because by it one might get wealth with ease without going to the trouble of earning and working.

The word *maysir* (**الميسر**) was mostly used for a particular method of gambling with arrows. It was also called *azlam* (**الازلام**) and *aqlam* (**الاقلام**). It was played by ten persons in the following manner:

A camel was purchased, slaughtered and divided into twenty-four parts. There were ten arrows: each

had a separate name and its specified share. Their names (with their shares in brackets) are given hereunder:

Fadhdh (1) *taw'am* (2) *raqib* (3) *hils* (4) *nafis* (5); *musbil* (6) *mu'alla* (7) The remaining three arrows were drawn with the names of the participants; anyone on whose name one of the first seven arrows was drawn took the number of the shares alloted to it; those on whose names the last-named three arrows were drawn got nothing and had to pay the price of the camel.

Qur'an: *Say: In both of them ... sin is greater than profit*:

Sin (*ithm,* **الاثم**) is near to evil (*dhanb,* **الذّنب**) in meaning. It means a condition in the thing or in reason which prevents the man from getting the good.

In other words, *ithm* (**الاثم**) is that evil which brings unhappiness and failure even in other affairs, and disturbs the felicity of life even in other matters.

Clearly, alcoholic drinks and games of chance fit this description.

The health hazards of alcohol have been described in untold numbers of books written by ancient and modern physicians, in which they have listed the havoc created by it in the stomach, the intestines, the liver, the lungs, the nervous system, the veins and arteries, the heart and the organs of perception, i.e. the eyes, the tongue, etc.

The data collected by them show the vast magnitude of the damage to the millions and millions of people who are attacked by a variety of diseases caused by this killing poison.

The social and moral disasters appearing in the wake of addiction to drink are too well-known to need any description.

Depravity of character, debauchery, shamelessness, the leakage of secrets, scandals, slanders, destruction and damage to others, crimes, murder — name any immorality, alcohol will lead to it.

In short, it nullifies all ethical laws and moral values upon which are based the felicity and bliss of this life and, more particularly, the values of chastity and probity.

Who can protect society from a drunkard who does not understand what he says and does not know what he does. Look at the crimes which have wrecked havoc throughout the world and have made human life a misery; search for their causes, and behind almost all of them you will see the hand of alcohol, directly or indirectly manipulating the minds of the criminals.

Nobody can deny the damage inflicted by alcohol upon the mind. Is there any need to describe how it negates the reason, puts the thinking process out of equilibrium and distorts the feelings and perceptions, not only during intoxication, but even afterwards?

This damage to the whole system of perception and reason is the biggest sin and disaster of alcohol, from which sprout all other sins and disasters.

Islam, as described earlier, has based its laws on true reason, and has most emphatically forbidden all such actions which hinder the proper functioning of reason. Intoxicants, games of chance, adultery, falsehood and other such sins come in this category.

The activities which are most damaging to the faculty of reason are drinking alcohol (among the deeds) and speaking lies (among the words).

These activities which nullify the rule of reason, and especially the politics which is based on alcohol and lies, endanger humanity, and destroy the foundation of happiness.

Whenever such a policy bears a fruit, it proves far bitterer than the previous one. When a burden proves unbearable, they add on some more weight and hope that the practice will make the bearer perfect, and would give him more strength!

Such endeavours result in failure; such activities end in loss. This one characteristic of Islam — that it has based its *shari'ah* on reason and has prohibited all such things which damage it — is enough to place it at the top of all the systems invented by human beings throughout the world.

Human beings, because of their animal tendencies, eagerly run towards the satisfaction of their lust. Lustful activities easily contaminate the environment, in contrast to chastity and piety.

It is easy to acquire a bad habit and very difficult to leave it. That is why Allah legislated such laws gradually, and led people to the ultimate goal step by step and sympathetically.

One of those widely-spread evils was the drinking of alcohol. And a cursory glance at the four verses revealed about the subject will show how, by easy stages, they were weaned from this bad habit.

First, Allah revealed,

***Say*: *My Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those that are concealed, and sin and rebellion without justice, and that you associate with Allah that for which He has not sent down any authority, and that you say against Allah what you do not know.* (7:33)**

This verse was revealed in Mecca, and it has clearly forbidden the sin (*harrama,* حرّم). Now we know that there is sin — great sin even — in alcohol, although at that time Allah did not clarify what sin was.

This ambiguity was, perhaps, a sort of compassion; it was as though the *shari'ah* wanted to overlook that sin of theirs for the time being. The same is the reason for the indirect hint in another verse of the same Meccan period:

And of the fruits of the palms and the grapes — you obtain from them intoxication and goodly provision **(16:67)**

It separated intoxication from "goodly provision" but stopped short of declaring it as a "bad provision".

Apparently people were not aware that intoxication was a great sin, until the verse was revealed:

O you who believe! Do not go near prayer when you are intoxicated until you know **(well)** ***what you say ...*** **(4:43)**

This verse was revealed at Medina, and it promulgated the partial prohibition of liquor in the best of the times and the best of the places — at the time of prayer in the mosque.

Reason and the context of the verse shows that this verse could not have been revealed after the verses of the chapters of *al-Baqarah* and *al-Ma'idah* (which will be described shortly), because those verses promulgate total prohibition.

There was no reason why a partial ban should be imposed after a total prohibition. Also, we know that this prohibition was promulgated gradually, and such a case demands proceeding from an easier step to a more difficult one, and not vice versa.

Then came the verse under discussion. It says that there is in intoxicants and games of chance

a great sin and **(some)** ***profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit.***

This verse, revealed after the above-mentioned verse 4:43, promulgates total prohibition of intoxicants and games of chance. It clearly says that "there is great sin" in these two evils. And verse 7:33, mentioned in the beginning, revealed at Mecca, had clearly prohibited sin.

This explanation exposes the absurdity of a commentator who says that this verse was not clear about the prohibition of liquor. First, let us give you a gist of what he says:

"This verse of the chapter of *al-Baqarah* was not clear about the prohibition of alcohol and gambling; the words of Allah that there is great sin in them only show that these are sinful acts, and sin means harm.

Even if we say that every harmful thing is prohibited, it does not include those things which are partially harmful and partially beneficial. That is why there was a difference of opinion about alcohol among the companions of the Prophet.

Some of them left drinking after the revelation of this verse, while others continued to drink. Perhaps, the drinkers thought that they could easily enjoy its profit safeguarding themselves from its harms.

When the ground was thus prepared, Allah revealed the verse of the chapter of *al-Ma'idah* which totally and clearly prohibits these things:

O you believe! Intoxicants and games of chance and **(sacrificing to)** ***stones set up and*** **(dividing by)** ***arrows are an abomination of Satan's handiword*****;** ***shun it therefore that you may be successful … Will you then desist?*** **(5:93-94)"**

Now let us look critically at the above argument:

First: A major part of this argument rests on the assumption that sin means harm. But it is wrong. Just because in this verse it is followed by the words, ***and*** **(some)** ***profit for men,*** it does not imply that its meaning is "harm" or "loss", i.e. the opposite of "benefit".

How can the word "sin" (*ithm,* **الاثم**) be taken to mean "harm" in the verses listed below? :-

And whoever associates anything with Allah, he devises indeed a great sin. **(4:48)**

And whoever conceals it **(i.e. testimony),** ***his heart is surely sinful.*** **(2:283)**

Surely I wish that you should bear my sin as well as your own sin. **(5:29)**

Every man of them shall have what he has earned of sin. **(24:11)**

And whoever earns a sin, he earns it only against his own self. **(4:111)**

There are many such verses.

Second: The verse did not say that the order was given "because" of the harm inherent in alcohol. It just promulgated the law. There was no justification for the companions to follow their own opinion in this case.

Even if we admit, for the sake of argument, that the verse gives the reason for that order, that reason is not the harm, but the greatness of the harm as compared with the profit. The verse says in clear words,

and their sin is greater than their profit.

Such a clear declaration leaves no room at all for the exercise of one's own opinion. Opinion has no place in the presence of a clear order of Allah and the Apostle.

Third: Let us suppose, for the time being, that the verse did not clearly say that liquor and gambling were forbidden. But did it not say in clear words that they were great sins? Was not this verse revealed at Medina?

Had not verse 7:33, revealed years ago at Mecca; clearly prohibited the sin? What excuse can be offered by those companions who followed their own opinion in opposition to these verses of Mecca and Medina, which taken jointly clearly prohibit alcohol and games of chance?

Verse 7:33 prohibits all sins. And this verse under discussion uses the adjective 'great' (*kabir,* **الكبير**) and

‘greater’ (*akbar.* الاكبر) for the sins of alcohol and gambling.

In view of this nobody can remain in any doubt that these two evils are the greatest of all sins; nor can there remain any doubt about their absolute prohibition.

The Qur’an has termed murder, the hiding of testimony, lying and slander etc. as “sin”, but it has not used the adjective “great” for any sin except polytheism

(*....and whoever associates anything with Allah, he devises indeed a great sin.* — **4:48**)

and alcohol and games of chance.

In short, there is no doubt that this verse clearly prohibits these two sins.

Lastly the two verses of the chapter *al-Ma’idah* were revealed:

O you who believe! Intoxicants and games of chance and **(sacrificing to)** ***stones set up and*** **(dividing by)** ***arrows are only an abomination of Satan’s handiwork; shun it therefore that you may be successful. Satan only desires to cause enmity and hatred to spring in your midst by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you off from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will you then desist?*** **(5:93—94)**

The last sentence (***Will you then desist?***) shows that the Muslims had not desisted from drinking alcohol even after the revelation of the verse of the chapter *al Baqarah* under discussion; and that there was a need for such a strong admonition.

This much about liquor. So far as gambling is concerned its social evils and the ruin caused by it in the structure of life are well-known, and need no description. But we shall further explain it in the fifth chapter.

Now we come back to the meaning of the words used in the verse. Sin (*ithm,* الأثم) has just now been explained. Greatness (*kibr,* الكبر) in volume is as numerousness (*kathrah,* الكثرة) in number. Their opposite are smallness (*sighar,* الصّغر) and paucity (*qillah,* القلّة) respectively.

These two adjectives are relative ones. When there are two things, one of them may be greater than the other, which then will be called smaller than the first.

But the first one which was called “greater” may be smaller than a third one. If there was no comparison, there would be neither the greatness nor the smallness; nor would there by numerousness or paucity.

Probably people first became aware of greatness when they looked at the size of material things around themselves. Later on they extended this concept to mental visions and ideas. Allah says:

***Surely it* (i.e. hell) *is one of the greatest* (misfortunes). (74:35);**

***a great* (i.e. grievous) *word it is that comes out of their mouths.* (18:5);**

***great* (i.e. hard) *to the unbelievers is that which you call them to.* (42:13)**

'Izam (العظم) has the same meaning as *kibar* (الكبر): both denote greatness.

Apparently *'izam* (العظم) is derived from *'azm* (bone, العظم); as the greatness of the body of an animal or man is related to the size of the skeleton – the bones inside — the word *'azm* (bone, العظم) was metaphorically used for greatness, and gradually "greatness" became its first meaning.

Naf' (profit, النفع) is opposite of *dharar* (harm, loss, الضرر) These words are used for the things which are desired or disliked because of other things; while good and bad are used for the things which are liked or disliked by themselves.

***Profits for men*:** It refers to the monetary gains as well as the amusement and merry-making for which people indulge in these two sins.

Allah used here the plural form (profits); but while comparing it with sin He used the singular form (their sin is greater than their profit). As the comparison was in size, and not in number, there was no reason to use the plural which describes the number, not the size.

Qur'an: *And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever can be spared.*

'Afw (العفو) originally meant 'to go to a thing to get it.' Then, keeping in view various connections and relations, it came to be used for forgiveness, obliteration of footprints and moderation in spending.

It is this last meaning which is intended in this verse, and that is why it has been translated as "whatever can be spared".

In this verse, the reply fits the question in the same way as was explained in the verse 2:215,

They ask you to what they should spend. Say: Whatever of good you spend, it is for the parents ...

Qur'an: *Thus does Allah make clear to you the signs that you may ponder about this world and the hereafter.*

Fid-dunya wa 'l-akhirah. (فى الدّنيا و الاخرة) literally means "in this world and the hereafter". But it does not mean 'you may ponder while you are in this world and in the hereafter'.

It refers to the subject upon which men are expected to ponder. That is why we have translated it "may ponder about this world ..."

The verse exhorts the believers to ponder on the realities and affairs of both the worlds. This world is a place which Allah has created for you to live in and for you to earn in it what might be beneficial to you in your permanent home, i.e. the hereafter.

That is the place where you will return to your Lord and He will give you the recompense for what you did in this world.

This verse urges people to enquire about, and investigate, the realities of existence, the percepts of the beginning and the end and the mysteries of nature; and to think and ponder upon the social concepts, moral and ethical values, and the laws of life governing individuals and groups.

In short, man is expected to think about all the knowledge right from his beginning upto his returning to his Lord, as well as all the affairs coming between these points which have any bearing on the happiness and misery of mankind.

This verse also shows that although the Qur'an demands complete obedience from man towards the command of Allah and His Apostle, without any if and but, yet it likes people to ponder on those commands and their philosophy so that they may grasp their realities and, instead of blindly following the laws, may see the light of those brilliant teachings and follow that light to ultimate destination.

Thus Allah does make clear probably means the explanation of the philosophy behind the given laws and commands, and the clarification of the fundamentals of the faith and belief.

Qur'an: ***And they ask you concerning the orphans. Say: "To set right for them*** **(their affairs)** ***is good."***

There is a hint, a clear indication even, in this verse that it was revealed to lighten some burden — it allows mingling with the orphans, and then goes on to say:

and if Allah had willed, He would certainly have made it hard for you.

It shows that prior to this verse the rules concerning the guardianship of the orphans were hard and difficult, which had caused anxiety and alarm among the Muslims, and which led them to ask the question referred to in the verse.

There were some verses about the orphans, very severe in tone:

And give to the orphans their property, and do not substitute worthless **(things)** ***for*** **(their)** ***good*** **(ones),** ***and do not devour their property*** **(as an addition)** ***to your own property; this is surely a great crime.*** **(4:2);**

As for those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, surely they only swallow fire into their bellies and soon they shall enter into burning fire. **(4:10)**

Apparently the verse under discussion was revealed after these verses; and the traditions, which will be quoted later, support this view.

The *islah* (to set right, اصلاح) is used here as a common noun. It denotes, according to the usage of the Arabic language, really good management, not just a show; and the sentence, ***and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well-doer,*** points to this.

Qur'an: *and if you mingle with them, they are your brethren*:

This sentence refers to the Islamic concept of the equality of all the believers. This concept nullifies all distinctions which are the basic cause of every mischief which appears in society.

It abolishes various types of injustice and rebellion; putting oneself on a high pedestal, treating others as one's slaves, thinking of them as an inferior, and weak species.

This abolition of differences creates equilibrium in various social weights; there appears a fine balance between a weak orphan and his powerful guardian, between a rich tycoon and a wretched beggar, and so on. Allah says:

***The believers are but brethren*. (49:10)**

Now, the verse under discussion allows the guardian to mingle with the orphan only when it is done like the mingling of two brothers who have equal obligation towards each other.

If something is taken from an orphan's property, then something of equal value must be given to him and added to his property. In this context, this verse runs parallel to the verse mentioned earlier,

***And give to the orphans their property, and do not substitute worthless* (things) *for* (their) *good* (ones), *and do not devour their property* (as an addition) *to your own property*; *this is surely a great crime*. (4:2)**

A comparison between the two verses shows that the verse under discussion has somewhat lessoned the burden of the guardians; and the sentence, ***and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well-doer,*** also hints at this relaxation of rigour.

The meaning is: Now you may mingle with your wards, the orphans (and this is the relaxation of the previous rule); but the mingling should be as of two brothers who have equal obligations towards each other.

If this condition is fulfilled, then there should be no anxiety and fear on your part. If that mingling is with good intentions, and in order to set their affairs right for them, then it is good; and the reality cannot be hidden from Allah, and He will not reproach you just because you mingled and mixed with the orphans, provided you did it for their good, like brethren, and Allah knows the difference between a mischief-

maker and a well-doer.

Qur'an: ***and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well doer*:**

Here the preposition, from (*min,* **من**) has been used after "knows" (*ya'lamu,* **يعلم**); probably it is a hint that "knows" in this verse has the significance of "distinguishes"; and the sentence means, "Allah distinguishes the mischief-maker from the well-doer."

'Anat (**العنت**) means difficulty and hardship.

Traditions

'Ali ibn Yaqtin said: "al-Mahdi asked Abu 'l-Hasan al-Kazim (a.s.) about whether intoxicants were prohibited in the Book of Allah, because the people know that it is not allowed but do not know that it is prohibited.

"The Imam said: 'But it is prohibited.' He asked: 'Where in the Book of Allah is it forbidden? O Abu '1-Hasan!' He replied: 'The word of Allah:

Say: My Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those that are concealed, and sin and rebellion without justice ...' **(7:33)**

Then the Imam explained: 'And as for sin, it is intoxicants themselves, because Allah said somewhere else,

They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: "In both of them there is a great sin and **(some)** ***profits, for men, and their sin is greater than their profits."***

So the sin according to the Book of Allah is intoxicants and games of chance, and their sin is greater than their profit, as Allah has said.'

"al-Mahdi said: 'O 'Ali ibn Yaqtin! This is the legal decree of the house of Hashim.' I said: 'You spoke the truth, O leader of the faithful! Praise be to Allah who did not take this knowledge out from you, O people of the house!' "

'Ali ibn Yaqtin says: "By God, al-Mahdi could not restrain himself from saying to me, 'You spoke the truth, O Rafidi!' " [*al-Kafi*]

The author says: The meaning of this tradition can be understood from the commentary.

There is a tradition narrated from Abu Basir that one of the two Imams (i.e. fifth or sixth — a.s.) said: "Verily Allah made a house for sin, then He made a door for the house, then He made a lock for the door, then He made a key for the lock; and (that) key of sin is intoxicants." [*al-Kafi*]

There is another tradition from Abū ‘Abdillah (a.s.): “The Messenger of Allah said: ‘Verily intoxicants are the head of every sin!’ ” [*ibid.*]

There is a tradition narrated by Isma‘il, in which he said: “Abu Ja‘far (a.s.) went into the Sacred Mosque; some Qurayshites saw him and said: ‘He is the god of the people of Iraq.’

Someone said: ‘If you send one of you to him.’ So a young man from among them came to him and asked: ‘O Uncle! What is the greatest of the great (sins)?’ He said: ‘Drinking alcohol.’ ” [*ibid.*]

There is a tradition narrated by Abu ’1-Bilad, that one of the two Imams (al-Baqir or as-Sadiq — a.s.) said: “Allah has not been disobeyed with anything more powerful than drinking alcohol.

Verily one of them leaves the obligatory prayers, and jumps upon his mother and daughter and sister, and he does not know.” [*ibid*.]

“An atheist asked Abū ‘Abdillah (a.s.): ‘Why did Allah prohibit alcohol when there is nothing more delicious than it?’ (The Imam said: ‘He prohibited it because it is the mother of all wicked things and the head of every evil.

There come a time to the drinker ,of it when he loses his reason, then he does not know his Lord, and leaves no sin but that he commits it …’ ” [*al-Ihtijaj*]

The author says: The traditions explain one another and experience and observation support them.

A tradition from Jabir is reported that Abū Ja‘far (a.s.) said: “The Messenger of Allah cursed ten persons concerning an alcoholic beverage — the one who plants it, the one who guards it, the one who squeezes its juice out, the one who drinks it, the one who serves it, the one who transports it, the one to whom it is trans ported, the one who sells it, the one who purchases it, and the one who eats its price.” [*al-Kafi*]

Another tradition says that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: “The Messenger of Allah said: ‘Cursed is he, cursed is he who sits at a table where alcohol is drunk.’ ” [*ibid., al-Mahasin*]

The author says: The above two traditions are confirmed by the words of Allah,

***and do not help one another in sin and transgression*. (5:3)**

as-Sadūq reports through his chains, from Abū Amamah that he said: “The Messenger of Allah said: ‘There are four persons at whom Allah will not look (with mercy) on the day of resurrection — the one who is disobedient (to his parents), the one who helps a man and then reminds him of it, the one who denies the destiny (decreed by Allah), and the one who habitually drinks alcohol’.” [*al-Khisal*]

Ibnu ’sh-Shaykh has reported in *al-Amali*, through his chains, from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that the Prophet said: “My Lord, Great is His Glory! has sworn thus:

No servant of mine will drink alcohol in this world but that I shall make him drink on the day of resurrection from the boiling water (of hell) as much as he had drunk alcohol; (it would make no difference) whether after that he is punished or forgiven."

The Prophet said: "Verily the one who drinks alcohol shall come on the day of resurrection, with blackened face, blue eyes, a slanting jaw-bone and running saliva, licking his tongue from his back-side."

Abū Ja'far (a.s.) said: "It is an obligation upon Allah (i.e. Allah has made it incumbent upon Himself) that He will make the drinker of alcohol drink what comes out from the vulva of fornicating women.

From that vulva will come out pus and thick blood, its heat and stink will offend (even) the inmates of the fire." [*at-Tafsir,* al-Qummi]

The author says: These traditions may be supported by the word of Allah,

***Surely the tree of Zaqqūm is the food of the sinful, like molten brass; it shall boil in* (their) *bellies, like the boiling of hot water. Seize him, then drag him down into the midst of Hell; then pour over his head of the torment of the boiling water: 'Taste* (it)*; you forsooth are the mighty, the honourable!* (44:43—49)**

There are numerous traditions with the same meaning as described above.

There is a tradition narrated by al-Washsha' that he heard Abu'1-Hasan (a.s.) saying: *"Maysir* (**الميسر**) is gambling." [*al-Kafi*]

The author says: Traditions giving this explanation are numerous; and there is no doubt whatsoever about the meaning.

It is reported, under the verse,

And they ask you as to what they should spend ... ,

that Ibn 'Abbas said: "Verily, some people from the companions, when they were told to spend in the way of Allah, came to the Prophet and said:

'We do not know what this "spending" is which we have been ordered in our properties. So, what should we spend from it?' Then Allah revealed:

and they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: 'Whatever can be spared'

And before that, one used to spend his wealth until he no longer had anything left to give in alms, and until there remained no property to eat from." [*ad-Durru 'l-manthūr*]

It is narrated from Yahya that he was told that Ma'adh ibn-Jabal and Tha'labah came to the Messenger of Allah and said: "O Messenger of Allah!

Verily we have our servants and families; what, therefore, should we spend from our properties?" Then Allah revealed:

And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: 'Whatever can be spared' " [*ibid.*]

It is reported that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the word (*'afw* **العفو**); which we have translated as "whatever can be spared" that *'afw* is the middle (course). [*ibid.,* al-'Ayyashi]

And it is written that al-Baqir (a.s.) and as-Sadiq (a.s.) said that it is modicum, a sufficiency. And the tradition of Ab Basir interprets it as frugality, thrift. [al-'Ayyashi]

It is reported from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the verse:

And they who when they spend, are neither extravagant nor parsimonious, and **(keep)** ***between these the just mean*** **(25:67)**

that he said: "This (stage) is after this stage; it is the middle." [*ibid*]

al-Baqir (a.s.) said: " *'afw* (**العفو**) is what is in excess of the maintenance of the year." [*Majma'u 'l-bayan*]

The author says: The tradition express the same meanings in different words; and the last one gives an example of *'afw* (**العفو**)

There are innumerable traditions showing the excellence of alms, its ways, place and quantity; some of which shall be quoted in the relevant places, God willing.

There is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the verse:

And they ask you concerning the orphans ...

that he said: "When the verse:

(As for) ***those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, surely they only swallow fire into their bellies and soon they shall enter burning fire,***

everyone who had any orphan with him turned him out; and they asked the Messenger of Allah about turning them out. Then Allah revealed:

And they ask you concerning the orphans. Say: ' To set right for them **(their affairs)** ***is good; and if you mingle with them, they are your brethren; and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well-doer ...*** ' "[*at-Tafsir,* al-Qummi]

There is a tradition from Ibn ‘Abbas that he said: When Allah revealed:

And do not approach the property of the orphan except in the best manner ... **(6:153)**

and

those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly ... ,

every one who had an orphan with him went (to his home) and separated his (orphan’s) food from his own food and his drink from his own drink; and he put some extra portion in the orphan’s food, and kept it reserved for him till he ate it or it deteriorated and he threw it away.

This system proved very hard for them, so they mentioned it to the Messenger of Allah. Then Allah revealed:

And they ask you concerning the orphans ... and if you mingle with them, they are your brethren...

Then they mixed their food with their own food and their drink with their own drink. [*ad-Durru ’l-manthr*]

The author says: The same thing has been narrated from Sa‘id ibn Jubayr, ‘Ata’ and Qatadah.

Suratul Baqarah: Verse 221

(٢٢١ وَلَا تَنكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكَاتِ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنَّ ۚ وَلَأَمَةٌ مُّؤْمِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّن مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ ۗ وَلَا تُنكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ
حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنُوا ۚ وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِّن مُّشْرِكٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكُمْ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ
بِإِذْنِهِ ۖ وَيُبَيِّنُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

And do not marry the idolatresses until they believe; and certainly a believing bondswoman is better than an idolatress, even though she should allure you*; *and do not give **(believing women)** ***in marriage to idolaters until they believe*; *and certainly a believing bondsman is better than an idolater, even though he should allure you*; *those invite to the fire, and Allah invites to the garden and to forgiveness by His leave; and makes clear His signs for men, so that they may be mindful*.** **(221)**

Commentary

Qur’an: ***And do not marry the idolatresses until they believe*:**

ar-Raghib has said in *al-Mufradat*: The original meaning of *nikah* (النّكاح) is *'aqd* (the marriage-tie, العقد) then it was metaphorically used for sexual intercourse.

It is impossible that it could be the other way round, because all the words denoting sexual intercourse are but metaphors; they thought it indecent to mention it, just as they disliked to declare the act itself.

It is not possible, for one who does not intend to utter an obscenity, to use the name of an unmentionable act for a decent thing like marriage.

This observation of ar-Raghib is very good; but for this reasoning to be valid, the word *'aqd* (العقد) should be taken to mean the marriage-tie, not the formulae of the proposal and acceptance of marriage.

The *mushrikat* (idolatresses, المشركات) is the *ismu 'l-fa'il* (active participle, i.e. the noun derived from an infinitive verb denoting its doer, اسم الفاعل) of the verb *ishrak* (الاشراک) which means "to ascribe a partner to Allah"; it is also called polytheism.

It is well-known that polytheism may be open or hidden, and these two qualities may be of various degrees and grades. The same is the case with belief and disbelief.

The most open kind of polytheism is to believe that there is more than one god and to take and worship idols and treat them as intercessors before God.

Less open is the polytheism of the people of the book, as they deny the prophethood of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), and, especially their belief that 'Uzayr was the son of God, or 'Isa was the son of God, and so is their claim that they themselves are sons of God, and His beloved.

All this is polytheism, but less manifest than that of the idolaters. More hidden than that is believing that apparent causes independently create their effects; and then relying on these causes.

The most hidden polytheism is the one from which only the chosen servants of Allah, with pure hearts, can escape. And that is to be forgetful of Allah and to divert attention to other than Him.

But there is an important point which must be cleared here. Attributing a verb, adjective or active participle (in its literal sense) to someone is one thing; but using that adjective or active participle as a nomenclature is an entirely different matter.

If a believer neglected an obligatory act, it might be said that he denied it or disbelieved in it; but the nomenclature, unbeliever/disbeliever, cannot be used for him. Allah says:

and for the sake of Allah, pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men **(upon)** ***everyone who can afford the journey to it*****;** ***and whoever disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-sufficient, independent of the worlds*****. (3:97)**

Here the verb, "disbelieves", has been used for him who neglects the pilgrimage, still he is not called an

“unbeliever”, he is a sinner; and if the adjective “unbeliever” or “disbeliever” is used for him at all, it must be conditional, e.g. “disbeliever in pilgrimage”.

The same is the case with all active participles and adjectives used in the Qur’an, like righteous, thankful, purified; and like sinner, unjust, etc. These terms cannot be used as a nomenclature in every place where the verb, adjective or active participle is used.

Accordingly, we cannot use the nomenclature, polytheist, for all those who indulge in hidden or open polytheism. “Idolater” or “polytheist” is a Qur’anic terminology and we should look at the Qur’an to know who is called a polytheist.

The Qur’an does not use this term for the Jews or the Christians. Instead it invented for them a new term, “people of the book”. And the term “disbeliever” (*kafir,* **الكافر**) is general, covering all those who are outside the pale of Islam.

So far as the term, polytheist or idolater, is concerned, the Qur’an uses it in a context where it is known that the disbelievers, other than the people of the book, are meant. See, for example, the following verse:

Those who disbelieved from among the people of the book and the polytheists could not have separated themselves **(from the faithful)** ***until there had come to them the clear evidence*** **(98:1);**

… ***the idolaters are nothing but unclean, so they shall not approach the Sacred Mosque after this year*** **… (9:28);**

then slay the idolaters wherever you find them **(9:5);**

How can there be an agreement for the idolaters with Allah and with His Apostle? **(9:7);**

… ***and fight the polytheists all together as they fight you all together*** **… (9:36)**

etc.

Now we come to the verse: And they said: Be Jews or Christians, you will be rightly guided. Say: Nay! (We follow) the religion of Ibrahim, the upright one, and he was not one of the polytheists.

(2:135) The last sentence, “he was not one of the polytheists”, is not an innuendo against the Jews and the Christians. To know its meaning, let us look at another verse: Ibrahim was not a Jew, nor a Christian; but he was an upright (man), a Muslim, and he was not one of the polytheists.

(3:67). The word “upright (man)” is an adverse allusion to the Jews and the Christians; it exalts Ibrahim above the soulless ritualism of the Jews as well as the dogmatism of the Christians, the materialism of the one and the misguided spiritualism of the other.

It says that Ibrahim was on the middle path, neither a Jew nor a Christian. And then it uses the word "a Muslim", and shows that he was purely a Muslim, not ascribing any partner, associate or colleague to Allah; and then it adversely alludes to the polytheists by the words, "he was not one of the polytheists."

Likewise, in verse 2:135, the word "the upright one" indirectly hints against the Jews and the Christians who had gone astray; and the sentence, "and he was not one of the polytheists" alludes to the idol-worshippers.

In short, this verse does not refer to the Jews and the Christians as polytheists.

Now we come to some verses where the active participle, polytheist (*mushrik,* **المشرک**) has been used for other than idol-worshippers:-

And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating other **(with Him). (12:106)**

... ***and woe to the polytheists who do not give zakat, and they are unbelievers in the hereafter*****. (41:6—7)**

His **(Satan's)** ***power is only over those who befriend him and those who associate others with Him*** **(Allah). (16:100)**

These verses have used the active participle, "polytheists", for those who, for example, befriend Satan and are under his power.

Obviously, almost all the believers (except an infinitesimal minority who are friends of Allah, and are His truly righteous servants) would come under this definition.

But we would not be justified in giving them the name, "polytheists" because the active participle and the nomenclature are two different things.

This lengthy explanation shows that the apparent meaning of the verse under discussion prohibits marriage with idol-worshipping men and women only; marriage with the people of the book is not included in this verse.

In this context, there are no grounds at all for saying that this verse abrogated verse 6 of the chapter of al-Ma'idah; This day have been made lawful for you (all) good things; and the food of those who were given the book is lawful to you and your food lawful for them; and the chaste (ones) from the believing women and the chaste (ones) from those who were given the book before you (are lawful for you) when you have given them their wage (dower) with chaste intention, not fornicating nor taking them for paramours in secret ... (5:6) Nor is there any reason for saying that this verse (2:221) joined with the verse,

... and hold not to the ties of marriage of unbelieving women ... **(60:10),**

abrogates verse 5:6. Nor is it correct to say that the verse 5:6 has abrogated the two verses, 2:221 and 60:10.

Why are the above opinions wrong?

It is because:

First: As explained above, the verse under discussion apparently says nothing about marriage with the people of the book, while the verse of the chapter of *al-Ma'idah* (5:6) is concerned only with marriage with the people of the book.

As the subject matters of the two verses are totally different, there is no question of one of them abrogating the other.

So far as verse 60:10 *is* concerned, it speaks about not holding ties of marriage with unbelieving women, and at the first glance it appears contradictory to verse 5:6 which allows marriage with chaste women of the people of the book.

But a little more thinking will show (as will be explained later on) that this speaks about a man who accepts Islam and his wife remains a disbeliever, then he is forbidden to hold intact the marriage-tie with that woman, while the verse 5:6 speaks about performing a new marriage with a woman who is from the people of the book.

The subject matters, therefore, of the two verses are not the same. Accordingly there arises no question of abrogation at all.

Second: Even if we accept for the time being that verses 2:221 and 60:10 forbid marriage with a Jewess or a Christian woman, the context compels us to believe that they cannot abrogate verse 5:6 which allows that marriage.

Verse 5:6 shows some relaxation of the rule and Allah describes it as His grace upon the believers. Such a verse cannot be abrogated. In Islam relaxed rules usually get the upper hand over strict ones.

Therefore, if there were any abrogation, verse 5:6 would abrogate verses 2:221 and 60:10, and not vice versa.

Third: The chapter of *al Baqarah* (ch. 2) was the first one revealed at Medina soon after *Hijrah;* and the chapter of *al-Mumtahanah* (ch. 60) was revealed at Medina before the take-over of Mecca in 8 A.H.: while the chapter of *al-Ma'idah* (ch. 5) was the last one revealed — it abrogated some previous rules but no rule revealed in it was ever abrogated.

How could the verses revealed before the chapter 5 abrogate the verse of that chapter which was yet to be revealed?

Qur'an: ***and certainly a believing bondswoman is better than an idolatress, even though she should allure you*:**

The people at that time accorded no dignity to slave-girls and anyone marrying such a woman immediately became an object of scorn.

This verse, by qualifying the word "bondswoman" with the adjective "believing" and leaving the word "idolatress" without any condition, emphasizes the principle that a believing woman, even if she is a slave, is better than an idolatress even if she comes from a noble family and is rich and beautiful — the factors which usually attract a man towards a woman.

Someone has said that the word "bondswoman" (*amah,* **أمة**) here and the word "bondsman" (*'abd,* **عبد**) in the next sentence, mean slave woman and slave man of Allah — in other words, believing woman and believing man. But this interpretation is farfetched.

Qur'an: ***and certainly a believing bondsman is better than an idolater, even though he should allure you*:**

The same comment as above.

Qur'an: ***Those invite to the fire, and Allah invites to the garden and to forgiveness by His leave*:**

It explains the reason why marriage with idol-worshippers has been prohibited. The idolaters believe in falsehood, walk on the wrong path, and, thus, evil characteristics become firmly rooted in their psychology.

Disbelief and sin look attractive to them and their eyes lose the ability to see the light of truth. As a result, their whole life becomes an open invitation to follow them to eternal perdition. In short, by their actions and talks they try to allure and entice the believers to the fire of hell.

The believers, on the other hand, proceed on the path of true faith, and live a righteous and virtuous life; and by their good example in words and deeds invite people to the paradise and the Lord's forgiveness by His leave, as He allowed them to call the people into the right path, leading them to eternal bliss — paradise and forgiveness.

Apparently, it would have looked proper to say, "and these (i.e. the believers) invite to the paradise...", as the contrasting sentence says: "those invite to the fire."

But Allah used His own name instead of the believers to show that the believers in this invitation, nay, in all their activities and affairs, rely on their Creator and Lord; they are not independent of Allah, their Master. Allah says:

***...and Allah is the Master of the believers*. (3:68)**

This sentence may be interpreted also in another way: The invitation to the garden and to forgiveness may be a reference to this law itself — the rule forbidding marriage with polytheists is in itself an invitation to paradise and the forgiveness of Allah.

Traditions

It is written about this verse that it was revealed about Marthad ibn Abi Marthad al-Ghanawi. The Messenger of Allah sent him to Mecca to bring some Muslims out; and he was a strong and brave man.

A woman, 'Unaq by name, offered him her person, but he refused; they had been friends before the advent of Islam. Then she said: "Well, will you then agree to marry me?"

He said: "Not before I seek permission from the Messenger of Allah" When he returned (to Medina), he asked permission to marry her. [*Majma'u 'l-bayan*]

The author says: The same thing has been narrated in *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr* from Ibn 'Abbas.

al-Wahidi has narrated through the chain of as-Suddi from Abū Malik from Ibn 'Abbas about this verse that it was revealed about 'Abdullah ibn Rawahah.

He had a black slave-girl; once he became angry and slapped her (on the face). Then he felt frightened, and coming to the Prophet told him the story.

The Prophet said: "What is she? O 'Abdullah!" He replied: "She keeps the fast, prays, does *wudhū* properly, and offers testimony that there is no god except Allah and that you are His Messenger."

The Prophet said: "O 'Abdullah! She is a believing woman." 'Abdullah said: "By Him Who sent you with truth! I shall surely set her free and then marry her." He did so.

Some Muslims ridiculed him and said, "Lo! He married a slave-girl". They thought it better to establish marriage-ties with polytheist men and women, because they were of "honourable" families.

Then Allah revealed:

and certainly a believing bondswoman is better than an idolatress ... [*ad-Durru'l-manthūr*]

Another tradition, quoted in the same book from Muqatil says that she was a bondswoman of Hudhayfah, whom he emancipated and married.

The author says: The above traditions are not contradictory. Maybe there were various such cases, and then the verse was revealed covering all of them.

There are some traditions showing that this verse abrogated verse 5:6, or was abrogated by it. We have shown the absurdity of these views, and we shall discuss those traditions when commenting on verse

5:6.

Suratul Baqarah: Verse 222-223

٢٢٢) وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ ۖ قُلْ هُوَ أَذًى فَاعْتَزِلُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي الْمَحِيضِ ۖ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوهُنَّ حَتَّىٰ يَطْهُرْنَ ۖ فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ)

٢٢٣) نِسَاؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ فَأْتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّىٰ شِئْتُمْ ۖ وَقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُم مُّلَاقُوهُ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ)

And they ask you about menstruation. Say it is a dis comfort; therefore, keep aloof from the women during the menstruation and do not go near them until they have become clean; then when they have cleansed themselves, go in them as Allah has commanded you; surely Allah loves those who purify themselves. **(222)**

Your women are a tillage for you, so go unto your tillage when you like, and do good beforehand for yourselves; .and fear Allah, and know that you are to meet Him, and give good news to the believers. **(223)**

Commentary

Qur'an: ***And they ask you about menstruation. Say: It is a discomfort:***

mahidh (**المحيض**) and *haydh* (**الحيض**) are verbal infinitives; the Arabs say: *hadhati 'l-mar'ah* (**حاضت المرأة**) when the natural system of the woman discharges the well-known periodic blood, which has its own special colour, etc. and is a peculiarity of women.

Its active participle (*ismu 'l-fa'il,* **اسم الفاعل**) is used in both masculine and feminine genders, because there is no risk of misunderstanding. They say *ha'idh* (**الحائض**) and *haidhah* (**الحائضة**) i.e. the woman having monthly period; as they say *hamil* (**الحامل**) and *hamilah* (**الحاملة**) i.e. the pregnant women.

Adha (**الاذى**) means discomfort and distress. Some people say that it is synonymous with *dharar* (harm, loss, **الضرّر**).But it is not correct. The opposite of *dharar* (harm, loss, **الضرّر**) is *naf'* (benefit, profit, **النّفع**); but *naf'* (**النّفع**) is not the opposite of *adha* (**الاذى**).

Also people say *dawaun mudhirrun* (harmful medicine, **دوآء مضر**); but if they said *dawa'un mu'dhin* (**مؤذ**

دوآء) it would give another meaning; disagreeable or unpleasant medicine. Moreover, the Qur'an says:

They shall by no means harm you (*lan yadhurr□kum,* لن يضرّوكم) ***but with a distress*** (*adhdh,* (اذى 3:111))

There would be no sense if you read it as: "they shall by no means harm you but with a harm." In some other verses, also, it is difficult to interpret *adha* (اذى) as *dharar* (loss, harm, ضرر):

Surely **(as for)** ***those who annoy*** (*yu'dh□na,* يوذون) ***Allah and His Apostle ...*** (33:57);

O my people! Why do you give me trouble (*tu'dh□nani,* تؤذوننى) ***and you know indeed that I am Allah's Apostle to you*** (61:5).

Apparently, discomfort (*adha,* اذى) signifies the effect of a disagreeable thing, and there may be times when a situation can be a discomfort as well as a harm or loss.

Menstruation is called *adha* (اذى) in the meaning described above — discomfort, distress, disagreeable.

Those who interpret *adha* (اذى) as harm, say that the question was about sexual intercourse during the monthly period, and Allah replied that it was harmful.

The physicians have said that at that time nature is occupied with cleansing the womb and making it ready for pregnancy, and sexual intercourse in the midst .of that would creat a disturbance which is harmful to the health.

Qur'an: ***therefore, keep aloof from the women during the menstruation and do not go near them...:***

i'tizal (اعتزال) means to withdraw, to retire, to avoid mingling. They say *'azalta nasibahu* (عزلت نصيبه) when you separate his share and keep it in a place away from the others' shares.

Qurb (to be near, القرب) is the opposite of *bu'd* (to be far away, distant, البعد). It is used with the preposition *min* (from, من) and also without any preposition, as in this verse.

Keep aloof from woman during the menstruation means "do not establish sexual relation with them during the passing of blood."

People have had different views and customs about women in their monthly period. The Jews were extremely harsh in this matter. They ostracized such a woman even in food and drink.

Her pots were separated; she took her meal apart from others, sat away from all the household, and slept alone. The Torah had ordained very severe rules concerning that period: about the woman as, well as about those who were unfortunate enough to go near her or even to touch her.

The Christians had no restriction at all about mingling, or even sleeping with them. The pagans of Arabia had no fixed rule.

The Arabs of Medina and its neighbourhood had adopted some of the Jewish customs, and had thus made the lives of rich women difficult for them.

On the other hand some pagans liked to have sexual intercourse with them in the belief that if a woman became pregnant at that time, the child would be cruel and extremely fond of shedding blood — these were admirable qualities for a man among the bedouins!

Apparently the words of this verse confirm the Jewish custom, but it is not so. When we read the next sentence,

then when they have cleansed themselves, go in to them as Allah has commanded you,

we know that it means 'going in to them from their front'. It means that it was only this act, i.e. sexual intercourse in to their front, which was prohibited by the preceding sentences, and that the words, "keep aloof from them" and "do not go near them" are not used in their literal meaning; rather they are metaphors for sexual relations.

Accordingly, this verse prohibits only this one action, and imposes no restriction whatsoever on mingling with them in food, drink, sleep, etc. In short, Islam adopted the middle course between the severe restrictions of the Jews and the free license of the Christians.

The word "menstruation" (*mahidh,* **المحيض**) appears in the question, and then again in the answer (***keep aloof … during the menstruation***)

Why has the word been repeated instead of using a pronoun in the answer? It is because there is a difference in meaning of the two words: the first refers to the menstruation, and the second to its period.

Qur'an: ***until they have become clean*; *then when they have cleansed themselves, go into them as Allah has commanded you*:**

Cleanliness (*taharah,* **الطّهارة**) and its opposite, uncleanliness (*najasah,* النّجاسة) are among the most extensively applied concepts in Islam. They have their own comprehensive laws which cover a major part of religious commandments.

The two words, because of their very common use, have become *al-haqiqatu 'sh-shar'iyyah* (**الحقيقة الشّرعيّة**) as though they were "originally made to express these religious concepts."

The meaning of cleanliness is known to the whole of mankind inspite of the differences in their languages. It shows that the idea of *taharah* (**الطّهارة**) is well-known to all human beings whatever their origin and period.

Life depends on exploiting material things, and using them to achieve its goal. Man desires whatever he desires only because of its benefit, use and characteristics. The most basic and most comprehensive are the benefits concerned with feeding and reproduction.

Sometimes some changes occur in these material things which cause repulsion; and man wants to throw such things away. Such changes appear mostly in taste, smell or colour.

When this change appears, the material becomes unsavoury and repulsive. This change is called uncleanliness (*najasah,* النّجاسة). Its opposite is *taharah* (الطّهارة) which implies that the thing is still in its original condition of benefit and use, which attracts the man to it.

Cleanliness and uncleanliness are, therefore, two mutually exclusive qualities of a thing: it has either a quality which makes it lie likeable or another which makes it repulsive.

Man in the beginning must have perceived these qualities within the sphere of the five senses; gradually the concept would have been widened to cover mental and spiritual subjects, depending on whether those ideas were attractive or repulsive.

Thus we come to the concept of *taharah* (الطّهارة) and *najasah* (النّجاسة) in parentage, character, belief, action and word.

There are four words with nearly the same meaning: *nazafah* (النّظافة), *nazahah* (النّزاهة), *quds* (القدس) and *subhan* (سبحان)

Nazafah (النّظافة): It is the cleanliness of a thing after it had become unclean. It is exclusively used for the things which may be perceived by one of the five senses.

Nazahah (النّزاهة): Its real meaning is "to be far away, distant". Its use for cleanliness is metaphorical — the thing is far from ugliness, uncleanliness.

Quds (قدس) and *subhan* (سبحان) are preserved for mental and spiritual subjects.

Near in meaning to *najasah* (النجاسة) are *qadharah* (filthiness, القذارة), *rijs* (dirtiness, الرّجس) and *rujz* (uncleanliness, الرّجز).

Qadharah (القذارة): Its real meaning is "to be distant". The verbs and adjectives derived from this verbal infinitive are used for a she-camel which remains aloof from the drove, for an unsocial man who does not mingle with others, for a person isolated from others and for a thing which is disliked.

Therefore, its use in the meaning of *najasah* (النّجاسة) must be metaphorical because an unclean thing is left and put aside until it is clean again.

Rijs (الرّجس) and *rujz* (الرّجز): Their original meaning is fright and aversion. Their use in the meaning of uncleanliness is metaphorical.

Islam has extended the meaning of cleanliness and uncleanliness to cover not only the things perceived by the five senses but also to ideas and thoughts.

According to Islam, even general principles and social laws are either clean or unclean. For example, Allah says in this verse:

do not go near them until they have become clean ...

(Here cleanliness refers to cessation of menstruation, — a material cleanliness) Also, He says:

And your garments do purify **(74:4);**

... but He intends to purify you ... **(5:6);**

These are they whom Allah does not intend to purify their hearts **...(5:41);**

None shall touch it save the purified ones. **(56:79)**

Some of these verses refer to spiritual purifications and cleanliness.

The Islamic *shari'ah* treats some unclean things as *al-a'yanu'n-najisah* (inherently unclean things, **الاعيان النّجسة**). Some of them are the blood, urine, stool and semen of man and of some animals, corpses, dogs and pigs.

It has ordered the believers to protect themselves from these things in prayers, food and drink.

Taharah (**الطّهارة**) is of two categories: From *khabath* (**الخبث**) by which one becomes clean after coming into touch with the above mentioned inherently unclean things; and from *hadath* (**الحدث**), which comes through *wudh*ء or an obligatory bath as explained in the books of Islamic laws.

It was explained earlier that Islam is the religion of monotheism. This monotheism is the root to which all the branches owe their existence. Now the belief in monotheism is the highest cleanliness before Allah.

After that come other fundamentals of faith, and they increase the spiritual purification of man. Then comes ethical righteousness, and the laws of *shari'ah* made for the good in this world and the hereafter.

The verse quoted above may be explained by keeping this principle in view. Also, it explains the verse of purity,

Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanliness from you, O People of the House! and to purify you a **(thorough)** ***purifying*****. (33:33)**

Now we return to the explanation of the words used in this verse under discussion: "until they have become clean", i.e. until the blood stops. That is the beginning of the period of cleanliness (*tuhr,* **الطّهر**).

Then when they have cleansed themselves,

i.e., when they have taken an obligatory bath or at least washed the part of body from where blood comes out.

go into them as Allah has commanded you:

This command comes after the order forbidding sexual relation with them; therefore, it signifies only that the restriction is now lifted; in other words, it means that sexual relations with them are allowed after their becoming clean, not that it is obligatory.

Go into them is a metaphor for that relation. It is an example of the character building of the Qur'an; as is the phrase, ***as Allah has commanded you.***

Sexual relations are generally regarded as an amusement. But the Qur'an draws man's attention to the fact that it is a thing ordered by Allah, the order being ingrained in his nature.

We may call it a creative order — an order given not in words, but programmed into our creation and nature.

Thus the Qur'an reminds us that it is an action without which the human species cannot survive; such an important function should not be treated as a sport or an amusement; it is one of the fundamental laws of nature.

This verse is similar to the words of Allah:

...*now be in contact with them and seek what Allah has written for you* ... (2:187),

and:

... *go into your tillage when you like, and do good beforehand for yourselves* ... (2:223)

Apparently, the order to go into them refers to that "creative order" which is known because Allah has given human beings reproductive organs and has created in them the power and inclination which lead them to reproduce.

Possibly the "command" could be interpreted as a legislative order: that it was obligatory to marry for a sufficient number of people to ensure continuity of the human race. But such a meaning is far-fetched.

Some commentators argue that the words ***as Allah has commanded you*** prohibit going into the posterior of the women. But it is the weakest argument; this subject is difficult to prove from this verse.

The argument cannot be based on the order, ***go into them,*** because, as explained earlier, this order, coming after a prohibition, signifies only the permission to establish sexual contact, it is not an obligatory

rule.

Therefore, if one were to ignore it one would not be committing an offence. Nor can it be argued on the strength of the words, ***as Allah has commanded you,*** because, the command referred to herein is the creative, not the legislative one, as we have explained just now.

And even if we accept, for the sake of argument, that it is a legislative order, it would be obligatory for only "a sufficient number of people", as we have explained above. And going against an obligatory order is unlawful only when that order is personally obligatory on oneself.

Qur'an: ***Surely Allah loves those who turn much*** **(to Him)** ***and He loves those who purify themselves*****:**

tawbah (usually translated as repentance, **التّوبة**) means returning to Allah. *Tatahhur* (**التّطهّر**) means purifying and cleansing oneself; in other words, turning away from dirtiness and returning to the original cleanliness.

The meanings of both words come true when one obeys the command of Allah, and especially so in the matters of cleanliness and uncleanliness.

By doing whatever Allah has told one to do, and abstaining from what He has forbidden, one purifies oneself from the uncleanliness of disobedience, and comes back to his Lord.

That is why Allah has ended this verse on these words; they are, therefore, applied to all the rules mentioned before them –

Keep aloof from the women during the menstruation **and** ***go into them as Allah has commanded you.***

The sentences, ***Surely Allah loves those who turn much*** **(to Him)** ***and He loves those who purify themselves,*** are not limited with any qualification or condition.

Therefore, they apply to all the grades of cleanliness, as mentioned earlier. And the forms *mutatahhirin* (**المتطهّرين**) and *tawwabin* (**التّوّابين**) signify great emphasis.

These two factors taken together signify that Allah loves all kinds of repentance (be it by asking for His for giveness, obeying all His commands or having true faith and belief) and all kinds of purification (be it by washing oneself, doing ablution, taking the obligatory bath, performing good deeds or acquiring true spiritual knowledge).

Also, it signifies an increase by number: Allah loves repeated repentance and repeated cleanliness.

Qur'an: ***Your women are a tillage for you, so go unto your tillage when you like*****:**

harth (الحرث) is an infinitive verb, meaning to "to till, to cultivate". It is also used for the land which is tilled or cultivated.

Anna (انّى) is an adverb meaning "when", "whenever". In this sentence it is synonymous with *mata* (when, متى). Sometimes it is also used for "where". Allah says:

... O Maryam! Whence (anna, انّى) ***comes this to you? She said: It is from Allah.*** **(3:36)**

If, in the verse under discussion, *anna* (انّى) means "where", then its meaning would be, "where you like". If it means, "when", then it means, "when you like".

In any case, it gives a sort of freedom to the couple, and that is why we cannot take the words, "***so go unto your tillage***", to be an obligatory order. No one gives a compulsory order and then leaves it in the hands of the doer to do as he likes.

The verse begins with the sentence, *Your women are a tillage for you*; after this reasoning comes the order, and there also the word "*tillage*" is repeated.

This emphasis shows that the freedom given to man of going in to the women is either about the place of the intercourse or about its time; but it is not a freedom of entering anywhere in her body. She is a *tillage* and that idea must be kept in mind when approaching her.

If the order means, 'so go into your *tillage* at any place you like', then it is not concerned with the time of intercourse, and has no conflict whatsoever with the previous verse,

keep aloof from the women during the menstruation and do not go near them.

If, on the other hand, it means, 'so go into your *tillage* at any time you like', then it shall be limited to the period of purity from menstruation, because of the previous verse.

Just to avoid any misunderstanding, it is necessary to point out that this verse could not have abrogated the verse of menstruation — no matter whichever of the two was revealed first:

The verse of menstruation gives two reasons why sexual relation in that period is forbidden — and both reasons are still valid, in spite of the verse of *tillage*.

First, it says that menstruation is a discomfort and it continues to be a discomfort. Second, it shows that this order was given to avoid dirtiness and to remain clean, and Allah always loves those who remain clean and pure; so much so that He counts keeping them cleansed as one of His graces upon them;

Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty, but He intends to purify you and that He may complete His favour on you ... **(5:6)**

Such a language cannot be abrogated by a verse like that of *tillage*. Why? Because this verse says that

your women are your tillage, so come into your tillage when you like.

Now, the reason for this putative "concession" was present even when the prohibition was ordained. If it could not stop its promulgation, how can it cause its abrogation after it had already been firmly established?

Second, the verse of tillage ends on the words, "and do good beforehand for yourselves, and fear Allah, and know that you will meet Him." Such an ending would be out of place if the verse (of tillage) contained a concession.

The meaning of the verse is as follows: Women are to humanity as tillage is to an individual. Agricultural land is needed to preserve the seed and to produce food, so that the human race may continue to exist.

Likewise, women are needed for the continuity of humanity. According to the system created by Allah, the woman's womb is the place where a child is made and develops from a microscopic sperm to a human being.

As the original place of that sperm is the body of man, He created between the man and the woman a love and compassion and an attraction which excites the man to seek the woman.

As the creative purpose of this mutual attraction is to pave the way for the continuity of the human race, there was no reason why it should be confined to one place and not another, or one time and not another, as long as it helped in achieving that goal and did not hinder any other obligatory work.

This explanation shows the relevance of the words ***do good beforehand for yourselves,*** coming after the verse of tillage.

Someone has written that the verse of tillage gives permission to remove the male organ from the woman just before ejaculation. Such an interpretation is patently absurd.

No less absurd is the view that the words, ***do good beforehand*** mean saying*...**bismi'llah** ...* (by the name of Allah ...بسم الله...) before the intercourse.

Qur'an: ***and do good beforehand for yourselves*; *and fear Allah, and know that you are to meet Him, and give good news to the believers.***

Obviously, these words addressed to males, or both males and females, are a sort of encouragement to keep the human species alive through marriage and reproduction.

But is not an end in itself. Mankind and its continuity is desired only for the continuity of the religion of Allah, the dominance of monotheism and the divine worship through piety. Allah says:

***And I did not create the jinn and the human beings except that they should worship Me*. (51:56)**

When He commands them to do anything concerning their life in this world, it is done only to make it easier for them to worship their Lord; it is not done with the aim of encouraging them to submerge themselves in sexual desire and wordly attractions.

No doubt the apparent meaning of ***do good beforehand for yourselves*** is "reproduce and bring into this world new souls to replace those who are dying every day"; but it is not the final goal: the real aim is to keep the remembrance of Allah going on, by producing righteous people who will do good deeds, the recompense and reward of which will reach their forefathers who were instrumental in bringing those good-doers into the world. Allah says:

...and We write down what they have sent before and their footprints ... **(36:12)**

This leads us to believe that the real meaning of ***do good beforehand for yourselves*** is 'send good deeds beforehand for the day of resurrection'. Allah says:

...the day when man shall see what his two hands have sent before ... **(78:40);**

... and whatever of good you send on beforehand for yourselves you will find it with Allah ... **(73:20)**

This verse under discussion

(***and do good beforehand for yourselves, and fear Allah, and know that you are to meet Him ...***)

is similar to verse 59:18:

O you who believe! Fear Allah, and let every soul consider what it has sent on for tomorrow and fear Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do.

In short, the meaning of these sentences is as follows:

***and do good beforehand for yourselves*:**

Send on good deeds beforehand for the day of resurrection. Producing children and training them to be righteous servants of Allah and good members of the society is one of those good deeds.

***and fear All`ah*:**

taqwa (fear of Allah, piety, التّقوى) consists of going into the tillage as commanded by Allah, neither exceeding the limits imposed by Him, neglecting the divine ordinance, nor committing unlawful acts.

and know that you are to meet Him.

The order, in fact, means 'fear Allah whom you have to meet on the day of resurrection, lest your reckoning be severe'. The same is the significance of verse 59:18, mentioned earlier which says:

and fear Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do.

It is not uncommon to use the verb "to know" for the meaning "to be on guard", "to safeguard" and "to look out". Allah says:

... *and know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart ...* (8:24);

it means, 'be afraid of His intervention between you and your hearts.'

and give good news to the believers.

Good deeds and fear of the day of reckoning are the chief characteristics of faith. Therefore, the talk was ended by giving good news to the believers.

For this very reason, verse 59:18 began with the words:

O you who believe.

Traditions

Ahmad, 'Abd ibn Hamid, ad-Darimi, Muslim, Abū Dawūd, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, Abū Ya'la, Ibn al-Mundhir, Abū Hatim, an-Nahhas (in *an-Nasikh*), Abū Hayyan, and al-Bayhaqi (in his *as-Sunan*) have narrated from Anas:

"The Jews, when a woman of their house was in monthly period, turned her out of the house; they did not eat with her, did not drink with her, nor did they live with her in the same house.

The Messenger of Allah was asked concerning this matter. Then Allah sent down the verse:

And they ask you about menstruation. Say: It is a discomfort; therefore, keep aloof from the women during the men struation ...

The Messenger of Allah, therefore, said: 'Remain with them in the (same) houses, and do everything except sexual intercourse.' This report reached the Jews, and they said, 'This man does not want to leave anything to our customs without going against it.'

Usayd ibn al-Hudhayr and 'Abbad ibn Bishr came and said: 'O Messenger of Allah! The Jews are saying so-and-so. Should we not establish sexual relations also with them?"

On hearing it the face of the Messenger of Allah changed and we thought that he had become angry with them.

Then they went out; and at the same moment some milk was brought to the Messenger of Allah as a present; so he sent it behind them and made them drink it. Thus they knew that he was not angry with

them." [*ad-Durru 'l-manthr*]

It is reported from as-Suddi about the verse, *And they ask you about menstruation* that the man who asked it was Thabit ibn ad-Dahdah. [*ibid.*]

The author says: The same thing has been narrated also from Muqatil.

There is a tradition that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the word of Allah,

go into them as Allah has commanded you:

It is about seeking a child; therefore seek a child from where Allah has commanded you. [*at-Tahdhib*]

as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked: "What can the husband of a menstruating woman get from her?" He said: "Everything except the front part itself." [*al-Kafi*]

Another tradition is reported from the same Imam about the woman whose blood stops at the end of her usual period.

The Imam said: "If her husband is overcome by sexual desire, then he should order her to wash her front part, then he may touch her, if he so wishes, before she takes her obligatory bath." Other tradition adds: "And the bath is preferable to me." [*ibid.*]

The author says: There are numerous traditions of the same meaning. The word used in the Qur'an is recited *hatta yathurna* (till they have become clean **حتّى يطهرن**); and it refers to the stopping of blood. Therefore, the Qur'an and these traditions support each other.

It is said that the difference between the two words, *yathurna*(they have become clean, **يطهرن**) and *yatatahharna* (they have cleansed themselves, **يتطهّرن**) is that the second form implies doing something by one's own choice; therefore, it would mean taking the bath; but the first does not imply any choice; thus it would refer to the stopping of blood.

Accordingly, sexual intercourse is prohibited ***until they have become clean,*** i.e., until the blood stops. As soon as the blood stops, relations are again allowed.

When they have cleansed themselves go into them:

If the cleansing refers to washing it would mean that the washing, as described in this tradition, is *sunnah* (commendable); and if it means taking the obligatory bath, then the verse would imply that it is commendable (*sunnah*) to go into them after they have taken their obligatory bath, as the above tradition says, "and bath is preferable to me".

But in no case does this verse imply that going into them after stopage of blood and before the bath is prohibited, because the moment of prohibition lasts until the blood stops.

There is a tradition about the words of Allah,

Surely Allah loves those who turn much* (to Him), *and He loves those who purify themselves,

that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "The people used to cleanse themselves (after defecation) with cotton and stones etc. Then was instituted cleansing with water, and it is a good habit.

Therefore, the Messenger of Allah ordered it and did it. Then Allah sent down in His Book:

Surely Allah loves those who turn much* (to Him), *and He loves those who purify themselves.
"[*al-Kafi*]

The author says: There are numerous traditions with this meaning, and it is said in some of them that the first man to cleanse himself with water was Bara' ibn 'Azib; then this verse was revealed and the custom established.

There is a tradition in the same book from Salam ibn al-Mustanir that he said: "I was with Abu Ja'far (a.s.) when Himran ibn A'yun entered and asked him concerning some things.

When Himran wanted to stand up (and go back), he told Abu Ja'far (a.s.): 'I wish to inform you — May Allah prolong your life and may He grant us the benefit of your presence — that we come to you; and before we go out from your presence, our hearts become soft, our souls think no more about this world, and we disdain the wealth which people have in their hands.

Then we go away from your presence, and when we mingle with people and traders, we (again) love this world.' Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said: 'It is these hearts; at one time they become hard, at another, soft.'

Then the Imam continued: 'Surely, the companions of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) once told him: "O Messenger of Allah! We are afraid of hypocrisy (appearing) in ourselves."

He asked: "And why do you feel so?" They said: "When we are in your presence and you remind us (of Allah) and invite us (to piety), we become afraid (of the displeasure of Allah), and we forget the world and foresake it, so much so that we (seem to) see the hereafter and the garden and the fire; this all is so long as we are in your presence.

But as soon as we come out of your presence, and enter these (our) houses, and feel the scent of our children and see our families, our condition changes almost completely, as though we had no conviction of anything. Do you fear that it is hypocrisy on our part?"

Then the Messenger of Allah told them:

"Not at all. Surely, these steps are of Satan who wants to attract you towards this world. By Allah! If you continued in that condition which you have just described, you would indeed shake hands with the angels, and would walk upon the water.

And had it not been that you commit sins and then seek pardon from Allah, He would certainly create (another) creation who would commit sins and then ask forgiveness of Allah, so that Allah would forgive them. Verily the believer is seduced, (but is also) often-returning (to Allah)."

Have you not heard the words of Allah:

Surely Allah loves those who turn much **(to Him),** ***and He loves those who purify themselves.***

And Allah says:

And that ask forgiveness of your Lord, then turn to Him ... **(11:3)**' "

The author says: A similar tradition has been reported by al-'Ayyashi in his *at-Tafsir.*

The words of the Prophet, "if you continued in that condition..." point to the position of *wilayah* (friendship of Allah, **الولاية**) which means keeping aloof from the world and fixing the eyes on to what is with Allah. We have explained it partly under verse 2:156.

His words, "And had it not been that you commit sins ...", allude to a mystery of the divine decree. And we shall talk about it under verse 15:21

(***And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure***)

and other such verses.

The words, "Have you not heard....", are of Ab Ja'far (a.s.) and are addressed to Himran. These words interpret *tawbah* (**التّوبة**) and *taharah* (**الطّهارة**) as returning to Allah by desisting from wrong and removing the filth of sins from the soul and the rust of mistakes from the heart.

It is an example of deducing a conclusion by looking at a verse from one level while at another level a new result (but never in conflict with the first) may be obtained. For example, the verse,

None shall touch it save the purified ones **(56:79)**

proves at one level that none has the knowledge of the Book except the sinless members of the family of the Prophet, while, on other level, it declares that touching the writing of the Qur'an without doing *wudhu* or taking the bath is prohibited.

Creation progresses, taking from the treasures that are with Allah, until it reaches the last level of *maqadir* (the measures, decrees, **المقادير**). Allah says:

And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure. **(15:21)**

Likewise, the decrees do not come down to us except after passing through various stages of reality. This subject will be further explained under the verse,

***He it is Who has revealed the Book to you*; *some of its verses are decesive* ... (3:7)**

From above, it may be understood that the verse under discussion, at one level refers to returning the soul and heart to Allah by cleansing them from the dirt of sins (as mentioned just above), and, at another level, obliges one to take the bath; and at this level these two words would mean returning the body towards Allah by removing uncleanliness.

This explains also the tradition of the Imam: "Allah sent down to Ibrahim (a.s.) uprightness (*hanifiyyah,* **الحنيفيّة**) and it is cleanliness (*taharah,* **الطّهارة**). And it is ten things — five in the head, and five in the body.

That which is in the head is: trimming the moustache, keeping the beard, cutting the hair, cleansing the teeth, and picking the teeth; and that which is in the body is: removing the hair from the body, circumcision, cutting the nails, taking bath after *janabah* (*i.e.* after sexual intercourse or ejaculation during sleep), and cleansing by water after an evacuation of the bowel.

This is the pure uprightness brought by Ibrahim; it was not abrogated, nor will it be abrogated upto the day of resurrection ... " [*at-Tafsir,* al-Qummi]

There are many traditions showing that the above things are a part of cleanliness. Some of them say: Indeed *n□rah* (hair removing paste, **النّورة**) is a purifier.

There is a tradition about the words of Allah: ***Your women are a tillage for you ...*** narrated by Mu'ammar ibn Khallad that Abu '1-Hasan ar-Ridha (a.s.) told him:

"What do you say about going into the women in their posterior? I said: 'I have been told that the people of Medina have no objection about it.' He said:

'Verily the Jews said that if a man comes (into her) from her behind, his child (resulting .from that intercourse) will be cross-eyed. Therefore, Allah revealed:

Your women are a tillage for you, so go into your filth from where you like,

that is, from their behind.' " [al-'Ayyashi]

There is in the same book a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said about this verse: "From her front and from her behind (but) in the vagina".

Another tradition in the same book reports that Ab□ Basir asked Ab□ 'Abdillah (a.s.) about a man who enters into the posterior of his wife. The Imam expressed his abhorance of it and said:

“Beware of the anus of women.” Then he said: “Your women are a tillage for you, so go into your tillage as you like” only means “whenever you like”.

The same book narrates from al-Fath ibn Yazid al-Jurjani that he wrote same question to ar-Ridha (a.s.); and the same reply came:

“You asked about the man who enters into a woman in her posterior; the woman is a play-thing; she should not be hurt, and she is a tillage as Allah has said.”

The author says: There are numerous traditions with this meaning narrated from the Imams of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* (a.s.) in *al-Kafi, at-Tahdhib,* and *Tafsirs* of al-‘Ayyashi and al-Qummi.

All of them show that the verse of tillage only proves that intercourse should be into the front part. Of course, there is a tradition in *Tafsir* of al-‘Ayyashi narrated by ‘Abdullah ibn Abi Ya‘fur in which he says:

“I asked Abu ‘Abdillah (a.s.) about going into women in their posterior; he said: ‘There is no harm’; then he recited the verse:

Your women are a tillage for you, so go into your tillage when* (as) *you like.

But, apparently the meaning of “going into women in their posterior” means entering into vagina from behind; and the verse quoted supports this meaning, as has been seen in the tradition of Mu‘ammar ibn Khallad, mentioned above.

Ibn ‘Asakir has narrated a tradition from Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah that he said: “The Ansar (of Medina) used to go into their women lying down; and the Quraysh (of Mecca) used various postures. A

Qurayshite man married a woman from Ansar, and wanted to sleep with her (in his own way). She said: except in the way it should be done. The case was reported to the Messenger of Allah; so Allah revealed:

so go into your tillage when* (as) *you like.

That is, in any posture, standing, sitting or lying down, but it should be into the same passage.” [*ad Durru 'l-manthur*]

The author says: This meaning is narrated with numerous chains from various companions, giving the same reason for its revelation.

And the tradition of ar-Ridha (a.s.) has already been quoted giving the same meaning. The words in this last tradition, “in one passage” allude to the rule that intercourse should be in the front part only.

There are numerous traditions showing that going into their posterior is prohibited; the traditions are from numerous chains through numerous companions from the Prophet.

Even those traditions narrated by our Imams of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* which show that entering into their posterior is allowed but with the utmost abhorance do not offer the verse of tillage as their proof. They argue on the basis of verse 15:71, which quotes L□t as saying:

"***He said: 'These are my daughters if you are to do*** (***aught***)'."

Here L□t (a.s.) offered his daughters to them, knowing well that they did not enter into the front part. And this was not abrogated by any Qur'anic verse. We shall talk about it there. Here it is enough to say that the verse of tillage has no relevance to this topic.

But, even according to the Sunni traditions, the ruling is not unanimous.

It has been narrated from 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Malik ibn Anas, Ab□ Sa'id al-Khudri and others that they did not see any harm in that practice and they used the verse of tillage as their proof. Ibn 'Umar goes so far as to say that it was revealed specifically to legalise this practice.

It is reported on the authority of ad-Dar Qutni (in *al-Ghara'ib* of Malik) through his chain to Nafi' that he said: "Ibn 'Umar told me, 'Keep the Qur'an before me, O Nafi'!' Then he recited until he reached the verse:

Your women are a tillage for you, so go into your tillage when you like.

He asked me: 'Do you know, O Nafi'! about whom this verse was revealed?' I replied: 'No!' He said: 'It was revealed about a man from Ansar who entered into the posterior of his woman; so people thought it a grave matter. Then Allah revealed:

Your women are a tillage for you, so go into your tillage when you like.'

I said: 'From her back side into her front part?' He said: 'No. But into her back side itself.' [*ad Durru 'l-manth□r*]

The author says: This meaning has been narrated from Ibn 'Umar with numerous chains. Ibn 'Abdi '1-Barr has said: "The tradition with this meaning from Ibn 'Umar is *sahih* (correct) well-known and famous."

Ibn Rahwayh, Ab□ Ya'la, Ibn Jarir, at-Tahawi (in his *Mushkilu.'l-athar*) and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated with good chains from Ab□ Sa'id al-Khudri that a man entered into the posterior of his woman; people thought it bad of him; then the verse of tillage was revealed. [*ad Durru 'l-manth□r*]

al-Khatib has narrated in the "narrators of Malik" from Ab□ Sulayman al-Jawzjani that he said: "I asked Malik ibn Anas about intercourse with lawful women into their posterior. He told me: 'Just now I have washed my head (i.e. taken a bath) after (doing) it.' " [*ibid.*]

at-Tahawi has narrated from the chain of Asbagh ibn al-Faraj from 'Abdullah ibn al-Qasim that he said:

“I did not find anyone whom I follow in my religion who was doubtful about its legality, (meaning, entering into the back-side ,of the women).

Then he read: ***Your women are a tillage for you.*** Then he asked: ‘So what is more clear than this.’ ” [*ibid.*]

There is a tradition in *as-Sunan* of Ab Daw d, from Ibn ‘Abbas that he said: “Surely Ibn ‘Umar, May Allah forgive him, fell into error (in interpreting the verse of tillage in this way).

The fact is that there were some tribes of Medina, and they were idol worshippers, residing with some tribes of the Jews, and they were the people of the Book.

And these Medinites thought that the Jews were superior than them in knowledge, and they, therefore, followed them in many of their customs.

And those people of the Book did not go to the women but in one posture only (i.e. lying down), and that was most comfortable to the woman. And these tribes of Ansar of Medina adopted this method from them.

Now these Qurayshite used very strange postures; and they enjoyed keeping them in various position — lying down, facing them or entering from their back side.

When the emigrants came to Medina, one of them married a woman from Ansar and started doing like this with her. She complained of it to him and said:

‘We were doing it in one way; you do like that or keep away from me.’

This news spread, till it reached the Messenger of Allah. Then Allah revealed the verse:

Your women are a tillage for you, so go into your tillage when you like.

It means, facing them, from their back side or lying down, meaning in the place of child (i.e. in the place where conception may take place).”

The author says: as-Suy ti has narrated it through other chains also, from Mujahid from Ibn ‘Abbas.

It is reported in the same book: Ibn ‘Abdi ’1-Hakam has narrated that ash-Shafi‘i argued with Muhammad ibn al-Hasan on this subject. Ibn al-Hasan argued that “the tillage can be in the front part only.” ash-Shafi‘i said:

“Then doing it anywhere except in the front part will be prohibited?” He agreed. He (ash-Shafi‘i) said: “Do you think, if he did with her between her thighs or in the folds of her belly, is there any tillage in it?”

He replied: “No!” He asked: “Will it then be unlawful?” He said: “No!” ash-Shafi‘i said: “Then why do

you bring an argument which you yourselves do not believe in?"

It is reported in the same book: Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi '1-Hatim have narrated from Sa'id ibn Jubayr that he said: "Mujahid and I were sitting with Ibn 'Abbas when a man came to him and said:

'Will you not satisfy me about the verse of menstruation?' He replied: 'Surely! Recite it.' He recited:

And they ask you about menstruation ... go into them as Allah has commanded you.

Ibn 'Abbas said: 'From where the blood was coming, you are ordered to go into the same place.' The man said: 'Then what about the verse:

Your women are a tillage for you, so go into your tillage when you like?'

He replied: 'O Woe unto thee! Is there any tillage in the posterior? If what you say were correct then the verse of menstruation would be abrogated, because if that place was not open (because of blood) you would go into this (other) place! But his verse means "whenever you like" in the night or day!' "

The author says: The last argument is defective. The verse of menstruation only says that in that period going into the front part of the women is prohibited.

If, allegedly, the verse of tillage allows going into their posterior, it would cover a new subject, and there would be no conflict between it and the verse of menstruation.

So, there would be no question of either abrogating the other. Moreover, we have already explained that the verse of tillage does not say that going into women in their posterior is allowed.

Of course, some traditions narrated from Ibn 'Abbas argue that the words, "go into them as Allah has commanded you", prove that going into women in their posterior is forbidden.

But we have already explained that it is the most defective argument, because the verse only says that entering into their front part is prohibited so long as they have not become clean.

It says nothing about other matters; and the verse of filth also says nothing except that one may go into one's tillage at any time.

This subject is from Islamic law; we have dealt here with only that side of it which was relevant to the subject of *at-Tafsir.*

Appendix A: A Chronoligical List of the Fourteen Infallibles (a.s.)

Appendix B: List of Names and Numbers of the Surahs of the Holy Qur'an

In this book the references of the Qur'anic verses have been given by writing serial number of the relevant chapter, followed by a colon (:) that is followed by the number/s of the Verse/s. The names of the chapters have been omitted for the sake of brevity.

The names of the chapters with their serial numbers are given here for the guidance of the readers. To find, for instance, the verse 5:67 in the Qur'an, the reader should open the fifth chapter, that its, *al-Ma'idah* (اَلمَآئِدة = The Table) and then find the 67th verse.

S. No.	Arabic Names of the Chapters	Transliteration	Meaning
1.	فاتِحَةُ الكِتاب	*Fatihatu 'l-kitab*	The Opening of The Book
2.	البَقَرة	*al -Baqarah*	The Cow
3.	آل عِمران	*Al 'Imran*	The House of Imran
4.	النِّســاء	*an-Nisa'*	Women
5.	المَـائِدة	*Al-Ma'idah*	The Table
6.	الأنْعـام	*Al -An'am*	Cattle
7.	الأعراف	*al-A'raf*	The Battlements
8.	الأنْفـال	*al-Anfal*	The Spoils
9.	التَّوْبَة	*At-Tawbah*	Repentance
10.	يُونُس	*Yunus*	Jonah
11.	هُود	*Hud*	Hood
12.	يُوسُف	*Yusuf*	Joseph

13.	الرَّعد	*ar-Ra'd*	**Thunder**
14.	اِبراهيم	*Ibrahim*	**Abraham**
15.	الحِجْر	*Al-Hijr*	**El-Hijr**
16.	النَّحل	*An-Nahl*	**The Bee**
17.	الإِسْرآء	*al-Isra'*	**The Night Journey**
18.	الكَهْف	*al-Kahf*	**The Cave**
19.	مَريَم	*Maryam*	**Mary**
20.	طه	***Ta Ha***	**Ta Ha**
21.	الأَنْبِيآء	***al-Anbiya'***	**Prophets**
22.	الحَجّ	*al-Hajj*	**The Pilgrimage**
23.	المؤمِنون	*al-Mu'minun*	**The Believers**
24.	النّور	*an-Nur*	**Light**
25.	الفُرقان	*al-Furqan*	**Discrimination (Salvation)**
26.	الشُّعَراء	*ash-Shu'ara'*	**The Poets**
27.	النَّمْل	*an-Naml*	**The Ant**
28.	القَصَص	*al-Qasas*	**The Stories**
29.	العَنْكَبُوت	*al-'Ankabut*	**The Spider**
30.	الرُّوم	*Ar-Rum*	**The Greeks**
31.	لُقْمان	*Luqman*	**Lokman**
32.	السَّجْدة	*as-Sajdah*	**Prostration**
33.	الأحزاب	*al-Ahzab*	**The Confederates**
34.	سَبَأ	*Saba'*	**Sheba**
35.	فاطِر (المَلائِكة)	*Fatir (or, al-Mala'ikah)*	**The Originator (or The Angels)**
36.	يس	*Ya Sin*	**Ya Sin**
37.	الصّافّات	*as-Saffat*	**The Rangers**
38.	ص	*Sad*	**Sad**

39.	الزُّمَر	*az-Zumar*	**The Companies**
40.	المُؤْمِن	*al-Mu'min*	**The Believer**
41.	فُصِّلَت	*Fussilat*	**Distinguished**
42.	الشُّورى	*ash-Shura*	**Counsel**
43.	الزُّخْرُف	*az-Zukhruf*	**Ornaments**
44.	الدُّخان	*ad-Dukhan*	**Smoke**
45.	الجاثِية	*al-Jathiyah*	**Hobbling**
46.	الأحقاف	*al-Ahqaf*	**The Sand-Dunes**
47.	(مُحَمّد (ص	*Muhammad*	**Muhammad**
48.	الفَتْح	*al-Fath*	**Victory**
49.	الحُجُرات	*al Hujurat*	**Apartments**
50.	ق	*Qaf*	**Qaf**
51.	الذّارِيات	*adh-Dhariyat*	**The Scatterers**
52.	الطُّور	*at-Tur*	**The Mount**
53.	النَّجْم	*an-Najm*	**The Star**
54.	القَمَر	*al-Qamar*	**The Moon**
55.	الرَّحمن	*ar-Rahman*	**The All-merciful**
56.	الواقِعَة	*al-Waqi'ah*	**The Terror**
57.	الحَديد	*al-Hadid*	**Iron**
58.	المُجادَلة	*Al-Mujadalah*	**The Disputer**
59.	الحَشْر	*al-Hashr*	**The Mustering**
60.	المُمتَحَنة	*al-Mumtahanah*	**The Woman Tested**
61.	الصَّف	*as-Saff*	**The Ranks**
62.	الجُمُعة	*al-Jumu'ah*	**Congregation**
63.	المُنافِقُون	*al-Munafiqun*	**The Hypocrites**
64.	التَّغابُن	*at-Taghabun*	**Mutual Fraud**

65.	الطَّلاق	*at-Talaq*	**Divorce**
66,	التَّحْريم	*at-tahrim*	**The Forbidding**
67.	المُلْك	*al-Mulk*	**The Kingdom**
68.	القَلَم	*al-Qalam*	**The Pen**
69.	الحَاقَّة	*al-Haqqah*	**The Indubitable**
70.	المَعارِج	*al-Ma'arij*	**The Stairways**
71.	نُوح	*Nuh*	**Noah**
72.	الجِنّ	*Al-Jinn*	**The Jinn**
73.	المُزَّمّل	*al-Muzzammil*	**Enwrapped**
74.	المُدَّثّر	*al-Muddaththir*	**Shrouded**
75.	القِيامَة	*al-Qiyamah*	**The Resurrection**
76.	الدَّهر (الإنسان)	*ad-Dahr* (**or,** *al -Insan*)	**The Time** (**or, Man**)
77.	المُرسَلات	*al-Mursalat*	**The Loosed Ones**
78.	النَّبأ	*an-Naba'*	**The Tiding**
79.	النّازِعات	*an-Nazi'at*	**The Pluckers**
80.	عَبَس	*'Abas*	**He Frowned**
81.	التَّكْوير	*at-Takwir*	**The Darkening**
82.	الإنفِطار	*al-Infitar*	**The Splitting**
83.	المُطَفِّفين	*al-Mutaffifin*	**The Stinters**
84.	الإنشِقاق	**al-Inshiqaq**	**The Rending**
85.	البُروج	*al-Buruj*	**The Constellations**
86.	الطّارق	*at-Tariq*	**The Night-star**
87.	الأعلى	*Al-A'la*	**The Most High**
88.	الغاشِيَة	*al-Ghashiyah*	**The Enveloper**
89.	الفَجْر	*Al-Fajr*	**The Dawn**
90.	البَلَد	*Al-Balad*	**The Land**

91.	الشـَّمْس	*ash-Shams*	**The Sun**
92.	اللَّيل	*Al-Layl*	**The Night**
93.	الضُّحى	*ad-Duha*	**The Forenoon**
94.	الإنشـِراح	*al-Inshirah*	**The Expanding**
95.	التِّين	*At-Tin*	**The Fig**
96.	العَلَق	*al-'laq*	**The Blood-clot**
97.	القَدر	*al -Qadr*	**Power**
98.	البَيِّنَة	*al -Bayyinah*	**The Clear Sign**
99.	الزِّلزال	*Az-Zilzal*	**The Earthquake**
100.	العَاديات	*al-'Adiyat*	**The Chargers**
101.	القارِعَة	*al-Qari'ah*	**The Clatterer**
102.	التَكاثُر	*at-Takathur*	**Rivalry**
103.	العَصْر	*Al-'Asr*	**Afternoon**
104.	الهُمَزَة	*al-Humazah*	**The Backbiter**
109.	الفيل	*Al-Fil*	**The Elephant**
106.	قُرَيْش	*Quraysh*	**Quraish**
107.	الماعُون	*al-Ma'un*	**Charity**
108.	الكَوْثَر	*al-Kawthar*	**Abundance**
109.	الكافِرون	*al-Kafirun*	**The Unbelievers**
110.	النَّصر	*An-Nasr*	**Help**
111.	تَبَّت	*Tabbat* (**or,** *Lahab*)	**Perish** (**or,The Flame**)
112.	الإخْلاص (التَّوحيد)	*al Ikhlas* (**or,** *at-Tawhid*)	**Sincere Religion** (**or, Divine Unity**)
113.	الفَلَق	*al-Falaq*	**Daybreak**
114.	النَّاس	*an-Nas*	**Men**

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Al-Mizan - An Exegesis Of The Qur'an - Volume 4

Al-Mizan - An Exegesis Of The Qur'an - Volume 4

Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i

Translated by
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This is the fourth volume of this renowned commentary on the Holy Qur'an written by Allamah Tabataba'i, one of its greatest modern commentators, and translated by Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi. This volume contains the exegesis of Surah Al-Baqarah from verse 224 to verse 286.

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Important notice:

The Ahlul Bayt DILP team would like to inform readers of the following regarding this digitised text.

During the editing and digitisation process, the DILP team identified various typographical, spelling, transliteration, and referencing inconsistencies. To improve clarity, readability, and accuracy, grammatical and orthographic corrections have been made, and the transliteration of Arabic names and terms has been standardised where appropriate.

In addition, sections and subheadings have been introduced to improve navigation and make the content more searchable in an online environment. As a result, the digital version diverges from the printed volume.

Users wishing to see the translation as it was published should refer to printed copies available in bookshops. Those who understand are advised to refer directly to the original text.

Miscellaneous information:
Al-Mizan, An Exegesis Of The Qur'an - Volume 4 Surah Al-Baqarah, From Verse 224 to Verse 286 by Allamah as-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i Translated by: Allamah Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi Published by: W.O.F.I.S., World Organization for Islamic Services, First edition 1982/1402 Translated from the Arabic al-M□z□n f□ tafs□ri 'l-Qur'□n Beirut, 1393/1973 (3rd ed.) Published by: P. O. Box No. 11365 - 1545 Tehran – IRAN http://www.wofis.com

Foreword

1. Al-'Allamah as-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i (1321/1904 - 1402/1981) - may Allah have mercy upon him - was a famous scholar, thinker and the most celebrated contemporary Islamic philosopher. We have introduced him briefly in the first volume of the English translation of al-Mizan which will be published, by the help of Allah, in the near future.

2. Al-'Allamah at-Tabataba'i is well-known for a number of his works of which the most important is his great exegesis **al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Qur'an** which is rightly counted as the fundamental pillar of scholarly work which the 'Allamah has achieved in the Islamic world.

3. We felt the necessity of publishing an exegesis of the Holy Qur'an in English. After a thorough consultation, we came to choose al-Mizan because we found that it contained in itself, to a considerable extent, the points which should necessarily be expounded in a perfect exegesis of the Holy Qur'an and the points which appeal to the mind of the contemporary Muslim reader. Therefore, we proposed to al-Ustadh al-'Allamah as-Sayyid Sa'id Akhtar ar-Radawi to undertake this task because we were familiar with his intellectual ability to understand the Arabic text of al-Mizan and his literary capability in expression and translation. So, we relied on him for this work and consider him responsible for the English translation as al-'Allamah at-Tabataba'i was responsible for the Arabic text of al-Mizan and its discussions.

4. We have proceeded to publish the translation of the second volume of the Arabic al-Mizan earlier as it was ready for printing, whereas the first volume is not ready yet for the reasons which we do not wish to state here. So, we saw no reason in delaying its printing. We have included two appendixes: one for the authors cited in all the volumes of al-Mizan, and the other for the books cited therein. These two appendixes have been attached to the first volume of the English translation. Apart from this, the reader will find two appendixes in all the volumes of the translation of al-Mizan.

* * * * *

We implore upon Allah to affect our work purely for His pleasure, and to help us to complete this work which we have started. May Allah guide us in this step which we have taken and in the future steps, for He is the best Master and the best Helper.

World Organization for Islamic Services

(Board of Writing, Translation and Publication)

6/4/1402

1/2/1982

Tehran – IRAN

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 224 – 227

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا اللَّهَ عُرْضَةً لِأَيْمَانِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَتُصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

And make not Allah a target of your swearing (by Him) against your doing good and guarding (against evil) and making peace between men, and Allah is Hearing, Knowing (2:224).

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَٰكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ

Allah will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned, and Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing (2:225).

لِلَّذِينَ يُؤْلُونَ مِنْ نِسَائِهِمْ تَرَبُّصُ أَرْبَعَةِ أَشْهُرٍ فَإِنْ فَاءُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

For those who swear (to abstain) from their wives is (ordained) a waiting for four months; then if they go back, then Allah is surely Forgiving, Merciful (2:226).

وَإِنْ عَزَمُوا الطَّلَاقَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

And if they resolved on divorce, then Allah is surely Hearing, Knowing (2:227).

Commentary

Verse 224

Qur'an: And make not Allah a target of your swearing (by Him) against your doing good and guarding (against evil) and making peace between men, and Allah is Hearing, Knowing (2:224).

al-"Urdah" (العُرْضَة) is derived from *al-'ard* (العَرْض) which means to display a thing to show its fitness for the purpose for which it is made. For example, to display goods for sale, to show a house for rent, to offer food for consumption. Some of the uses of *al-'urdah* are: a target for shooting practice is called *al-'urdah* of the arrows; a horse readied for a journey is called *al-'urdah* for travel; a girl of marriageable age is called *al-'urdah* of marriage. All these are relevant to its original meaning. But the use of this word for a hindrance on the road (and other similar uses) have come into vogue later as metaphors.

"al-Ayman" (اَلاَيْمَان) is plural of *al-yamin* (اليَمين) and means "oaths". Its original meaning is the right hand. As they strike by, raise, or give, the right hand when taking an oath, showing allegiance or concluding a deal, the word was metaphorically used for the oath, borrowing the organ of an action for the action itself, because of their mutual relationship. This same relationship also allows the use of the name of the action for its organ, as *as-sabbabah* (السَّبَّابَة = the one who abuses) is used for the forefinger which is often used to point with when abusing.

The meaning of the verse, then, shall be as follows (And Allah knows better!):

And do not use (the name of) Allah (like) a target upon which to attach your oaths which you have sworn to the effect that you will not do a good deed or will not guard yourselves against evil or will not make peace between people; because Allah does not like it that His name be made a means of desisting from what He Himself has ordered (2:224).

(This meaning is supported by the traditions which will be quoted later.)

Based on this meaning, the verse can be analysed grammatically in three ways:

a) *An tabarru* (اَنْ تَبَرُّوُا = literal meaning: that you do good) is in fact an *la tabarru* (اَنْ لا تَبَرُّوُا = that you do not do good). In the translation we have followed this meaning and the negative has been expressed by the word "against" (your swearing against your doing). Such an omission of the negative is common after *"an"* (اَن) which turns the verb into an infinitive. See for example the verse:

Allah makes it clear for you (lest) you err (4:176).

b) Or there is no omission; and the words "your doing good..." is governed by the negative "make not". The meaning, in this case, will be that Allah forbids you to take such oaths.

c) Or the *al-'urdah* (target) may imply excess, as a target is used for shooting practice. The verse, in this

case, will be a prohibition of excessive swearing by the name of Allah. It will mean, “Do not swear every now and then by the name of Allah, because it will lead you to abstain from doing good, etc.” A habitually swearing man does not care what he swears about. As he becomes used to it, it loses its importance, and it may encourage him to make a false oath. This much about his own attitude. So far as society is concerned, he will lose his respect, people will look down upon him – after all, swearing implies that the man himself is not sure that people will accept his words as true. If, in this way, he degrades his own words, why should other believe what he says. Ultimately, he will become a subject of the verse:

***and do not obey** (**i.e. accept the words of**) **any mean swearer.** (**68:10**).*

The words of Allah, “and Allah is Hearing, Knowing” are a sort of threatening, whatever meaning one accepts of the preceding sentence. But the first meaning (upon which our translation is based) is the most obvious.

Verse 225

***Qur’an: Allah will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned** (**2:225**).*

A *“al-laghw”* (اللَّغْو = vain) action is that which has no effect. The effect of a thing varies according to variations in its attachments, etc. An oath may have an effect in so far as it is a word, or in so far as, it emphasizes speech; or thirdly in so far as it is a vow; or fourthly if it is broken, or if one perjures, and so on. In this verse the vain oath is contrasted with that (oath) which hearts have earned. It shows that the vain oath here means that which has no effect on the intention of the speaker, that is, such oaths which one utters (like ‘No, By God’, ‘Yes, By God’) without taking those words seriously.

“al-Kasb” (الكَسْب) means to earn profits by a work or profession etc. Originally, it was used for the obtaining of those things which fulfil material needs. Then it was metaphorically used for any good or evil a man may get as a result of any of his actions, like earning praise and good. reputation through good character and social services, and earning good knowledge, superiority, and nobility by striving for them; or earning condemnation, abuse, and slander; or sin and error by one’s evil actions. This is the meaning of *al-kasb* and *al-iktisab* (الاِكْتِسَاب). Some people say that al-iktisab is used when one earns a benefit for one’s own self; and al-kasb refers to earning a benefit whether it is done for one’s own self or for others, as when a servant earns for his master, or a guardian for his ward.

In any case the active participle *al-kasib* (الكَاسِب) and *al-muktasib* (المُكْتَسِب), (both of which mean “one who earns”) are used only for a human being.

The Meaning Of “Heart” In The Qur’an

The above explanation is a proof that the words “your hearts” in the verse refer to the man himself – his

spirit and soul. The faculties of thought, understanding, love, hate, fear, and so forth, may be attributed (basing what one says on the common man's belief) to the heart, as hearing is attributed to the ears, sight to the eyes, and taste to the tongue. But the word 'earning' can only be attributed to man. As the verse uses the expression, "for what your hearts have earned", it proves that the "heart" here stands for the 'soul', 'spirit'.

The same meaning applies to the verses:

...his heart is surely sinful (***2:283***).

And:

...And comes with a penitent heart. (***50:33***).

When man looked at animals and at himself, he found that perceptions and thinking sometimes become ineffective, for example, during epilepsy or lunacy, yet life continues, as is witnessed by the heartbeat and the pulse. This led him to believe that the source of life is the heart; he thought that the spirit of life first attaches itself to the heart, and that it is from there that life extends to all parts of the body. He further believed that all the psychological faculties, such as perception, will, love, hate, hope, fear and other such things, belong to the heart because it is the seat of the psyche – the spirit. Of course, every organ is the source of its own function – the mind for thinking, the eyes for seeing, the ears for hearing, the lungs for breathing, and so on. But all are like tools which are used in the work they are made for; it is the heart that is the tool-wielder.

And it is a fact that physical research and experiments have not been able to pin-point the source of control which rules over the whole body. There is no doubt that the limbs and organs of the body, even though they are different from each other and have different functions and duties to perform, are united under the control of one ruling power, and are really one unit.

It is not that the ancients were not aware of the mind and its functions. Man knew the importance of the head from the very beginning. Does one not see that all the nations and races, with their different languages, name the "authority". the "head", and with it its derivatives. For example *ar-ra's* (**الرَّأْس** = head), *ar-riyasah* (**الرِّيَاسَة** = headship, meaning presidency) and *ar-ra'is* (**الرَّئِيس** = head, that is, President). Then there are the phrases like head of a thread, the head (beginning) of a period, the head (starting-point) of a distance, the head (beginning) of a speech, the head (summit) of a mountain, a head (individual number) of animals or cattle, the head of the year (New Year's Day), etc.

Apparently, this is the reason why people attribute perception and thinking and sentiments (which are not totally void of perception) like love, hate, hope, fear, will, envoy, chastity, bravery, etc. to the heart. But by heart they mean the spirit which runs into or is attached to, the body. They attribute perceptions and sentiments to the heart, as well as to the spirit and soul, and also to their own selves. They say: I love him; my soul loves him, my heart loves him. Then the metaphorical use of heart for spirit and soul came

into general use; then this use was extended to the breast, because the breast contains the heart; and, therefore, to it were attributed the faculties of perception, action and the sentiments.

There are many such uses in the Qur'an:

…He expands his breast for Islam… (***6:125***).

…your breast straitens at what they say (***15:97***).

…and the hearts rose up to the throats…alluding to the constriction of the breast (***33:10***).

Surely, Allah knows whatever is in your breasts. (***5:7***).

A point to consider: Can these expressions not be a support for the common belief mentioned earlier, even if it is yet to be clarified? Shaykh Abu 'Ali Ibn Sina is inclined to believe that it is the heart that perceives, and the brain is its tool.

Anyhow, now we come back to the verse. The sentence, "but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned", is a metaphor in a metaphor. The preceding sentence says:

Allah will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths. (***2:225***).

The contrasting sentence should have been, "...for what is firmly considered of your oath". Instead, it mentions the effect, that is, the sin, which will come into being if one breaks that vow. It is done to show that Allah looks only at the heart, as He says:

and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it Allah will call you to account for it (***2:284***).

There does not reach Allah their flesh nor their blood, but to Him reaches your piety… (***22:37***).

The words, "and Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing", hint at the undesirability of vain swearing and oath-taking, because such a thing should not be done by a believer. Allah says:

Successful indeed are the believers (***23:1***).

Who are humble in their prayers (***23:2***).

And who keep aloof from what is vain… (***23:3***).

Verse 226

Qur'an: For those who swear (***to abstain***) ***from their wives is*** (***ordained***) ***a waiting for four months; then if they go back, then Allah is surely Forgiving, Merciful*** (***2:226***).

"al-Ila' "(الإِيْلآء = to swear), in Islamic jurisprudence, means the swearing by husband that he will not go to his wife, provided it is done in anger with an intention to harm the wife. This is the meaning intended in this verse. The preposition "from" after the verb "swear" gives the meaning of distance; thus, the verse implies the meaning of swearing to abstain and to remain aloof from the wife. The waiting of four months implies the same, because it is the period at the end of which cohabitation is, according to the *Shari'ah*, obligatory on the husband.

"If they resolved on divorce". The verse means the intention followed by its implementation. It is also implied by the words, "Allah is surely Hearing, Knowing", because "Hearing" can be applied to the spoken words of the divorce, not its intention only.

The words at the end of verse,

***"Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing"* (*2:225*).**

Show that if one goes back to his wife then one shall not be punished in the hereafter. So far as this life is concerned, he is obliged to pay its penalty, *al-kaffarah* (الكَفَّارَة) because this penalty is not forgiven. Allah says:

Allah does not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He calls you to account for the making of deliberate oaths; so its expiation is the feeding of ten poor men out of the average (food) you feed your families with, or their clothing, or the freeing of a neck, but whosoever cannot find (means) then fasting for three days; this the expiation of your oaths when you swear. And guard your oaths. (5:89).

The meaning of the verses is that if one swears to abstain from his wife, then the Muslim Qadi (judge) shall give him a time of four months to go back to her. If by the end of that period, he gives the penalty for the oath, and establishes sexual relations with her, then he shall get no punishment in the hereafter. If on the other hand, he decides to divorce her, that is another way out. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing.

Traditions

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi, from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) about the words of Allah: And make not Allah a target of your swearing, that he (the Imam) said: "It is the word of man: 'No, by God', 'Yes, by God'."

Another tradition in the same book, from Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq ('a), about this verse, says: "That is, a man swears that he would not talk with his brother, and other such oaths, or that he would not talk with his mother."

Another tradition in *al-Kafi* from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) about it says: "When you are called to make peace between two persons, do not say on oath that you will not carry out."

The author says: The first tradition gives one explanation of the verse, the second and third give another. There is another tradition of nearly the same meaning in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq ('a) that they said: "He is the man who makes peace between two persons, and carries the burden of the sin that is between them..." Apparently the tradition means that such a man should not swear that he will not try to do it; he should make peace between them, even if he has to carry the sin, and Allah will forgive him, and he will be an example of him who follows this verse.

There is in *al-Kafi* from Mas'adah from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) that he said about the verse:

***Allah will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths...* (*2:225*).**

"Vain is the saying of a man, 'No, by God', and 'Yes, by God', without having any firm intention about anything."

The author says: The same meaning is narrated in *al-Kafi* from him by another chain; and in *al-Majma' al-Bayan* from him and Imam al-Baqir ('a).

There is a narration in *al-Kafi* from both Imams that they said: "If a man swears that he will not go near his wife, then she has not got any say or any right for four months; and he has no sin in not going to her in that period. If the four months pass away and he does not touch her, then, so long as she is silent and does not complain, he is absolved and free (from any responsibility). Then if she brings her case (before the Qadi), the husband will be told: either go back to her and touch her or divorce her. 'Resolve of divorce' means that he should leave her; then when she sees her monthly blood and (afterwards) becomes clean, he will divorce her. And he has, moreover, the right of *ar-raj'ah* (الرَّجْعَة = returning to her; revoking the divorce) before the expiry of three monthly periods. So this is the *al-'ila'*, which Allah revealed in His Book, and which the Apostle of Allah ordained."

There is in the same book a tradition from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) in which he says, *inter alia*: "And *al-'ila'* is that he says, 'By Allah, I shall not cohabit with thee so and so' or says, 'By Allah, I shall put thee to sorrow', and then puts her to sorrow."

The author says: There are some differences between Sunnis and Shi'ahs about some particulars of *al-'ila'*; but the discussion of it concerns Islamic jurisprudence.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 228 - 242

وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنَّ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَبُعُولَتُهُنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

And the divorced women should keep themselves in waiting for three monthly courses; and it is not lawful for them that they should conceal what Allah has created in their womb, if they believe in Allah and the last day; and their husbands have a better right to take them back in the meanwhile if they wish for reconciliation; and they have rights similar to those upon them in a just manner, and for the men is (right) a degree above them, and Allah is Mighty, Wise (2:228).

الطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتَانِ فَإِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا مِمَّا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا إِلَّا أَنْ يَخَافَا أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

Divorce is twice; then keep (them) in fairness or let (them) go with kindness; and it is not lawful for you to take any part of what you have given them, unless both fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah; then if you fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah, there is no blame on them for what she gives up (to become free thereby). These are the limits of Allah, so do not exceed them, and whoever exceeds the limits of Allah then these it is that are the unjust (2:229).

فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا تَحِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدُ حَتَّىٰ تَنْكِحَ زَوْجًا غَيْرَهُ فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يَتَرَاجَعَا إِنْ ظَنَّا أَنْ يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ يُبَيِّنُهَا لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

So if he divorces her she shall not be lawful to him afterwards until she marries another husband; then if he divorces her there is no blame on them both if they return to each other (by marriage), if they both think that they can keep within the limits of Allah, and these are the limits of Allah which He makes clear for a people who know (2:230).

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِتَعْتَدُوا وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَٰلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُوًا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

And when you divorce the women and they reach their prescribed time then either retain them in fairness or set them free with fairness, and do not retain them for injury, so that you exceed the limits, and whoever does this, he indeed is unjust to his own self, and do not take Allah's signs for a mockery, and remember the favour of Allah upon you, and that which He has revealed to you of the Book and the Wisdom, admonishing you thereby; and fear Allah, and know that Allah is the Knower of all things (2:231).

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ أَنْ يَنْكِحْنَ أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ إِذَا تَرَاضَوْا بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ذَٰلِكَ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَٰلِكُمْ أَزْكَىٰ لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

And when you have divorced the women and they have ended their term (of waiting), then do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they agree among themselves in a lawful manner; with this is admonished whosoever among you believe in Allah and the last day; this is more profitable and purer for you; and Allah knows while you do not know (2:232).

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَا تُضَارَّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ بِوَلَدِهِ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَٰلِكَ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تَسْتَرْضِعُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَا آتَيْتُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

And the mothers should suckle their children for two complete years for him who desires to make complete the time of suckling, and their maintenance and their clothing must be borne by the father according to usage; no soul shall have imposed upon it a duty but to the extent of its capacity; neither shall a mother be made to suffer harm on account of her child, nor a father on account of his child; and a similar duty (devolves) on the (father's) heir; then if both desire weaning by mutual consent and counsel, there is no blame on them; and if you wish to engage a wet-nurse for your children, there is no blame on you so long as you pay what you promised according to usage; and fear Allah and know that Allah sees what you do (2:233).

وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَعَشْرًا فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

And (as for) those of you who die and leave wives behind, they should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten (days); then when they have fully attained their term, there is no blame on you for what they do for themselves in a proper manner; and Allah is aware of what you do (2:234).

وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا عَرَّضْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ خِطْبَةِ النِّسَاءِ أَوْ أَكْنَنْتُمْ فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ سَتَذْكُرُونَهُنَّ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُوَاعِدُوهُنَّ سِرًّا إِلَّا أَنْ تَقُولُوا قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا وَلَا تَعْزِمُوا عُقْدَةَ النِّكَاحِ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ الْكِتَابُ أَجَلَهُ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ

And there is no blame on you respecting that which you speak indirectly in the asking of (such) women in marriage or keep (the proposal) concealed within your minds; Allah knows that you will soon mention them, but do not give them a promise in secret unless you speak in a proper manner; and do not resolve the marriage-tie until the prescribed term is completed, and know that Allah knows what is in your mind, therefore beware of Him, and know that Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing (2:235).

لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ مَا لَمْ تَمَسُّوهُنَّ أَوْ تَفْرِضُوا لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً وَمَتِّعُوهُنَّ عَلَى الْمُوسِعِ قَدَرُهُ وَعَلَى الْمُقْتِرِ قَدَرُهُ مَتَاعًا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ

There is no blame on you if you divorce the women while yet you have not touched them or appointed for them a dowry, and make provision for them, on the wealthy according to his means, and on the straitened in circumstances according to his means, a provision according to usage; (this is) a duty on the doers of good (to other) (2:236).

وَإِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَمَسُّوهُنَّ وَقَدْ فَرَضْتُمْ لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً فَنِصْفُ مَا فَرَضْتُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يَعْفُونَ أَوْ يَعْفُوَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ وَأَنْ تَعْفُوا أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَنْسَوُا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

And if you divorce them before you have touched them and you have appointed for them a dowry, then (pay to them) half of what you have appointed, unless they remit or he remits in whose hand is the marriage tie; and it is nearer to piety that you should remit, and do not forget generosity between you; surely Allah sees what you do (2:237).

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَىٰ وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ

Maintain the prayers and the middle prayer and stand up truly obedient to Allah (2:238).

فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ فَرِجَالًا أَوْ رُكْبَانًا فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَمَا عَلَّمَكُمْ مَا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ

But if you are in danger, then (say your prayers) on foot or on horseback; and when you are secure, then remember Allah as He has taught you what you did not know (2:239).

وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا وَصِيَّةً لِأَزْوَاجِهِمْ مَتَاعًا إِلَى الْحَوْلِ غَيْرَ إِخْرَاجٍ فَإِنْ خَرَجْنَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي مَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ مِنْ مَعْرُوفٍ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

And those of you who die and leave wives behind, (***make***) ***a bequest in favour of their wives of maintenance for the year without turning*** (***them***) ***out, then if they themselves go away, there is no blame on you for what they do of proper deeds about themselves, and Allah is Mighty, Wise*** (***2:240***)***.***

وَلِلْمُطَلَّقَاتِ مَتَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ

And for the divorced women (***too***) ***provision*** (***should be made***) ***according to usage;*** (***this is***) ***a duty on those who guard*** (***against evil***) (***2:241***)***.***

كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

Thus, Allah makes clear to you His signs, so that you may understand (***2:242***)***.***

Commentary

These verses promulgate the laws concerning divorce and the period of waiting as well as about a divorcee suckling her child; in middle of it are some rules concerning prayer.

Verse 228

Qur'an: And the divorced women should keep themselves in waiting for three monthly periods (***2:228***)***.***

"at-Talaq" (**الطَّلَاق**) literally means to release from bonds, to remove the fetters. Then it was metaphorically used for releasing the women from the tie of marriage, and it was so exclusively used in this sense that eventually it became its real meaning.

"Yatarabbasna bi anfusihinna" (**يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِن** = should keep themselves in waiting): *at-tarabbus* (**التَّرَبُّص**) is to wait, to hold back. This word is followed here by *"bi anfusihinna"* (**بِأَنْفُسِهِن** ; literal meaning = concerning their own selves); it thus gives the meaning that they should not attach themselves to any man. In other words, it ordains the rule of *al-'iddah* (**العِدَّة**) = waiting period) of divorce.

"A woman is in *al-'iddah*" means that she is holding herself back from marrying again, lest the sperm of the original and subsequent husbands be mixed, and genealogies and consanguinity be corrupted.

The words "should keep themselves in waiting" thus not only legislate a law but also hint at its

philosophy. It is not necessary for that philosophy and benefit to be found in every individual case; the laws are made keeping in view the good of the majority of people, not all.

The words thus mean: the divorced women should keep themselves in waiting, by not giving themselves to another husband, so that the sperm should not be mixed and consanguinity and parentage not corrupted.

It is an order, but the sentence (in Arabic) is constructed as a statement. This form of expression is used for emphasis.

"*al-Quru'*" (القُرُوء) is the plural of *al-qur'* (القُرْء). This is used for the monthly period and also for the period of cleanliness; and is, thus, a word made with two opposite meanings, as some people have said. But the fact is that its root *q-r-'* (قرء) indicates collection, gathering, joining together, but not every collection and gathering, only that which is followed by dispersal and transmission. Keeping this in view, it is obvious that the original meaning of *al-qur'*, would have been the period of cleanliness, because it is the time when blood accumulates in the womb; then it was used also for the period of menstruation because it is the time when blood is discharged after its accumulation.

al-Qar' (القَرْء) is also used for reading and reciting, because in recitation and reading, letters and words are first joined together and then proclaimed. The scholars of language have clearly said that *al-qar'* means collection and gathering. And that it indicates such gathering may be inferred from the following verses:

Do not move your tongue with it to make haste with it. (***75:16***).

Surely on Us is the collecting of it and [*"qur'anahu"* (قُرْآنَه)] ***the reciting of it.*** (***75:17***).

Therefore, when We have recited it, then follow its recitation (***75:18***).

And a Qur'an which We revealed in portions so that you may read it to the people by slow degrees... (***17:106***).

Both verses are concerned with the collection and revelation of the Book of Allah; and in both it is referred to as the Qur'an, not as the Book or the Furqan etc.

It is for the same reason that it is given the name Qur'an.

ar-Raghib says in his *al-Mufradat: al-Qur'* in fact means the start of the menses after cleanliness. As it has two elements in its meaning - cleanliness and the following menses - it is used for both meanings, even separately. When a noun is made for a meaning with two elements, it is also used for those elements separately. For example *al-ma'idah* (المَآئِدَة) is used for a table upon which food is arranged; now it is often used either for the table only or the food only. But *al-qur'* was originally made for cleanliness only nor for the menses only. A girl who has not yet seen blood is not said to be in *al-qur'*;

likewise a sick woman whose blood continues without stopping is not said to be in *al-qur'*.

***Qur'an: And it is not lawful for them that they should conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they believe in Allah and the last day* (*2:228*).**

The divorced woman should not conceal the fact of her being pregnant or her monthly period. Without this prohibition she might have been tempted to conceal it, so that she might soon complete the *al-'iddah* or that her husband might not get chance of revoking the divorce.

This prohibition of concealment has a proviso:

***If they believe in Allah and the last day,* (*2:228*).**

While the basic law of the waiting period has no such clause. This clause shows that the order given is an essential requirement of the belief, and the women must adhere to it faithfully and scrupulously. It is as we say: Live with the people honestly if you want good.

***Qur'an: And their husbands have a better right to take them back in the meanwhile if they wish for reconciliation* (*2:228*).**

"al-Bu'ulah" (**البُعُوْلَة**) is plural of *al-ba'l* (**البَعْل**), which means the male spouse, so long as the couple are married. Later, the word acquired a shade of meaning of domination, strength and firmness, because of the position of the husband vis-a-vis the wife. Now, we find other usages all based on this meaning. For example, a horse rider is called its *al-ba'l*; a high land is called *al-ba'l*, there was an idol named *ba'l* (**بَعْل**), and a date-tree is named *al-ba'l* when it grows high.

"Their husbands": The pronoun "their" stands for "the divorced women". But the order is not for those who are given an irrevocable divorce; it is meant only for those divorced revocably.

"In the meanwhile," refers to the period of waiting.

The proviso, "if they wish for reconciliation", is very important. It shows that taking them back, that is, the revocation of the divorce, must be with good intention, with a wish to make amends. The husband should not revoke the divorce only to inflict harm and injury upon the woman, because, such a behaviour is clearly forbidden in the verse,

***And do not retain them for injury.* (*2:231*).**

"Ahaqq" (**أَحَق**) is the comparative (and superlative) and means "having more right". it always requires another person having less right. For example, the previous husband had a right to the divorcee, and the other proposers also have right to her, but the previous husband has more right to her, because of the previous marriage-tie.

But this meaning apparently is not correct here, because this verse is not talking about a fresh marriage;

it is speaking about “taking them back”, revoking the divorce; and it is a right which no one shares with him. So, why use the phrase “have a better right”? The fact is that there is a very interesting deletion in the verse. Its complete meaning is: their husbands have more (or a better) right to them than another proposer, and this right can be utilized by taking them back and revoking the divorce during the period of waiting.

This right exists only in revocable divorce; and it is this circumstantial evidence which proves that the order is only about such divorcees and not about those who have been given an irrevocable divorce.

The verse explains the law concerning only those divorcees with whom marriage has been consummated, provided they are at the age of menstruation and are not pregnant. For others, there are other verses.

Qur’an: And they have rights similar to those upon them in a just manner, and for the men is (right) a degree above them. (2:228).

“al-Ma’ruf” (**المَعْرُوف** = variously translated in these verses as “a just manner”, “fairness”, a “lawful manner”, “usage”, a “proper manner” and “proper deeds”) literally means “known”. It refers to the things and usages established in society by the mutual dealings of its members, and recognized as just and good by general acceptance. This word has been repeatedly used in these verses – in twelve places. It shows how much importance Allah attaches to fairness and justice in matters concerning divorce. *al-Ma’ruf* is a comprehensive word which covers the guidance of reason, the laws of religion, nobility of character and moral and ethical values.

As Islam has built its *Shari’ah* on the foundation of nature, (*al-ma’ruf* = known) in its eyes is that custom which is known to the people when they walk on the straight path of nature and do not deviate from it.

The natural law of society says that all the members of society should be treated equally, they should have as much rights as they have obligations. At the same time it decrees that every individual’s personal perfection and attributes must be recognized. The ruler’s authority, the people’s subordination, the scholar’s knowledge, the illiterate person’s ignorance, all must be weighed in the scale of their usefulness for, and effect on, society; and with that recognition everyone should be given his proper right.

The same principle was applied by Islam concerning the rights and obligations of women. It gave her as much right upon the husband as it ordained upon her for the husband. At the same time, it preserved her rightful value and place in her union with the man; and in this area, Islam found that men have a right a degree above women.

It is clear from the above that the sentence, “and for the men is (a right) a degree above them”, is like a clause which completes the principal sentence. The whole sentence means that women, or divorcees, are equal with men, but that men are a degree above them; therefore, Allah has given the women as

much right as is laid upon them, with the preservation of the authority of men over them. We shall discuss this subject later on.

Verse 229

Qur'an: Divorce is twice; then keep (them) in fairness or let (them) go with kindness; and it is not lawful for you to take any part of what you have given them (2:229).

"al-Marrah" (المَرَّة) means once; it is derived from *al-murur* (المُرُوْر = to pass). *ad-daf'ah* (الدَّفْعَة), *al-karrah* (الكَرَّة) and *an-nuzlah* (النُّزْلَة) have the same meaning. *at-tasrih* (التَّسْرِيْح) means to send forth the cattle to pasture. *as-sarh* (السَّرْح) is a tree, the fruit of which is eaten by the camel. The Arabs say *sarraht al-ibal* (سَرَّحْتُ الإِبَلَ = I let loose the camel to feed on *sarh*). *at-tasrih* is derived from the same root and is used in this verse as a metaphor for releasing the divorced woman by not taking her back during the waiting period.

"Divorce is twice": The divorce referred to here is the revocable divorce. That is why it has been followed by the words,

then keep (them) in fairness or let (them) go with kindness (2:229).

The third divorce, after these two, is mentioned in verse 2:230, which says:

So if he divorces her, she shall not be lawful to him until she marries another husband (2:230).

To let them go with kindness means to let them go free by not revoking the divorce. They are either to be retained in fairness *bi-ma'rufin* (بِمَعْرُوْفٍ) or to be freed with kindness *"bi ihsanin"* (بِإِحْسَانٍ). The difference between these expressions is important. Retaining the divorcee by revoking the divorce could be done with a bad intention, to injure and harm her. For example, a man divorces his wife, then waits until she nearly completes the waiting period and then he revokes the divorce and takes her back; then again, he divorces her and the procedure is repeated. Such things could be done to mentally torture the woman; and it is unjust, unfair and cruel; the *Shari'ah* of Islam dislike such behaviour. The revocation which is commendable in this religion is the one carried out for, and based on reconciliation, at which there is hope for the good companionship and love which Allah has created between husband and wife.

In the same way, letting her go could be done in an ugly manner; for example, quarrelling with her, showing rage and anger, and demonstrating a spirit of revenge. Such behaviour is not allowed in Islam. The *Shari'ah* says that this "letting her go" should be done in a manner recognized as noble by society and accepted as lawful by religion. It is this "fair dealing" which has been mentioned in the coming verse:

Then either retain them in fairness or set them free with fairness (2:231).

But the verse under discussion goes a step further and commands the man, if he wishes to let her go, to

do so “with kindness”. The expression has been changed to prepare minds for the next rule:

and it is not lawful for you to take any part of what you have given them, (***2:229***).

Obviously, the words “in fairness” and “with kindness” were necessary to prevent unscrupulous persons from misusing the law and defeating its purpose by following its letter but not its spirit. The real aim of the rule or revocation of divorce is to facilitate reconciliation. Therefore, it was necessary to ordain that it should be done “in fairness”, not to inflict any harm up-on the woman. Allah says in a coming verse:

and do not retain them for injury, so that you exceed the limits... (***2:231***).

Likewise, the purpose of the ordinance to “let her go” is to safeguard her rights, so that the man does not take back all or part of the dowry given to her. For this purpose, the word, “in fairness” was not sufficient, because some societies might not think it bad to take back the dowry, in whole or part, at the time of divorce. Therefore, the expression was changed to “with kindness”. Now it paves the way for the next sentence, “and it is not lawful ...”, and compensates to some degree the loss that the woman suffers in the ruination of her family life and the breaking of the marriage-tie.

Qur’an: ***Unless both fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah*** (***2:229***).

“Both fear” means both have an overriding opinion that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah. “Limits of Allah” are His commands and prohibitions, the things prohibited or made obligatory by Him.

The situation mentioned in this verse appears when their mentalities, characters and manners are opposed to each other, and thus hate becomes the predominant factor in, their relationship.

Qur’an: Then if you fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah, then there is no blame on them for what she gives up (***to become free thereby***) (***2:229***).

The change from the dual for *“khafa”* (**خَافَا** = both feared) of the previous sentence to the plural *“khiftum”* (**خِفْتُم** = you - three or more - feared) here indicates that the fear, suspicion or opinion should be a reasonable one, recognized as such by common people. Doubts based on evil suggestions, infatuations or hypochondria will not do. That is also the reason why the whole phrase, “that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah”, has been repeated. If a pronoun were used (i.e., if you fear ‘it’) there would be a chance that the couple’s unreasonable doubts and suspicions would become the basis of this rule. This repetition has removed the chance of such a misunderstanding.

“There is no blame on them”: Before that, the husband was prohibited from taking any part of what he had given the wife. It means that the wife, on her part, was prohibited from giving him anything back, because if she gave him anything while he was not allowed to take it, she would be cooperating with him in a sin and transgression. Now, this verse gives an exception to that general rule: In the *al-khul’* (**الخُلْع**) form of divorce they are allowed to agree on an amount which the wife pays to the husband to get herself free. In this situation, there is no blame on the husband for taking it, nor on the wife in giving it.

Hence the expression, “there is no blame on them”.

***Qur’an: These are the limits of Allah, so do not exceed them, and whoever exceeds the limits of Allah then these it is that are the unjust* (*2:229*).**

“These” is the demonstrative pronoun, pointing to the above-mentioned laws. These are matters of social legislation coupled with ethical teachings and other academic subjects.

It may be inferred from these verses that one should not try to separate legislative rules from moral principles. It is wrong to stick to the letter of the law, neglecting the spirit behind it. This sanctimoniousness defeats the purpose of the *Shari’ah*, negates the aims of religion and changes the bliss of life into misery. Islam is a religion of deeds, not of words; a *Shari’ah* of action, not of dogma. The Muslims have only reached this level of retrogression and backwardness, because their whole attention was fixed on the body of the law, and they completely forgot that there was also a soul and spirit inside that body. The coming verse: “and whoever does this, he indeed is unjust to his own self” proves this assertion of ours.

This verse frequently changes the pronouns from plural to singular and from second person to third person and then returns to the original form. This style helps to hold the attention of the audience, and the variation of style refreshes the mind.

Verse 230

***Qur’an: So, if he divorces her she shall not be lawful to him afterwards until she marries another husband…clear for a people who know* (*2:230*).**

This verse promulgates the law of the third divorce. If after the two divorces and returns mentioned above, he divorces her a third time, she shall be prohibited to him until she marries another husband.

It is the wife herself who is said to be prohibited, while prohibition applies to marrying her as well as to cohabiting with her. This mode of expression has been used because “she is prohibited” implies both meanings; and, accordingly, “until she marries another husband” also implies marriage followed by cohabitation. Then if he, that is, the second husband, divorces her there is no blame on them both, that is, the woman and her first husband, if they return to each other, that is, by means of a fresh marriage, after reconciliation and mutual consent.

The verb used is *“yataraja’a”* (يَتَرَاجَعَا) which means, “both return to each other”; it is not the return or revocation after the first two divorces over which the husband has the right and which the women cannot refuse. This mutual return should be affected if they both think that they can keep within the limits of Allah. The words “limits of Allah” have again been repeated in the final sentences because these are other than those mentioned earlier.

This verse is a miracle of brevity and conciseness. Such a short verse contains fourteen pronouns all referring to different things; and although they are all near each other there is no ambiguity in the meaning, nor any difficulty in its understanding.

This verse, and the two before it, contains numerous common nouns and many metaphors without any adverse effect on their eloquence and elocution. For example, the phrase *"fa imsakun bima'rufin au tasrihun bi ihsanin"* (فَاِمْسَاکٌ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ اَوْ تَسْرِيْحٌ بِاِحْسَان = than keeping them in fairness or letting them go with kindness) contains four common nouns coming one after other. Also, there are the following metaphorical expressions:

"What you have given them": Dowry.

"If you fear": If you have reasonable ground to believe.

"What she gives up": The redemption paid in *al-khul'*.

"So if he divorces her": The third divorce.

"She shall not be lawful to him": He is prohibited to marry her again and cohabit with her.

"Until she marries another husband": Until she marries and cohabits with him. (N.B. the politeness of the Qur'an).

"If they return": If they marry again.

Then there is the contrast between "keep" and "let go", and between "both fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah" and "both think that they can keep within the limits of Allah". Look also at the variation of style in "so do not exceed them" and "whoever exceeds them".

Verse 231

Qur'an: ***And when you divorce the women and they reach their prescribed time, then either retain them in fairness or set them free with fairness, and do not retain them for injury, so that you exceed the limit*** (***2:231***).

"They reach their prescribed time": When their prescribed time is about to expire. The verb *al-bulugh* (اَلْبُلُوْغ = to reach) is used not only for arriving at the destination, but also for coming near it. The reason of our opting for this meaning is clear from the next words, "then either retain them in fairness or set them free with fairness". The husband has neither of these options when her prescribed period has expired.

The words, "and do not retain them for injury, so that you exceed the limit", forbid retaining her with the intention of injuring her. A preceding verse had already prohibited taking back "any part of what you

have given them" when one decides to let them go free. The only exception is *al-khul'* (الخُلْع).

***Qur'an: And whoever does this, he indeed is unjust to his own self, and do not take Allah's signs for a mockery* (*2:231*).**

It describes the reason why retaining the woman with the intention of causing her harm is prohibited. Marriage completes the bliss of life. This bliss cannot be achieved unless both husband and wife are happy with each other and complement each other to attain a natural perfection. Divorce disturbs that harmony; and revocation is an attempt to mend that damage, to join after separation and to unite after coming apart. How can this purpose be attained if he retains her so as to inflict harm upon her? The two purposes are diametrically opposed. Anyone who resorts to such ugly behaviour is unjust to his own soul, because he drives it away from the straight path to which human nature leads. Obviously, he treats the signs of Allah as a joke. Allah has not ordained a soulless *Shari'ah* concerned only with the body of deeds, like giving, taking, keeping, letting go, etc. In fact, all these rules have been made for the common weal, to make up the deficiencies of society, and to perfect the bliss of human life. Then Allah combined these rules with good ethics to develop the psyche and cleanse the soul. All the laws of Islam are finely meshed with fundamental knowledge, like the Oneness of God, and the Mastership of the Prophet and the Imams etc. If anyone confines his religion to the external rules and throws things out, he surely has taken the commandments and signs of Allah as a mockery.

***Qur'an: And remember the favour of Allah upon you, and that which He has revealed to you of the Book and the Wisdom…the Knower of all things* (*2:231*).**

"The favour of Allah": The grace bestowed in the form of religion, or the reality of religion, that is, the blessings one gets after following the Divine Commandments, an example of which is the happy life one lives when husband and wife love and respect each other and when there is harmony in domestic life. Allah calls the blessings of the religion His favour. For example:

***This day I have perfected your religion for you and have completed My favour on you…* (*5:3*).**

***…So that He may complete His favour on you…* (*5:6*).**

***…So by His favour you became brethren…* (*3:103*).**

Accordingly, the next words, "and that which He has revealed to you of the Book and the Wisdom, admonishing you thereby", would be a description of that favour; and the Book and the Wisdom would refer to the body and soul of the *Shari'ah* respectively – to its commandments and their philosophy.

Also, the favour may be taken to refer to all the Divine Graces – creative and otherwise. In this case, the verse would mean: Remember the mystery of your life and think how it has been made into a perfect unit, and how the creative forces have established the wonderful harmony between husband and wife. Then heed to the admonition of Allah which He has addressed to you in the form of the commandments

of *Shari'ah*, and to their philosophy. If you ponder upon these matters you may hope to advance on to the road of blessings and bliss and you will not carelessly ruin the perfection of your life; and fear Allah and remember that He knows every thing; your appearance, therefore, should not differ from the depths of your reality. In short, you should not try to defeat the purpose of the law by apparently following the letter of the law.

Verse 232

Qur'an: And when you have divorced the women and they have ended their term (of waiting), then do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they agree among themselves in a lawful manner (2:232).

Apparently, the order in "do not prevent them" is addressed to guardians and other relatives against whose wishes the women cannot usually go. "Their husbands" means the husbands who had given them divorce. The verse forbids guardians and other relatives from preventing the woman from re-marrying her husband if, after the expiry of the waiting period, both are reconciled to each other, and wish to re-establish the marriage-tie. It often happens that the relatives of the woman do not wish her to establish such a union again with the same husband, as they hate and dislike him because he divorced her in the first place. This verse says that they should not allow such feelings to become a hindrance in the path of such a reunion.

This verse does not prove in any way that marriage is not lawful without the permission of guardian:

First: because, even if it does not prove that guardianship has no effect on marriage, it surely does not prove that it has any such effect.

Second: There is no reason to say that the command, "do not prevent", is addressed to guardians only. Obviously, it is a general command addressed to all the relatives whose advice or pressure may create difficulty in such a re-marriage. Also, the order, apparently, is of an advisory nature, to draw the attention of the relatives to the benefits and gains which may accrue as a result of her re-marrying the same husband. That is why it has been recommended by the words, "this is more profitable and purer for you ".

A commentator has said that the command, "do not prevent", is addressed to the husbands who give the divorce, and it forbids them to hide for some time the news of the divorce from the women so that they have to start their "period of waiting" late on receiving the news, and thus are prevented from entering into marriage early. Accordingly, the meaning would be like this: "And when you have divorced the women, (O husbands!) and they have ended their term of waiting, then do not prevent them from marrying (other men who would be) their husbands." But this interpretation does not conform with the words of the verse. If that were the purpose of the verse, it should have said, 'do not prevent them from marrying' or 'from taking other husbands'. It would not have said, "their husbands". (Also, the verse says

that they have already completed their period of waiting; so where is the question of unnecessarily prolonging the period of waiting?)

"Fa-balaghna ajalahunna" (فَبَلَغْنَ اَجَلَهُن) literally means 'and they have reached their term'. But it means ending their term, as we have written in the translation. If the period of waiting had not ended, no guardian or relative could prevent her return to the husband: "and their husbands have a better right to take them back in the meanwhile". Moreover, in that case Allah would have said, "do not prevent them from returning" not "from marrying".

Qur'an: With this is admonished whosoever among you believes in Allah and the Last Day (2:232).

It is exactly the same admonition as the one in verse 2:228, "it is not lawful for them that they should conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they believe in Allah and the last day". These two commands have been tied especially with the proviso of belief in Allah and the last day, because it is the belief of *at-tawhid* (التَّوْحِيْد = Monotheism, Oneness of God); and the religion of Monotheism encourages unity, not disunity; togetherness, not separation.

In these sentences, Allah has first used the singular pronoun (is admonished whosoever), then the plural (among you,) again the singular (believe in ...), then again, He returns to the plural (for you). Basically, the verse is addressed to the Apostle of Allah together with his *ummah*; therefore, plural pronouns are quite in order. Yet, sometimes the talk is addressed to the Apostle only, because he is the original recipient of the revelation, and others are addressed only through him. This happens mostly in those sentences in which no law or command is promulgated. So far as those verses are concerned which bring any law or command, almost all of them are in the plural form. This style alternatively widens the circle, then shortens it, then again widens it. This variation holds the attention of the audience and keeps them alert.

Qur'an: This is more profitable and purer for you (2:232).

"Azka" (اَزْكي) is derived from *az-zakah* (الزَّكوة) which means 'good and pleasant growth'; therefore, it has been translated here as 'more profitable'. Purity has been explained earlier. The demonstrative pronoun, "this", refers either to not preventing them from re-marrying their previous husbands, or to such re-marriage itself. The result in both cases is the same. Such a re-marriage would create harmony in place of discord and would mend broken relationships. This would strengthen the feeling of unity and accord, from which would sprout healthy religious virtues. Such a re-marriage would augment the women's virtues of chastity and modesty and would put a protective cover on their shame. Also, it would be purer for their souls because it would prevent them from thinking about other men when searching for the next husband.

Islam is the religion of *az-zakah* (good growth, purification), *at-taharah* (الطَّهَارَة = cleanliness) and knowledge. Allah says:

…Reciting to them his communications and purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the Wisdom… (***3:164***).

…but He intends to purify you… (***5:7***).

Qur'an: And Allah knows while you do not know (***2:232***).

That is, except what He teaches you, as He says:

…And teaching them the Book and the Wisdom (***3:164***).

…And they cannot comprehend any thing out of His knowledge except what He pleases… (***2:255***).

There is no conflict between this verse and the preceding one, "…which He makes clear for a people who know", as it means, 'who know by the teaching of Allah'.

Verse 233

Qur'an: And the mothers should suckle their children for two whole years for him who desires to make complete the time of suckling (***2:233***).

The words used in this verse are *"al-walidat"* (الوَالِدَات = those who give birth to) and *"mawludun lahu"* (مَوْلُوْدٌ لَه = he to whom the child is born). The more common words *al-umm* (الأُم = mother) and *al-ab* (الاَب = father) have not been used, because *al-umm* is more general than *al-walidah* (الوَالِدَة) – the grandmother, aunt and wet-nurse are also called *al-umm* (mother), but only the woman who gives birth to the child may be called its *al-walidah*. Likewise, *al-ab* is more general than *al-walad* (الوَالِد = he from whose seed the child is born); and *al-Ibn* (الإِبْن = son) is more general than *al-walad* (الوَلَد = the born child). The rule prescribed in this verse concerns especially the born child and the woman who bore it and the man to whom it was born.

The verse has discarded even the word *al-walid* (father) and has used a longer word *mawludun lahu* (he to whom the child is born) because this new word gives in a nutshell the reason of this rule. As the child is born to the father and is attached to him in most affairs the father is obliged to bear the full responsibility for it, feeding and clothing it, care of it and bringing it up. This includes feeding and clothing the child's mother, who feeds it from her breast. On the other hand, the mother is obliged not to harm the father of the child, because it is he who is ultimately responsible for that child, born of her womb.

A strange interpretation has been written by one commentator. He says: "Allah used the word 'he for whom the child is born', instead of 'father', to show that mothers are only a means of bearing children for fathers, but that children actually belong to fathers, and that is why, at the time of mentioning parentage, only the names of the fathers are shown, not those of the mothers. And al-Ma'mun al-Rashid has said in a couplet: 'And surely, the mothers of the people are but receptacles, where the seeds are deposited, and the sons are of the fathers only.'"

The poor fellow forgot that this very verse says in the beginning *"awladahunna"* (أَوْلادَهُن = their, that is, the mothers' children): and again it says, *"bi waladiha"* (بِوَلَدِهَا = her child). More amusing is his attempt to argue on the strength of the poetry of al-Ma'mun. al-Ma'mun and his ilk are too worthless to have their words quoted in an explanation of the Qur'an. Many men of literature get confused between different disciplines; they are unable to distinguish literature from legislation, or social laws from the decrees of creation. They, therefore, offer evidence to solve a social problem or a mystery of creation.

In fact, the child belongs to both the father and mother as far as creation is concerned. But in social affairs, various nations follow various systems: in matriarchies, the child is attached to the mother; in patriarchies, to the father. This verse confirms this second system by referring to the father as "he to whom the child is born".

"al-Irda'" (الإِرْضَاع = suckling) is on the paradigm of *al-if'al* (الإِفْعَال) from *ar-rida'ah* (الرِّضَاعَة) and *ar-rada'* (الرَّضَع); both of which mean 'to suck milk from the breast'.

"al-Hawl" (الحَوْل) is "year". Its literal meaning is to turn, to change. The year is given this name because it turns and changes. "Two complete years": As the year is made up of many parts (e.g.360 days), the word sometimes is used for even an incomplete period. If one stays in a place for, let us say, eleven months, he often says that he stayed there for a year. This is why the adjective, "complete", has been used to show that two whole years are intended here.

***...For him who desires to make complete the time of suckling,* (*2:233*).**

It proves that the custody (guardianship) and suckling of the child is a right of the divorced mother and is left to her discretion. Also deciding on the end of the prescribed period is her right. If she wishes to suckle the child for two complete years, she may do so: and if she does not want so, it is at her discretion. The husband has no say in it except when the divorced wife agrees to it by mutual counsel, as is described in the words,

***...if both desire weaning by mutual consent and counsel,* (*2:233*).**

***Qur'an: And their maintenance and their clothing must be borne by the father according to the usage; no soul shall have imposed upon it a duty but to the extent of its capacity* (*2:233*).**

Allah has prescribed the maintenance and clothing of the mother, according to the level of *al-ma'ruf* (المَعْرُوْف = known, usual), that is, as is generally known and accepted in families of that status. The reason for this rule is given in the next sentence that Allah does not impose any duty beyond the capacity of His servants.

Upon this general and basic principle are based two rules mentioned after it:

(1) The right of the woman concerning the custody and suckling of the child, and other related rules. The husband has no right to come between the child and its mother, by not allowing her to keep the child in

her custody, or by preventing her from seeing it and so on. The rights of the mother must be accorded to her; otherwise, it will injure and harm her and put her under an unjustified mental and emotional strain.

(2) On her part, the woman is forbidden to injure and harm the husband, for example, by not allowing him to see the child.

The above two rules are ordained in the words,

Neither shall a mother be made to suffer harm on account of her child, nor a father on account of his child, (***2:233***).

Why did Allah not use a pronoun? Instead of saying, "on account of his child", it could be said, "on account of him". But a pronoun in this place would have created an apparent contradiction. The sentence mentions the father as, "he to whom the child is born". The pronoun "him" would have referred to "her child" in the preceding sentence. So the purport of the supposed sentence would have been: nor shall he to whom the child is born be made to suffer on account of "her" child!

But the sentence in its present form does not give room for such a contradiction. Not only that; the actual style recognizes factors of creation as well as social legislation: it recognizes that in creation, the child belongs to both parents, and, therefore, it is referred to as "her child" and "his child"; then it shows that in social laws, it belongs to the father, who is, thus, referred to as the one to whom the child is born.

Qur'an: And a similar duty (***devolves***) ***on the*** (***father's***) ***heir*** (***2:233***).

Some other meanings have been written for this verse which are not in conformity with its apparent meaning; we do not intend to quote them here. What we have written is according to the traditions narrated from the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) and is also in accord with the apparent meaning of the verse.

Qur'an: then if both desire weaning by mutual consent and counsel, there is no blame on them; and if you wish to engage a wet-nurse for your children, there is no blame on you so long as you pay what you promised according to usage (***2:233***).

This is an offshoot of the right of the mother and of the avoidance of harm to either party. The upbringing and suckling of the child is not an obligation on her; it is a right of hers and she may waive her right if she so wishes. Therefore, it is perfectly right if the parents agree by mutual counsel to wean the child before the completion of the two years. Also, the father may engage another wet-nurse for the child, if the mother returns the child to him and refuses to suckle it; or if she is sick or has not got enough milk or for any other reason. But it is incumbent upon him to give the wet-nurse her rightful dues without infringing any of her rights, as Allah says:

...and if you wish to engage a wet-nurse for your children, there is no blame on you so long as you pay what you promised according to usage; (***2:233***).

Qur'an: And fear Allah and know that Allah sees what you do (2:233).

It is an order to fear Allah and to be careful of one's obligations towards Him, which in present context means to obey these orders and to show fairness in their implementation. As these matters may be seen and observed, Allah reminds man to know that He sees what man does. Compare it with the ending of the previous verse which forbids husbands to retain their wives with the intention of inflicting harm upon them and then reminds them that Allah knows every thing. As the intention cannot be "seen", man was reminded there that Allah "knows" every thing, and even his intention is not hidden from Him.

Verse 234

Qur'an: And (as for) those of you who die and leave wives behind, they should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten (days) (2:234).

"at-Tawaffi" (التَّوَفِّي) means to cause to die. It is said *tawaffahu 'llah* (تَوَفَّاهُ آللّه) when Allah gave him death, and the dead man is called *al-mutawaffa* (المُتَوَفَّي is one who is given death).

"Yadharun" (يَذَرُوْن) like *yad'un* (يَدْعُوْن) means "they leave", or "they shall leave". These two verbs have no past tense.

"'Ashran" (عَشْرًا = ten) here means ten days. 'Days' was deleted as the meaning was clear.

Qur'an: Then when they have fully attained their term, there is no blame on you for what they do for themselves in a proper manner (2:234).

"Bulugh al-ajal" (بُلُوْغُ الْاَجَل = reaching the term) means completing the waiting period of death, prescribed above. "There is no blame on you..." is a way of expressing the widows' full authority on their own affairs; if they wish to enter into marriage again, they are free to do so, and no relative of theirs, or of their deceased husbands, has any right to interfere. The verse puts a stop to the foolish custom of some societies which, owing to ignorance, blind prejudice, miserliness or envy, do not like widows to remarry. It says that widows have a right to do so, and that right is recognized by the *Shari'ah*; no one has any power to forbid a lawful action.

Various nations had various customs regarding the widow. Some, like the Hindus, burnt her alive with the dead husband; others, like many ancient tribes in Africa and elsewhere, buried her alive with the husband's body; some like the ancient Christians, did not allow her to marry again and she had to remain single until death released her from this chain; some others, like the Arabs of the pre-Islamic days, kept her secluded for one year, or, like some advanced societies of nowadays, for nine months; there are others who say that the deceased husband has a right upon the widow which prevents her from re-marrying for a certain period - without fixing that time.

All these customs and traditions are based on the assumption that marriage basically joins two lives

together and is the manifestation of love and affection; and that this love has a sanctity which must be respected. This respect is binding on both the parties, and whoever dies first, the surviving spouse must show grace, dignity and decorum as a natural courtesy towards his or her departed partner in life. But this courtesy is more binding on the woman, because she is expected to be a model of modesty and chastity and has to protect herself from other men's eyes. It is not in keeping with her dignity to appear as cheap merchandise handled by various admirers one after another. The above-mentioned customs and traditions are based on this belief.

Islam has prescribed a term of nearly a third of a year for this waiting.

Qur'an: And Allah is aware of what you do (2:234).

As the verse contained the rules of *al-'iddah* of death and the right of widows to remarry and as these legislations were about actions and were based on Divine wisdom, it was appropriate to remind the audience that Allah knows all about their actions, and He knows best what should be allowed and what should be forbidden; therefore, widows have to wait in one instance and have freedom in the other.

Verse 235

Qur'an: And there is no blame on you respecting that which you speak indirectly in the asking of (such) women in marriage or keep (the proposal) concealed within your minds (2:235).

"at-Ta'rid" (التَّعْرِيْض), translated here as speaking indirectly, is speaking obliquely in a way that the hearer understands the real aim which the speaker does not want to declare openly. The difference between speaking indirectly and metaphor is that in speaking indirectly the apparent meaning also remains valid and the indirect meaning is inferred from it. For example, the suitor says to the woman: "I am a good companion, of generous nature." While the clear meaning also is valid, the purport of the talk is to let the woman know that if she married him, she would be happy. But in metaphor the apparent meaning vacates its place for the metaphorical one. For example, one says about a brave man, "I saw a lion". Here real meaning of lion (the particular animal) is not valid at all.

"al-Khatb" (الخَطْب) means speaking and reiterating. *"al-khitbah"* (الخِطْبَة) and *"al-khutbah"* (الخُطْبَة) both are derived from it. The former means proposing to a woman asking her hand in marriage. The suitor is called *al-khatib* (الخَاطِب plural: *al-khuttab* الخُطَّاب); the latter means a lecture. The lecturer is called *al-khatib* (الخَطِيْب plural: *al-khutaba'* الخُطَبَآء).

"al-Iknan" (الإِكْنَان) is derived from *al-kann* (الكَن), and both mean 'to hide', 'to conceal'. But *al-iknan* is concealing an idea in the mind, as the verse says: "or keep concealed within your mind"; and *al-kann* is hiding or covering something with, or in, a material thing like a cloth, a house, etc. Allah says:

As if they were eggs carefully sheltered: (37:49).

***The like of the hidden pearls* (*56:23*).**

The verse says that it is not improper to speak to such women indirectly, letting them know that you are interested in marrying them when they are free, or to hide this idea in your mind.

***Qur'an: Allah knows that you will soon mention them, but do not give them a promise in secret unless you speak in a proper manner;* (*2:235*).**

It gives the reason of the above sentences. Mentioning such women in the context of marriage is a natural thing for you, and Allah does not forbid a thing which is ingrained in your nature.

This is one of the rules which clearly show that Islam is based on the foundation of nature.

***Qur'an: And do not resolve the marriage-tie until prescribed term is completed* (*2:235*).**

"al-'Azm" (**العَزْم** = resolve, determination) is to set the heart on a work with firm intention of doing it, so that no weakness remains in the effect of that resolve, unless that resolve itself is cancelled. *"al-'Uqdah"* (**العُقْدَة** = knot, tie) is derived from *"al-'aqd"* (**العَقْد**) which means to tie. The verse likens the bond of marriage with the knot which joins two cords together so that they become one; thus, the husband and wife become one by the marriage-tie.

The marriage-tie is connected in this verse with resolve and determination, which is a matter of the heart and mind. The verse thus indicates that the reality behind the marriage rite is something dependent on, and connected with, intention, faith and belief. Marriage is, in fact, a matter based on society's (or religion's) recognition, and has no existence outside common belief. It is the same as was described about ownership and other such matters under the verse 2:213. The verse, thus, contains an allegory and a metaphor.

"Hatta yablugha 'l-kitabu ajalahu" (**حَتَّي يَبْلُغَ الْكِتَابُ اَجَلَه**); *"al-kitab"* (**الكِتَاب**) means 'written' that is, a prescribed rule, and it refers to the waiting imposed on the women who are in *al-'iddah.* Literally the phrase means, "until the prescribed rule reaches (the end of) its duration".

The verse thus means: Do not perform marriage with them until their prescribed waiting period has been completed.

It is clear from this verse that the talk in this and the preceding verses is about those women who are in the waiting period, Therefore, the definite article "the women" refers not to all women but to the previously-mentioned group. That is why it has been translated, "...in the asking of (such) women in marriage..."

***Qur'an: And know that Allah knows what is in your mind; therefore, beware of Him, and know that Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing* (*2:235*).**

By mentioning the Divine attributes of Knowledge, Forgiveness and Forbearance, Allah warns the believers that the matters discussed in the two verses – proposing to women during their waiting period, and speaking to them obliquely about it, and giving them a promise in secret – are extremely perilous things; Allah does not like them at all, although He has allowed what He has allowed.

Verse 236

***Qur'an: There is no blame on you if you divorce the women while yet you have not touched them or appointed for them a dowry,* (*2:236*).**

To touch allegorically, means to cohabit. *"Aw tafridu lahunna faridatan"* (**اَوْ تَفْرِضُوا لَهُنَّ فَرِيْضَة**), literally means 'or appointed for them a (prescribed) duty', and it refers to fixing the dowry.

The verse means that it shall not be a hindrance in divorce if the marriage was not yet consummated, or if the dowry was yet to be fixed.

***Qur'an: And make provision for them, on the wealthy according to his means, and on the straitened in circumstances according to his means, a provision according to usage* (*2:236*).**

"al-Mut'ah" (المُتْعَةُ) and *"al-mata'"* (المَتَاعُ) is what may be used or enjoyed. *"matti'uhunna"* (**مَتِّعُوْهُن**) means 'give them usable, enjoyable goods or wealth'. The word, 'a provision' is the object of the verb, "make provision"; between the verb and its object is placed the paranthetic clause, "on the wealthy...and on...to his means". *"al-Musi'"* (**المُوْسِع**) is the active participle of *"awsa'a"* (**اَوْسَع** = he became wealthy) This paradigm is reserved for transitive verbs. Perhaps, this verb was originally used with an object; gradually the object was omitted and the verb became intransitive.

The verse says: It is incumbent upon you, if you divorce a woman when the dowry was not yet fixed, to make for her a provision according to usage. And it should be according to the means of the husband.

Accordingly, she is entitled to get an amount similar to the dowry of her equals like her mother, her sister, etc. But this order does not cover the case of a woman divorced before cohabitation, because her case is explained in the next verse.

***Qur'an:* (*this is*) *a duty on the doers of good* (*to others*) (*2:236*).**

Apparently, the attribute of doing good to others is closely connected with this legislation. As "doing good to others" is not incumbent, it follows that the order given above should be a recommendation, not a compulsory law. But clear traditions of *Ahl al-Bayt* say that the order is compulsory and obligatory. Perhaps it may be inferred from this verse in this way: Allah has earlier said,

***"Divorce is twice; then keep* (*them*) *in fairness or let* (*them*) *go with kindness"* (*2:229*).**

There the Arabic word, for which we have used "Kindness", is *al-ihsan* (**الاِحْسَان**), which in this verse has

been translated as doing good to others. Anyhow, kindness and doing good is incumbent on those who let the women go, that is, those who give divorce. Therefore, the divorcers are obliged to be doers of good. And this verse orders the doers of good to make provision for the divorced women. In other words, it obliges the divorcers to make such provision. (And Allah knows better).

Verse 237

Qur'an: And if you divorce them before you have touched them and you have appointed for them a dowry, then (pay to them) half of what you have appointed, unless they remit or he remits in whose hand is the marriage tie; and it is nearer to piety that you should remit, (2:237).

If you divorce them before the consummation of marriage and a dowry was already fixed, then you are obliged to pay them half the prescribed amount. Of course, if the women themselves or their guardians remit this amount then the half also would be waived.

The husband may also be termed the "one in whose hand is the marriage-tie". Therefore, if he has already paid the full dowry and if he remits it, then it will not be necessary for the divorced wife to pay back to him half of that amount. And, in any case, remitting the due portion of the dowry is nearer to righteousness and piety. One who gives up his rightful dues (which he is entitled to, according to *Shari'ah*) shall more easily and readily turn away from what is not lawful, and shun what is forbidden.

Qur'an: And do not forget generosity between you; surely Allah sees what you do (2:237).

"al-fadl" (الفَضْل = translated here as generosity) originally means to exceed, to surpass. The same is the meaning of *al-fudul* (الفُضُوْل). But *al-fadl* is used for excellence in virtue, nobility and merit, while *al-fudul* is used for unwarranted excesses, like chattering and gossiping.

The verse exhorts the separated couple to do good and be generous to each other by forgoing their own rights and giving the other party more than its due.

The comment about "surely Allah sees what you do" is similar to that given concerning the last sentence of the verse 2:234.

Verse 238

Qur'an: Maintain the prayers and the middle prayer and stand up truly obedient to Allah (2:238).

"Hafizu" (حَافِظُوْا = maintain) is derived from *"al-hifz"* (الحِفْظ) which means to take hold of a thing and preserve it. Mostly it is used for retaining ideas and perceived pictures in the mind. The middle prayer is the prayer falling in the middle. The verse does not say which of the prayers is the middle one. It is explained in traditions which will be quoted later on.

"Stand up for Allah": The *"L"* (ل = for) shows the aim, that is, purely for the pleasure of Allah. "Standing

up" metaphorically means to start a work and be engaged in it. *"Qanitin"* (قَانِتِيْن) is derived from *"al-qunut"* (القُنُوْت) which means obedience, submission, surrender. Allah says:

All are obedient to Him (2:116).

And whoever of you is obedient to Allah and His Apostle... (33:31).

The meaning of the verse in short is: Remain engaged in the obedience of Allah, being submissive to Him, purely for His pleasure.

Verse 239

Qur'an: But if you are in danger, then (say your prayers) on foot or on horseback; and when you are secure, then remember Allah as He has taught you what you did not know (2:239).

The conjunctive *"F"* (ف = but) joining this sentence in the subjunctive mood with the previous verse shows that there was a deleted (but understood) conditional clause, therein: "Maintain, if you are not in danger". *"ar-Rijal"* (الرِّجَال) is plural of *ar-rajil* (الرَّاجِل = pedestrian), *"ar-rukban"* (الرُّكْبَان) is plural of *ar-rakib* (الرَّاكِب = rider). This verse prescribes the rule of the prayer of danger.

"F" implies that maintaining the prayer and attending to it regularly is a rule which can never be relaxed. If you are not in danger, then perform it as you have been taught; but if there is any danger or risk, then do it in the best possible way, standing or walking on foot, or even riding. Then after the danger passes away and you are secure, perform it in the usual way, and remember Allah as He has taught you what you did not know. *"K"* (ك = as) in "as He has taught you" is for analogy. "What you did not know" shows the magnitude of the favour of Allah; for this reason, it points to all the things taught by Allah, instead of mentioning only the teaching of the prayer.

The meaning of the sentence, thus, will be: So, remember Allah with a remembrance equal to His favour in teaching you the obligatory prayer among other teachings concerning the rules of the religion.

Verse 240

Qur'an: And those of you who die and leave wives behind (make) a bequest in favour of their wives of maintenance for the year (2:240).

"Bequest" in this sentence is an object; its verb "bequeath" is deleted because it is easily understood.

The definite article *al-* (اَلْ = the) in *"al-hawl"* (الحَوْل = the year) shows that the verse must have been revealed before the rule of *al-'iddah* of death (waiting for four months and ten days) was promulgated. The women in pre-Islamic days used to wait, after the death of their husbands, for a whole year. And this verse directs the husbands to bequeath for them enough property with which they might maintain themselves during that period of waiting, without turning them out of the house. It was their right, and

they could demand it. But they could as well forgo that right and go away. In that case, there was no blame on the heirs of the deceased husband for what they did of proper deeds about themselves.

This verse is like the verse:

Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth, for parents and near relatives, according to usage, a duty (incumbent) upon those who guard (against evil) (2:180).

Obviously, the verse under discussion was abrogated by the verses of *al-'iddah* of death and inheritance.

Verse 241

Qur'an: And for the divorced women (too) provision (should be made) according to usage; (this is) a duty on those who guard (against evil) (2:241).

The command is in respect of all the divorcees. The proviso of piety, "those who guard against evil", implies that it is a recommendation, nor a compulsion.

Verse 242

Qur'an: Thus, Allah makes clear to you His signs, so that you may understand (2:242).

"al-'Aql" (العَقْل) is "to tie", "to shackle". Accordingly, the faculty of perception is called *al-'aql*, because it holds fast the perceived picture; the perceived idea or picture is also called *al-'aql*, as is the power by which man distinguishes between good and evil, and right and wrong. Its opposites, from various view-points, are insanity, idiocy, foolishness and ignorance.

The words used in the Qur'an for the various facets of perception are very many: nearly twenty. Their list, with their approximate meanings, is as follows:

al-Yaqin (اليَقين) Conviction, Certitude

az-Zann (الظَّن) Weightier Supposition

al-Hisban (الحِسْبَان) Reckoning, Consideration

ash-Shu'ur (الشُّعُوْر) Sense

adh-Dhikr (الذِّكْر) Remembering

al-'Irfan (العِرْفَان) Knowledge, Recognition

al-Fahm (الفَهْم) Understanding

al-Fiqh (الفِقْه) Knowledge

ad-Dirayah (الدِّرَاية) Comprehension

al-Fikr (الفِكْر) Thinking

ar-Ra'y (الرَّأْي) Opinion

az-Za'm (الزَّعْم) Assumption

al-Hifz (الحِفْظ) Preservation

al-Hikmah (الحِكْمَة) Wisdom

al-Khubrah (الخُبْرَة) Full Knowledge

ash-Shahadah (الشَّهَادَة) Witness

al-'aql (العَقْل) Intellect, Sense, Reason

To this list may be added:

al-Qawl (القَوْل) Saying, i.e., Opinion

al-Fatwa (الفَتْوي) Decree, Decision

al-Basirah (البَصيرَة) Insight

and other words.

al-Yaqin (اليَقين = conviction): When the conviction is so strong that the mind does not entertain the opposite idea at all.

If an idea and its opposite both are equally balanced in mind, so that no side is heavier than the other, it is called *ash-shakk*, (الشَّك) that is, doubt.

But if one side has more weight than the other, the weightier side is called *az-zann*, and the lighter one *al-wahm* (الوَهْم), that is, fancy, illusion.

al-Hisban (reckoning, consideration) is nearer to *az-zann* in meaning. But its use in this meaning is allegorical, as is the case with *al-'add* (العَد). Both words mean "to count". When it is said, "He counted Zayd among the braves", it is implied that he thought Zayd to be brave.

ash-Shu'ur (sense) is derived from *ash-sha'r* (الشَّعْر = hair); therefore implies a finer perception. It is mostly used for sensing the material things. Hence the five senses are called *al-masha'ir* (المَشَاعِر).

adh-Dhikr (remembering) is to recall the picture stored in the memory after its absence from the sense; or to prevent its absence from the senses.

al-'Irfan and *al-ma'rifah* (المَعْرِفَة), that is, knowledge, recognition, is conformity of the picture obtained in the mind with the ideas or pictures already stored in the memory. That is why it is said that *al-'irfan* is the knowledge after a previous knowledge.

al-Fahm (understanding) is the reaction of an outside factor by which a picture is created in the mind.

al-Fiqh (knowledge) is deep etching of the above-mentioned picture in the mind.

ad-Dirayah (comprehension) is even deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the subject, so that even hidden and less known points become known and clear. That is why it is mostly used when the importance of the subject matter is to be shown. Allah says:

***The sure calamity!* (*69:1*).**

***What is the sure calamity?* (*69:2*).**

***And what would make you "comprehend" what the sure calamity is!* (*69:3*).**

***Surely, We sent it down on the night of destiny.* (*97:1*).**

***And what will make you comprehend what the night of destiny is?* (*97:2*).**

al-Fikr (thinking) is the review of the known factors to discover the unknown.

ar-Ra'y (opinion) is the opinion reached at through thinking and consideration. Mostly it is used for "practical knowledge", that is, what should be done and what not; rather than for theoretical subjects like physical sciences.

Nearer to it in meaning are *al-basirah* (discernment, insight); *al ifta'* (الإِفْتَآء = the giving of a decision) and *al-qawl* (saying). But the use of "saying" in meaning of view is metaphorical, putting an inseparable thing for its companion (as the saying necessarily shows the decided opinion of the sayer).

az-Za'm (assumption) indicates a picture in mind, whether it is a confirmed or a probable idea.

al-'Ilm (العِلْم = knowledge) is the comprehension which does not allow the opposite.

al-Hifz (preservation) is to save the known picture protecting it from change and deterioration.

al-Hikmah (wisdom) is the knowledge which is confirmed and precise.

al-Khubrah (full knowledge): Full academic knowledge, so that the knowledgeable person perceives all the conclusions from the premises.

ash-Shahadah (witnessing) is to get the thing in specie, either through the five senses, or the internal perceptive powers like the feeling.

Apart from the last-mentioned five words, the meanings of all others are more or less related to matter, movement and change. Therefore, they are not attributed to Allah. We do not say that He, for example, presumes, thinks, guesses or senses etc.

But the last five words are free from such defects in meanings. They do not have any shade of deficiency. They are therefore used for Him. He says:

...And Allah knows what you do (***2:234***).

...And Allah knows every thing (***4:176***).

And your Lord is the preserver of all things (***34:21***).

And He is the Knower, the Wise (***12:83***).

Surely, He is a witness over all things (***41:53***).

Now we return to our original discussion. *al-'aql* is the faculty of perception which holds fast the perceived picture, according to the Creation of Allah. It knows truth and falsity in theoretical matters, and good and evil and the benefit and harm in the practical field. First it recognizes itself, then it perceives the sensual phenomena through the five senses, then it turns to the inner feelings and through them becomes connected to the outside world - like will, love, hate, hope, fear and similar emotions and sentiments. Then it analyses the perceived ideas and pictures, and re-arranges them, generalizing and particularizing them. Then it forms an opinion in theoretical matters and decides its own course of action in practical ones. This, in short, is *al-'aql* that is, reason and its function.

But sometimes some forces overpower man by subduing all other powers. For example, lust and anger subjugate all the other faculties, either vanquishing them completely or weakening them. Thus, man deviates from the middle path, straying to excess or deficiency in his moral and ethical life. In short, reason does not function as it should normally do, even though it seems to work. It is like a judge who bases his judgement on false testimonies or faked evidence. His judgement will be a perversity of justice, even though he does not mean to be unjust. He will be called a judge, but at the same time he will not be a judge. Likewise, when a man chooses his course of action on the basis of wrong premises, he is not working reasonably, even though this exercise is tolerantly given the name of "reason". It is because the man by such an exercise goes against the dictates of healthy nature and right path.

"Reason", as defined by the divine representatives, is that which benefits a man in his religion, and leads him to the true knowledge and virtuous deeds. If it is not so, it is not "reason", even if it helps him in distinguishing between worldly good and bad affairs. Allah says:

And they shall say: Had we but listened or pondered "na'qil" (نَعْقِل) ***we would not have been among the inmates of the burning fire*** (***67:10***).

Have they not travelled in the land so that they should have hearts with which to understand, or ears with which to hear? For surely it is not the eyes which become blind, but blind become the hearts which are in the breasts (***22:46***).

The two verses use the verb *al-'aql* for the knowledge which man acquires on his own and the verb "to hear" for the perception acquired with the help of others, provided both are done through true nature. Allah says:

And who forsakes the religion of Ibrahim but he who makes himself a fool… (***2:130***).

This verse, as explained earlier, is a contraposition of the tradition: "*al-'aql* (reason, wisdom) is that by which the Beneficent (Allah) is worshipped..."

Now it is obvious that when Allah uses the word *al-'aql* it refers to the perception which a man gets when his nature is healthy and perfect. This explains the meaning of the words of the verse,

Thus Allah makes clear to you His signs so that you may understand (***2:242***).

The clarifying creates knowledge and knowledge is the foundation of wisdom and understanding, as Allah says:

And these examples, We set them forth for the people, and none understand them but the learned (***29:43***).

Traditions

There is a tradition in *as-Sunan* of Abu Dawud from Asma', daughter of Yazid Ibn as-Sakan al-Ansariyyah, that she said: "I was given divorce in the days of the Messenger of Allah (S) and there was no waiting period for a divorce. When I was divorced, the (rule of) waiting period of divorce was revealed:

And the divorced women should keep themselves in waiting for three monthly courses. (***2:228***).

Thus, she was the first woman about whom the (rule of) waiting period for divorce was sent down.

And there is a tradition about this verse in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from Zurarah that he said: "I heard Rabi'ah ar-Ra'i saying: 'In my opinion, *al-aqra'* (الاَقْرَآء = period) which Allah has ordained in the Qur'an is the period of purity between two menstruations, and not the menstruation itself.'" Zurarah said: "Then I came to Abu Ja'far ('a) and narrated to him what Rabi'ah had said. He (the Imam) said: 'But he did not say it by his own opinion; it has reached him from Imam 'Ali ('a).' I said: 'May Allah put your affairs right

for you! Was Imam ‘Ali (‘a) saying so?’ He said: ‘Yes! He had said, “Surely *al-qur’* (القُرْء) is *at-tuhr* (الطُّهْر = the period of purity); the blood accumulates in that period and when the time comes it is expelled.” ‘I said: ‘May Allah put your affairs right for you! (What do you say) If a man divorces his wife in the period of purity, without cohabiting with her (in that period), in the presence of two just witnesses?’ He said: ‘When she enters into her third menstruation, her waiting period is finished and she becomes lawful for another husband...’”

The author says: This meaning is narrated from him (the Imam) from various chains. Zurarah asked “whether Imam ‘Ali (‘a) was saying so?” because it is generally believed by the Sunnis that Imam ‘Ali (‘a) said that the word meant the period of menstruation and not of purity. (It is reported in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from ash-Shafi’i, ‘Abdu ‘r-Razzaq, ‘Abd Ibn Hamid and al-Bayhaqi from ‘Ali (‘a) that he said: “It is allowed to her husband to return to her until she bathes from the third menstruation, and [then] she becomes lawful to [another] husband.) But the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* deny it; and attribute to him the word that *al-aqra’* is the period of purity, not menstruation, as was mentioned in the above tradition. This opinion has been attributed to other companions also, like Zayd Ibn Thabit, ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Umar, and ‘A’ishah; and it has been narrated from all of them.

There is in *Majma’ al-Bayan* from Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) explaining the words of Allah:

***And it is not lawful for them…conceal what Allah has created in their wombs* (*2:228*).**

That he said: “Pregnancy and menstruation.”

It is written in *at-Tafsir* of al-Qummi: “Surely Allah has delegated to women (the information of) three things: purity, menstruation and pregnancy.”

It is written in the same book about the words of Allah: And for the men is (right) a degree above them, that the Imam said: “The right of men over women is superior to the right of women over men.”

The author says: This is not contradictory with their equality in the ordainment of rights.

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsir* of al-’Ayyashi about the verse:

***Divorce is twice; then keep* (*them*) *in fairness or let* (*them*) *go in kindness,* (*2:229*).**

From Abu Ja’far (‘a) that he said: “Verily Allah says: ‘Divorce is ...go in kindness’; and letting them go in kindness is the third divorce.”

And there is a tradition in *at-Tahdhib* from Abu Ja’far (‘a) that he said: “Divorce, according to the *sunnah*, is that he divorces her once, that is, in her period of purity, without cohabiting (in that period), in the presence of two just witnesses, then leaves her until her period of waiting expires. Thus, she becomes completely separated from him. Then he may become one of the suitors, she may marry him is she so wishes; and not, if not. And if he wants to revoke the divorce, he should keep witnesses to return

her (to himself) before the expiry of her period of waiting; and in this case, she will remain with him after that divorce..."

Hasan Ibn Faddal is reported in *Man la Yahduruh al-Faqih* as saying: "I asked Imam ar-Ridha' ('a) of the reason why the woman who is divorced (twice and returned twice) during her period of waiting, is not lawful to her husband until she marries another husband. He (the Imam) said: 'Surely Allah allowed him to give divorce twice, as He said:

Divorce is twice; then keep (them) in fairness or let (them) go in kindness, (2:229)

that is, in the third divorce. And because he entered into what Allah dislikes, that is, divorce, He prohibited her to him, so that she would not be lawful for him until she marries a husband other than him; so that people should not treat divorce lightly and the women should not be harmed...'"

The author says: It is the madhhab of *Ahl al-Bayt*, as narrated by the Shi'ite sources, that divorce with one word or in one sitting is not but only one divorce, even if he said: "I divorce thee three divorces". But the Sunnis have contradictory traditions about it. Some show that it would be only one divorce, others say that it would be three and some narrate it from 'Ali and Ja'far Ibn Muhammad (Imam as-Sadiq ('a)). But it appears from some Sunni traditions, narrated by Muslim, an-Nasa'i, Abu Dawud (in their *as-Sihah*) and others that it was 'Umar who, two or three years after receiving the caliphate, validated pronouncement of three divorces with one word. It is reported in *ad-Durr al-Manthur*: 'Abdu 'r-Razzaq, Muslim, Abu Dawud, an-Nasa'i, al-Hakim and al-Bayhaqi have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "It was (the system of) divorce during the days of the Messenger of Allah (S) and Abu Bakr and two years during the caliphate of 'Umar that three divorces (i.e., in one sitting) were (counted as) one. Then 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab said: 'Surely the people are making haste in a matter in which they were given time. Therefore, (it would be good) if we sanction it.' He then validated it."

And it is reported in *as-Sunan* of Abu Dawud from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "'Abd Yazid Abu Rukanah divorced Umm Rukanah and married a woman from the tribe of Muzinah. Then she (i.e., the new wife) came to the Prophet and said: 'He does not satisfy me even as much as this hair. (She said it taking out a hair from her head.) Therefore, separate between him and me.' On hearing it the Prophet felt enraged and called Rukanah and his brother, and asked his companions: 'Do you see that this resembles him (Abu Rukanah) in this and this, and that in this and this?' They said: 'Yes' Then the Prophet told 'Abd Yazid: 'Give her divorce.' He did so. Then (the Prophet) said: 'Take back your wife, Umm Rukanah.' He said: 'I have given her three divorces, O Messenger of Allah!' The Prophet said: 'I know. Yet you take her back.' "Then he recited:

O Prophet! when you divorce women, divorce them for their prescribed time... (65:1).

It is reported in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from al-Bayhaqi from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "Rukanah divorced a woman three times in one sitting; then he grieved for her. So, the Messenger of Allah (S) asked him: 'How did you divorce her?' He said: 'I divorce her thrice in one sitting.' The Messenger of Allah said:

‘Then take her back if you so wish.’ So he took her back.” Therefore, Ibn ‘Abbas was of the opinion that the divorce can be given (once) only in every period of cleanliness; and that it is the *sunnah* which Allah has ordered, “Divorce them for their prescribed period.”

The author says: This meaning is narrated in other traditions also. So far as the “sanction” given by ‘Umar is concerned, the arguments against it are like those described in the subject of *mut’at al-hajj.*

The word of Allah, “Divorce is twice”, has been offered as a proof that three divorces in one word (e.g., I give thee three divorces, or, I divorce thee thrice) are not effective at all. The words ‘twice’ and ‘thrice’ are not used for a thing effected by one word, and all Muslims accept this principle when they talk about *al-li ‘an* (اللِّعَان = mutual imprecation).

The author of *Majma’ al-Bayan* says about the word of Allah, “or let (them) go with kindness”: Two interpretations have come down to us of this phrase; first, that it is the third divorce, second, that the woman should be left to complete her period of waiting, so that she becomes completely free of the marriage-bond. It is narrated from as-Suddi and ad-Dahhak; and the same meaning is reported from Imam al-Baqir (‘a) and Imam as-Sadiq (‘a).

The author says: As you see, there is a difference in the traditions about the meaning of this phrase.

It is reported in *at-Tafsir* of al-Qummi about the words of Allah, “and it is not lawful for you to take any part of what you have given them unless both fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah; then if you fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah, there is no blame on them for what she gives up to become free thereby:” Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said: “The *khul’* (Redemption) is not effected except when the woman tells her husband, ‘I shall not fulfil for you your vow’ and ‘I will surely go out without your permission’ and ‘I will surely get other man to sleep in your bed’ and ‘I will not take the obligatory bath of *al-janabah* on your account’ (i.e., I will not sleep with you); or she says, ‘I will not obey any order of yours or let you give me divorce’.

When she says such things, then it is allowed to him to take back from her all that he had given her and all that he can get from her which she gives him. When both are agreed on it, he will divorce her in her period of cleanliness in the presence of the witnesses. Thus (on expiry of her waiting period) she separates from him with one divorce; and now he may be one of those who want to marry her. And if she so wishes, she may marry him again, and if she so wishes, she may reject him. If both remarry, she will be with him, and yet two more divorces (like this) may be given to her. And he should make a condition with her (when he takes ransom from her for giving her divorce), like that made in case of *al-mubarat* (Mutual Freeing), that ‘if you take back anything from this ransom given me by you, then I have more right on you’ (i.e., the divorce will become a revocable one).”

And he (the Imam) said: “There is no *al-khul’, al-mubarat* or *at-takhyir* (option) except in a period of cleanliness without cohabitation (in that period) taking as witnesses two just men. And if a woman who obtains divorce as *al-khul’*, marries another husband and then he (also) divorces her, it is lawful for the

first husband to marry her."

And he said: "The husband has no right to revoke the divorce in case of al-khul' and al-mubarat, except when the woman changes her decision (and agrees to return to him); then he shall return to her whatever he took from her (and then may revoke the divorce)."

It is reported in *Man la Yahduruh al-Faqih* from Imam al-Baqir ('a) that he said: "When the woman said to her husband the sentence, 'I shall not obey any order of yours', whether she elaborates it or not, it becomes lawful to him to take (ransom) from her (to give her *al-khul'*) and he has no right to get her back (i.e., to revoke the divorce)."

It is written in *al-Durr al-Manthur*: Ahmad has narrated from Sahl Ibn Abi Hathmah that he said: "Habibah bint Sahl was married to Thabit Ibn Qays Ibn Shammas; but she disliked him; he was an ugly man. So she came and said: 'O Messenger of Allah! Surely, I will not see him; and had it not been for fear of Allah, I surely would have spat in his face'. So he asked her: 'Will you give him back his garden which he gave you as dowry?' She said: 'Yes.' Thereupon she gave him back his garden and (the Messenger of Allah) separated them. And this was the first *al-khul'* in Islam."

at-Tafsir of al-Ayyashi quotes Imam al-Baqir ('a) as saying in the explanation of the word of Allah: These are the limits of Allah, so do not exceed them...: "Verily, Allah was displeased with one who fornicates, and therefore He prescribed for him a hundred lashes. Now if someone becomes enraged and increases it, then I repudiate him before Allah; and this is the word of Allah: These are the limits of Allah, so do not exceed them."

It is reported in *al-Kafi* from Abu Basir that he asked (Imam as-Sadiq ('a)) about the woman who is not allowed to her (former) husband until she marries another husband. He (the Imam) said: "It is that woman who is divorced then returned, then (likewise) divorced the third time; it is she who is not lawful to that husband until she marries another husband and he tastes her sweetness.

The author says: *al-'Usaylah* (العُسَيْلَة translated here as sweetness) means sexual intercourse. It is written in *as-Sihah*: *al-'Usaylah* is used in the meaning of sexual intercourse. That enjoyment was likened to *al-'asal* (العَسَل), that is, honey, and then was given diminutive form by adding *"h"* (ة) (because *al-'asal*, is mostly used as a feminine); so it became (*al-'usaylah*). Also it is said that it was given the feminine form because it means 'a piece or portion of honey' as they refer to a piece of *adh-dhahab* (الذَّهَب = gold) as *adh-dhahabah* (الذَّهَبَة).

And the words of the Imam, "and he tastes her sweetness" are based on the words of the Messenger of Allah (S) which he used in the incident of Rifa'ah, "No! Until you taste his sweetness and he tastes your sweetness". The incident is reported in *al-Durr al-Manthur* as follows: "al-Bazzaz, at-Tabarani and al-Bayhaqi have narrated that Rifa'ah Ibn Samu'al divorced his wife. Then she came to the Prophet and said: 'Messenger of Allah! 'Abdu 'r-Rahman married me and he has not but like this.' (Saying it she pointed to a fringe of her dress.) The Messenger of Allah kept ignoring her talk; at last he told her: 'You

want to return to Rifa'ah? No! Until you taste his (i.e., 'Abdu 'r-Rahman's) sweetness and he tastes your sweetness.'"

The author says: This tradition is well-known; and has been narrated by a multitude of Sunni narrators of the books of *as-Sihah* and others, as well as by some Shi'ah ones. And although the wordings of the various narratives are different from each other, most of them contain these words.

It is written in *at-Tahdhib* that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) was asked the question whether the *mut'ah* marriage (with a second husband) would make the woman lawful (for the first one), to which he replied: "No! Because Allah says:

So if he divorces her she shall not be lawful to him afterwards until she marries another husband; then if he divorces her there is no blame on them both if they return to each other... (2:230).

And there is no divorce in the *mut'ah*."

The same book quotes Muhammad Ibn Mudarib as saying: "I asked Imam ar-Ridha' ('a) whether a eunuch could make the woman lawful (for her first husband). He (the Imam) said: 'He cannot make her lawful.'"

It is written in *at-Tafsir* of al-Qummi under the words of Allah:

And when you divorce the women and they reach their prescribed time ...and do not retain them for injury... (2:231).

That the Imam said: "When he divorces her, he is not allowed to take her back (i.e., to revoke the divorce) if he does not really want her."

It is reported in *Man la Yahduruh al-Faqih* that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "It is not proper for a man to divorce his wife and then to take her back (to revoke the divorce) when he does not really want her and then divorce her again. It is the injury which Allah has forbidden. (It is improper) except that he divorces her and then takes her back and he intends to retain her.

It is narrated in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi under the words of Allah:

And do not take Allah's signs for a mockery... (2:231).

From 'Umar Ibn aj-Jami' through his chain to Imam 'Ali ('a) in a tradition in which he said, *inter alia:* "And whoever from this *ummah* read the Qur'an and (even then) entered the hell, then he was from among those who took the Allah's signs for a mockery..."

It is reported in *as-Sahih* of al-Bukhari about the words of Allah:

And when you have divorced the women and they have ended their term… (***2:232***).

That the sister of Ma'qil Ibn Yasar was divorced by her husband, then he (the husband) left her alone until her waiting term was completed. Then again, he proposed to her. Thereupon Ma'qil refused. Then the verse was revealed:

…then do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they agree among themselves in a lawful manner… (***2:232***).

The author says: This meaning has been quoted in *al-Durr al-Manthur* from al-Bukhari as well as other compilers of *as-Sahih* like an-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, at-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud and others.

It is reported in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from as-Suddi: This verse was revealed concerning Jabir Ibn 'Abdullah al-Ansari. He had a cousin (daughter of his uncle); her husband gave her one divorce, and her period of waiting expired. Then the (said) husband wanted to take her back (i.e., to remarry her). But Jabir refused saying, "You divorced our cousin and now you want to marry her second time!" And the woman herself wanted (to marry) her husband. Thereupon Allah sent down the verse:

And when you have divorced the women… (***2:232***).

The author says: According to the *madhhab* of *Ahl al-Bayt*, a brother or a cousin has no guardianship or authority over the woman in the matters of marriage. Therefore, if either tradition is accepted, it would mean that the prohibition in the verse:

…Then do not prevent them from marrying their husbands… (***2:232***).

Is not concerned with the scope of guardianship nor does it promulgate any rule except showing that it is improper to come between a man and his wife (or would-be wife). Or that this dislike or prohibition of such interference is addressed to everyone who might prevent the woman from such remarrying, whether they be a guardian or not.

It is narrated in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi, under the words of Allah:

And the mothers should suckle their children for two complete years… (***2:233***).

That Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "As long as the child is in the suckling-period, he is between both parents equally; thereafter, when he is weaned, the father has more right upon him than the other relatives. And if the father finds someone to suckle the child for four dirhams, and the mother says that she would not suckle him but for five dirhams, then he may take the child away from her; but it is more comforting, more uplifting and more clement to the child that he be left with his mother."

The same book reports that the same Imam said about the words of Allah,

"Neither shall a mother be made to suffer harm on account of her child, nor a father on account

of his child" (***2:233***).

The woman used to resist with her hand when the man wanted to cohabit with her, saying. "I shall not allow you; I fear to become pregnant on my child." And (likewise) the man used to say to the woman, "I shall not sleep with you; I am afraid that you will conceive, and thus I shall cause the death of my child." Therefore, Allah forbade the man to make the woman suffer harm, and the woman to make the man suffer.

It is narrated in the same book about the words of Allah:

And a similar duty (***devolves***) ***on the*** (***father's***) ***heir,*** (***2:233***).

That one of the two Imams (Imam al-Baqir or Imam as-Sadiq ('a)) said: "It is about maintenance. The duty of the heir (in this respect) is like that of the father."

Another tradition in the same book about this verse says that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "It is not proper for the heir to make the woman suffer harm (for example) to say, 'I shall not let her child visit her', and to inflict harm on her child, if they have something with him; and he should not be parsimonious for him."

There is a tradition in the same book from Hammad from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) that he said: "There is no suckling after weaning." Hammad said: "I told him, 'May I be your ransom, and what is the weaning?' He said: 'The two years mentioned by Allah.'"

The author says: "The two years" is the quotation from the verse, and that is why he (the Imam) explained it as "mentioned by Allah."

It is reported in *ad-Durr al-Manthur*: "It is narrated by 'Abdu 'r-Razzaq (Ibn *al-Musannaf*) and Ibn 'Adi from Jabir Ibn 'Abdullah that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: 'There is no orphan after puberty, and there is no suckling after weaning; and there is no (fast of) silence of the day up to the night, and there is no joining in the fast (i.e., fasting two days without breaking the fast at night), and there is no vow in a sin, and there is no maintenance in the sin, and there is no oath cutting the relationship, and there is no returning to nomadic life after *al-hijrah* (الهِجْرَة = emigration), and there is no emigration after the conquest (of Mecca), and there is no oath (vow) for a wife with the husband nor for a child with his father nor for a slave with his master (i.e., without their permission), and there is no divorce before marriage, and there is no emancipation before owning.'"

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from Abu Bakr al-Hadrami that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "When it was revealed:

And (***as for***) ***those of you who die and leave wives behind, they should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten*** (***days***), (***2:234***).

The women came arguing with the Messenger of Allah and said: 'We shall not wait'. The Messenger of

Allah told them: 'It was (your custom) that when a woman's husband died, she took the dropping (of a camel) and threw it behind her in her private room and then sat down (therein); then when the same day (i.e., date) came after a year, she took (the dropping) and broke it and applied it (to her eyes) as antimony; and then she could marry. Now Allah has put down (reduced) from you eight months.'"

It is narrated in *at-Tahdhib* from Imam al-Baqir ('a) that he said: "In every marriage, when the husband dies it is (incumbent) upon the woman (whether she is a free woman or a slave), and by whatever system the matrimonial bond was established (whether by *mut'ah*, permanent marriage or slavery), to observe the waiting period of four months and ten days."

It is narrated in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from Muhammad Ibn Muslim that he asked Imam al-Baqir ('a): 'May I be your ransom! Why is the waiting period of a divorced woman three menstruations or three months and that of the woman whose husband dies four months and ten days?" He (the Imam) said: "As for the waiting period of three months for a divorced woman, it is (prescribed) to make sure that there is no child in the womb. And as for the waiting period of a woman whose husband dies surely Allah has laid down a provision for the women and one upon them: The provision made for them is in *al-'ila'*, a period of four months, as He says:

***For those who swear* (*to abstain from their wives is ordained*) *a waiting for four months* (*2:226*).**

It is, therefore, not lawful for anyone (to abstain from the wife) for more than four months; because Allah knows that it is the furthest limit to which a woman may keep her sexual desire under control. And the provision made against them is that He ordered her to observe waiting period, when her husband dies, for four months and ten days. In this way, He (Allah) took from her for him at the time of his death what He took from him for her during his lifetime.

The author says: This meaning is also narrated from Imam ar-Ridha' and Imam al-Hadi ('a) from other chains.

It is written in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) about the words of Allah:

***And there is no blame on you respecting that which you speak indirectly in the asking of* (*such*) *women in marriage* (*2:235*).**

"The women in her *'iddah*, you speak to her in a graceful manner to attract her towards yourself. And you do not say, 'I do this and this' or 'I perform like this', hinting at indecent things." And another tradition says: "You tell her, when she is in her *'iddah*, 'O so-and-so! I do not like but only that which pleases you; and if your *'iddah* expires, you will not find me missing, God willing; and you should not keep yourself (alone). All this (you may say) without resolving the marriage-tie."

The author says: There are other traditions of the same meaning from the Imams.

The *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi quotes Imam as-Sadiq ('a) that he explained the words of Allah:

***And if you divorce them before you have touched them…* (*2:237*).**

In these words: "When the man divorces his wife before cohabiting with her, then she shall get half of her dowry; and if he had not appointed for her a dowry, then (for her) is a provision according to usage, on the wealthy according to his means and on the straitened in circumstances according to his means. And there is no waiting period for her and she may immediately marry whoever she wishes.

There is a tradition in *al-Kafi* from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) about the man who divorces his wife before cohabiting with her: "On him is half of the dowry, if anything was fixed (as dowry); and if nothing was fixed then he should give her a provision as other women of her status are provided for."

The author says: This tradition explains the words, "a provision according to usage."

al-Kafi, *at-Tahdhib*, *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi and other books narrate from Imam al-Baqir ('a) and Imam as-Sadiq ('a) under the words of Allah: "In whose hand is the marriage-tie", that both Imams said: "It is *al-wali* (الوَلِي = the guardian of the marriage)."

The author says: There are numerous traditions giving this explanation. And there are some Sunni traditions narrated from the Prophet and Imam 'Ali ('a) that it means "the husband".

It is narrated in *al-Kafi*, *Man la Yahduruh al-Faqih, at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi and that of al-Qummi, about the words of Allah:

***Maintain the prayers and the middle prayer…* (*2:238*).**

Through numerous chains from Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq ('a) that: "Surely, the middle prayer is the noon prayer."

The author says: It is what is narrated from the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) in their traditions with one voice. Of course, some of those traditions show that it is the Friday prayer. But it appears from the same traditions that they treat the noon and the Friday prayers as one prayer, not two. It is narrated in *al-Kafi* and *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from Zurarah from Imam al-Baqir ('a) - and the wording quoted here is from *al-Kafi* - that he (the Imam) said: "Allah says: Maintain the prayers and the middle prayer, and it is the prayer of the noon, the first prayer the Messenger of Allah (S) prayed, and it is (in) the middle of the day and between the two prayers of the day-time - the dawn and afternoon prayers."

And he said: "And this verse was revealed and the Messenger of Allah (S) was on a journey, so he (the Holy Prophet) recited *qunut* in it and continued it likewise in the journey and at the home-town, and he added two *rak'ahs* for him who is in his home-town. And those two *rak'ahs* added by the Prophet were dropped on Friday, for him who is in his home-town, because of the two sermons recited by the Imam. Therefore, he who prays on Friday without congregation, shall pray four *rak'ahs* of noon prayer like all other days..."

This tradition, as you see, counts the noon and the Friday prayers as one prayer, and says that it is the middle prayer. But most of these traditions are *al-maqtu'* (المَقْطُوْع i.e., their chain of narrators are broken, or do not reach a *ma'sum*); and those that are connected to a *ma'sum,* their texts are not free from confusion, like the above-mentioned tradition of *al-Kafi*. Moreover, it does not clearly fit the meaning of the verse. And Allah knowns better.

It is reported in *ad-Durr al-Manthur*: Ahmad, Ibn al-Mani', an-Nasa'i, Ibn Jabir, ash-Shashi and ad-Diya' have narrated through the chain of az-Zibriqan: "Verily, there was a group of the Quraysh, and Zayd Ibn Thabit passed by them and they were assembled. So, they sent two of their boys to him to ask him about the middle prayer. And he said: 'It is the noon prayer'. Then the boys came to Usamah Ibn Zayd and asked him (the same question). And he said: 'It is the noon prayer. Verily, the Messenger of Allah (S) used to pray the noon prayer in the summer and there would not be behind him except one or two lines, and the people were in their siesta or at their trade. Thereupon, Allah sent down the verse:

***Maintain the prayers and the middle prayer and stand up truly obedient to Allah* (*2:238*).**

Then the Messenger of Allah (S) said: "The men should desist (from that behaviour) or most surely I shall burn down their houses.""

The author says: The same reason has been narrated by Zayd Ibn Thabit and others from other chains.

And know that there is much difference of opinion regarding the meaning of "the middle prayer", much of it arises because of differences in the Sunni traditions. It has been said that it is the dawn prayer, and it has been narrated from Imam 'Ali ('a) and some companions. Others say that it is noon prayer, and it has been reported from the Holy Prophet and a number of the companions. Again, it is said that it is the afternoon prayer, and this also has been reported from the Prophet and a number of companions - as-Suyuti has narrated in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* more than fifty traditions of this meaning. Some say that it is the evening prayer. Other say that it is hidden among the prayers as the Night of Destiny is hidden among the nights of Ramadan. This is reported in some traditions from some companions. And also it is said that it is the night prayers; and, lastly, that it is the Friday prayer.

It is reported in *Majma' al-Bayan* about the words of Allah; And stand truly obedient to Allah, that *al-qunut* (القُنُوْت = obedience) is the invocation in the prayer during the standing posture, and it is narrated from Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq ('a).

The author says: Also it is narrated from some companions.

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said about this verse: "(*al-Qunut* means) one's going towards prayer and maintaining (i.e., praying) it in its time, so that nothing diverts one's attention or keeps him from it."

The author says: There is no conflict between the two traditions, as one may easily understand.

It is reported in *al-Kafi* about the words of Allah:

***But if you are in danger, then* (*say your prayers*) *on foot or on horseback…* (*2:239*).**

That Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "When he is afraid of a beast or a thief, he will say *at-takbir* and point (for the actions of prayer)."

And there is another tradition in *Man la Yahduruh al-Faqih* from the same Imam about the prayer when marching on: "It is *at-takbir* and *at-tahlil*." Then he (the Imam) recited this verse.

There is another tradition in the same book from the same Imam: "If you are in a fearful land and are afraid of a thief or a beast, then say the obligatory prayer and you are on your (riding) animal."

And the same book quotes a tradition of Imam al-Baqir ('a): "He who is afraid of a thief shall pray by sign while (riding) on his mount."

The author says: There are numerous traditions of this meaning.

It is reported in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from Abu Basir that he said: "I asked him (the Imam) about the words of Allah:

***And those of you who die and leave wives behind,* (*make*) *a bequest in favour of their wives of maintenance for the year without turning* (*them*) *out.* (*2:240*).**

He (the Imam) said: 'It is abrogated.' I said: 'And how was it?' He (the Imam) said: 'It was (a custom) that when a man died, his wife was maintained from his capital for one year; then she was turned out without any inheritance. Then it was abrogated by the verse of one-fourth and one-eighth. Now the woman is given maintenance from her own share.'"

There is another tradition in the same book that Mu'awiyah Ibn 'Ammar said: "I asked him (the Imam) about the words of Allah: And those of you who die …He said: 'It is abrogated; the verse: …they should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten (days), abrogated it, and the verse of inheritance abrogated it.'"

It is reported in *al-Kafi* and *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi: Imam as-Sadiq ('a) was asked about a man who divorces his wife, should he make provision for her? He said: "Yes. Does not he like to be one of the doers of good? Does not he like to be one of those who fear (Allah)?"

A Scientific Discourse About Woman

It is well known that Islam - and we should not forget that it is Allah who legislated it - did not base its laws on experiments, like all other laws. Yet, we are sometimes obliged to look at the rules, laws and customs of modern and even ancient peoples, so that we may rationally judge the *Shari'ah* of Islam. We

have to look at the felicity of the human races and then see whether other customs and laws fulfil the requirements of humanity or not. In this way, we may see the difference between Islamic and non-Islamic rules, and appreciate the living and powerful spirit of Islam in comparison with others. That is why we refer to the history of nations and societies, and describe what they have to say on particular subject.

Accordingly, we should discuss the ideas and ideals of Islam about the following:

1. The identity of woman and the comparison of it with the identity of man.

2. Her value and importance in society - so that we may know what influence she had and has in human life.

3. Her rights and the laws made about her.

4. The foundation of the above-mentioned laws.

But before we discuss the above subjects from the Islamic point of view, it is necessary to look at history and see what her life was like before the advent of Islam, and what treatment has been accorded to her by non-Muslim nations - both civilized and uncivilized - up till now. It is not within the scope of this book to go into the detail of these subjects; but a short review will not be out of place.

The Life Of Woman In Uncivilized Nations

In uncivilized tribes and nations - like the tribes of Africa, the aboriginals of Australia, the inhabitants of the Pacific Ocean islands, the Red Indians of America, etc., a woman's life in comparison with a man's life was exactly like the life of a domestic animal as compared with the life of a human being.

Because of the natural instinct of exploitation, man believes that he has a right to possess cattle and other domestic animals, and to use them as he wishes and in any work he likes. He makes use of their hair, wool, meat, bones, blood, hides and milk; they serve him as a guard and watch; they are exploited even for breeding and procreating; their offspring and their profit serve the purpose of man; they carry his burden, are used in agriculture and hunting and satisfy the need of man in countless other ways.

These animals have no say at all about their own necessities of life and their desires, like food and drink, living space, their sexual urge, and the rest. It is only their owner who provides them with these items according to his own wish. And he would never wish but what is beneficial to himself through those animals. If we were to look from the eyes of that animal at the arrangements made by man we would surely be alternately amused and enraged at his high-handedness; we would find an animal being persecuted without any fault, another one crying for help without anyone paying any heed to it, a third one oppressing others without any hindrance; we would see one living a blissful and enjoyable life without doing any work to deserve it, like the stallion or the bull kept for breeding, which lives a most

happy life according to its own view; and would find others living a distressed and difficult life without having committed any sin to deserve such a punishment, like a donkey which carries loads heavier than itself and the horse in the mill.

Such animals do not have even the right of life. The owner believes that it is he who has the right of their lives. If someone kills a horse, he is not charged with the murder of that horse, he is only accused of destroying the property of the owner. It is because man thinks that the animal's existence is an appendage to his own existence, its life is an offshoot of his own life; and that its status is that of a hanger-on.

The position of a woman *vis-a-vis* a man in these tribes and societies is exactly the same. According to their belief, woman was created for man. She was her man's appendage even in existence and life.

It was the father who owned her so long as she was not married, and the husband assumed that right soon after marriage.

The man could sell her, gift her away or loan her to some other man for the purpose of cohabitation, procreation, or service, etc. He could mete out to her any punishment he decided upon, even the death penalty. He could abandon her, without caring whether she would die. He could kill her to feed on her meat, especially in feasts and during famine. All the properties and rights of the woman belonged to the man; only he, and not she, could enter into dealings - selling, buying, accepting, rejecting - on her behalf.

And the woman was duty-bound to obey the man - her father or husband - whether she liked it or not; she was not expected to act independently even in her, let alone his affairs. It was her duty to look after the house and the children and make sure that the man's whims and desires were properly satisfied. When there was work to do, she always got the hardest, like carrying heavy load on her back, digging the earth, etc., and from vocations and handicrafts her share was the lowest and the most worthless. Things got bad to such extent that in some tribes a woman, after giving birth to a child, had to get up at once and engage herself in household drudgery, while the man lay on her bed convalescing and getting treatment for himself.

These were her rights and her duties. Every tribe and society had its own special rules and characteristics according to its habit and habitat; anyone interested should study the books written on this subject.

Woman In Pre-Islamic Civilizations

Now we come to those nations who lived under traditional well-defined customs which they had inherited from their forefathers, and which were not based on any book or codified law. Such were the people of ancient China, India, Egypt and Iran.

In all these civilizations the woman had no independence or freedom, either in her intentions or her actions; she was totally under the guardianship and mastership of man. Neither could she decide on anything concerning herself, nor had she any right to interfere in civilian affairs like the government, the judiciary, etc.

It was her duty to participate with man in all the responsibilities of life, like earning a livelihood. In addition, it was her exclusive duty to look after domestic affairs and the children. She had to obey her man in all his orders and desires.

On the whole, a woman in these societies was in a better position than her sisters in uncivilized nations. She was not killed, and her meat was not used in feasts. She was not entirely deprived of the right to property; she owned to a certain extent what she got from inheritance or marriage, though she could not administer it independently. The man had the right to take as many wives as he desired, and to divorce whomever he wished. The husband could marry after the death of his wife, but in most cases the widow had no such right; and mostly she was forbidden to participate in society beyond her door–step.

Each of these civilizations had some particular customs. The class system in Iranian society, gave women of the upper class a right to participate in government and state and to succeed to the throne. Also, it recognized as valid a marriage with women having close affinity, like the mother, daughter or sister.

In China, marriage was a sort of servitude for woman. The husband almost purchased and owned her. She had no right in inheritance and could not eat with men, not even with her own sons. Polyandry was allowed; many men jointly married one woman, and shared her among themselves, and the child was affiliated in most cases with the strongest husband.

In India, she was completely an appendage of the man. She was not allowed to remarry after the death of her husband – she would be burnt alive with the body of the deceased husband; otherwise, she would live in disgrace. During her monthly period, she was treated as the dirtiest thing; even her clothes could not be touched by others.

In short, the status of women in these nations was something between a human being and an animal. She was treated as a minor child under his guardianship; but unlike the child, she was never thought fit to be free from the yoke of her man's guardianship.

Woman In Some Other Civilizations

There were some other nations who lived under, and were governed by, a codified law or book, like the Chaldeans, the Romans and the Greeks.

The Chaldeans and the Assyrians followed Hammurabi's Code, which made the woman an appendage of her husband; she was not independent in her decision or action. If the wife disobeyed her husband in

any way, or decided independently on anything, the husband could turn her out of his home or could bring in another wife degrading the offending wife to concubinage. If she made any mistake in household management or exceeded the limits of the domestic budget, the husband could lodge complaints before the judge and on being found guilty she could be drowned in water.

The Romans were the first to enact civil laws. The earliest laws were made four centuries before the Christian era; and were gradually completed and perfected. The Roman law gave some freedom to the woman in her own affairs. The master of the house, that is, her husband and the father of her children, was vested as a sort of godhead; he was worshipped by the people of his household, as he, in his return, worshipped his forefathers and ancestors. He had full authority and decisive will in all that he desired and ordered concerning his family – he could kill them, if he so wished, without anybody lifting a finger to restrain him. The females of the family – wife, daughter and sister – were in a worse condition than the male members, even than their own sons. The women were not a part of society; their complaints were not heard; their dealings were not recognized, and they could not interfere in social affairs. But the men, like brothers and sons, even the adopted ones (adoption and affiliation of children to other than their real fathers was a common practice in Roman society as well as in Greek, Iranian and Arabian) could be granted independence in their affairs by the master of the house.

The females were not a part of the household. The men were the members of the family, and the women were their appendage. Any formal relationship, giving the right of inheritance, etc., was reserved for between the males. The women had no formal relationships – neither between themselves like mother with daughter, or sister with sister, nor between themselves and the men like wife with husband, mother with son, sister with brother or daughter with father. And there was no mutual right of inheritance except where there was the formal relationship. Of course, the natural relationship was not denied, and some consequences of that half–hearted acceptance were the prohibition of marriage between close relations in many societies, and the guardianship of the master of the house over her women.

In short, woman, in their eyes, was a parasite, completely dependent in her social and domestic life; the rein of her life and her will was in the hands of the master of the household – her father if she was with him, or husband if she lived with him, or others. The master could do with her whatever he wished and decide about her as he thought fit. He sold her, gifted her away, loaned her to others for sexual enjoyment, gave her in repayment of debt, rent or taxes. He punished her by beating and even killing her. He had the authority to administer her property if she got hold of any through marriage or if she earned it with the permission of her master; but not through inheritance because she had no such right. Her father or other male relatives gave her in marriage, and her husband had the right to dissolve the marriage.

The custom of the Greeks in the composition of the household and the mastership of the males was almost identical with the Romans. Their social and domestic organization was made up of the males; the females were their dependents. They had no independence in their will or action except under the

guardianship of men. But there was a surprising contradiction in that system: if there was any decision to be taken against the woman, she was treated as an independent person, and if there was any judgement in her favour, she was a dependant of men – provided such orders were of benefit to the men. Thus, the woman was punished for all her faults and crimes as though she were independent, but she was never rewarded for her good work except under guardianship of her man.

This shows that these legal systems did not think that woman was a part of human society, not even a weaker part dependent on others; instead, they treated her as a harmful bacterium which disturbed society and damaged its health; but there was the unavoidable reality that she was needed to continue the human race; therefore, it was necessary to look after her. Even then she should be punished if she made a mistake or committed a crime; and her rewards should be given to the man when she did a good work. She was not to be left to do as she liked; otherwise, society would come to harm. In this she was like a powerful enemy who has been defeated, caught and enslaved; he lives his long life under duress; if he does any wrong, he is punished, but if he does a good deed he is not thanked.

As society, according to their thinking, was made up of the men only, they believed that the progeny in reality consisted of male children only, and the family could continue only when there was a male child to carry it on. This belief was the basis of the system of the adoption of sons. The house which had no male child was thought to be ruined, and such a family was deemed extinct and dead. No wonder then that they had to adopt others' sons as their own to save the family from extinction. Such adopted sons were treated as legitimate, legally recognized sons, having mutual rights of inheritance, and subject to all the rules and customs concerning natural sons. When a man thought himself to be sterile, he brought one of his relatives like a brother or a brother's son to sleep with his wife, so that she could conceive by that relative, and the son born thereof would be called his own son, and the family would continue.

Marriage and divorce in Greece was like the Roman system. They could marry more than one wife, but only one of the wives would be officially recognized; others were unofficial.

Woman In Arabia: The Environment In Which The Qur'an Was Revealed

The Arabs lived in the Arabian Peninsula, an infertile land with an extremely hot climate. Most of them belonged to nomadic tribes far away from any civilization; they lived on raid and plunder. Their neighbours were Iran on the one side, Rome (the Byzantine Empire) on the other and Ethiopia and Sudan on the third.

As a result of this geography, most of their customs and traditions were barbarous, and traces could be found in them of some Roman and Iranian traditions, as well as some Indian and ancient Egyptian customs.

The Arabs did not accord any independence to the woman in her life; nor did she have any honour or dignity except that of her family. She was not entitled to inheritance. A man could marry as many wives

as he desired; there was no restriction on divorce. Daughters were buried alive. This wicked custom was started by Banu Tamim when many of their daughters were made captive after a war against Nu'man Ibn Mundhir. This disturbed them very much and they started burying their daughters alive. Gradually the practice was adopted by other tribes. When a daughter was born, the father thought it a disgrace and hid himself from others' eyes. On the other hand, his joy knew no bounds when he got news that a son was born – the more the better, even if the son was an adopted one. They gladly affiliated to themselves the son born as a result of their adultery. Sometimes, when many people slept with one woman in one month and a son was born, every one of them claimed him for himself and often than not, this led to dispute and conflicts.

Even then, it was seen in some families that their women had some freedom, and especially the daughters were free in matrimonial affairs, their consent and choice was respected and accepted. In this they were influenced by Iranian upper-class society.

Anyhow, their treatment of women was a mixture of the civilized systems of Rome and Iran (not giving them any independent rights, not allowing them to participate in public affairs like government and war, except in exceptional cases) and the barbarous systems of primitive nomads. The women were deprived of many human rights, but not because the master of the house was a sacred person deserving to be worshipped. It was simply a matter of the stronger party subjugating and exploiting the weaker one.

So far as worship was concerned, all of them (men and women both) worshipped idols, as was also done by the as-Sabi'in, the worshippers of stars etc. Every tribe had its own idol made according to its liking and preference. They also worshipped the celestial bodies and the angels (whom they thought to be the daughters of Allah!) and made idols representing them according to their own fancy. The idols were made of various materials, often of stone and wood, though Banu Hanifah are reported to have made their idol from flour. They worshipped it for a long time, then came a time of famine, so they ate it. A poet says about it:

The (*tribe of*) *Hanifah ate its lord,*

At the time of hardship and famine.

They did not fear their lord,

About (*its*) *evil consequences and effect*.

Sometimes they worshipped a stone; then if a more beautiful stone came to hand, the first one was thrown away and replaced by the second one. If nothing suitable was found, they took a double handful of earth, brought a sheep or goat and milked it over that mound of earth. Then they started going round it and worshipping it.

Such deprivation and misery created in woman's mind a weakness which made her an easy prey to

superstition and credulity. Books of history and anthropology have recorded how she fell into error whenever she tried to explain natural phenomena and simple events.

This in short, was the condition of woman in human society in various eras before the advent of Islam. It may be seen from above that:

First: Men thought that women were human beings, but on the level of dumb animals, or with very weak and low-grade human qualities, who could not be trusted if set free. The first was the view of primitive people, and the second, of others.

Second: Society did not accord her the status of a member; and she was not considered an integral part of humanity. For primitives, she was one of the necessities of life like a home and accommodation. For civilized people, she was a captive and dependent on her masters who took advantage of her labour and always remained alert lest she escaped or cheated.

Third: Both types of societies deprived her of all common rights; she was given only that much which was necessary for her exploitation by men.

Fourth: They treated her as a strong person treats a weakling. In other words, the basis of their dealings with her was exploitation. In addition, civilized nations believed that she was a weak human being, incapable of independently looking after herself, and who could not be trusted in any matter.

Different nations and tribes had different ways, and sometimes customs and beliefs were mixed; also, there were variations in the degrees and grades of the above treatment.

What Islam Brought For Woman

Woman had to undergo patiently the above-mentioned treatment, which imprisoned her in the dungeon of humiliation and disgrace. Consequently, weakness and inferiority became her second nature; she was brought up in this environment and lived and died in it. Ultimately, the word 'woman' became synonymous with 'weakness' and 'insignificance' - not only in the conversation of men but even in the language of women themselves.

Look at any society, primitive or civilized, and you will find adages and proverbs reflecting on woman's feebleness and unimportance. Take any two or more languages of different origins and unrelated developments, and you will find one thing in common: allegories, metaphors and similes connected with the word 'woman' to scold a coward, to rebuke a weakling and to chide a contemptible and despised person. An Arab poet said:

I do not know (and would that I knew),

Whether the family of Hisn are people or women.

Such expressions may be seen in hundreds and thousands in every language.

These idioms and expressions were enough to show what human society believed about women, even if there were nothing recorded in the books of history and culture, because the ideas and ideals of a nation may clearly be gleaned from its language.

The only thing showing any consideration and care towards her is found in a few sentences of the Torah and in the admonition of Jesus to have mercy on her.

Then came Islam, the religion of truth and monotheism, accompanied by the Qur'an. Islam originated and initiated in her favour a system which the world had never known before, from the early dawn of humanity. It set forth straight away against the dictum of the whole world, and rebuilt, for her, her natural place, which the world had completely destroyed, from the very beginning. It cancelled and dismissed as baseless their belief about her identity and their practice concerning her treatment.

Her Identity

Islam declared that woman is as much a human being as man is. Every person, male or female, is a human being, whose substance and ingredients combinedly originate from two human beings – one male and one female, and no one has any superiority over the other except through piety. Allah says:

"O you people! Surely, We have created you of a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may recognize each other; surely the most honourable of you with Allah is one among you who guards (him/herself) most (against evil); surely Allah is Knowing, Aware" (49: 13).

Allah clearly says that every human being originates and is made from two human beings, a male and a female, and they both jointly and in equal degree are the source of his existence; and everyone, male or female, is a combination of the substances taken from those two. Note that Allah did not say as the Arab poet had said: "And surely the mothers of the people are but receptacles". Nor did He say like another poet:

Our sons are (those who are) the

sons of our sons; and as for our daughters,

Their sons are the sons of distant men.

Instead, He (Allah) declared that every one was created jointly from both male and female. All were, therefore, similar to each other. There could be no declaration more complete and more appropriate. Finally, He declared that being a male or a female or being born in a certain family or tribe is not the criterion of superiority. Superiority originates only from piety. Also, Allah has said:

…that I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you

being from the other… (***3:195***).

Here it is clearly said that endeavour is not repulsed and work is not wasted. And why? Because the one of you is from the other. This verse in this way clearly says what was implied in the words of the previous verse, "surely We have created you of a male and a female": The man and the woman together are a single species, without any difference in their origin and root. He goes on to say that the work of anyone from these two groups is not wasted before Allah; it will not be neglected, nor will its reward be given to another person; every soul is mortgaged against its own endeavours. It is not as the people have said, that women were responsible for their mistakes, but so far as their good work was concerned, its reward should be given to the men.

Every male and every female shall get what he or she does, and there is no superiority except of piety. The virtues are a part of piety like faith with its various degrees, beneficial knowledge, balanced wisdom, good character, patience and forbearance. Therefore, a believing woman (in various stages of the faith), or a learned and wise one, or one who is of noble character, will be superior in her own right, and higher in grade than those men, whosoever, who are not equal to her in these virtues. Because there is no superiority except of piety and noble character.

There are other verses of the same meaning, and rather clearer. Allah says:

Whoever does good, whether male or female, and he is a believer, We will most certainly make him live a happy life, and We will most certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did (***16:97***).

…And whoever does good, whether male or female and he is a believer, these shall enter the garden in which they shall be given sustenance without measure (***40:40***).

And whoever does good deeds, whether male or female and he is a believer, these shall enter the garden, and they shall not be dealt with a jot unjustly (***4:124***).

And Allah has condemned their disdain of the daughters in these words (and it is the most telling condemnation):

And when a daughter is announced to one of them his face becomes black and he is full of wrath. (***16:58***).

He hides himself from the people because of the evil of that which is announced to him. Should he keep it with disgrace or bury it (***alive***) ***in the dust? Now surely evil is what they judge*** (***16:59***).

Obviously, they hid themselves because they thought that a daughter was a disgrace for the father. They thought that she would soon reach marriageable age and would become a toy in the hands of her husband who would use her for sexual enjoyment – a shameful thing; and this shame would affect her family and her father; it was, therefore, better to bury her alive. (The original reason of this custom has

already been described.) Allah severely condemned this practice in these words:

And when the buried alive shall be asked (***81:8***).

For what sin she was killed (***81:9***).

There has remained a residue of such superstitions among Muslims, a legacy of their pagan ancestors, which has not been washed away from their hearts. You will see them thinking that illicit sexual relations are a shame and disgrace for the woman (even if she repents) but not for the man (even if he continues in that sin); while Islam has declared that disgrace and evil belong to the sin in which the man and the woman were equal partners.

Her Value In Society

Islam has made the man and the woman equal in their will and action so far as the management of their lives is concerned. Allah said:

The one of you being from the other (***3:195***).

She is independent in her will and intention and independent in her action. The woman owns the products of her own will and action as the man owns his own without any difference whatsoever. For her is the benefit of what she earns, and on her is the responsibility of what she does.

According to Islam both are equal; the Qur'an confirms it and Allah shows the truth to be the truth by His words. Side by side, Islam recognizes two special qualities in her, by which the Creator has distinguished her from the man: First, she is like a tilth for the creation and propagation of the human race. The species cannot exist without her. This distinction calls for some special rules concerning her life. Second, she has a comparatively delicate body and a sensitive perception. This has a tangible effect on her life and on the social and domestic responsibilities entrusted to her.

This is her value in human society – and also the value of the man may be understood from it. These two distinctions are the basis of all the rules that are common to both groups and of those that are reserved for either of the two. Allah says:

And do not covet that by which Allah has made some of you excel others; men shall have the benefit of what they earn and women shall have the benefit of what they earn; and ask Allah of His grace; surely Allah knows all things (***4:32***).

It shows that the contribution made by each group to society is the criterion of the excellence granted to it. And it is this excellence which gives special status to one in comparison to the other. For example, man has been given preference over woman in the share of inheritance; while woman has been given preference over man by being exempted from the responsibilities of maintenance. And no one should covet the preference given to someone else.

There is another type of excellence which results from the deeds of the doer, whoever he or she might be. For example, the virtues of faith, knowledge, reason, piety and other admirable qualities. And it is the grace of Allah, He gives it to whomsoever He wishes, and ask Allah of His grace.

The proof of the above statement is found in the words of Allah, following the above-mentioned verse:

Men are the maintainers of women... (***3:34***).

Common And Special Rules

Woman, like man, is subject to all the rules concerning worship and social rights. She may act independently in all matter in which man is free to act, like inheritance, earning, dealings with other people, learning, teaching, making a claim, defending her rights, and so on. In all such affairs, Islam makes no discrimination between man and woman.

Of course, in other matters it has limited her sphere of activity, because of her natural characteristics. For example, she may not be made a ruler or a Qadi, she is exempted from participation in fighting, although she may attend the jihad and be entrusted with its other responsibilities, like nursing and treating the wounded soldiers; and she gets half the share of man in inheritance. She has to hide her body and the places of adornment; she has to obey her husband so far as his conjugal rights are concerned. To compensate these burdens, she is exempted from her own maintenance; it is her father or husband who must maintain her, and they are also obliged to protect her to their utmost ability, and she has the right to bring up her children. Islam has also enjoined that her person and honour must be protected - her name may not be used in an undignified manner. Also, she is exempted from worship during her monthly period and after delivery. In short, Islam says that in all conditions and in every way, she should be treated with tenderness and kindness.

What she is obliged to learn and do, in brief, is as follows: On the side of learning, she must know the fundamentals of the faith and the commandments of the *Shari'ah* concerning worship and civil rules. And on the side of action, she must follow the rules of the religion and obey her husband by giving him his conjugal rights.

But she is not obliged to earn her livelihood by any employment, handicrafts or artisanship. Nor she is obliged to take up the drudgery of domestic work. Similarly, it is not her duty to burden herself with what is considered useful for the general welfare of the society, like learning various disciplines (other than those mentioned earlier) or participating in useful industries or handicrafts.

She is not obliged to do so. But if she acquires such extra knowledge or looks after her domestic arrangements or affairs useful for the society, it will be regarded as her extra excellence, provided she keeps within the limits imposed upon her by the *Shari'ah*. It will be a matter of pride for her. Islam has allowed, nay, encouraged her to boast of such achievements before her compatriots, although it has forbidden the men to boast (except in *jihad*).

The traditions of the Prophet support what we have said. Space does not allow full details; otherwise, we would have liked to describe how the Prophet lived with his wife, Khadijah, and his daughter, Fatimah, as well as with his other wives; and how he behaved with the women of his community and what he said and enjoined about women. Also, we would have quoted the traditions narrated from the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* and their women like Zaynab (daughter of 'Ali), Fatimah and Sakinah (ds/o Husayn) and others, and what they said about women. Perhaps we will get a chance to quote some of them in the traditions connected with the verses concerning woman.

The Foundation

The foundation upon which these rules have been built is nature. It may be understood from the explanation under the heading, "Her value in the Society". Further, details are as follows:

The scholars of social sciences will no doubt agree with the premise that the duties imposed by society should be based upon natural abilities and demands. It is nature which has led human beings to this collective social life from the earliest dawn of humanity. Of course, a certain society may at times deviate from the natural course. As the body, by deviating from its natural way, loses its health and becomes sick, likewise, a society, by astraying from natural dictates, deteriorates into chaos.

Society, healthy or sick, is thus based on nature; although a sick society has been contaminated by extraneous and harmful elements during its progress.

This fact has been mentioned, or alluded to, by scholars of social sciences. And the Book of Allah, long before these researches, has explained it in the most excellent style:

Our Lord is He who gave everything its creation, then guided it (20:50).

Who created, then made complete (87:2).

And Who made (things) according to a measure, then guided (87:3).

And (I swear by) the soul and Him Who made it perfect (91:7).

Then He inspired it to understand what is wrong for it and right for it (91:8).

These and other such verses show that all things, including human beings, are guided to what they have been created for; and that they have been equipped with what is needed to reach their goal. The blissful life is that which conforms perfectly with the dictates of nature. It has been pointed out in these words of Allah:

Then set your face uprightly for the (right) religion – the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no alteration (by anyone else) in the creation of Allah; that is the established religion… (30:30).

So far as social norms are concerned, nature demands that all individuals should have equal rights and duties. It does not approve of giving one more than his due and oppressing another by depriving him of his rights. But this equality does not mean that every individual should be offered every responsibility and every office. It would be wrong, for example, for a young inexperienced man to be given the place of a well-experienced official, or for an idiot to be given the chair of a professor; or to expect from a weakling the performance of a strong and brave person. If we treat capable and incapable persons equally, it will be harmful to both.

What is then the meaning of this equality? It means that every person should be given his right and put in his proper place. This equality between individuals and groups implies that each shall get his due rights without any let or hindrance; no right shall be usurped or denied unjustly. The following words of Allah point to it:

…And they have rights similar to those upon them in a just manner, and for the men is (the right) a degree above them… **(*2:228*).**

This verse ordains equality between the rights of both groups at the same time as it shows the difference between both.

Both groups, men and women, share equally in the basic gifts of thinking and will (which in their turn create free choice). She should, therefore, be equally free in her thought and will and should have free choice. In other words, she should be free to look after her life's affairs - as well as social, except where there is any genuine reason to the contrary. Islam gave her this freedom and independence in full measure, as has been explained earlier. She, thus, became, by the grace of Allah, an independent personality, unfettered in her will and action by men and their guardianship. She got what the world had denied her throughout all her existence since the beginning of humanity and which was unheard of in all her history. Allah says:

***There is no blame on you for what they do for themselves in a proper manner* (*2:234*).**

But while sharing these basic qualities with man, she differs from him in other ways. An average woman lags behind an average man in the build of her body and its basic organs, like the brain, the heart, the veins, the nerves, her height and weight. (The details may be seen in any book of anatomy.) As a result, her body is comparatively soft and elegant, while a man's is tough and rough. And the fine sentiments, like love, tender-heartedness, and inclination towards beauty and adornment are more pronounced in her than in man. On the other hand, the reasoning power is more prominent in man than in woman. The woman lives a sentimental life; the man an intellectual one.

It was for this reason, that Islam differentiated between men and women in those duties and responsibilities which were related to reason and those related to sentiment. Ruling, judging and fighting have been reserved for man, because these things are closely related to reasoning and thinking. And the bringing up of, and looking after, the children, the domestic management has been reserved for

woman. Her maintenance is the responsibility of her husband, for which he is compensated by a double share in inheritance.

Look at the division of inheritance in this way: It is as though inheritance is divided in two equal shares. Then one-third of the woman's share is given to the man in lieu of her maintenance. Thus, the man gets two-thirds of the estate and the woman is left with one-third. But the expenses of her maintenance are not less than that of a man. In this way, she gets the benefit of the man's two-thirds share in equal measure. (One-third's benefit goes to her while the man gets the benefit of the remaining one-third.) The net result is that the man gets two-thirds in species while the woman gets two-thirds in benefit. Man has been given more to manage, because reasoning is his predominant characteristic; woman has been bestowed with more to benefit from and enjoy, because feeling and sentiment is more pronounced in her nature. (This topic will be explained under the verses of inheritance.) Then Allah completed His grace and bounty to women by giving them the concessions and exemptions mentioned earlier.

Question: The above-mentioned clemency granted in Islam to woman makes her idle. When she is told to hide herself from strangers and is guaranteed all the necessities of life (by transferring its burden onto man) she is bound to become slow, lazy, idle and unproductive; she will not be able to exert herself in difficult works and professions. Thus, her growth will be retarded and her progress will turn into backwardness; she will not be able to contribute meaningfully in making society perfect. And experience is an irrefutable proof of this aspect.

Reply: It is one thing to ordain laws to improve the conditions of humanity; and a completely separate thing to enforce these laws through exemplary character and good upbringing (which leads humanity to progress). It was the tragedy of Islam in the past that it did not get good rulers and striving guardians. Consequently, the laws were suffocated, upbringing halted and then turned in the opposite direction. Irrefutable experience shows that mere theories and beliefs do not produce the desired result, unless, and until, they are ingrained in the soul by exhortation and good training and example.

The Muslims in their long history could not take any good example to follow from their rulers, who usurped full authority over them. Look at Mu'awiyah speaking on the pulpit of Iraq after taking over the caliphate: "I did not fight you to make you pray or fast - this is your own affair. I fought you only to become your ruler, and this I have now become." Also look at other caliphs from the Umayyid and 'Abbasid dynasties and other rulers after them. All of them were of the same type. And had it not been that this religion gets its light from the light of Allah which cannot be extinguished (and Allah is to complete His light even if the unbelievers dislike it), judgement would have been pronounced against the Muslims long ago.

The Freedom Of Women In Western Civilization

There is no doubt whatsoever that Islam was the first to release woman from her bondage and to grant her freedom of will and action. All the slogans of the emancipation of woman raised in western countries

are an echo of the clarion call of Islam. These nations in this matter are just following the lead given by Islam – even though they have made mistakes in this endeavour. The principle laid down by Islam is a perfectly circular ring, and nothing can be added to, or subtracted from, this circle without disturbing the whole alignment.

These people tried to improve upon the masterpiece of Islam and decided to create complete equality between man and woman in all rights and privileges. This was done after long agitations and demands. They did not pause to ponder that woman lags behind man in many powers and faculties.

They explain away the inherent weakness of the woman by attributing it to the defective training and upbringing to which she has been subjected since time immemorial (perhaps, since the beginning of humanity) even though she was equal to man in all her natural potentials.

But it may be asked that if the natural potentials of both groups were the same, why did society since the dawn of humanity decide to oppress her? Why and how did man succeeded in subjugating her in the first place? And why has this oppression never changed its course?

Western civilization, in spite of its keen desire to emancipate woman, has not succeeded in doing so. The data collected show that woman is far behind man in all those professions and activities which Islam has reserved for man, like ruling, judging and military service.

And as to what has been the fruit of this endeavour, the less said the better.

A Discussion About Marriage And Divorce

Marriage is one of the fundamental sociological institutions. Mankind, since its very beginning, has been keeping to it without any disruption. Such an institution must have been based on the foundation of nature itself.

Islam has based its matrimonial laws on the correlation between masculinity and femininity. There is no need to emphasize that this complementary system created in man and woman – and it is the most intricate and interrelated system permeating their whole bodies – was not created in vain and without purpose. The male by his nature is attracted to the female and vice versa. And this system has only one goal in sight: reproduction and the continuity of the race. Marriage is based on this reality; and all its rules revolve around this axis. That is why Islam in its matrimonial laws has kept in view the fundamental principle of sexual interrelation; and on this principle are based the laws concerning chastity and conjugal rights; exclusive attachment of the wife to the husband and the rules of divorce and *'iddah*; legitimacy and parentage, the custody and upbringing of the children; inheritance and other related subjects.

Modern non-Islamic laws have laid the foundation of matrimony on a co-operation between husband and wife in their struggle for life. Marriage accordingly, is a co-operative institution much narrower than

other such institutions like municipality etc.

It is for this reason that modern laws do not pay any attention to the rules of chastity etc., which are an integral part of the matrimonial laws of Islam.

This basis, co-operation in life, has given rise to a vast multitude of social problems and domestic upheavals. Apart from that, it is not in conformity with the realities of creation and nature. Why does a man want to join others and co-operate with them? It is because his well-being depends on countless things and innumerable actions which he alone cannot get and do. He is by necessity obliged to join hands with others. Consequently, each person co-operates with the others, dividing labour and work according to their aptitudes. And all the required work is completed with their joint effort.

This development requires co-operation between any two persons - it does not specifically call for co-operation between a man and a woman. Therefore, building the edifice of matrimony is fundamentally wrong. Nature has based it on the need of procreation and not on social or domestic co-operation. Otherwise, there would not have been any need of any special laws for marriage; the general rules governing association and co-operation would have been enough. It would negate the virtue of chastity and fidelity, nullify the concept of legitimacy and affinity, and abrogate the rules of inheritance - as communism has done. If we accept this ultimate result of the western philosophy of marriage, we would have to accept that all this complicated and interrelated system in the bodies of man and woman was created without any purpose.

This is a short review of the Islamic and western philosophies of marriage. More explanation will be given in some other relevant place.

So far as divorce is concerned, it is a thing which the *Shari'ah* of Islam should be proud of. It has been made lawful and this legalization also is based on nature. There is nothing in nature to interdict it. Details of the conditions of its validity will be given in the chapter of "Divorce" (Ch. 65). Here it should be noted that today all the nations of the world (not excepting the Roman Catholic countries) have had to adopt this system in their civil codes, even though previously they ridiculed Islam on this account.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verse 243

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ مُوتُوا ثُمَّ أَحْيَاهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ

Did you not see those who went forth from their homes, and they were (in) thousands, for fear of death; then Allah said to them "Die"; (and) afterwards He gave them life; most surely Allah is Gracious to people, but most people thank (Him) not (2:243).

Commentary

Quran: Did you not see those who went forth from their homes, and they were (in) thousands, for fear of death (2:243).

"To see", in this verse means "to know". It implies that the thing described here is so obvious that to know it is to see it. Other examples of this expression are:

Did you not see that Allah created the heavens and the earth with truth? (14:19).

Did you not see how Allah has created the seven heavens one above another? (71:15).

az-Zamakhshari has said that the phrase "Did you not see" is an idiom used to express wonder and astonishment. It implies, "Are you not surprised that..." *"hadhara 'l-mawt"* (حَذَرَالْمَوْت) may mean 'for fear of death' (as translated here); or it may mean, 'they were afraid of death, a great fearing'.

Quran: Then Allah said to them "Die"; (and) afterwards He gave them life. (2:243).

The order was 'creative', not 'legislative'. It does not mean that they did not die of a 'natural' cause, as the traditions say that they died of the plague.

Instead of saying, 'Then Allah gave them death and afterwards gave them life', Allah used this expression, because it more forcefully shows the effectiveness of His order and supreme domination of His power. The use of the imperative mood in matters of creation is a more forceful style; likewise, it is more eloquent and emphatic to use a news style while ordaining a legislation ("you shall not take other's property unjustly").

"Afterwards He gave them life" implies that they were raised from death to life, and that they remained alive for some time. Had they been resurrected just as an example and warning for others, or to complete the proof, or to explain some other reality, Allah would have pointed it out, as is customary in the Qur'an. (See, for example, the story of the people of the Cave.)

Moreover, the next sentence, "most surely Allah is Gracious to people", also shows that they were not raised for only a short time.

Quran: But most people thank (Him) not. (2:243).

The repetition of the word "people" here (instead of pronoun) reflects on the low level of their thinking. Moreover, the word "people" in the preceding sentence ("most surely Allah is Gracious to people") refers

to the particular group that was raised from dead; while in this sentence it stands for the whole of mankind.

This verse has some connection with the next verses which describe the importance of *jihad,* fighting in the way of Allah – *jihad* also gives a new life to the nation when it is dead.

A commentator has said that this verse is a parable to illustrate the condition of the *ummah* – how it remains backward and dies when foreigners bring it under their yoke and keep it under their rule and domination, and how later on it rises to defend its rights and snatches its freedom from that colonial power; and thus, becomes alive again. The following is the gist of his argument:

"The verse does not refer to any historical event of either the Israelites (as many traditions say) or others (as some others say). Otherwise, it would have been essential to mention that it happened in this or that nation, or to disclose the name of the prophet concerned, as the Qur'an invariably does in all its stories. Moreover, the Torah also does not mention it in the history of the prophet Hezekiel ('a). This proves that the traditions narrated in this connection are from Jewish mythology which were taken over by the Muslims.

Apart from that, there is only one death and one life in this world, as is shown by the Qur'anic words:

They shall not taste therein (i.e., in the Paradise) death except the first death (44:56).

They (i.e., the inmates of Fire) shall say: "Our Lord! Twice didst Thou make us subject to death, and twice hast Thou given us life" (40:11).

Therefore, there cannot be two lives in this world.

"Obviously, the verse is a parable: A nation was attacked by powerful enemies, who humiliated and subjugated them. The enslaved nation did not defend its freedom and went out of their homes, even though they were in thousands, in great numbers, but they were afraid of death. Thereupon Allah said to them, "Die, the death of disgrace and ignorance". Because ignorance and inertia is death, as knowledge and self-respect is life. Allah says:

O you who believe! Answer (the call of) Allah and His Apostle when he calls you to that which gives you life (8:24).

Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth? (6:122).

"The nation died, that is, they were disgraced and overcame by their enemies and remained in that condition. Afterwards, Allah again gave them life, by inspiring them to rise against their oppressors and to defend their rights. So, they stood up and drove their oppressors out and became independent. Those

were the people to whom Allah gave life a second time, although so far as their identity was concerned, they were not the same people who had died the death of disgrace. But as both groups were of the same nation, Allah counted them as one people who first died and then were raised to life again. Allah has used similar expressions in various places in the Qur'an. For example, He says, addressing the Jews of the Prophet's time:

And We delivered you from Pharaoh's people who subjected you to severe torment (***7:141***).

Then We raised you up after your death that you may give thanks (***2:56***).

"Lastly, if this verse were not taken as a parable, it would have no connection with the verses following it, which are about fighting in the way of Allah."

This interpretation is based on some patently false premises:

First: It is based on the rejection of miracles, or at least some miracles, like giving life to the dead. But we have proved the existence of miracles. Moreover, here we are dealing with the Qur'an, and the Qur'an loudly declares the existence of miracles, like raising the dead, etc. Even if we fail to prove such miracles through intellectual reasoning, the irrefutable fact remains that the Qur'an believes in them.

Second: It claims that the Qur'an proves the impossibility of more than one life in this world. But the verses describing the raising of dead (in the stories of Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa and 'Uzayr) clearly and definitely prove that dead animals and persons were again raised to life in this world.

Moreover, a life in this world is not to be counted as two lives simply because a death intervenes in between. The story of 'Uzayr is clear on this point: He remained dead for a hundred years; but on raising again he was not even aware of that death.

Third: It is a false assumption that the Qur'an ought to have identified the nation or the prophet concerned, if it were the narration of a real event.

The style of speech differs according to its time, place and context. Sometimes details are given; on other occasions only, a passing reference is made. For example, the Qur'an refers to a people (without identifying them in any way):

Cursed be the fellows of the ditch (***85:4***).

Of the fire (***kept burning***) ***with fuel*** (***85:5***).

When they sat by it (***85:6***).

While they were witnesses of what they did with the believers (***85:7***).

And of those whom We have created are a people who guide with the truth and thereby do justice

(***7:181***).

Fourth: The claim that if this verse were not a parable it would have no connection with the subsequent verses, has no meaning at all.

The Qur'an was revealed little by little, and there is no need to search for any connection between two adjacent verses unless they are clearly in one context and obviously revealed all together.

The truth is that the verse narrates a real event.

What style, eloquence and force would be in a verse which most of the hearers believe to be a real event, while in reality it is but a parable having no factual basis at all.

Moreover, it is an invariable habit of the Qur'an to distinguish a simile or parable from other modes of expression. For example:

Their parable is like the parable of one who… (***2:17***).

The likeness of this world's life is only as… (***10:24***).

The similitude of those who were placed under the Torah… (***62:5***)

And so on.

Traditions

It is reported in *al-Ihtijaj* from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) that he said, *inter alia,* in a tradition: "Allah made alive again a people who left their homes fleeing from the plague; they were innumerable. So Allah gave them death for a long time until their bones decayed, their limbs disintegrated and they all became dust. Then Allah sent a prophet, named Hezekiel, at a time when He wished to show him His creation. So He called them, and their bodies re-composed and their souls returned, and they stood up in the same shape as they had died, not a single one was missing from their group. Then they lived after that for a long time.

The author says: This interpretation has been narrated by al-Kulayni and al-'Ayyashi in some detail, and at the end of that tradition are the words, "and about them was revealed this verse."

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 244 - 252

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

And fight in the way of Allah, and know that Allah is Hearing, Knowing (2:244).

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْسُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

Who is it that will lend to Allah a goodly loan, so He will multiply it for him manifold, and Allah holds and extends and to Him you shall be returned (2:245).

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلَإِ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَىٰ إِذْ قَالُوا لِنَبِيٍّ لَهُمُ ابْعَثْ لَنَا مَلِكًا نُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قَالَ هَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ أَلَّا تُقَاتِلُوا قَالُوا وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ أُخْرِجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَأَبْنَائِنَا فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ

Did you not see the chiefs of the children of Israel after Musa, when they said to a prophet of theirs. "Raise up for us a king (that) we may fight in the way of Allah". He said: "May it not be that if fighting is ordained for you, you would not fight?" They said: "And what reason have we that we should not fight in the way of Allah, and we have indeed been turned out of our homes and our children." But when fighting was ordained for them, they turned back, except a few of them, and Allah knows the unjust (2:246).

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا قَالُوا أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِنَ الْمَالِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مُلْكَهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

And their prophet said to them: "Surely Allah has raised Talut to be a king over you." They said: "How can he hold kingship over us while we have a greater right to kingship than he, and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth?" He said: "Surely Allah has chosen him over you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique, and Allah grants His Kingdom to whom He pleases, and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing" (2:247).

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ التَّابُوتُ فِيهِ سَكِينَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِمَّا تَرَكَ آلُ مُوسَىٰ وَآلُ هَارُونَ تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

And their prophet said to them: "Surely the sign of his kingship is, that there shall come to you the Ark in which there is tranquillity from your Lord and residue of the relics of what the family of Musa and the family of Harun have left, the angels bearing it, most surely there is a sign in this for those who believe" (***2:248***).

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ بِنَهَرٍ فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنِ
اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ
قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُو اللَّهِ كَمْ مِنْ فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

So when Talut departed with the forces, he said: "Surely Allah will try you with a stream; whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me, and whoever does not taste of it, he is surely of me, except he who takes with his hand as much (***of it***) ***as fills his hand;" but with the exception of a few of them they drank from it. So when he had crossed it, he and those who believed with him, they said: "We have today no power against Goliath and his forces." Those who thought that they would meet their Lord said: "How often has a small party vanquished a numerous host by Allah's permission, and Allah is with the patient ones"*** (***2:249***).

وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوا لِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ

And when they went out against Goliath and his forces they said: "Our Lord, pour down upon us patience, and make out feet firm and help us against the unbelieving people" (***2:250***).

فَهَزَمُوهُمْ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُودُ جَالُوتَ وَآتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ
بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

So they routed them by Allah's permission and Dawud slew Goliath, and Allah gave him kingship and wisdom, and taught him of what He pleased. And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder; but Allah is Gracious to the creatures (***2:251***).

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

These are the signs of Allah: We recite them to you with truth; and most surely you are (***one***) ***of the apostles*** (***2:252***).

General Comment

All these verses were obviously revealed together. The connection between the obligation of fighting, the exhortation of a goodly loan to Allah and the moral of the story of Talut, Dawud and Goliath, needs no explanation. The import of the verses is to show how fighting in the way of Allah strengthens the collective life, what the spirit is by which a nation goes forward in its worldly and religious life, and what gives it its real happiness and felicity. Allah declares that *jihad* is obligatory for the Muslims, calls them to spend in His way, by contributing in preparation for war so that their military power increases and they are ready for their enemies.

This spending has been called "lending to Allah" because it is done in His way. Also, it very forcefully exhorts the hearers to spend in His way to gain nearness to Him. Then comes the story of Talut, Dawud and Goliath, so that the believers who are told to fight should take lessons from it. The moral is that the kingdom and victory belong to faith and piety, even if its adherents be small in number; and defeat and destruction is the fare of hypocrisy and sin, even if its followers be numerous. See how the Israelites lived in disgrace and servitude as long as they remained inert and idle, and were too lazy to do anything to improve their condition.

But when they stood up to fight in the way of Allah and sought help from the word of truth, Allah helped them to vanquish their enemy, even though only a few of them were really truthful. Look at the majority of them turning back when fighting was prescribed for them, and objecting to the appointment of Talut, and drinking from the stream, and saying that they had no strength to fight against Goliath and his armies. In spite of all these shortcomings Allah made them victorious; they vanquished their enemy by the permission of Allah; Dawud slew Goliath and kingdom was established in them. They were given a new life and their power and sovereignty came back to them. It was not but because of a word which faith and piety made them utter when they stood before Goliath and his forces:

"Our Lord, pour down upon us patience and make our feet firm and help us against the unbelieving people" (***2:250***).

Thus, should the believers follow in the footsteps of the good people of previous nations, because they shall have the upper hand if they are believers.

Commentary

Verse 244

Qur'an: And fight in the way of Allah (***2:244***).

It makes fighting obligatory and compulsory. Here and everywhere in the Qur'an, the order of fighting has the stipulation, "in the way of Allah". It is to forestall any possible misunderstanding that this

important religious duty was ordained to establish the worldly domination of the Muslims over other nations and to spread the kingdom of the Muslim's – as many modern Muslim scholars think. The proviso, "in the way of Allah", shows that this order was given to spread the domination of religion, by which the people could prosper in both worlds.

***Qur'an: And know that Allah is Hearing, Knowing* (*2:244*).**

It is a warning to the believers – they should not utter a single word against any order given by Allah and His apostle, nor should they dislike in their hearts any such order as the hypocrites do. They should not be like the Israelites when they first objected about Talut, saying, "How can he hold kingship over us...", and then said, "We have today no power against Goliath and his forces", and retreated and turned away when fighting was prescribed for them, and drank from the stream after Talut had forbidden them to do so.

Verse 245

***Qur'an: Who is it that will lend to Allah a goodly loan, so that He will multiply it for him manifold* (*2:245*)**

The meaning of loan is well-known. Allah has named what is spent in His way as a loan to Himself, to exhort people to spend, and because it is done in His way, and also because it will surely be returned to them manifold.

The style has been changed from the imperative mood of previous verse (And fight in the way of Allah) to the interrogative here (Who is it that will lend?) to refresh and enliven the mind of the audience – an order is always received with a feeling of helplessness, but not so an invitation and exhortation.

***Qur'an: And Allah holds and extends and to Him you shall be returned* (*2:245*).**

"al-Qabd" (القَبْض) is to hold a thing towards oneself. *al-bast* (البَسْط) is its opposite. *"al-Bast"* (البَصْط) is a rendering of *al-bast* – *'S'* (س) of which has been changed to *'S'* (ص) because it is joined to *'T'* (ط) which is pronounced with a full voice, and S also has a full voice.

This sentence mentions three attributes of Allah: He holds, He extends and to Him all are to return. It is to remind the Muslims that whatever they spend, lending it to Him shall not be in vain, nor should they be surprised at how it will be increased manifold. Because Allah holds and extends – He decreases whatever He pleases and increases whatever He pleases; and they are to return to Him, and then He will repay them the said loan a goodly repayment.

Verse 246

***Qur'an: Did you not see the chiefs of the children of Israel after Musa, when they said to a prophet of theirs. "Raise up for us a king* (*that*) *we may fight in the way of Allah"* (*2:246*).**

Al-Mala' (المَلَاء) is said to mean a group of people having the same opinion. It is derived from *al-mal'* (المَلْاء) to fill, because it fills the eyes by its greatness and prestige.

The request, "Raise up for us a king (that) we may fight in the way of Allah", implies that the king, Goliath by name, had subjugated them and treated them so badly that they had lost all traces of a free life, like their homes and children. It happened after Allah had saved them from the people of Pharaoh by raising among them Musa and making him their head, and after the rule of the successors of Musa had come to an end.

Then the hardship increased to such an extent that their slumbering self-respect was awakened by the shock of it, and their elders went to a prophet of theirs asking him to raise for them a king to remove their internal differences and unite their power which had become ineffective because of disunity, so that they could fight under his command, in the way of Allah.

Qur'an: He said: "May it not be that if fighting is ordained for you, you would not fight?" (***2:246***).

The Israelites had asked their prophet to raise for them a king, so that they could fight under him in the way of Allah. But it was not in the power of the prophet; it was the prerogative of Allah. That is why the prophet attributed the appointment and the order of fighting to Allah. But he did not mention the divine name clearly. In their reply he questioned them about their possible disobedience, and he knew by divine revelation that they would surely disobey. Therefore, he did not mention the name of Allah clearly but only indicated that the authority is from Him and of Him only. How did he indicate it? By using the word "written" (lit. transl.: "if fighting is written on you"); and writing, in the meaning of ordaining, is done only by Allah.

Although, the prophet knew that they would not obey the command of Allah, he put this matter in the form of a question, so that the proof might be completed against them by their protests of sincerity, as their reply showed.

Qur'an: They said: "And what reason have we that we should not fight in the way of Allah, and we have indeed been turned out of our homes and our children" (***2:246***).

Their dispersal from their homes meant that they could not manage their affairs, as they had been sent away from their ancestral abode. Thus, "turned out of our homes" alludes to their inability to look after their homes and to benefit from them. It is this meaning that justifies the use of this verb, "turned out of" in connection with children.

Qur'an: But when fighting was ordained for them, they turned back, except a few of them, and Allah knows the unjust (***2:246***).

It is an offshoot of their prophet's question (May it not be that...you would not fight?) and their reply (And what reason have we that we should not fight?). The words, "And Allah knows the unjust", show that the

question of the prophet was based on divine revelation that they would surely turn away from fighting.

Verse 247

Qur'an: And their prophet said to them: "Surely Allah has raised Talut to be a king over you." They said: "How can he hold kingship over us while we have a greater right to kingship than he, and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth?" (***2:247***).

The announcement, "Allah has raised" was a reminder to them that they were mistaken in asking the prophet to raise a king for them so that they would fight. The prophet attributed this raising to Allah to teach them that it was a prerogative of Allah.

The declaration about Talut prompted them to protest. In their eyes, Talut had two defects, which made him unfit for kingship. The first "disqualification" was alluded to in their words narrated by Allah: "How can he hold kingship over us while we have a greater right to kingship than he". They did not think it necessary to elaborate why they were more deserving; it means that it was an obvious thing. The fact is that the house of prophethood and the house of kingship were well-known among the Israelites – the two houses were highly respected because of these two graces of Allah. And Talut was from neither. That is why they objected that they – the people of the house of kingship or both kingship and prophethood – had a greater right to kingship than Talut; Allah had put kingship in their family, how could they accept its transfer to someone else?

This objection was a result of their belief that Allah cannot abrogate or change any of His orders; they said: the hand of Allah is tied up. (Their hands be shackled!) Their prophet replied to this objection when he said: "Surely Allah has chosen him over you."

The second "disqualification" is described in their words,

"And he has not been granted an abundance of wealth" (***2:247***).

Talut was a poor man. Their prophet replied to it by saying:

"And He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique" (***2:247***).

Qur'an: He said: "Surely Allah has chosen him over you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique" (***2:247***).

al-Istifa' (الإصْطِفَآء) and *al-istisfa'* (الإِسْتِصْفَآء) means to choose. Its root is *as-safw* (الصَّفْو = clearness, choice); *al-bastah* (البَسْطَة) is expansion and power. These sentences are the replies to their objections:

Objection 1: ***They had a greater right of kingship than Talut because they were from the chosen family*** (***2:247***).

Reply: It was a distinction given to their family by Allah. Now that Allah has chosen someone else, he has a greater right than they; and now his family will have precedence over theirs and he has become nobler and higher in rank than they. The superiority follows the choice of Allah.

Objection 2: ***"and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth"*** (***2:247***).

Reply: Kingship is establishment of supreme authority over a group of people. Its only purpose is to unite the people under one will and join them together by creating a relationship with all of them. Everyone shall progress on the road of perfection without colliding with one another. No one shall be given preference without justice; no one shall be kept behind without justice. In short, kingship was created so that the ruler should manage the society in such a way that every member might reach his deserved perfection. To achieve that object, the king must have two qualities: (1) Knowledge of all that is good for his people and all that is bad; (2) Physical strength to implement and enforce what he thinks is good for the people.

Allah points this out in the words,

"***And He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique"*** (***2:247***).

So far as wealth is concerned, to count it among the necessities of kingship is foolishness.

Then He concisely put all these arguments in one sentence:

"And Allah grants His Kingdom to whom He pleases" (***2:247***).

The kingdom belongs to Allah alone; nobody has any right in it, except what Allah bestows from it on any one. Even then it really belongs to Allah only – see how the word "kingdom" is qualified here by possessive pronoun "His". When you keep this reality in view, you will know that Allah has full authority to do in His kingdom as He pleases and as He wills. Nobody has any right to say 'why' or 'how'. One cannot ask why Allah did this or that, because He is the Real cause; nor can one enquire how and by which means He did it, because Allah is the Perfect cause and He does not need any supplementary causes. Therefore, the Israelites should not have asked why He transferred the kingdom from one family to another, or why He gave it to someone who had neither a big family nor abundant wealth.

It is true that Allah bestows His bounty and grace as He wishes and upon whom He pleases. Still, it is not done at random or without reason. When we say, "Allah does what He wishes and gives His kingdom to whom He pleases" we do not mean that Allah does not have any object in view in His actions. Nor do we say that He acts haphazardly; that if there occurs any benefit from it, well and good, and if not, then what does it matter; –after all, the kingdom is His, He may do whatever He pleases. What we actually mean is this: Allah is the final and real cause of every creation, with matter and without matter. Benefit and usefulness also, like all other things, are His creation. In view of this, Allah, in His actions, cannot be governed by any aim and object, as we are; when He does a work (and whatever He

does is good) or creates a thing (and whatever He creates is beautiful), His action is beneficial to His creatures. But He is not subservient to any benefit.

The above explanation serves to resolve the apparent contradiction in this verse: The authoritative declaration, "Allah grants His kingdom to whom He pleases", seemingly cannot be reconciled with the reasons given earlier, "He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique". Had there been any discordance between His absolute power to do as He pleases, and His actions being full of benefit and reason, the two arguments could not be advanced side by side, let alone be complementary to each other.

The last sentence of the verse,

***"And Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing"* (*2:247*).**

Makes it even more clear. "Ample-giving" shows that He cannot be restricted by anyone or anything in bestowing His bounties or in any other action. "Knowing" shows that all His actions are done by His true knowledge which is never wrong. In other words, He does whatever He pleases, and He never does but what is beneficial.

"Wasi'" (وَاسِع = translated here as "Ample-giving") is the active participle of *al-wus'ah* (الوُسْعَة) and *as-sa'ah* (السَّعَة) which is the capacity of a body to accommodate another body, like the capacity of a water-pot to hold water, that of a box for things packed in it, and that of a house to accommodate its residents. Then it was borrowed for riches: but not for every wealth and not in all conditions; it is used for riches when the possibility of spending and giving is taken into consideration. It is as though the wealth has the capacity to be spent and given. It is this meaning in which Allah is called al-wasi' (الوَاسِع), that is, the Possessor of wealth who has power to give whatever He pleases.

Verse 248

***Qur'an: And their prophet said to them: "Surely the sign of his kingship is that there shall come to you the Ark in which there's tranquillity"* (*2:248*).**

"at-Tabut" (التَّابُوْت = translated here as "Ark") means chest. It is on the paradigm of *fa'lut* (فَعْلُوت) from *at-tawb* (التَّوْب = to return). A chest is given this name because man returns to it every now and then.

Meaning Of "As-Sakinah"

"as-Sakinah" (السَّكِيْنَة = tranquillity) is derived from *as-sukun* (السُّكُوْن) which is opposite of movement. *as-sakinah* is used for tranquillity of the heart. When a man is of stable mind and is not perturbed in taking a firm decision, he is said to have *as-sakinah*. It is a virtue of a wise man who has a strong will. Allah has made it a characteristic of *al-Iman* (الإِيْمَان = faith) in its higher degree and has counted it as one of His most valuable gifts.

Man, according to his nature, bases his action on reasoning. He arranges logical premises, analyses the benefits of a particular action, and sees how it will affect the bliss of his life and bring the good of the society as a whole. Then he decides what to do and what not to do.

When man goes forward on the path of nature in the process of his reasoning, and his only aim is to gain real benefit and happiness in life, then his thinking is accompanied by peace of mind and tranquillity of heart without any nervousness and perturbation. On the other hand, if he clings in his life to the world and follows his low desires, he becomes confused, and his thought and will-power are distorted by his unhealthy vision. As a result, he goes astray from the path of truth; or remains undecided, confused and irresolute in his decisions and cannot perform any difficult and dangerous task which requires strong will-power and firm feet.

A believing man, because of his belief in Allah, relies on a firm support and an unshaking pillar of strength. He bases his life on true knowledge where doubt and confusion cannot intrude; sets forth in his actions in the light of divine commandments which he is sure are the most perfect guide. He knows that his affairs are not in his own hands; he is, therefore, not afraid of any possible loss; and if any harm comes to him, he is not sorry about it. He is not puzzled when he has to distinguish good from evil.

But a disbeliever has no guardian to look after his affairs. His good and evil are in his own hands. He wanders in the darkness of confusion, undecidedness and uncertainty, because his thoughts are permeated by low desires, spectres of unreality, and unhealthy feelings.

Allah says:

…And Allah is the Guardian of the believers (***3:68***).

That is because Allah is the Guardian of those who believe, and because the unbelievers have no guardian for them (***47:11***).

Allah is the Guardian of those who believe; He brings them out of darkness into the light; and (***as to***) ***those who disbelieve, their guardians are the Satans who take them out of the light into the darkness*** (***2:257***).

Surely, We have made the Satans to be the guardians of those who do not believe (***7:27***).

It is only the Satan that frightens his friends… (***3:175***).

The Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins you to be niggardly, and Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance… (***2:268***).

…and whoever takes the Satan for a guardian rather than Allah, he indeed shall suffer a manifest loss (***4:119***).

He gives them promises and excites vain desires in them; and the Satan does not promise them aught but (in) deception (4:120).

… (it is) a promise of Allah, true (indeed); and who is truer of word than Allah? (4:122).

Now surely the friends of Allah – they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve (10:62).

These verses, as you see, put all fear, grief, perturbation and deception on the side of disbelief; and the opposite virtues on the side of faith. Even more clear is the verse:

Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth? (6:122).

It shows that the disbeliever gropes about awkwardly in his journey of life because he has fallen in utter darkness and cannot see anything. But the believer has a divine light by which he sees his path and knows what is good for him and what is bad. It is because Allah has bestowed upon him a fresh and new life in addition to this material life which he shares with the disbelievers. That new life accompanies this light which illuminates its path. Allah says:

O you who believe! Fear Allah and believe in His Apostle: He will give you two portions of His mercy, and make for you a light with which you will walk, and forgive you… (57:28).

Again, He says:

You shall not find a people who believe in Allah and the latter-day befriending those who act in opposition to Allah and His Apostle, even though they were their (own) fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their kinsfolk; these are they into whose hearts He has written (impressed) faith, and whom He has strengthened with a spirit from Him (58:22).

It shows that this new life is from a spirit from Allah and is accompanied by a firm faith deeply impressed into their hearts. These believers are strengthened by a spirit from Allah, which confirms the faith into their hearts, gives a new life to their bodies and creates a brilliant light to lead them forward.

It is easy to see that the import of this verse is similar to that of the following verse:

He it is who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they might have more of faith added to their faith – and Allah's are the hosts of the heavens and the earth, and Allah is Knowing, Wise (48:4).

"Tranquillity" in this verse corresponds with the "spirit" in the previous one; and "having more of faith added to their faith" of this one corresponds with "impressing the faith into their hearts" of the previous one. This conformity becomes more obvious when we look at the sentence, "and Allah's are the hosts of

the heavens and the earth", because the Qur'an often uses the term "hosts" for the angels and the spirit.

Similar in the meaning are the verses:

...then Allah sent down His tranquillity on His Apostle and on the believers, and made them keep the word of guarding (against evil), and they were entitled to it and worthy of it (48:26).

So Allah sent down His tranquillity upon him and strengthened him with hosts which you did not see... (9:40).

From the above discussion; it may be inferred that *as-sakinah* is a divine spirit, or accompanies a divine spirit, by divine command; it creates tranquillity in heart, firmness of purpose and peace of mind. This does not involve us in far-fetched interpretations which would remove the word from its real meaning. And the traditions on this subject should be interpreted in this light.

Verse 248

Qur'an: And residue of the relics of what the family of Musa and the family of Harun have left, the angels bearing it (2:248).

"al-Al" (الأل) of a man means those of his family who are most closely related to him; and, when used without any condition, it includes also the man himself. Therefore, the phrase here means Musa, Harun and their most closely related family-members. "The angels bearing it" shows the state of the Ark. The words of Allah, "most surely there is a sign in this for those who believe", like the words at the beginning of the verse, prove that they had asked their prophet for a proof of the truth of what he had told them,

"Surely Allah has raised Talut to be a king over you." (2:247).

Verse 249

Qur'an: So when Talut departed with the forces, he said: "Surely Allah will try you with a stream; whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me, and whoever does not taste of it, he is surely of me, except he who takes with his hand as much (of it) as fills his hand;" but with the exception of a few of them they drank from it... (2:249).

"al-Fasl" (الفَصْل) here means to depart from a place: the same is the meaning of the word in ***"And when the caravan had departed" (12:94).*** Sometimes it means "to cut", that is, to separate two things, as Allah says:

And He is the best of separators (between truth and falsehood) (6:57).

Thus, the verb is used sometimes transitively and at other times intransitively.

The word *"al-jund"* (الجُنْد) signifies a dense concentration of something. The army is called al-jund,

because people are densely concentrated in it. In this verse, the word is used in plural, and it shows that their number was very great – and this was after the people had

***"Turned back except a few of them"* (*2:246*).**

The whole talk is a comment on the condition of the Israelites and how they "fulfilled" the covenant made with Allah. All together they pleaded that a king be raised for them, and made a very strong covenant to fight under him; and they were so numerous that when they all turned back except a few of them, those few were "forces"; and those forces also were of no avail because they drank from the stream; thus, what was left, was a residue of the residue, and among them were also those who had taken a handful of water, and as a result were overcome by cowardice and hypocrisy. And then Allah declares how a handful of believers, who were forbearing in the way of Allah, were given victory over the huge armies of Goliath.

"al-Ibtila'" (الإِبْتِلآء) is to test; *"al-nahar"* (النَّهَر) is the place in which a stream flows; *"al-ightiraf"* (الاِغْتِرَاف) and *al-gharf* (الغَرْف) is to raise a thing in the hand and get it, for example, raising water in the hand to drink it.

The position of the exceptional clause in this verse requires special attention: Allah will try you with a stream; whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me, and whoever does not taste of it, he is surely of me, except he who takes with his hand as much (of it) as fills the hand. It would appear at the first glance that the words, "except he who takes with his hand ..." should have come after the sentence, "whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me". But the fact is that this is not related at all with those who would drink from the stream. The Qur'an mentions that those who would drink were not from Talut, and that is that. Then it changes the word "drink" to "taste" and says, "and whoever does not taste of it, he is surely of me". Only then comes the exceptional clause. Had this clause been put after the first sentence, "whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me", it would have signified that he who took only a handful of water was of Talut. This in its turn would have meant that the whole army from the beginning was of Talut, and then those who drank from the stream were cut off from him.

But the present sequence, in which two categories have been mentioned – one of those who would drink and the other of those who would not drink – shows that the real position of the soldiers of the army was at that time undecided and unknown. It was only after the test of the stream that the reality was to be known. Those who would drink from it would be known to be not of Talut; and those who would not even taste of it would be known to be of Talut. After these two separate sentences comes the exceptional clause, which removes those who would take a handful of water from the first group – but it does not put them in the second one. If there were only the first sentence, the exceptional clause would have given the meaning that by taking a handful of water one would not be cut off from Talut, that is, would remain of him.

But now that two separate categories have expressly been mentioned, removal from one group does not

automatically mean inclusion in the other. In short, the position of the exceptional clause shows the existence of three groups: those who were not of Talut, those who were of him, and the takers of handful of water. After crossing the stream, two later groups remained with Talut. That is why there appeared so much difference in their states; one group was forbearing, the other was restless; one had full confidence in Allah, the other was perturbed and troubled.

Qur'an: So when he had crossed it, he and those who believed with him, they said: "We have today no power against Goliath and his forces." Those who thought that they would meet their Lord said: "How often has a small party vanquished a numerous host by Allah's permission, and Allah is with the patient ones" (***2:249***).

"al-Fi'ah" (الفِئَة) means a group of people. A glance at the verses is sufficient to show that those who said,

"We have today no power against Goliath and his forces" (***2:249***).

were those who had taken a handful of water; and those who replied them were those who had not tasted of it.

"Those who thought that they would meet their Lord" (***2:249***).

The "thought" here means "certainty", that is, "those who were sure...". Also, it may be an allegorical style to show that in their humility they did not believe themselves worthy of meeting their Lord. They did not say, "It is possible for a small party to vanquish a numerous host." Instead, they said, "How often has a small party vanquished..." Thus, they put forward a fact as their argument (instead of a theoretical possibility) to make the reply more convincing.

Verse 250

Qur'an: And when they went out against Goliath and his forces they said: "Our Lord, pour down upon us patience, and make out feet firm and help us against the unbelieving people" (***2:250***).

"al-Buruz" (البُرُوْز) is to appear. From it is derived *"al-baraz"* (البَرَاز) which means to appear or set forth for battle. *"al-Ifragh"* (الإِفْرَاغ) means to pour a liquid material in a mould. In this invocation, they beg Allah to pour down upon them patience according to their capacity. It is a very fine allegory. "Make our feet firm" is another allegorical expression which signifies determination, steadiness and firmness in front of the enemy, so that they do not flee from him.

Verse 251

Qur'an: So they put them to flight by Allah's permission and Dawud slew Goliath, and Allah gave him kingship and wisdom, and taught him of what He pleased (***2:251***).

"al-Hazm" (الهَزْم) means to repel, to drive back.

***Qur'an: And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder; but Allah is Gracious to the creatures* (*2:251*).**

It is obvious that the disorder of the earth means the disorder among those who are on the earth, that is, the disorder in human society. If society's disorder brings in its wake disorder on the earth's surface, it would also have to be included in the meaning of this verse, not because of itself but because of its being a result of society's disorder.

This verse hints at a philosophical reality, which is as follows:

The felicity and good of the human species is incomplete if there is no society and no mutual assistance. This factor depends on unity, to a certain degree, in society, so that various individuals may join together to form a single group. The group together becomes a single unit; metaphorically speaking, it becomes as though it has a single body and a single soul. It acts and reacts like a single individual. Social unity, and the place in which it occurs, that is, the assembly of human individuals, is just like unity in creation, and the place in which it occurs, that is, the universe. We know that unity in this system of creation results from the action and reaction occurring in the components of the universe. The various creative causes struggle with each other, repel, or are repelled by opposing forces, and it is as a result of this constant action and reaction that various parts of this system remain connected with each other. Otherwise, the universe would have ceased to exist.

Likewise, the system of human society is based on action and reaction, on repulsion and overpowering; otherwise, the various members of society could not remain bound with each other, and society would have ceased to exist; in short, the felicity of the species would have vanished. If we suppose that there is no repelling each other, in this meaning, (i.e., overpowering others and making them obey the victor's will), every individual member will do what he thinks fit, even if it goes against the interest of the other members (whether those interests are lawful is not our concern at this juncture); and those other members will have no means to prevent him from that course of action. Thus, the unity of the members will cease to exist and society will be finished. We have described this subject fully under verse 2:213; where it was explained that the basic factor upon which society is founded is the human instinct of subjugating others for one's own benefit; and mutual assistance and civilization is a side product of this instinct, it is a secondary cause.

This repulsion and overpowering is an overwhelming factor in human society. Man tries to make others do what he wants, and to repel them from what he does not like. It is seen in war as well as in peace, in comfort as well as in discomfort, in ease as well as in hardship. Man does it instinctively; he becomes conscious of it only when someone opposes his will, and then he begins the process of the said repulsion as he thinks necessary. That repulsion has degrees of strength and weakness. War is one of those degrees.

This natural instinct is seen in action when a believer repulses his oppressor in defence of his lawful rights; and it is also seen when someone uses it to protect his unlawful gains. Nature bestows its bounties on the believers and the unbelievers alike. It is not that a believer has a nature separate from that of the unbeliever. If this trait of repelling and overpowering were not present in human nature, nobody would have defended anything, whether it be a lawful right or an unlawful gain.

It is this natural trait from which man gains so many benefits – first, society is founded on it, then he makes others follow his own will, and through it he keeps what he has gained, lawfully or otherwise; and it is through it that he tries to get back what has been taken from him unjustly; and lastly it is through this trait that he makes the truth live after it has died, and tries to keep society on the path of eternal bliss. In short, it is a natural factor from which man derives many more benefits than harm.

"Perhaps" it is these things which are referred to in this sentence:

And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder (***2:251***).

The next sentence supports this interpretation:

And Allah is Gracious to the creatures. (***2:251***).

There are some interpretations which are not so appropriate:

Some commentators have said: The repulsion mentioned here means the repelling of the unbelievers by the believers, as the context shows. Also, another verse may be quoted in its support:

And had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, certainly there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered (***22:40***).

Comment: The meaning in itself is correct as far as it goes; but it is not the whole meaning. What the verse means by the good of the earth, is a comprehensive and continuous good which keeps society alive; not any particular good which appears for a short time and then disappears, like in the story of Talut and in some other events.

Others have said: This verse refers to the fact that Allah saves the sinner from perdition and destruction, because of the righteous one. Many traditions from both Sunni and Shi'ite chains of narrators mention this fact: A tradition of *jabir* is recorded in *Majma' al-Bayan* and *ad-Durr al-Manthur*, that he said: "The Apostle of Allah (S) said: 'Verily Allah, because of the good of a Muslim man, makes good his child and the child of his child, and the people of his house, and of the houses around it; and they remain in the protection of Allah so long as he remains in them.'"

Another tradition, in *al-Kafi* and *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi, quotes Imam as-Sadiq ('a) as saying: "Verily

Allah, repels (the misfortune) from that of our Shi'ahs who does not pray, because of the one who prays, and if they all unite on neglecting the prayer, all of them would perish. And verily, Allah repels from that of our Shi'ahs who does not pay *zakat*, because of the one who pays it, and if they all unite on its non-payment, all would perish. And verily, Allah repels from that of our Shi'ahs who does not perform *hajj*, because of the one who performs it, and if they all unite on neglecting the *hajj*, all would perish."

Comment: The two verses mentioned earlier obviously do not fit the meaning of these two traditions; although it may be said that these traditions give examples as to how Allah repels some people by some others.

Someone has said: The verse means that Allah repels the oppressors with other oppressors.

Comment: Its absurdity is too obvious.

Verse 252

Qur'an: These are the signs of Allah: We recite them to you with truth; and most surely you are (one) of the apostles (2:252).

This verse is a sort of epilogue to conclude the story. Also, the last sentence, "and most surely you are (one) of the apostles", creates a clear connection with the next verse.

Traditions

'Abdu'r-Razzaq and Ibn Jarir have narrated from Zayd Ibn Aslam that he said: "When the verse was revealed:

Who is it that will lend to Allah a goodly loan, so He will multiply it... (2:245).

Abu 'd-Dahdah came to the Prophet and said: 'O Prophet of Allah! Do I not see our Lord asking a loan from us from the same which He has given us for ourselves?! And verily I have two plots of lands, one in the higher region, and the other in the lower one; and verily I dedicate the better one as *sadaqah* (alms).' And the Prophet used to say: 'How many pampered clusters of dates Abu 'd-Dahdah has got in the Garden!'"[1]

The author says: This tradition has been narrated through numerous chains.

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "When the verse was revealed:

Whoever brings good deed, he shall have better than it (27:89).

The Messenger of Allah (S) said: 'O Allah! Increase for me.' So, Allah sent down the verse:

Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it (6:160).

The Messenger of Allah (again) said: 'O Allah! Increase for me.' Then Allah revealed,

Who is it that will lend to Allah a goodly loan, so He will multiply it for him manifold. (***2:245***).

Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah knew that "many" from Allah cannot be counted and has no limit.2

The author says: at-Tabarsi in *Majma' al-Bayan* and al-'Ayyashi in his *at-Tafsir* have narrated a similar tradition. And a tradition nearly like it has been narrated from Sunni chains also.

The words of the Imam, "Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah knew": The end of the verse hints at it, "and Allah holds and extends", because no limit can be put on the bounty of Allah; He has said:

And the bounty of your Lord is not confined (***17:20***).

A tradition of Abu al-Hasan ('a) recorded in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi says that this verse is about the gift for the Imam.

The author says: A similar tradition is narrated from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) in *al-Kafi*; it gives an example of a general rule.

Majma' al-Bayan says about the words of Allah, "when they said to a prophet of theirs" that the prophet was Ushmu'il who is Isma'il in Arabic.

The author says: Sunni traditions also confirm it. And Ushmu'il is Samuel of the Bible.

al-Qummi narrated from his father from an-Nadr Ibn Suwayd from Yahya al-Halabi from Harun Ibn Kharijah from Abu Ja'far ('a) saying: "Verily, the Israelites, after the death of Musa, indulged in sins, and changed the religion of God, and acted arrogantly against the commandments of God; and there was a prophet among them, who ordered them (to do good) and forbade them (evil), but they did not obey him. (And it is narrated that he was the prophet, Armiah3 – may the peace of Allah be upon our prophet and him!) Thereupon, Allah gave Goliath mastery over them; and he was a Coptic.4 He humiliated them, and killed their men, and turned them out of their homes and their properties and kept their women as slave-girls. Therefore, they resorted to their prophet and said: 'Ask Allah to raise up for us a king, so that we may fight in the way of Allah.' And there was the prophethood in one house of the children of Israel and kingship and rulership in another house. And Allah had not kept the prophethood and kingship in one house; that is why they asked their prophet to 'raise for us a king, so that we may fight in the way of Allah.'

Thereupon their prophet said to them: 'May it not be that if fighting is ordained for you, you would not fight?' They said: 'And what reasons have we that we should not fight in the way of Allah, and we have indeed been turned out of our homes and our children.' And it happened as Allah said: But when fighting was ordained for them, they turned back, except a few of them; and Allah knows the unjust. And their prophet said to them: 'Surely Allah has raised Talut to be a king over you.' Then they were enraged by

this (appointment), and said: 'How can he hold kingship over us, while we have a greater right to kingship then he and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth?'

And the prophethood was in the house of Lawi[5], and the kingship in the house of Yusuf; and Talut was from the house of Binyamin[6] , the full brother of Yusuf, and was, thus, from neither the house of prophethood nor from that of kingship. Then their prophet said to them: 'Surely, Allah has chosen him over you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique, and Allah grants His Kingdom to whom He pleases, and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.' And Talut was the greatest of them in physique, the most powerful and knowledgeable of them all, but he was a poor man.

So, they vilified him because of his poverty, and said that he had not been given an abundance of wealth. Thereupon, their prophet said to them: 'Surely the sign of his kingship is that there shall come to you the Ark in which there is tranquillity from your Lord and residue of the relics of what the family of Musa and the family of Harun have left, the angels bearing it.' And it was the chest which was sent by Allah and Musa's mother put him in it and threw it in the river; and it was among the Israelites, and they sought blessings through it. When Musa was about to die, he put inside it in the tablets, and his coat of mail and whatever signs of prophethood he had, and gave it in trust to his successor, Yusha'.[7]

And the Ark remained in them until they made slight of it, and the children played with it in the streets. Thus, the Israelites remained with honour and dignity as long as the Ark was with them, but when they committed sins and profaned the Ark, Allah took it away from them. When they asked their prophet, Allah raised Talut as king over them, and he let them in the fight then Allah returned the Ark to them, as he said:

***'Surely the sign of his kingship is that there shall come to you the Ark in which there is tranquillity from your Lord and residue of the relics of what the family of Musa and the family of Harun have left, the angels bearing it'* (*2:248*).**

"And he (Abu Ja'far) said: "The residue is the children of the prophets."[8]

The author says: The sentence, "And it is narrated that he was the prophet, Armiah" is another tradition, parenthetically inserted in this tradition.[9]

"And it happened as Allah said": It means that a majority of them turned back and only a small minority of them obeyed the order to fight. And some traditions say that this minority was sixty thousand souls. It has been narrated by al-Qummi in his *at-Tafsir* (al-Qummi narrated from his father from al-Husayn Ibn Khalid from Imam ar-Ridha', ('a) and by al-'Ayyashi in his *at-Tafsir* from Imam al-Baqir ('a).

"And the prophethood was in the house of Lawi and the kingship in the house of Yusuf." Some people say that the kingship was in the house of Yahudha.[10] But there is an objection on it: There was no king among the Israelites before Talut, Dawud and Sulayman. So how can it be said that "before Talut" kingship was in the house of Judah? This objection is strengthened by the traditions of the Imams of *Ahl*

al-Bayt that the kingship was in the house of Yusuf, because the kingship of Yusuf is accepted by all.

"The residue is the children of the Prophets": This sentence is a conjecture of the narrator. The Imam explained the words, "the family of Musa and the family of Harun" with the words, "the children of the prophets"; and the narrator fancied that it was the explanation of the word, "residue". And this view is supported by the tradition recorded in the *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) was asked about the words of Allah,

"And residue of the relics of what the family of Musa and the family of Harun have left, the angels bearing it" (***2:248***).

And he replied: "The children of the prophets."

Muhammad Ibn Yahya narrated from Muhammad Ibn Ahmad from Muhammad Ibn Khalid and al-Husayn Ibn Sa'id from an-Nasr Ibn Suwayd from Yahya al-Halabi from Harun Ibn Kharijah from Abu Basir from Abu Ja'far ('a) saying in a tradition, *inter alia*: "And Allah reports the words of Talut:

'Surely Allah will try you with a stream; whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me, and whoever does not taste of it, he is surely of me' (***2:249***).

But all of them drank from it, except three hundred and thirteen men, among them were those who took a handful of water as well as those who did not drink at all. When they went out against Goliath, those who had taken handful of water said,

"We have today no power against Goliath and his forces" (***2:249***).

and those who had not taken it said,

'How often has a small party vanquished a numerous host by Allah's permission, and Allah is with the patient ones.' (***2:249***). 11

The author says: That there remained with Talut only three hundred and thirteen men (equal in number to the Muslim "army" in the battle of Badr) is mentioned in numerous traditions from Shi'ah and Sunni chains. The details that those who said: "We have today no power..." were those who had taken a handful of water, and those who said, "How often a small party..." were those who had not tasted it at all, may be inferred from the position of the exceptional clause in the verse, as we have already explained.

al-Kulayni narrated through his chains from Ahmad Ibn Muhammad from al-Husayn Ibn Sa'id from Fadalah Ibn Ayyub from Yahya al-Halabi from 'Abdullah Ibn Sulayman from Abu Ja'far ('a) who said about the words of Allah, surely the sign of his kingdom...the angels bearing it: "They bore it in the shape of a cow."12

It will have been noted that we have quoted the complete chain of narrators of this tradition, although generally we do not do so in this book. We omit the chains where the traditions are in conformity with the Qur'an, because then there is no need to mention the chains of narrators. But where the tradition mentions a thing which is not in the Qur'an, and which cannot be inferred from it, then it is necessary to quote the complete chain. Still, we write in this book only those traditions which are correct according to the chains of the narrators or are supported by the context or other associations.

al-'Ayyashi writes in his *at-Tafsir* a tradition from Muhammad al-Halabi that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "Dawud had four brothers; and their father was an old-aged man; and Dawud had remained behind to look after the sheep of his father. Talut departed with his forces. Dawud's father called him (and he was the youngest) and said: 'O my son! Take to your brothers this (food) which we have prepared for them, so that they may get strength to overcome their enemy.' And he (Dawud) was short of stature, dark, with very little hair, but pure of heart. So, he went away, and (by that time) the two forces had reached near to each other."

At this juncture, another tradition of Abu Basir says that he heard the Imam saying: "Then Dawud passed by a stone, and it said: 'O Dawud! Take me and kill Goliath with me, because, verily, I have been created to kill him.' So he took it and put it in his bag in which he kept the stones for his sling which he used in the herding of his sheep. On entering the army camp, he heard them greatly magnifying the affair of Goliath. So he said to them: 'Why are you so overwhelmed by his affair? By Allah! If I see him, I will kill him.' Thereupon, they started talking with each other about it till he was brought before Talut. Talut asked him: 'O young man! How much strength do you have? And what experience have you of yourself?' Dawud said: 'It happens that if a lion attacks a goat of my herd and catches it; then I overtake him, catch his head, open his jaws and rescue the goat from his mouth.' (Hearing this) Talut said: 'Bring me a full-size coat of mail.' It was brought unto him and he put it in Dawud's neck, and lo! His body filled it completely. Thereupon, Talut and those Israelites who were present there were awe-struck by him; and Talut said: 'By Allah! Most probably Allah will kill him (Goliath) by him.'

"When the morning came and people gathered around Talut, and the people (of the two forces) stood against each other, Dawud said: 'Show me Goliath.' When he saw him, he took the stone, and putting it in his sling, threw it towards him, and it hit him between his eyes, reaching to his brain; and (Goliath) fell down from his stead; and people cried: 'Dawud has killed Goliath.' Then the people made him their king until nobody was heard talking about Talut. And the Israelites gathered around Dawud; and Allah sent down Zabur to him, and taught him the handicraft of iron, making it soft for him; and ordered the mountains and the birds to join him in glorifying God." The Imam said: "And nobody was given a voice like him. Thereupon Dawud lived among the Israelites, hidden from them; and he was given strength to worship (God)."

The author says: The Shi'ah and Sunni traditions unanimously say that Dawud killed Goliath by a sling.

Imam 'Ali ('a) said: "The tranquillity, which was in the Ark, was a pleasant breeze from the Garden; it had

a face like that of a human being."[13]

The author says: This meaning has been narrated in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* – from Sufyan Ibn 'Uyaynah and Ibn Jarir, through the chain of Salman Ibn Kuhayl from Imam 'Ali ('a); – and from 'Abdu 'r-Razzaq and Abu 'Ubayd and 'Abd Ibn Hamid and Ibn Jarir and Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abi Hatim and al-Hakim (and he has said that the tradition is "correct"), and Ibn 'Asakir and al-Bayhaqi (in his *ad-Dala'il*), through the chain of Abu al-Ahwas from Imam 'Ali ('a).

al-Qummi narrated from his father from 'Ali Ibn al-Husayn Ibn Khalid from Imam ar-Ridha' ('a) saying: "The tranquillity is a breeze from the Garden, it has a face like that of a human being."[14]

The author says: The same meaning has been narrated by Imam as-Sadiq ('a) in *Ma'ani 'l-akhbar* and by al-'Ayyashi in his *at-Tafsir* from Imam ar-Ridha' ('a).

These traditions explaining the meaning of *as-sakinah* (tranquillity) are not *mutawatir*; yet, if they are accepted as correct, they may be interpreted in the following way, so as to fit the meaning of the verse of the Qur'an:

"The tranquillity has a face like that of a human being." It means that it is one of the stages of spiritual perfection. At that stage, the soul remains tranquil and at peace with the commands and decrees of Allah. Such expressions, explaining a reality in an allegorical way, are found in many traditions of the Imams'. According to this interpretation, tranquillity would mean the spirit of faith, and that is the meaning we have given to it earlier. And it is in this light that the following tradition of Abu al-Hasan ('a), mentioned in *Ma'ani al-akhbar*, should be seen and interpreted: "(Tranquillity) is the spirit of God, which speaks; when they differed among themselves on any matter, it spoke up and informed them (of truth)..." Obviously, it means that it is the spirit of faith and it guides the believer to the truth about which the people differ.

A Philosophical And Social Discussion About The Struggle For Existence And The Survival Of Fittest

According to scientists, scientific experiments show that existing things struggle with each other for their existence, because it is ingrained in their nature to protect themselves from extinction, and to make use of their powers in the purpose for which they are created. This struggle is carried on through mutual action and reaction – each influences the others, and is in its turn influenced by others. In the end, the more powerful and more perfect being vanquishes the weaker and the less perfect one. It means that nature goes on selecting, among individuals of a species, the fittest and the most perfect, and it alone is allowed to continue and propagate the species and all others gradually become extinct. Thus, we get two laws of nature: the struggle for existence, and natural selection and survival of the fittest.

As the society is based on the demands of nature, the abovementioned two laws are found in civilization

also.

The best society is the one which is based on the foundation of a complete and firm unity; in which the rights of the individuals and groups, and of society in general, are well–balanced and well–preserved. Such a society has more right to survive; and others lacking in these qualities deserve to perish and vanish. Experience has shown that only those nations do survive which look well after their collective duties, and proceed, fully alert, on the road of collective bliss and felicity. On the other hand, when disunity creeps into a nation, hearts become disunited, differences crop up, tyranny and mischief poison the atmosphere, the lords of the land indulge in luxuries and the will to strive for a cause is weakened in them, and, as a result, the nation or group is obliterated from the face of the earth.

Archaeologists have unearthed fossils, bones and skeletons of many animals which have become extinct, like the brontosaurus; or from whose species only a few examples have survived like alligators and toads. The only factors which led to their extinction were the laws of the struggle for existence, natural selection and survival of the fittest. Likewise, the species which are found today are constantly changing because of the said struggle and survival; and only the fittest and strongest deserves to survive. Then those strong and good traits are transmitted to the next generations, and thus the species continues to develop and flourish.

According to them, that is also how evolution initially began. Matter was scattered in space, and when it joined together, the stars, the planets and the species living therein came into being. Then what was fit for survival survived and existence passed on from generation to generation; and what was unable to withstand the struggle of stronger beings was destroyed.

This, in short, is the theory of the scientists.

Later scientists have had their own objections against this theory. There are even today many weaker species, both in animals and in vegetables, that go on flourishing. For example, man has domesticated and developed many species of vegetables and animals, these varieties are definitely fitter and stronger than their natural counterparts. Yet the natural varieties go on reproducing and transmitting their weak traits to the next generations. This phenomenon shows that the supposedly basic natural laws of struggle for existence, natural selection and survival of the fittest are not comprehensive.

This difficulty led later scientists to invent a new theory and that is adaptation to the environment. “Environment” covers all the surrounding conditions of time and space and factors which influence the state of a thing. The nature of thing adjusts itself to the surrounding influences. That is why every living thing, be it in the water or on dry land, in polar regions or in the equatorial zone, has limbs and faculties which are suited to that particular environment. If a life adjusts itself to the influences of its environment, it continues; otherwise, it is finished. The previously mentioned two laws – the struggle for existence, and. natural selection and survival of the fittest – should be based on this basic law of adaptation to the environment; and where this latter law is isolated, the former two laws, even if their conditions are

fulfilled, cannot save a species.

The difficulty is that even this law is not comprehensive, as scientists themselves admit.

The fact, as admitted by science, is that these laws are correct to a certain extent, but they are not comprehensive and all-inclusive.

A comprehensive philosophical interpretation can be offered in the following way:

All that happens in this material world, whether it is the existence of a thing or the changes and alterations occurring in it, revolve around the law of cause and effect. Every material being tries to influence other things to make it agreeable to itself. The net result of this action is that every active agent takes some thing from the object of its action to add to its own perfection. Thus, every thing is constantly engaged in preserving its existence. To this extent, it may be accepted that there is a struggle for existence and survival in this world.

A strong active agent either changes a weaker object to suit its own needs or destroys it completely for the same purpose. Had that weaker object been stronger, it could have faced the opposite forces and preserved itself from the forced changes and destruction. To this extent, it may be accepted that there is a law of natural selection and survival of the fittest in this world.

When many causative factors gather around an object, and all, or most, of them combine to create an effect on the said object, it cannot escape from their combined force, and has to adjust itself accordingly. To this extent, the law of adaptation to the environment must be accepted.

But it must be remembered that these laws effect (in the thing which is capable of being effected) only that object's accidental properties and supplementary factors. It cannot change the thing per se into another thing.

Materialists do not believe that there are separate genera and species, completely different from each other. They think all things are basically the same - one matter, and that the different shapes are the result of different accidental properties; and it is only by these accidental or supplementary factors that species differ from each other. Otherwise, there is no basic difference between them. Every thing, after disintegration, returns to the same state - matter. It is because of this view, that they said that a species changes into another through the above-mentioned laws. We shall discuss this view, God willing, in an appropriate place.

To come back to our original topic:

A commentator of the Qur'an has said that the verse:

And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder; but Allah is Gracious to the creatures (***2:251***).

Points to the laws of the struggle for existence and natural selection. According to him other two verses also point to the same laws:

***Permission* (*to fight*) *is given to those upon whom war is made, for they have been oppressed, and most surely Allah is well able to assist them* (*22:39*).**

***Those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say, Our Lord is Allah. And had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, certainly there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered; and surely Allah will help him who helps Him* (*i.e. His cause*)*; most surely Allah is Strong, Mighty* (*22:40*).**

***Those who, should We establish them in the land, will keep up prayer and pay the zakat and enjoin good and forbid evil; and Allah's is the end of the affairs* (*22:41*).**

According to him, this verse points to the struggle for existence and for the defence of the truth; and that this struggle leads to the survival of the fittest and preservation of the best.

The second verse, which he put for his argument, is verse:

***He sends down water from the heavens, then the valleys flow according to their measure, and the torrent bears along the swelling foam, and from what they melt in the fire for the sake of* (*making*) *ornaments or apparatus arises a foam like it; thus does Allah compare truth and falsehood; then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits the people, it remains in the earth; thus does Allah set forth parables* (*13:17*).**

According to the said commentator, this verse signifies that the torrents of the happenings and the scale of the struggle throw away and nullify the scum of falsehood which might have harmed society, and the pure gold of truth, beneficial for society, remains. It clearly shows the law of the survival of the fittest in action.

The author says: The laws of the struggle for existence and natural selection (in the meanings mentioned earlier) are correct to a certain extent, and also it is agreed that the Qur'an supports them in the said meaning. But the two types of verses quoted by the said commentator have nothing to do with these two laws.

The first type of verse was revealed to show that Allah's will cannot be defeated; and that the truth, that is, religious beliefs and knowledge as confirmed by Allah, shall always prevail; and likewise, the standard-bearer of that truth shall always vanquish falsehood. To see the purpose of the verse, look again at the phrases,

"***For they have been oppressed, and most surely Allah is well able to assist them"* (*22:39*).**

And

"***Those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say, Our Lord is Allah"*** (***22:40***).

The purpose of those clauses is to make it clear that the believers shall be victorious; but not because of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. We should not forget that the strongest and the fittest, in the language of these laws, means the one who is the strongest and fittest in the physical and material sense; it does not mean strong in truthfulness or fittest in the spiritual sense. According to these two laws whoever is better equipped with military hardware and more trained and better disciplined, will vanquish the weaker party – it makes no difference which party is in the right and which in the wrong. But these verses tell us that the believers shall be victorious because they have long been oppressed for speaking the truth, and Allah is truth and He shall help the truth to prevail; falsehood shall not be able to withstand the proof of truth; Allah Himself shall assist the bearer of truth if he is sincere in his heart. The next words show this aspect clearly:

"And surely Allah will help him who helps Him; most surely Allah is Strong, Mighty" (***22:40***).

"Those who, should We establish them in the land, will keep up prayer…" (***22:41***).

It shows that their confession of truth is based on sincerity. Then Allah ends the verse on the words,

"And Allah's is the end of the affairs" (***22:41***).

This sentence reminds one of many Qur'anic sentences which prove that creation is relentlessly progressing on the path of perfection towards truth and real felicity and bliss. Doubtlessly, the Qur'an proves that victory is for Allah and His forces only:

"Allah has written down, I will most certainly prevail, I and My apostles" (***58:21***).

"And certainly, Our word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the apostles" (***37:171***).

"Most surely, they shall be the assisted ones" (***37:172***).

"And most surely Our host alone shall be the victorious ones" (***37:173***).

"And Allah is predominant over His affair" (***12:21***).

In all these verses, victory has been reserved for the people of sincere faith and true belief, irrespective of their physical or material strength, while the laws of struggle and survival are based on physical and material strength and fitness.

Likewise, the second verse, quoted by the said commentator, which describes the parable of pure water

and gold in contrast to the foam and scum, is revealed to show that truth shall last and falsehood shall go away. How? It does not say. It may be by physical struggle as in the case when truth and falsehood are both of a material kind. On the other hand, it may not be governed by the law of struggle, if either truth, or falsehood, or both are of the spiritual, and not the material, world. Allah says:

"And the faces shall be humbled before the Living, the Self-subsistent God" (***20:111***).

"Whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His; all are obedient to Him" (***2:116***).

"And that to your Lord is the goal" (***53:42***).

Thus, Allah is victorious and predominant over all things, and. He is the One, the Subduer.

It has already been explained that the verse under discussion,

"And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder" (***2:251***).

Points to that reality upon which society is based. Man's instinct for subjugating others for his own benefit. This reality includes, to a certain extent, in the meaning accepted by us earlier, the laws of the struggle for existence and natural selection. But the basic law, which is also comprehensive, is the same instinct of subjugating others. And the verse should be interpreted in this light. It should not be based on two partial and non-comprehensive laws.

Let us look at this topic from another angle: The two laws - the struggle for existence and natural selection - demand that plurality be replaced by singularity. Both sides of the struggle aim at annihilating the opposite party, so that the victor may add to itself the advantages of the vanquished party's existence and its attachments. And nature, by its selection aims at keeping alive only the best. The net result will be to vanquish and annihilate many and to let only the one, that is, the best and the fittest, survive.

This is basically against the concept of society, because society is formed of a multitude, all of whom are expected to co-operate with, and help, each other. It is this natural law which is the basis of society and civilization, not those laws which exhort one man to eat up the other. The repelling which, as mentioned under verse 2:213, builds nations and protects them from mischief, is that repulsion which leads to togetherness and that unity which is based on plurality. It is not that repulsion which negates togetherness, nor is it that unity which destroys plurality.

The *jihad* and fighting ordained by Allah develop the earth and protects it from chaos, disorder and mischief, because it is through this fighting that the collective rights of the oppressed and down-trodden people are revived; and not because it shatters unity, annihilates people and obliterates their foot-prints. This basic difference between the two theories must always be kept in mind.

History And How Much The Qur'an Is Concerned With It

Oral and written history has been the favourite subject of people since the beginning of humanity. So far as we are aware, there have always been some persons who remembered, wrote or otherwise transmitted the great and small events of the past to the generations who came later, and who preserved what they were given by the ancients. Man benefits from history in various fields of his life: society comes to know its origin; people take lessons from the achievements and failures of the past generations; events are used as stories, for information and amusement; political, economic and industrial guidelines are charted out in the light of the experience of the past.

In spite of all these benefits, which in themselves would be enough to bestow on history a halo of virtuosity, two factors have always worked to divert it from the path of truth and reality:

First: History has always been a slave of the rulers of the time. Every government wants to advertise what is beneficial to it and to suppress the report of what may be harmful to its interests. It keeps its dark side either completely hidden or alters its details and presents falsehood disguised as truth.

Second: Even the historians, reporters, narrators and writers of the books of history can never be free from their feelings and prejudice. In the past, the historians and the governments were, on the whole, people who believed in one or another religion, and at that time, religious prejudice and national feelings tainted historical writings. Now-a-days, materialism and nationalism occupy the same place, and the reports of past and present events are seen through these glasses. Ancient writers seldom wrote anything that could damage the religious faith of their contemporaries. Modern writers seldom write anything without injecting into it some items to support their materialistic view.

Apart from these two basic factors, there were and are other difficulties which have put history into disrepute. In the old times, there were scarcely any tools to record, preserve, transmit, copy, edit and preserve historical material. Now, with the progress of technology, all such tools are in the hands of historians; but a new enemy has overpowered them, and that is professional politics. The same event is reported in ten or twenty ways, depending on the nationality and political leaning of the reporters.

These glaring defects have robbed written history of its value. Now scholars have more confidence in archaeological evidence than in written records. Even in that field, national feelings and prejudice play their part. And politics dictate how much should be disclosed, and even what interpretation should be put on archaeological discoveries.

So, this is history and its various defects which can never be glossed over or corrected. With this background, we should never compare the historical events mentioned in the Qur'an, with the narrations of the same events given in the books of history. The Qur'an is a divine revelation, free from mistake and falsehood. How can it be judged with the help of history, the history which nobody believes to be free from lie and error? Many historical events, as given in the Qur'an, like this very story of Talut, differ from

the reports in the Bible. But why should we worry? The Bible is no better than other history books; The alterations, suppressions, additions and omissions carried out in these books are too well–known to need any description. The story of Samuel and Saul was written in the Bible by an unknown hand. The story of Talut in the Qur'an is the true words of Allah.

This much about history in general. Now let us see what is the main object of the Qur'an in such narrations. The Qur'an is not a book of history, nor does it describe an event with all its details as a book of history purports to do. The Qur'an is divine speech, poured into the mould of revelation:

"With it Allah guides him who follows His pleasure into the ways of safety" (***5:16***).

That is why it does not narrate an event from the beginning to the end with all its details. It only picks out a few such points of an event as will be useful to the listener as a lesson, sermon and moral. Look for example at this very story. It begins with the words, "Did you not see the chiefs of the children of Israel", and then picks out the following points as highlights:

"And their prophet said to them: Surely Allah has raised Talut to be a king over you" (***2:247***).

"And their prophet said to them, Surely the sign of his kingdom is…" (***2:248***).

"So when Talut departed" (***2:249***).

"And when they went out against Goliath…" (***2:250***).

Obviously if one wants to write the fully story of Talut, one will have to add many paragraphs between all these highlights. But the Qur'an is not interested in a story *per se*.

We have mentioned this fact in the story of the cow, and this principle applies to all other Qur'anic stories. It selects for description only that much which is needed to stress some points in moral lessons, wise teachings and spiritual guidance, or to show how Allah dealt with ancient nations and the people who passed away before the Muslims. Allah says:

In their stories there is certainly a lesson for men of understanding (***12:111***).

Allah desires to explain to you, and to guide you into the ways of those before you (***4:26***).

Indeed, there have been examples before you; therefore, travel in the earth and see what was the end of the rejectors" (***3:137***).

This is a clear statement for men who guard (***against evil***) (***3:138***).

There are many similar verses.

1. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
2. al-Ma'ani.
3. Jeremiah, in the Bible.
4. Goliath was a Philistine. The area had political connection with Egypt. Perhaps it is in this sense that he has been called a Coptic.
5. Levi, in the Bible.
6. Benjamin, in the Bible.
7. Joshua, in the Bible.
8. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
9. As mentioned in a previous tradition, the prophet was Samuel, and not Jeremiah.
10. Judah, in the Bible.
11. al-Kafi.
12. al-Kafi.
13. Majma' ul-Bayan.
14. at-Tafsir.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 253 - 254

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ مِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَلَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٍ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا اقْتَتَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ وَلَٰكِنِ اخْتَلَفُوا فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ آمَنَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَفَرَ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا اقْتَتَلُوا وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيدُ

These apostles, We have made some of them to excel others; among them are some to whom Allah spoke, and some of them He exalted by degree (of rank); and We gave clear (evidence) to 'Isa, son of Maryam, and strengthened him with the holy spirit. And if Allah had pleased, those after them would not have fought one with another after clear arguments had come to them; but they differed; so there were some of them who believed and others who denied; and if Allah had so pleased they would not have fought one with another, but Allah does what He intends (2:253).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ وَلَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

O You who believe! Spend out of what We have given you, before the day comes in which there is no bargaining, neither any friendship nor intercession; and the unbelievers - they are unjust (2:254).

General Comment

These two verses do not differ much in context from the preceding verses which ordained fighting and spending in the way of Allah. Then came the story of Talut, in this context, so that the believers might learn important lessons from it, and that story ended on the words, “and most surely you are one of the apostles” which are immediately followed by the opening sentence of this verse,

“These apostles, We have made some of them to excel the others” (***2:253***).

Thereafter, it describes why those who came after those apostles fought one with another. (In the story of Talut also, there was a restrictive phrase, “after Musa” to describe “the chiefs of the children of Israel”.) Then it reverts to the exhortation of spending in the way of Allah before the final day comes.

All these similarities in context strongly support the view that these two verses are connected with the previous ones, and that all of them were sent down together.

The verse purports to remove a common misunderstanding, which is as follows:

The apostleship, especially when it was accompanied by clear evidence, that is, arguments and miracles to prove its truth, should have ended the scourge of fighting. It could have happened in one of the two ways:

(1) When Allah sent the apostles and gave them clear signs for the specific purpose of guiding people to their bliss in both worlds, it would have been proper if He had also prevented them from fighting among themselves and united them all in the truth. So, why is there so much fighting going on among the followers of those apostles? This objection becomes all the more telling after the advent of Islam which counts unity as one of the pillars of its *Shari’ah* and the basis of its laws.

(2) The sending of the apostles and the giving to them of the clear signs was done for the specific purpose of creating faith in peoples’ hearts. Belief and faith is a spiritual characteristic, which cannot be created by force and coercion. Then what the use of fighting once the prophets and the apostles had been sent.

We have explained this objection together with its reply in the commentary of the verses of fighting.

In this verse, Allah gives the following reply: The fighting among the followers of the apostles occurred because the said followers differed among themselves. Had they not differed, there would not have been any fighting among them. The cause of the fighting was, therefore, their difference. It is true that if Allah so wished, there would not have occurred any difference; and thus, there would not have been any fighting.

Alternatively, He could have disconnected the cause, that is, the difference, from its effect, that is,

fighting; so that even if there was difference, there would not have occurred any fighting. But Allah does what He wishes; and He has decreed that the effect will follow its cause; also, that the people will have freedom of choice, and that there will not be any compulsion for them to follow a certain course.

And that is why they differed, and were not prevented from it, and that is why the said difference caused the fighting.

Commentary

Verse 253

Qur'an: These apostles, We have made some of them to excel the others (2:253).

It demonstrates the greatness of the apostles and the grandeur of their status. That is why the demonstrative pronoun *"tilka"* (تِلْكَ = those) has been used, which is meant to point to a distant object. The verse shows the excellence given by Allah to some of them over others – some of them have been given more excellence than the others. But all of them are great, as the apostleship in itself is an excellence, which all of them share. There is a difference among the apostles, of their grades and ranks; and there is a difference among their followers, as the verse describes. But the two types of differences have nothing in common.

The difference among the apostles is only in their ranks and grades, but they all are one in the basic excellence of apostleship; and the conflict of the people of the apostles is the one which is found between belief and disbelief, between affirmation and negation. It goes without saying that the two differences are quite separate from each other. And that is why Allah has used separate words for each. The difference in the rank and grade of the apostles has been named excellence, and it has been attributed to Allah, "We have made some of them to excel others". The conflict of the followers of the apostles has been called a difference, and it has been attributed to the men themselves, "they differed".

The verse ends on the topic of fighting, and the preceding verses were also concerned with admonition to fight in the way of Allah, and with a story about it. It obviously means that the sentences under discussion, "These apostles ...with the holy spirit", are a prologue to make the meaning of the next sentences clearer. It shows that the institution of apostleship, in spite of all its blessings and good, has not been able to end fighting among the people, because the said fighting is initiated by the people themselves.

The apostleship has a high, towering excellence; and its good and bliss have ever-lasting freshness; whenever you look at it you will see a new beauty, and whichever aspect you ponder upon, you will find a new virtue. This excellent institution, in spite of its brilliant splendour and awe-inspiring magnificence, in spite of its accompanying clear evidence and miracle, is not able to eradicate the differences of people in belief and disbelief. It is so, because this difference is caused by the people themselves. Allah has

mentioned this fact in various verses:

"Surely the religion with Allah is Islam; and those to whom the book had been given did not differ, but after knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves" (***3:19***).

"Mankind was but one people; so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with the truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed. And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves" (***2:213***).

The fact remains that if Allah had so wished He could have prevented this difference and the resulting fighting by His creative decree. But Allah has established a system of cause and effect in the universe, and difference is the established cause of conflict and fighting. Also, if He had so wished, He could have forbidden it by His legislative decree; or He could have refrained from giving the believers the order to fight in His way. But He gave this order; and made it a criterion of faith,

"So that Allah may separate the impure from the pure" (***8:37***).

"And most certainly Allah will know those who believe and most certainly He will know the hypocrites" (***29:11***).

In short, fighting among the people of the apostles cannot be avoided, as there is always the possibility of people differing because of envy and revolt. The apostleship and its clear evidence are sufficient to refute wrong beliefs and clear away doubts. But envy, revolt, obstinacy and other such moral defects cannot be removed and the earth cannot be purged of them except by fighting in the way of Allah, which will better the condition of humanity. Experience proves that in many cases arguments alone were not effective unless they were supported by the sword. That is why Allah ordered His apostles, whenever necessary, to stand in support of truth and fight in His way. He so ordered in the days of Ibrahim and the prophets of the children of Israel, and after the Apostle of Allah came. More details have already been given under the verses of fighting.

Qur'an: Among them are some to whom Allah spoke, and some of them He exalted by degree (***of rank***) (***2:253***).

In these sentences the pronouns and verbs have been changed from the first person of the preceding one (We have made some of them to excel) to the third person. The reason – and Allah knows better – may be as follows:

Meritorious epithets are of two kinds: First, that which in itself is enough to show the merit and honour of the person or thing so described; for example, the clear evidence and the miracle, and being strengthened with the holy spirit, which has been mentioned in respect of 'Isa ('a). There is no doubt that these epithets are, per se, splendid and lofty. Second, that which in itself has no value unless it is related

to a great subject, and its merit and honour depend upon the prestige of the doer; for example, being spoken to, per se, has no virtue, but if one is spoken to by a great personality it bestows an honour to the man who is spoken to. And it carries a very great splendour if one is spoken to by Allah. Likewise, being raised in rank, per se, has no virtue unless it is done for example, by Allah.

In this light, we may easily appreciate the great eloquence of the Qur'an in changing the pronouns in three sentences: "among them are some to whom Allah spoke, and some of them He exalted by degree (of rank); and We gave clear (evidence) to 'Isa ..." When Allah described the virtues of being spoken to and being raised in rank, He changed the pronouns to the third person clearly mentioning the name, 'Allah', as the bestower of these merits. When the epithets reached clear evidence, etc., which were honoured in themselves, the pronouns reverted to the first person of the starting sentence and said: "and We gave clear evidence to 'Isa son of Maryam".

The commentators advance various opinions as to who is meant by the two sentences. It is said that "some to whom Allah spoke" refers to Musa, as verse 164 of chap. 4 says:

"And We spoke to Musa (directly) speaking (to him)" (4:164),

and as several other verses testify. Also, it is said that it means the Apostle of Allah, Muhammad (S), because Allah spoke to him on the night of the ascension when Allah brought him near Himself to such a degree that all intermediate links vanished completely, and Allah addressed to him His revelation directly without any intermediary. He says:

"Then he (i.e., Muhammad) drew near, then he bowed" (53:8).

"So he was the measure of two bows or closer still" (53:9).

"And He revealed to His servant what He revealed" (53:10).

A third interpretation is that the speaking means revelation in general, because revelation is a secret speaking, and it has been termed speaking in the verse:

"And it is not for any man that Allah should speak to him except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger so that he reveals by His permission what He pleases" (42:51).

But this last interpretation does not conform with the preposition *"min"* (مِن = from, among) which denotes that not all, but only "some", of the apostles were given this distinction – and revelation was not confined to only a few of them, it was common to all.

The most appropriate interpretation is that it refers to Musa ('a), because Allah's speaking with him was already mentioned in a chapter of Meccan period (which was revealed long before this chapter 2, which is a Medinite chapter):

"And when Musa came at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said: My Lord! show me (Thyself), so that I may look upon Thee. He said: You cannot (bear to) see Me but look at the mountain, if it remains firm in its place, then will you see Me; but when his Lord manifested His glory to the mountain, He made it crumble and Musa fell down in a swoon; then when he recovered, he said: Glory be to Thee, I turn to Thee, and I am the first of the believers" (7:143).

"He said: O Musa! Surely I have chosen you above the people with My messages and with My words, therefore take hold of what I give to you and be of the grateful ones" (7:144).

Obviously, the fact that Musa was spoken to by Allah had been well-understood when the verse under discussion was revealed.

Likewise, various interpretations have been offered for the sentence, "and some of them He exalted by degree (of rank)".

It is said that it refers to Muhammad (S), as Allah raised him in status and exalted over all the apostles, because He:

- sent him towards all the men: ***"And We have not sent you but to all the men ..." (34:28).***

- made him a mercy to the worlds: ***"And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds" (21:107).***

- made him the Last of the prophets: ***"...but he is the apostle of Allah and the last of the prophets..." (33:40).***

- gave him the Qur'an, which is the guardian over all books and explains clearly everything, and is protected from the alterations of wrong-doers, and, in short, is a miracle which will last up to the end of the world: ***"And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth, verifying what is before it of the book and a guardian over it" (5:48).***

"And We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything..." (16:89).

"Surely, We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian (15:9).

"Say: If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Qur'an, they could not bring the like of it, even though some of them were aiders of the others" (17:88).

- and gave him especially the established and upright religion which is responsible for all the good of this world and the next: ***"Then set thy face upright to the established religion" (30:43).***

Another interpretation is that it refers to various prophets who were raised in status in one way or the other. For example, the following prophets:

– Nuh (**'a**): ***"Peace be on Nuh in all the worlds"*** (***37:79***).

– Ibrahim (**'a**): ***"And*** (***remember***) ***when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, then he fulfilled them. He said: "Surely I will make you Imam for mankind …"*** (***2:124***).

"And make for me a truthful tongue (***i.e., goodly mention***) ***among the posterity*** (***26:84***).

– Idris (**'a**): ***"And We raised him to a high station*** (***19:57***).

– Yusuf (**'a**): ***"We raise the degrees of whomsoever We please"*** (***12:76***).

– Dawud (**'a**): ***"And We gave to Dawud Psalm"*** (***4:163***).

And likewise various other prophets.

A third interpretation is that the words, "These apostles", in the beginning of the verse, refer to those apostles only who have been mentioned in this chapter of the Cow, like Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa, 'Uzayr, Armiah, Ushmu'il, Dawud, and Muhammad, the peace of Allah be on them all. Out of them Musa and 'Isa have especially been mentioned in this verse, and from among the rest it is Muhammad (S) who has been raised in degrees of rank over the others.

A fourth interpretation: "These apostles" refers to only those who have been mentioned in the preceding story; and they are Musa, Dawud, Ushmu'il and Muhammad. Musa's distinction has been mentioned, and that is his being spoken to. Then comes the topic of raising the degrees of rank, and from the above list, no one is more deserving for it than Muhammad (S). Probably, that was the reason why 'Isa had to be mentioned in this verse by name – because in the preceding story he was not mentioned at all.

But a well-balanced interpretation would be as follows:

There is no doubt that the exalted rank of the Prophet, Muhammad (S), is included in the meaning of this sentence; but there is no reason to suppose that the sentence refers only to his excellence or only to those prophets who are mentioned in the story of Talut or in the chapter of the Cow, because all such view are arbitrary and without any justifiable reason. It is quite obvious that the verse is general; "these apostles" refer to all the apostles sent by Allah, and "some of them He exalted by degrees of rank" covers all those apostles who were exalted by Him in any way.

Someone has said: The context shows that the sentence, "some of them He exalted...", refers only to Muhammad (S). The verse gives a lesson to those nations that fight among themselves, after their apostles, even though their religion is one – and only three such nations were present when the verse was revealed: the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims. Therefore, it was appropriate to mention their apostles especially; Musa and 'Isa have already been described in the verse, and it means that the remaining sentence, "some of them He exalted...", specifically refers to Muhammad (S).

Comment: The Qur'an decrees that all the apostles were sent to all of mankind, as Allah says:

"…We do not make any distinction between any of them…" (***2:136***).

The apostles brought them clear signs, arguments and miracles. This fact in itself should have been enough to cut at the root of mischief and disorder, and to prevent fighting among their followers. But those followers differed with one another because of their rebellion, envy and worldly desire. This was the basic cause which gave rise to the fighting. Therefore, Allah ordains fighting when the good of mankind depends upon it, so that He may manifest the truth of what was true by His words and cut away the root of the wrong-doers.

This context shows that the verse is not particularly concerned with any nation; rather its import is general.

A Talk About The Speech Of Allah

The sentence,

"Among them are some to whom Allah spoke" (***2:253***).

Shows that Allah did speak to some people; it proves that an actual occurrence did happen, that it is not an allegory or analogy; and that Allah has named that occurrence His "speech". We shall discuss this subject in two parts:

First: The words of Allah prove that all the blessings, bounties and distinctions which Allah has reserved for His prophets and apostles and which are hidden from other people's perception, like revelation, speaking, the descent of the spirit and the angels, and the witnessing of the great divine signs; as well as the things which He has informed His prophets and apostles about, like the angels, Satan, the Tablet, the Pen, etc., are actual and factual things. There is no allegory in their claims: when they said "angels" they did not mean "mental powers calling towards good"; when they talked about "revelation", they were not referring to "the products of those mental powers"; the holy spirit and faithful spirit, in their language, were not used for "the highest degree of those mental powers from which pure thoughts rain down for the good of the human society"; Satan and jinn were not allegorical names for "base desire and unjustified anger which call towards evil and disorder"; "the whispering of slinking Satan" was not another name for "the evil thoughts which disrupt a good society or make one commit bad actions"; and so on.

The Qur'anic verses, as well as the declarations of the previous prophets, show in the clearest way that they used these words in their actual meanings, not in an allegorical style. Nobody, except an obstinate and reckless contender, can have any doubt about it – and we have not undertaken to convince such a contender! If such clear expressions were to be explained away in this way, then all the spiritual facts given by these apostles could be interpreted in purely materialistic terms, totally rejecting existence

beyond the matter! We have discussed it in short in the topic of miracle.

Anyhow, divine speech is a factual and actual thing, and it creates the same result which is created by our talking. It may be explained as follows:

Allah has named some of His actions “speech” and “speaking”:

“And Allah spoke to Musa (directly) speaking (to him)” (4:164).

“Among them are some to whom Allah spoke” (2:253).

And He has explained this vague expression in the verse:

“And it is not for any man that Allah should speak to him except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger so that he reveals by His permission what He pleases” (42:51).

The exceptional clause, “except by revelation...”, would be meaningless unless the speaking (mentioned in “should speak to him”) is taken to mean real speaking. It then follows that the speaking by Allah is real, even though it may have a special style and method. In short, the principle of “speaking” by Allah is a reality and cannot be denied.

What is the reality of speech from our point of view? Man needs society and civilization, and, as a result, needs all the essential ingredients of co-operative civilization - and “speaking” is one of them. Nature has guided man to express his thoughts through the medium of the voice which is produced from his mouth. He has made various combinations of his voice as signs to describe various ideas which are produced in his mind.

Needless to say, that the only way to convey hidden ideas and thoughts to others is to appoint, and agree upon, some signs for them. Man needs. speech because there is no method to understand, and make others understand, other than words, the variously mixed and combined sounds which have been agreed upon as signs, and made as tokens for objects and ideas. That is why a language is closely related to the developmental stage of the society which it serves. When the society develops, the language also widens its circle to cope with it. In this manner, languages develop and widen their circles in direct relation with the development stages of the respective societies.

Speech makes others understand what is in the mind of the speaker, through the medium of combined sounds; these sounds have been agreed upon, by the speaker and the listener, as tokens and signs to convey certain ideas.

It follows that man develops speech when he is with other men. (Also, some animals who live together in colonies, and who have voices, use some particular sounds to express some particular feelings. This may be called their speech.) If there were a man completely cut off from other human beings, he would not need any speech, because there would be no need to communicate with others. Likewise, other

creatures, who do not need any society or co-operation in their existences, do not need speech; two examples of this category are the angels and Satan.

It is certain that the speech of Allah does not emanate from Him as it does with us. The human voice issues from the larynx and arrives at particular sounds by movements of the tongue, teeth, jaws and lips, and interaction between them. And, what is more, our speech is only a sign or token which we have agreed upon; sounds, *per se*, have no value or meaning if there be no prior agreement as to what they mean. But Allah is too great in splendour and too high in glory to have any limb or organ, or to need help from such things as words, which have no real worth at all - whose value depends upon the agreement of the speaker and the listener. Allah has said:

"Nothing is like a likeness of Him" (***42:11***).

Still, Allah in the verse mentioned earlier:

"And it is not for any man that Allah should speak to him except by revelation..." (***42:51***).

Confirms for Himself the reality of speaking, although He disallows for Himself that speaking with which we are familiar. Allah dissociates Himself from that speech which is known to us and whose only value is that of a token or sign - which depends on agreed upon meanings. But He confirms speech for Himself with its particular effect. As the particular effect is the same, that is, making the other party understand the message, it can be called "speech" although it has no resemblance to our speech. It is like the words, scale, lamp and armament, which were made in old days for certain primitive tools and implements, and are now equally correctly used for new types of machine scales, electric bulbs and modern military hardware, because their effects are the same, even though the shapes are completely different.

The method by which Allah lets His apostles and prophets know what He intends to convey to them is His speech. But we have not been told what is its reality and how it happens. But, in any case, its effect is the same: making the listener understand the intended message.

Divine speech is a divine action, like His other actions - giving life and death, sustaining, guiding, forgiving, etc. In other words, it is an attribute of action, not an attribute of person like knowledge, power and life. (The attributes of persons are not other than the person-himself). As "speaking" is an attribute of action, like other such attributes, it may be described in terms of space and time. Allah has said:

"And when Musa came to Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said: "My Lord: show me (***Thyself***)***, so that I may look upon Thee." He said: "You can never see Me"*** (***7:143***).

"...And indeed, I created you before when you were nothing" (***19:9***).

"...Then Allah said to them, Die; (***and thereafter***) ***He gave them life"*** (***2:243***).

"We give sustenance to you and to them" (***6:151***).

"Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it" (***20:50***).

"Then He turned to the (***mercifully***) ***that they might turn*** (***to Him***)***"*** (***9:118***).

In these verses the speech of Allah is qualified by the time and the place of its occurrence, like His other actions, e.g., creating, giving death, life and sustenance, guiding and turning towards His servants with mercy.

This explanation is enough for *tafsir*, which is the subject of our book. We shall comment shortly afterwards on theological disputes and philosophical arguments concerning this topic.

Here another aspect of this subject should be looked into. Allah has not used the words "speech" and "speaking" except about His talk with human beings. Of course, "word" and "words" have been used in other contexts. He has said:

"The Messiah, 'Isa son of Maryam is but an apostle of Allah and His word which He communicated to Maryam" (***4:171***).

Here, "word" has been used for a human being himself. Also, He says:

"And the word of your Lord that is the highest" (***9:40***).

"And the word of your Lord has been accomplished truly and justly" (***6:115***).

"…The words of Allah will not come to an end" (***31:27***).

In these verses, "word" and "words" mean the decree of Allah, or some sort of creation.

The word, "saying", has been used by Allah referring to His talk with human beings as well as with others. He says in connection with His talk:

– With man: ***"So We said: "O Adam! Surely this is an enemy to you and to your wife"*** (***20:117***).

– With angels: ***"And when your Lord said to the angels: "I am going to place in the earth a khalifah"*** (***2:30***).

"When your Lord said to the angels; "Surely I am going to create a man from dust" (***38:71***).

– With Satan: ***"He said: "O Iblis! what prevented thee that thou shouldst do obeisance to him whom I created with My two hands"*** (***38:75***).

– With inanimate things: ***"Then He directed Himself to the heaven and it was a vapour, so He said to it and to the earth: "Come both, willingly or unwillingly." They both said: "We come willingly"***

(***41:11***).

"We said: "O Fire! be cold and a safety to Ibrahim" (***21:69***).

"And it was said: "O earth! swallow down thy water, and 0 sky! withhold (***thy rain***)***…"*** (***11:44***).

All the above, with their diversity, are included in the following two verses:

"His command, when He intends anything is only that He says to it: 'Be' and it is" (***36:82***).

"…when He has decreed a matter, He only says to it: 'Be' and it is" (***19:35***).

We find that Allah uses the word, "saying", about His address to those who have reason and hearing power, like man, as well as to inanimate things which do not have such powers (as we understand them) like the earth and the sky. Also, it is clear that the last mentioned two verses are a sort of explanation to the previously mentioned verses.

On pondering on all these aspects, one finds out that the divine "saying" means creating a thing to show the intended meaning. So far as the matters of creation are concerned, when Allah creates a thing and brings it into existence, it exists. And the very thing is a "saying" of Allah, because it, by its existence, shows the particular intention of Allah for its creation. It is known that when He intends a thing and says to it: 'Be' and it comes into being, no word passes from the Creator to the thing created; there is in fact only the existence of the thing, and nothing else. Therefore, that is the thing created, and also it, in itself, is the word 'Be'. In short, His saying, in matters of creation, is the creation itself, it is nothing separate from it.

In matters other than creation – for example, when He says something to a man – it means that He creates something which gives that man an inner knowledge of the intended message. It may be by creating a voice in a body (like in the tree, for His talk with Musa; and in the curtain of light, in the case of the Prophet Muhammad (S)); or by some other method which we do not know, or whose modality we do not understand.

The same is, more or less, the case of His speaking to the angels or Satan. But there is an important difference.

Unlike our existence, the existence of the angels and Satan is not biological and social. As a result, they do not achieve gradual perceptive perfection as we do. They do not have to make signs and tokens to indicate their intentions. When they want to understand, or make someone else understand, a thing it is not done through the medium of the voice. There is no combined sound, emanating from the larynx with inter–related actions by various parts of the mouth; and, also, there is no hearing, through a hole called the ear, receiving the sound from the air and conveying it through an intricate mechanism to the brain. Still, the reality of "saying" exists in both groups – and in their like, if there by any. And, as explained earlier, that reality is "making the addressee understand the intended message."

In short, among the angels, as well as among the Satans, there is "saying", but not like ours. Likewise, between Allah and the angels (and between Him and the Satans) there is "saying" but not through the medium of voice and word.

In the same way, we may explain the "saying" which is attributed in the Qur'an to the animals. For example, Allah says:

"…an ant said: "O ants! enter into your dwellings…" (***27:18***).

"…then said (***the hoopoe***)***: "I comprehend that which you do not comprehend, and I have brought to you a sure information from Sheba"*** (***27:22***).

The same meaning may be applied in the cases where Allah "says" or "reveals" something to such animals. For example,

And your Lord revealed to the bee, (**saying**)***: "Make hives in the mountains and in the trees and in what they build"*** (***16:68***).

There are some other words synonymous, or near in meaning, to "saying" and "speaking"; for example, revealing, inspiring, informing and relating. Allah says:

"Surely, We have revealed to you as We revealed to Nuh and the prophets after him…" (***4:163***).

"And (***I swear by***) ***the soul and Him Who made it perfect"*** (***91:7***).

"Then He inspired it to understand what is wrong for it and right for it" (***91:8***).

"He (***the Prophet***) ***said: "Informed me the All-knowing, the All-aware"*** (***66:3***).

"He relates the truth…" (***6:57***).

The explanation, written in the beginning about the speech of Allah, applies to these words also: There is an actual and factual occurrence which Allah has named His, speaking, revealing and inspiring etc.; and it has the same effect that speaking, etc. has; it makes no difference whether we know its reality or not. (We shall have some further discussion about Revelation in chapter 42, God willing).

Even though the basic meaning is common to all the abovementioned words, their use is determined by context, and its suitability for the literal meaning. An utterance is called "speech" when the main emphasis is on conveying the message to the listener's mind; that is why this word had been used when Allah wanted to show the excellence and high status of the prophets, because, in this context, the emphasis is on communicating which naturally draws the attention to the recipient of the communication. It is called "saying" when the main attention is on the intended meaning; and it is for this reason that the creative and legislative decrees and commandments are called "saying": He said,

"The truth then it is and the truth do I speak" (***38:84***).

"That I will most certainly fill hell with thee and with those of them who follow thee, all" (***38:85***).

And it is called "revelation" when it is hidden from others; and, therefore, the communication of the message to the prophets is named thus:

"Surely We have revealed to you as We revealed to Nuh and the prophets after him…" (***4:163***).

Second: How is the word "speaking" used? In the beginning, words were made for phenomena which can be perceived by one of the five senses. Gradually the meanings shifted towards those meaning which could be perceived by the mind only. When a word is made for a material thing is used for a mental process or a metaphysical meaning, it is in the beginning done with allegorical sense; but the continued use makes the latter its real meaning. Likewise, the advancement of civilization and technology amends, improves and changes the tools and implements which are used by man. But even with such continuous changes and improvements, the name does not change.

In old days, a "lamp" was a metal or earthen receptacle containing oil or fat in which a wick was placed and then lighted for illumination at night. From stage to stage it changed shape, technique and source of light; and now we have these electric bulbs, in which not a single thing of the original "lamp" remains. Still, we call it and similar other things "lamp" because the purpose is the same; this apparatus illuminates the night as the original lamp did. So long as this basic purpose is served by a new apparatus the original name, "lamp", is transferred to it in reality, not allegorically, even if all appearances have changed.

This example shows that a word is easily transferred to a change or new shape of the original form if the purpose of the original remains unchanged, and that this also will be its "real", and not "allegorical", meaning. Today, there are thousands and thousands of old names used for new items, and these names are treated as their real ones, not allegorical; because, in spite of radical changes in shapes and techniques, the original purpose has remained intact. Likewise, in every language there are countless words which were made for material things, and were later used for metaphysical objects – in reality, not as an allegory.

It shows that when the words "speaking" and "saying" are used in places where the effect is "letting the audience know the message" they are used in their real meaning. It is for this reason that we said earlier that when "saying" or "speaking" was attributed to Allah, it was used in its real sense. It is the same with other words which are used sometimes for Allah, and at other times for human beings, like life, knowledge, will, giving, withholding, etc. As the net result and effect of these words is found in the person and actions of Allah, they are attributed to Him in their real meanings, even though their modality and other aspects are totally different from what we understand from these words.

The same is the explanation of "exalting the apostles by degrees of rank". This exalting is a real thing,

and not just a thing found in the mind of the speaker. We have already explained the difference between real existence and the existence in mind, under the heading "Knowledge and Action" under verse 2:213. We gave there the example of the phrase "a man who is president". Now "a man" has a real existence, but his "being president" is a thing found in the minds of people only. Such aspects have no existence outside the mind.

Many sincere men of religion have fallen into the error of thinking that this exalting by Allah is also like the above-mentioned presidency. Once they had committed themselves to this explanation, they had to say that the effects of that exalting (for example, the things of the next world - paradise, hell, the questioning, the reckoning etc.) had the same relationship with this exalting as the paraphernalia of the presidency have with the said office - that the said relationship was, so to say, in the mind of the speaker only; it had no existence outside.

They did not realize that such an explanation lowers the dignity of God, reducing Him to a position of sub-ordinate to His own suppositions and thoughts - Glorified is He from such sacrilegious imputations. Such people, because of that basic error, are not ready to believe that the prophets of Allah and His chosen servants have been give some really-existing spiritual perfections, which the Qur'an and the traditions clearly attributed to them; these people try to interpret such verses and traditions in such a way as to rob them of their real existence and turn them into the above-mentioned things which exist only in the mind.

Qur'an: And We gave clear (evidence) to 'Isa, son of Maryam, and strengthened him with the holy spirit (2:253).

In this sentence, the original "first person" pronouns have been used; and we have already explained the reason for this. A question arises as to why only 'Isa, and no other prophet, has been mentioned here by name. The reason is this: What has been mentioned in his excellence - giving clear evidence and strengthening with the holy spirit - are things common to all apostles. Allah says:

"Certainly, We sent Our apostles with clear evidence" (57:25).

"He sends down the angels with spirit by His commandments on whom He pleases of His servants, (saying): Give the warning..." (16:2).

But these otherwise common factors were found in 'Isa in a rather special way. All his miracles - raising the dead, creating the bird by breathing into it, giving sight to the blind, curing lepers and giving information of the unseen - had a very special relation with the life and the spirit. Therefore, those factors were mentioned as the special excellence of 'Isa, and his name was clearly mentioned. Had Allah only said,

"And We gave clear evidence to some of them and strengthened him with the holy spirit" (2:253).

It would not have pointed especially to ‘Isa, because, as you know, these two factors were common to all apostles. It was necessary to mention the name to show that these were given to ‘Isa in a rather special way. Moreover, ‘Isa himself was clear evidence of the power of Allah, as he was born without a father. Allah says:

“And made her (***Maryam***) ***and her son a sign for the worlds”*** (***21:91***).

Thus, the son and his mother together were the signs of Allah, and it was their special distinction.

Qur’an: And if Allah had pleased, those after them would not have fought one with another after clear arguments had come to them” (***2:253***).

Here Allah again refers to Himself in the third person, because the context demands a clear declaration that the divine will cannot be obstructed and His power cannot be foiled. All happenings, in all their positive and negative aspects, are under divine control and authority. It is the attribute of godship which emanates unlimited power and unrestricted authority; and that is why the divine name, Allah, had to be clearly mentioned to emphasize the fact that if Allah had so willed, they would not have fought. This force could not be produced by saying, “if We had so willed ...” And it is for the same reason that the divine name, and not the pronoun, has been repeated in the next sentences, “and if Allah had so pleased, they would not have fought”, and “Allah does what He intends”.

Qur’an: But they differed; so there were some of them who believed and others who denied (***2:253***).

We have already described why Allah attributed the difference to the people, and not to Himself. He has declared several times that the difference in belief and disbelief appeared among people because of their envy, rebellion and evil desire; and such things cannot be attributed to Allah.

Qur’an: And if Allah had so pleased, they would not have fought one with another, but Allah does what He intends (***2:253***).

We have already explained this. If Allah had so wished, ie could have disconnected the cause, the difference, from its effect, the fighting. But Allah does what He intends, and He has decided that the difference will cause the fighting, according to the system of cause and effect which He has decreed in this world.

In short, the verse says that the apostles sent by Allah are His servants, very near to Him, above mankind in their excellence; they have been exalted, some above others, in the degrees of their ranks but they all equally share the basic excellence of apostleship. They came to their peoples with clear, arguments and miracles; they clearly pronounced the truth and unmistakably showed the right path. It might have been expected that their followers, after them, would not have abandon the unity, love and mutual regard in the cause of the religion of Allah.

But there was another factor, lurking about, and that was their envy and rebellion, which divided them up into believers and non-believers; and this difference spread and affected all aspects of their lives. If Allah had so wished, He could have taken away the causative power of this difference, and then it would not have led to fighting. But He did not wish so, and let the system of cause and effect take its course; and He brings out what He wishes.

Verse 254

Qur'an: O You who believe! Spend out of what We have given you, before the day comes in which there is no bargaining, neither any friendship nor intercession; and the unbelievers - they are unjust (2:254).

The meaning is quite clear. The last sentence implies that not spending in the way of Allah is unbelief and injustice.

Traditions

Imam al-Baqir ('a) said about the words of Allah: *These apostles...:* "There is in this (verse) that which may be a proof that the companions of Muhammad did differ (among themselves) after him, so there were some of them who believed and others who disbelieved."[1]

Asbagh Ibn Nubatah said: "I was standing with the Leader of the faithful, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib ('a) on the day of the Camel. There came a man and stood before him and said: 'O Leader of the faithfuls! These people (i.e., the enemies) said *takbir* (*Allahu Akbar*), and we said it; and they said *tahlil* (*la ilaha illa Allah*) and we said it; and they prayed and we prayed. Then, on what (ground) are we fighting them?' He ('Ali ('a)) replied: 'On (the basis of) this verse:

These apostles, We have made some of them to excel others; among them are some to whom Allah spoke and some of them He exalted by degree (of rank); and We gave clear (evidence) to 'Isa, son of Maryam, and strengthened him with the holy spirit. And if Allah had pleased, those after them would not have fought one with another - so we are those after them - but they differed; so there were some of them who believed and others who disbelieved; and if Allah had so pleased they would not have fought one with another, but Allah does what He intends. (2:253)

So we are those who believed and they are those who disbelieved.' Thereupon, the man said: 'These people are unbelievers, by the Lord of the Ka'bah!' Then he attacked and fought them until he was killed; may Allah have mercy on him!"[2]

The author says: This event has been narrated by al-Mufid in his *al-Amali*, and by ash-Shaykh in his book of the same name, and by al-Qummi in his *at-Tafsir*. This tradition shows that Imam 'Ali ('a) interpreted "disbelief" in this verse in a general sense, which includes hidden, disbelief as well as open disbelief which is termed *al-kufr* (الكُفْر = infidelity) in Islam and with which Islam deals in a special way. It

is well-known from traditions and history that Imam 'Ali ('a) did not treat his opponents (in the battles of the Camel, Siffin and Nahrawan) like any group of the unbelievers - they were not dealt with like unbelievers, whether from the people of the book or others, nor like the apostates. The only implication of this special treatment is that he thought them to be unbelievers in their hearts but not openly. And he ('a) used to say: "I fight against them on the interpretation (of the Qur'an), not on (its) revelation."

The verse clearly supports this meaning. It says that the clear evidence brought by the apostles did not prevent the fighting of their followers because they differed among themselves; and such a difference cannot be removed by those arguments and evidence because it is not based on reason but on envy and rebellion. The verse thus describes the phenomenon mentioned in the following verses:

"And people were naught but a single nation, then they disagreed; and had not a word already gone forth from your Lord, the matter would have certainly been decided between them in respect of that concerning which they disagree" (***10:19***).

"Mankind was but one people, so Allah sent the prophets…And none differed about it but the very people who were given it after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves; whereupon Allah guided, by His will, those who believed to the truth about which they differed" (***2:213***).

"…and they shall continue to differ" (***11:118***).

"Except those on whom your Lord has mercy…" (***11:119***).

All this shows that difference about the book, that is, about the religion, between the followers of the apostles, after the departure of those apostles, cannot be avoided. Allah says particularly about this *ummah*:

"Or do you think that you would enter the Garden while yet the like of those who have passed away before you has not come upon you?" (***2:214***).

"And He informs us of the complaint of His Apostle on the Day of Resurrection: And the Apostle cried out: "O my Lord! surely my people treated this Qur'an as a forsaken thing" (***25:30***).

In these, and many other verses, this factor has been explicitly or implicitly mentioned.

And it is a fact that difference in the Muslim *ummah* started in the days of the companions. History and *mutawatir* and near *mutawatir* traditions clearly show that, in the troubles and discords which started soon after the Apostle, the companions themselves dealt with each other in this same way. In their own eyes they were treading the path of the discord and difference mentioned in these verses. And none of them claimed that he was above any difference on account of 'ismah (sinlessness) or good tidings given to him by the Apostle, or *ijtihad*, nor did anyone say that he was not included in these verses. (We do not include *Ahl al-Bayt* of the Prophet in the term 'companion'). More details of this difference is beyond the

scope of this book.

al-Mufid narrates in his *al-Amali* from Abu Basir that he said: "I heard Abu 'Abdillah ('a) say: 'Allah, Great is His name, was ever Omniscient in His person and there was nothing to be known; and He was ever Omnipotent in His person and there was nothing to be ordained.' I said: 'May I be your ransom! Was He then ever Speaking?' He said: 'Speech is created. There was Allah and He was not speaking, then He created speech.'"

Safwan Ibn Yahya said: "Abu Qurrah, the traditionalist, asked Imam ar-Ridha' ('a) and said: 'Tell me, may I be your ransom! About Allah's speaking to Musa.' He (the Imam) said: 'Allah knows better in which language He spoke to him.' Abu Qurrah caught his own tongue and said: 'I am asking you about this tongue.' Thereupon Abu '1-Hasan ('a) said: 'Glorified is Allah from what you say! And may Allah protect you (from thinking) that He might resemble His creatures or might speak like they speak; rather, He, Glorified be He, there is nothing like Him, nor there is any speaker or doer like Him.' (Abu Qurrah) said: 'How?' (The Imam) said: 'The speech of Allah with His creature is not like the speech of a creature with another creature; and He does not speak with a mouth and tongue; rather He says to it: 'Be' and it is. It was by His will He addressed (His) command and prohibition to Musa without any meditation in His Self.'"[3]

Imam Ali ('a) said in a sermon: "Speaking, not by meditation, Wishing, not by contemplation."[4]

In the same book, he (Imam 'Ali ('a)) says, *inter alia*, in another sermon: "He Who spoke to Musa (directly) speaking, and showed him of His great signs, without limbs and organs and without implements, sound or uvula."

The author says: The traditions narrated from the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* with this meaning are numerous, and all of them show that the speech of Allah (to use the terminology of the Qur'an and sunnah) is an attribute of action, and not an attribute of Person.

A Philosophical Discussion About The Speech Of Allah

Philosophers point out that when a speaker conveys his thought to the mind of a hearer, by means of words, it is popularly called speech and talk, and its net result is that the hearer understands and the speaker is understood. The reality of speech is "what conveys an idea to the other party"; rather particulars - the medium of words, and their being produced by the passage of air through the larynx, mouth, and lips and their entering the ears of the hearer - are inconsequential; they are not essential to the reality of speech. Whatever describes the intended meaning is speech; even the movement of your hand to call someone to your side or to indicate to him to sit down, etc. is your speech, albeit without your uttering a single word.

Taking this as their basis, the philosophers say: the things found in the universe depend on their causes

for their existence and for their characteristics. By their existence they pronounce the existence of their causes; and by their characteristics and faculties they show the characteristics and faculties of their causes. Therefore, every "effect" is a speech for its cause, and by this speech that cause talks about its own perfection.

And all existing things taken separately or jointly, and their aggregate, the universe, are, in this way, the speech of God; by this speech, God describes His perfect attributes which are otherwise hidden from us. Allah is the Creator of the universe, and the universe is His creation. In the same manner, He speaks via the medium of the universe about His names and attributes, and the universe is His speech.

They go even further: They say that deep thinking leads one to the belief that the ultimate "speech" is God Himself. We say that the universe leads to the Creator; but leading is a quality of existence and nothing in the universe exists on its own. Every thing exists because God has given it existence. When a thing leads to the Creator, it does so by the existence and qualities given to it by the Creator. In other words, it is the Creator Himself Who leads to Himself through His creation. In the same way, it is He Himself Who leads to His creation. He Himself leads us to Himself; in this sense, He is the speech and the Speaker and the meaning; and at this stage, we may say that His speech is His person or an attribute of His person. Also, He Himself, by creating the universe, leads us to His power and wisdom; the universe is, thus, His speech to lead us to the Creator; and in this sense, speech (i.e., the universe) is an attribute of His action.

The author says: Quite apart from the question of the correctness of this interpretation, the words of the Qur'an do not support it.

Speech, as mentioned in the Qur'an and *sunnah*, is something different from the Speaker and the hearer. Allah says:

"Among them are some to whom Allah spoke" (***2:253***).

"And Allah spoke to Musa (***directly***) ***speaking"*** (***4:164***).

"And Allah said: "O 'Isa!" (***3:55***).

"And We said: "O Adam!" (***2:35***).

"Surely, We have revealed to you" (***4:163***).

"Informed me the All-knowing, the All-aware" (***66:3***).

There are numerous similar verses. Obviously, the speech or talk mentioned in them cannot mean the Person of Allah by any stretch of imagination.

Discussion Of Speech In Theology

This subject was among the very first points of contention in the Muslim world; and that is why theology was named *'ilm al-kalam* (عِلْمُ الْكَلاَم = the knowledge of speech) in Islam. The question which split the Muslim scholars was whether the speech of Allah was eternal.

The Ash'arites said that it was eternal. But they invented a new meaning for 'speech'. According to them, 'speech' means the thought and meaning which is found in the mind of the speaker, and the spoken word is a mere manifestation of that 'speech'. They named it *al-kalamu 'n-nafsi* (الكَلاَمُ النَّفْسِي) that is, the speech found in the person. Armed with this new meaning, they said that the ideas and thoughts of Allah are nothing more or less than the Knowledge of Allah. And, as the knowledge of Allah, they are self-existent, eternal. So far as the spoken words are concerned, they are obviously created and separate from the person of Allah.

The Mu'tazilites said that it was created. And they interpreted 'speech' as the words which are spoken and which show the meanings for which they are made. They said that this was the meaning of 'speech' as understood by all; and what the Ash'arites had named "the speech found in the person" is not speech; it is knowledge. In other words, when we talk, we do not find in our minds anything other than the mental pictures or the meanings which we express in our words. If that mental picture is called "the speech found in the person" then it is knowledge and nothing else. And if they use this name for something else, that something is unknown to us all.

The Ash'arites say that it is possible to use two or more adjectives or names for a single thing, depending on the aspect or aspects which are to be emphasized. Now, if we think about that mental picture in terms of its being the picture of a truth or fact, then it will be called "knowledge"; and if we look at it as a picture which can be transmitted to others, then it will be called "speech".

The author says: All this conflict and polemic is quite beside the point. The Knowledge of Allah, whether its meaning, is *al-'ilm al-huduri* (العِلْمُ الْحُضُوْرِي), that is, the knowledge which is always present; the knowledge which is not separate from the person of Allah.

And what these theologians, the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites, are arguing and talking about is *al-'ilm al-husuli'* (العِلْمُ الْحُصُولِي), that is, the knowledge which is acquired. Such knowledge is acquired when ideas are produced in the mind; these ideas do not exist outside the mind. And we have proved somewhere else that ideas and quiddities are abstract things which do not exist outside the minds of human beings (and of some animals which perform their duties of life with the help of the five senses and some feelings).

Allah, High and Glorified is He, is too great to be attributed with a "mind" with which He might perceive ideas and quiddities, which are not found outside the imagination of the perceiver. Otherwise, He would become a compound or composed thing and would be liable to transitory phases; and even His speech

would have the potentiality to be wrong. Great and Glorified is He from such things.

It is clear from the above explanation that the polemics of the Muslim theologians are totally beside the point. What they were talking about was a kind of acquired knowledge which is beneath Divine dignity. And the ever-present and eternal Knowledge of Allah is not under dispute as it is not called “speech” even by the Ash’arites.

Further details, as to how He knows the ideas which we express in words, will be given in a more appropriate place.

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1. al-Kafi.
2. at-Tafsir, of al-’Ayyashi.
3. al-Ihtijaj.
4. Nahj ul-balaghah.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verse 255

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

Allah is He besides Whom there is no god, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist; slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep; whatever is the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His Permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything of His Knowledge except what He pleases; His Chair (Knowledge) extends over the heavens and the earth; and the preservation of them both tires Him not; and He is the Most High, the Great (2:255).

Commentary

Quran: Allah is He besides Whom there is no god, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist (2:255).

In the chapter of the Opening, some explanation was given of the name, “Allah”, and it was mentioned

that it ultimately means “The Being Who concentrates in Himself all the attributes of perfection”; it makes no difference whether it is derived from *alaha ‘r-rajul* (أَلَهَ الرَّجُل = the man was bewildered; yearned for) or from *alaha* (أَلَه = worshipped). “He besides Whom there is no god”: It has been explained under verse 2:163. Its literal translation is, “there is no god except He”. It shows that other deities worshipped besides Allah, in fact have no existence at all.

“Ever-living”: *“al-hayy”* (الحَي) is on a paradigm which denotes perpetuity; the word, therefore, means not only living but Ever-living. Man, in the very beginning, found out that there were two kinds of things around him: first, those things whose condition do not change as long as they exist, like stones and other such materials; second, those which go on changing, like trees, animals and man himself. He also found that after sometimes such things start to deteriorate, and even lose consciousness; still they exist; until at a certain point when their existence come to an end. Thus he realized that there was something else, besides the senses, which keeps one alive and which is the source of all the senses and their perceptions. He called it “life”, and its absence was named “death”. It is life which is the source of knowledge (perception) and power.

Allah has mentioned this life in many places as an accepted fact:

***“Know that Allah gives life to the earth after its death”* (*29:17*).**

***“And among His signs is this, that you see the earth still, but when We send down on it the water, it stirs and swells; most surely He who gives it life is the Giver of life to the dead”* (*41:39*).**

***“Neither are the living and the dead alike”* (*35:22*).**

***“We have made of water every thing living”* (*21:30*).**

These verses describe all three kinds of living things, the vegetable, the animal and the human being.

Likewise, Allah describes various types of life:

***“…and are pleased with the world’s life and are content with it…”* (*10:7*).**

***“They shall say: “Our Lord! twice didst Thou make us subject to death and twice hast Thou given us life…”* (*40:11*).**

The two lives referred to in this verse are the life of *al-barzakh* (البَرْزَخ = the period after death in this world and before the Day of Resurrection) and the life on the Day of Resurrection. Thus, there are various types of life, as there are various types of living things.

Although Allah mentions the life of this world as an accepted fact, in various other verses of the Qur’an He describes it as an unsound, imperfect and insignificant thing, as He says:

“…this world’s life is nothing compared with hereafter but (only a) means (13:26);

***"…coveting the (transitory) goods of this world's life…"* (*4:94*).**

***"…desiring the adornments of this world's life…"* (*18:28*).**

***"And this world's life is naught but a play and an idle sport…"* (*6:32*).**

***"…and this world's life is naught but means of deception"* (*57:20*).**

So these are the attributes used for this world's life. It is a means, and a means is sought to obtain an end and to reach a goal, it is not an end in itself. It is a transitory thing, and transitory things go away soon. It is an adornment, and an adornment is used to attract eyes towards the things adorned: in other words, what catches the eyes is not the real thing, and the real thing does not attract the eyes. It is a play, and a play keeps you oblivious of the really important responsibilities. It is a vain sport, and a vain sport is indulged in for imaginary, not real, reasons. And it is a means of deception, and such a thing deceives man.

A comprehensive verse, which also explains the above-mentioned ones, is the following:

***"And this life of the world is nothing but a sport and a play; and as for the next abode, the most surely is the life - did they but know!"* (*29:64*).**

The life of this world, in comparison to the life hereafter is not a real life, as the above-mentioned verse shows. It is transitory, while the life hereafter is the real life, because that life will not end; death will not reach it. Allah says:

***"They shall call therein for every fruit in security"* (*44:55*).**

***"They shall not taste therein death except the first death"* (*44:56*).**

***"They shall have therein what they wish and with Us is more yet"* (*50:35*).**

Thus, there will be no death in the life hereafter, and there shall be no deficiency in that life nor there shall be any annoyance for them. But the first factor, that is, security is the basic characteristic of that real life.

The life hereafter, therefore, is the real life because there is no death in it; and, as Allah Himself has declared in many other verses, it is He Who controls it. Obviously, the life hereafter is also dependent and not independent. It has not got this characteristic of eternity by itself; it is a gift given to it by God.

Going a step further, it will be realized that the real life is only that which 'cannot' be overtaken by death. The life hereafter 'will not' be overtaken by death; but it 'can' be overtaken, if God so pleases. Therefore, that also is not "real" life. Real life is that in which non-existence at any stage is impossible; which is essential being; in other words, where life is not acquired by the person, but the person is life itself and life is the person himself. Allah says:

"and rely on the Ever-living Who dies not" (***25:58***).

Thus, the only real life is Divine Life, Essential Being.

The above discourse shows that the exclusiveness in the verse:

"He is the Living, there is no god but He" (***40:65***).

Is real, not relative: In reality, He is the only Living One, because real life, unconquered by death or deterioration, is His alone.

In the verse under discussion, as in a similar verse:

"Allah there is no god but He, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting ..." (***3:2***).

The word "Allah" is the subject, "there is no god but He" is its first predicate, "the Ever-living" is the second and "the Self-subsisting..." the third predicate. Accordingly, the meaning would be "Allah is the Ever-living..."; and life would be reserved for Allah only; others would get life only when He bestows it on them.

"al-Qayyum" (**القَيُّوْم** = the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist) is on the paradigm of *fay'ul* (**فَيْعُول**), from the verb *al-qiyam* (**القِيَام** = to stand); as is *al-qayyam* (**القَيَّام**) on the paradigm of *fay'al* (**فَيْعَال**), in the same meaning. It is a paradigm which is used to show the maximum degree of a quality. The original meaning of the verb (to stand) has, by association, been extended and now it is used for protecting a thing, accomplishing a task and managing it, bringing up a thing, looking after it and having power over it. Allah clearly said that He "stands" with the affairs of His creation, that is, watches it, looks after it and brings it up and has all power over it. He says:

"Is it He then who stands over (***i.e., watches***) ***every soul as to what it earns?"*** (***13:33***).

Another verse is more comprehensive:

"Allah bears witness that there is no god but He (***and so do the angels and those possessed of knowledge***)***, standing with*** (***maintaining***) ***justice, there is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise"*** (***3:18***).

He maintains His creation with justice. He does not give and does not withhold but with justice - and existence is nothing except giving and withholding. He gives to everything what it deserves. Lastly, He declares that this maintaining with justice is according to His two great names, the Mighty, the Wise: by His Might He maintains every thing; and by His Wisdom He, does justice to it.

Allah is the origin of every thing. Existence as well as all attributes, qualities and the effects of every thing begin from Him. All other "origins" originates from Him. He stands over every thing in the real and comprehensive sense of "standing", as explained above. There is no weakness or flaw in His "standing";

and other things cannot stand except by Him. This attribute is reserved for Him in both ways: “Standing”. cannot be found except in Allah, and Allah is never anything but standing. The former is understood by the syntax of the sentence: Allah is the “Standing”. The latter is understood by the next sentence:

***“Slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep”* (*2:255*).**

This discourse leads us to believe that the name *al-qayyum* (The Standing) is the basis for all the divine names which refer to His attributes of action in any way, like the Creator, the Sustainer, the Originator, the Resurrector, the Bestower of life, the Giver of death, the Forgiver, the Compassionate, the Affectionate and so on.

Qur’an: *“Slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep”* (*2:255*).

“as-Sinah” (**السِّنَة**) means drowsiness; *“an-nawm”* (**النَّوْم**) is sleep, the inert condition in which the muscles are relaxed and the consciousness suppressed by natural factors in the body of an animal or a human being. *“ar-Ru’ya”* (**الرُّؤْيَا** = dream) is something else; it is the vision which passes through the mind in sleep.

A criticism has been levelled against this sentence that is contrary to the sequence demanded by rhetoric: when two things are thus mentioned in an affirmative sentence the weaker point is mentioned first and then one progress to the stronger one; for example, we say, “Zayd can carry a load of fifty kilogram, even a hundred.” But in a negative sentence the sequence is reversed; it goes from stronger to weaker point; for example, “He cannot carry a load of a hundred kilogram, let alone fifty”; “he does not spend hundreds of pounds on himself, let alone tens.” According to this rule, as the sentence here is negative, it should have been written thus: “Sleep does not overtake Him nor slumber”.

Reply: The sequence does not always follow the affirmativeness or negativity of the sentence. Look, for example, as the sentence, “He is too weak to carry a load of twenty kilograms or even ten.” It is an affirmative sentence, and still the stronger point comes first. It would be against the norms of rhetoric, if the weaker point, that is, 10 kilograms were mentioned first. In fact, the only correct procedure is to look at the context and see what it demands. Now, look at this Qur’anic sentence. Sleep is more contrary to the attribute of “Standing” in comparison to slumber. Therefore, eloquence demanded that, first, slumber be denied, and. then the stronger point, sleep, be negated. The meaning, thus, will be: The weaker factor (slumber) has no effect on His power and standing, nor does even the stronger one (sleep).

***Qur’an: Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission?* (*2:255*).**

The perfect and comprehensive “Standing” of Allah means that He owns, in real ownership, the heavens and the earth and what is in them. That is why His attribute of “Standing” is followed here by a declaration of that ownership. It was for the same reason that the attribute of “Standing” was joined with the declaration of His Oneness: His Oneness would not be complete if He were not “Standing”.

There are two sentences here, both of which are followed by other sentences to remove chances of misunderstandings. The sentence, “whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His”, is followed by the sentence, “who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission?” And the next sentence, “He knows what is before them and what is behind them”, is followed by the words, “and they cannot comprehend anything of His Knowledge except what He pleases.”

“Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His”: Allah owns everything, and has authority over them all. Things and all their attributes, properties and traits exist because of God and by Him. The verse, from the word “the Self-subsisting” up to this sentence, proves that the total authority is Allah’s alone. There is no work connected with anything, right from its existence up to its ultimate end, that is not done by Him and does not proceed from Him.

On realizing this eternal truth, one might wonder about the system of “cause-and-effect” prevalent in this world. What is the significance of these causes? How could they have any influence on any effect when nothing has any effect or power except Allah?

The sentence, “who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission?” answers this speculation. These causes are intermediaries in such affairs. In other words, they are intercessors who cause the bringing of a thing or effect into being, by the permission of Allah. Intercession means being an intermediary in bringing about a good or averting an evil. There is no doubt that an intercessor has some influence on the affairs of the thing for which he intercedes. Such influence could be contrary to the complete authority and total sovereignty of Allah, had it not been based on the permission of Allah Himself. But every cause draws its effectiveness only from the decree of Allah Himself. There is no cause and no instrument which is independent of the will of Allah. Every cause is a cause, because Allah has made it so. Therefore, whatever effect and influence it has on anything is in fact done by Allah. Ultimately, there is no authority except that of Allah, and no “standing” except His.

As already explained, intercession means being an intermediary in the world of cause and effect – it may be a creative intercession, that is, being an intermediary cause of creation; or a legislative intercession, that is, interceding in the award of recompense on the Day of Judgement, as is clearly mentioned in the Qur’an and *sunnah* (as was described in the commentary on verse 2:48). The sentence, “who is he that can intercede with Him...” is preceded by a description of His “Standing” and total authority; these two attributes cover His power and authority in both creation and legislation. Therefore, the intercession mentioned in this sentence must cover both creative and legislative intercessions.

The context of this verse, so far as intercession is concerned, is like the following verses:

“Surely your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods, and He is firmly established on the ‘Arsh (Throne) regulating the affair; there is no intercessor except after His permission; this is Allah, your Lord; therefore, worship Him; will you not then ponder?” (***10:3***).

“Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six periods, and

He is firmly established on the 'Arsh (Throne); you have not besides Him any guardian or any intercessor; will you not then ponder?" (32:4).

It was described in the topic of intercession that it includes creative causation as well as legislative intercession. Every cause intercedes with Allah for its effect and becomes a medium for bestowing the grace of existence on it, by adhering to the divine attributes of grace and mercy. The system of "cause-and-effect" is found in intercession as well as in prayer and invocation. Allah says:

"All those who are in the heavens and the earth do beseech Him; every day He is in a (new) splendour" (55:29).

"And He gave you of all that you ask Him" (14:34).

This aspect has been described in the commentary on verse 2:186.

Qur'an: "He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases" (2:255).

The sentence comes after the topic of intercession, and in its context, it is like the following verses:

"...Nay! They are honoured servants" (21:26).

"They do not precede Him in speech and (only) according to His commandment do they act" (21:27).

"He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they do not intercede except for him whom He approves, and for fear of Him they tremble (21:28).

Apparently, the pronouns of the third person plural in the verse under discussion refer to the intercessors, who are implied in the preceding sentence. To say that

"He knows what is before them and what is behind them" (21:28).

Is to say that He encompasses them completely. He has given them permission to intercede; but it does not mean that they can do anything without His prior permission. Nor may others take undue advantage of that intercession.

The following two verses throw light on the same subject:

And we do not come down but by the command of your Lord; His is whatever is before us and whatever is behind us and whatever is between these, and your Lord is not forgetful (19:64).

"The Knower of the unseen! So He does not reveal His secret to any" (72:26).

"Except to him whom He chooses of an apostle; for surely He makes a guard to march before him

and after him" (***72:27***).

"So that He may know that they have indeed delivered the messages of their Lord, and He encompasses what is with them and He takes account of every thing (***72:28***).

These two verses show that Allah encompasses the angels and the prophets, so that they cannot do anything without His permission; they cannot descend unless bidden to do so, and cannot deliver except what He wishes them to deliver. It may be inferred that "what is before them" refers to what is seen by them; and "what is behind them" to what is not seen by them and is far away from them. In other words, the two phrases refer to the seen and the unseen. In short, the sentence says that Allah knows very well what is present with them and what is yet to come to them; and then the talk is completed by the words, "and they cannot comprehend any thing out of His knowledge except what He pleases". He knows them and encompasses what they know, but they cannot comprehend His knowledge except what He pleases.

We have proved that the intercessor, in this verse, means both creative causes and legislative interceders. The pronouns used in three places in this verse are those of the third person plural, masculine gender, normally used for rational beings. Someone might think that these pronouns could not be used for creative causes (as these causes are not "people" or rational beings). It is not so. Intercession, interceding, glorifying the Creator and offering thanks to Him are normally the acts of rational beings; and for this reason, the Qur'an mostly uses such pronouns even for inert or lifeless things, when it declares them to perform such deeds. Allah says:

"…and there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification" (***17:44***).

"Then He directed Himself to the heaven and it was vapour, so He said to it and to the earth; Come both willing or unwillingly. They both said. We come willingly" (***41:11***).

In both verses the pronouns of rational beings have been used for "everything" and for the heaven and the earth. There are many similar verses.

The sentence,

"And they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases", (***2:255***).

Shows total authority and perfect management. Perfect management demands that the subordinate should not know what is to happen next; otherwise, he might try to wriggle out of a forthcoming unpleasant situation, and the plan of the manager might be put in disorder. It is easy to see in the light of the above discussion the import of this sentence: it wants to show that the management of all affairs is in the hands of Allah only, and it is done by His knowledge and by His control of the intermediary causes which He Himself has created. So far as these intermediary causes are concerned (and especially those

with life and intellect), their effectiveness and their knowledge is derived from His knowledge, will and pleasure – and ultimately is a reflection of divine knowledge and power. And none of them can proceed against the will and decree of Allah in any way.

The sentence, moreover, shows that knowledge (not "the thing known") is of Allah only. No creature has any knowledge except what Allah is pleased to bestow upon him. It is the same as when Allah has said that power, honour and life belongs to Him only. For example:

"…and O, that those who are unjust could see, when they see the chastisement, that the power is wholly Allah's, and that Allah is severe in requitting (evil)" (2:165).

"Do they seek honour from them? Then surely all honour is for Allah" (4:139).

"He is the Living, there is no god but He" (40:65).

The following verses also may be brought as evidence that knowledge belongs to Allah only:

"Surely He is the Knowing, the Wise" (12:83).

"And Allah knows while you do not know" (3:66).

There are many other verses of the same meaning.

The verb of knowledge in the preceding sentence has been changed to the verb of comprehension here and it has raised the verse to a very high plane of eloquence.

Qur'an: His Chair extends over the heavens and the earth (2:255).

"al-Kursi" (الكُرْسِي) means chair. Metaphorically it sometimes is used for kingdom; thus the chair of king means the sphere of his authority and the region under his sovereignty.

The preceding sentences show that the whole universe belongs to Allah and is encompassed by His knowledge. This sentence also says that His "Chair" extends over the whole universe. It is reasonable to believe that the extension of the "Chair" refers to all-encompassing divine authority. The "Chair", thus, would mean the divine position by which the heavens and the earth are maintained, possessed, managed and known. Ultimately, the "Chair" would be a degree of divine knowledge. And extension of the chair would mean maintenance and preservation of everything that is in the heavens and in the earth, with all its characteristics; and that is why the sentence is followed by the words, "and the preservation of them both tires Him not."

Qur'an: And the preservation of them both tires Him not, and He is the Most High, the Great (2:255).

"al-Awd" (الأَوْد) means to tire, to weigh down, to depress. Although, the objective pronoun after the verb

“tires” is generally taken to refer to “Allah” (as is seen in the translation), equally correctly it may be taken to refer to the “Chair” and then it would be translated as “tires it not”. The declaration at the end of the verse that ‘the preservation of the heavens and the earth tires Him not’ is befitting to its beginning:

***“Slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep”* (*2:255*).**

This verse, in short, says that there is no god except Allah, for Him is Life and to Him belongs the attribute of *al-qayyumiyyah* (القَيُّوْمِيَّة = Standing, Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist), in its unrestricted sense without any weakness or defect. That is why the verse ends on the words, “and He is Most High, the Great”. He is Most High: the hands of creatures cannot reach Him and can in no way weaker His authority or enfeeble His being. He is Great: the great number of the creatures does not overwhelm Him, and the magnitude of the heavens and the earths does not tire Him.

This sentence also shows that eminence and greatness in their true sense are for Allah only. This restriction is real, because eminence and greatness are parts of perfection, and every perfection in its real sense is found in Allah only. Also, the restriction may have been used to strengthen the claim that the eminence and greatness are reserved for Allah only - the heavens and the earth are insignificant before His majesty and greatness.

Traditions

al-’Ayyashi narrates in his *at-Tafsir* from Imam as-Sadiq (‘a): “Abu Dharr said: ‘O Messenger of Allah! What is the best of that which has been revealed to you?’ He said: ‘The verse of the “Chair”. The seven heavens and the seven earths in the “Chair” are but like a ring thrown in a vast open space.’ Then he said: ‘And surely the excellence of *al-’Arsh* (العَرْش = the Throne) over the chair is like that of the open space over the ring.’”

The author says: as-Suyuti has quoted the first part of this tradition in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from Ibn Rahwayh (in his *al-Musnad*) who has narrated it from ‘Awf Ibn Malik from Abu Dharr; and also he has quoted Ahmad, Ibnu ‘d-Daris and al-Hakim (who said that it is correct) and al-Bayhaqi (in his *Shu’ab al-’iman*) who have narrated it from Abu Dharr.

Ahmad and at-Tabarani have narrated from Abu Amamah who said: “I said: ‘O Messenger of Allah! Which (verse) revealed to you is the greatest?’ He said:

***‘Allah is He besides Whom there is no god, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist* (*2:255*).**

The verse of the Chair.’”[1]

The author says: as-Suyuti has also narrated the same thing through al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (in his *Tarikh*) from Anas from the Prophet.

In the same book he quotes ad-Darimi who has narrated from Ayfa' Ibn 'Abdullah al-Kala'i that he said: "A man said: 'O Messenger of Allah! Which verse in the Book of Allah is the greatest?' He said: 'The verse of the Chair; Allah is He besides Whom there is no god, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist...'"

The author says: This verse was named "the verse of the Chair" in the early period of Islam during the lifetime of the Prophet; and was thus described by the Prophet himself as the traditions quoted from him and the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* and the companions prove. That this verse was given a special name shows how much importance was attached to it. It could only be because of the highest nobility of its meaning and the elegance and grace of its style. It establishes the pristine belief of the Oneness of God

***Allah is He besides Whom there is no god* (*2:255*).**

And then goes on to the attribute of "standing" which is the foundation of all His names which describe His attributes of action. Then it gives details of those attributes in all small and big things and affairs of the universe, showing that whatever emanates from His authority is a part of that authority. It is because of these fine points that the traditions have called it "the greatest verse of the Qur'an". It deals in detail with various aspects of monotheism and divine authority. Of course, there are some other verses which deal with this subject, for example:

***"Allah is He besides Whom there is no god; His are the very best names"* (*20:8*).**

But it lacks the details which have been given in this verse of the Chair. It is for this reason that some traditions have said that the verse of the Chair is the chief of all the verses of the Qur'an. See for the proof the tradition narrated in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from Abu Hurayrah from the Prophet. Some, other traditions say: Every thing has a summit, and the summit of the Qur'an is the verse of the Chair. It has been narrated in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from 'Abdullah Ibn Sinan from Imam as-Sadiq ('a).

at-Tusi has narrated in his *al-Amali*, through his chains from Abu Amamah al-Bahili that he heard 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib ('a) say: "I do not think that a man who enters into Islam on attaining wisdom, or was born in Islam (i.e., in a Muslim family) should pass a night's darkness..." (At this juncture Abu Amamah interrupted by asking, "and what is the meaning of a night's darkness?" 'Ali ('a) said: "the whole night") "until he recites this verse: Allah is He besides Whom there is no god..."; and he recited the complete verse up to the end: and the preservation of them both tires Him not; and He is the Most High, the Great. Then he said: "If you but knew what it is (or, as another version says, "what is in it") you would not leave it on any condition. Surely, the Messenger of Allah (S) said, 'I have been given the verse of the Chair from the treasure (that is) below *al-'Arsh* (the Throne); and no prophet before me was given it:'" Then Imam 'Ali ('a) continued: "I have not spent a single night, since I heard it from the Messenger of Allah, without reciting it..."

The author says: This has been narrated in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* quoting 'Ubayd, Ibn Abi Shaybah, ad-Darimi, Muhammad Ibn Nasr, Ibnu 'd-Daris and ad-Daylami, all from Imam 'Ali ('a). There is a multitude

of traditions, from both Sunni and Shi'ite sources, about the excellence of this verse. The tradition of the Prophet quoted in this tradition ("I have been given the verse of the Chair from below the Throne") has been narrated in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* on the authority of al-Bukhari (in his *at-Tarikh*) and Ibnu 'd-Daris from the Prophet. It may be inferred from it that the Chair is below *al-'Arsh* and is encompassed by it. We shall describe it later.

Zurarah said: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah ('a) about the words of Allah: His Chair extends over the heavens and the earth - whether the heavens and the earth encompass the Chair or the Chair extends over the heavens and the earth? He said: 'Verily, every thing is in the Chair.'"[2]

The author says: In many traditions the same point has been emphasized in reply to similar questions. This question looks strange, because nobody has ever recited the verse in a way which could justify such confusion. Apparently, the questions were based not on the recital of the Qur'an but on the common understanding that the Chair was a particular body kept over the heavens or over the seventh heaven (i.e. above the material world), and from there the affairs of the material world were managed. That being the picture of the Chair in their minds, it was reasonable to suppose that the heavens and the earth encompassed the Chair because it was placed over the heavens as a wooden or iron chair is placed over a floor. And with this background it would seem more appropriate to say that the heavens and the earth encompassed the Chair. And that gave rise to the question as to why Allah, instead, said: "His Chair extends over the heavens and the earth?" A question of the same type was asked about the *'Arsh* and the reply was given that the extension (or encompassing) was not as a material thing encompasses another material thing.

Hafs Ibn al-Ghiyath said: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah ('a) about the words of Allah: His Chair extends over the heavens and the earth. He said: 'His knowledge.'"[3]

There is another tradition in the same book from the same Imam about this verse which says: "The heavens and the earth and whatever is between them is in the Chair, and the Throne is that knowledge which no one can measure."

The author says: These two traditions show that the Chair is one of the levels of the knowledge of Allah. Many other traditions support this interpretation.

As will be explained later, there exists a level of knowledge which is not limited or measured. In other words, there is a world, on a higher plane than ours, whose constituents are not bound by material dimensions. They exist and at the same time are known to Allah. And that knowledge also is unlimited. God willing, we shall describe it in detail when commenting on the verse:

"...And there does not lie concealed from your Lord the weight of an atom in the earth or in the heaven, nor any thing than that nor greater, but it is in a clear book" (***10:61***).

This boundless knowledge has been referred to in the tradition of the Imam in these words, "and the

'Arsh is that knowledge which no one can measure." The import of the tradition is not to show the great number of the known things, because number is not unlimited and anything which is created is finite. What the tradition wants to say is that the limitations and restrictions of this material world are not found in that world. Existence, on that level, is perfect and the conditions, dimensions and distinctions of this material world are not found there. It is as Allah says:

"And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure" (***15:21***).

When those existing things are known by unlimited knowledge, that is, when they exist without any limitation attached to them, that knowledge is called *al-'Arsh* (The Throne); and when they exist in the world of limitations and known with those limitations, that knowledge is called *al-Kursi* (The Chair).

At this stage we may probably say that the words,

"He knows what is before them and what is behind them" (***2:255***).

Allude to this plane of knowledge. What is before them (i.e. the future) and what is behind them (i.e. the past) is not what is with them (i.e. the present). It refers to a plane where past, present, and future lose their limitations of time, and are all equally present.

Hannan said: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah ('a) about the Throne and the Chair. He replied: 'Verily, the Throne has many diverse attributes. Allah uses in the Qur'an various adjectives to describe its various aspects. He says:

"the Lord of the great Throne" (***9:129***).

It means; Lord of the great kingdom or authority.

And He says:

"The Beneficent (***God***) ***on the Throne is firm"*** (***20:5***).

It means that He is firm in His kingdom. And it is the knowledge of the "how" of the things. Also, the Throne, although together with it, is distinct from the Chair; because they are two of the greatest doors of the unseen, and they both are unseen. And they are together in the unseen, because the Chair is the manifest door of the unseen, from which appears creation and from which all the things come. And the Throne is the concealed door of the unseen in which is found the knowledge of the states, conditions and existence; of measure and limit; of will and intention; as well as the knowledge of words, actions and omissions, and the knowledge of the beginning and the return.

Thus, the two are two gates of knowledge joined together, because the dominion of the Throne is other than the dominion of the Chair, and its (the Throne's) knowledge is more hidden than the knowledge of

the Chair. That is why Allah said, “the Lord of the great Throne”; that is, its attribute is greater than that of the Chair, and both are joined in it.’” (Hannan says) “I said: ‘May I be your ransom, then why did it become associated with the Chair in excellence?’ He (the Imam) said: It was associated with it because the knowledge of the state and condition is found in it. And in it are found the manifest doors of *al-bada’* (البدآء = the decree hidden from other); as well as its reality and the dimensions of its joining and separating. Therefore, they are two neighbours, one of which contains the other in itself. And by similitudes are turned those who know, and so that they may offer proof for the truth of their claims. Because He chooses especially whom He pleases for His mercy, and He is the Mighty, the Powerful.’”[4]

The author says: The words of the tradition, “the Chair is the manifest door of the unseen”, may be understood in the light of the short explanation given earlier. The level of the knowledge of measured things is nearer to our material world than infinite knowledge which has no limits. Further explanation will be given under the following verse:

Surely your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods of time, and He is firm on the Throne. (***7:54***).

“And by similitudes are turned those who know”: It is an indication that the words, throne, chair and similar other expressions, are similitudes which have been given to people for their understanding, and only those who have knowledge understand this.

Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said, *inter alia*, in a tradition: “Every thing which Allah has created is in the receptacle of the Chair, except His Throne, because that is too great for the Chair to encompass.”[5]

The author says: Its meaning may be understood from the earlier discourse. And it is in conformity with other traditions. Contrary to it there is a tradition which says that the Throne is that knowledge which Allah gave to His prophets and apostles and the Chair is that knowledge which no one was made aware of. It has been narrated by as-Saduq through Mufaddal from Imam as-Sadiq (‘a). But in view of all other traditions, it can only be surmised that the narrator was confused and changed the names, Throne and Chair, from their proper places. If this is not accepted then the tradition will have to be discarded like the one that is attributed to Zaynab al-’Attarah.

al-‘Ayyashi narrates in his *at-Tafsir* from Imam ‘Ali (‘a) that he said: “Verily the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them is created in the hollow of the Chair; and it has four angels who bear it by the order of Allah.”

The author says: as-Saduq has narrated it from Imam ‘Ali (‘a) through Asbach Ibn Nubatah. It is the only tradition narrated from *Ahl al-Bayt* which says that there are angels who bear the Chair. But other traditions mention such bearers only for the Throne; and it is in conformity with the Book of Allah, as He says:

“Those who bear the Throne and those around it celebrate the praise of their Lord…” (***40:7***).

"And above them eight shall bear on that day the Throne of your Lord" (***69: 17***).

It may be said that the Chair is somewhat joined with the Throne, as a manifest side of a thing is joined with its hidden side; and in this way the bearers of one may be called the bearers of the other.

al-'Ayyashi narrates in his *at-Tafsir* from Mu'awiyah Ibn 'Ammar that he asked Imam as-Sadiq ('a) about (the verse), Who is it that can intercede with Him but by His permission? He said: "We are those intercessors."

The author says: It has also been narrated by al-Barqi in *al-Mahasin*. You know that the intercession in this verse is common to creative and the legislative intercedings and therefore includes the intercession of the Prophet and the Imams. This tradition, thus, gives an example of the intercessors.

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1. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
2. al-Kafi.
3. Ma'ani'l-akhbar.
4. at-Tawhid.
5. al-Ihtijaj.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 256- 257

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

There is no compulsion in the religion; truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error; therefore, whoever disbelieves the rebels (***false deities***) ***and believes in Allah, he indeed has laid hold on the strongest handle, for which there is no break off; and Allah is Hearing, Knowing*** (***2:256***).

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَاؤُهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُمْ مِنَ النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

Allah is the Guardian of those who believe; He brings them out of the darkness into the light; and

(***as to***) ***those who disbelieve their guardians are the rebels, they take them out of the light into the darkness. They are the inmates of the Fire, in it they shall abide*** (***2:257***).

Commentary

Verse 256

Qur'an: There is no compulsion in the religion; truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error (***2:256***).

"al-Ikrah" (الإِكْرَاه) means to compel someone to a work without his willingness. *"ar-Rushd"* (الرُّشْد) is to get at the reality of an affair; to reach the right path. *"al-Ghayy"* (الغَي) is its opposite. These two words are more general than *"al-huda"* (الهُدَي) (to find the path which leads to the destination) and *"ad-dalal"* (الضَّلاَل) (not to find such path) respectively. Obviously, when the word *ar-rushd* is used for reaching the right path it is done in the way of applying a general word for a particular example: a walker reaches reality when he travels on the right path. Thus the words *ar-rushd* and *al-huda* are made for two different meanings, but one is used for the other because of a special association. Allah says:

"...then if you find in them maturity of intellect: "rushdan" (***4:6***) ***"***(رُشْدا).

"And certainly We gave to Ibrahim his rectitude: "rushdahu" (رُشْدَه) ***before"*** (***21:51***).

The same applies to *al-ghayy* and *ad-dalal*. That is why we have mentioned before that *ad-dalal* is to deviate from the right path but with knowing and remembering the goal and destination; while *al-ghayy* is to deviate from the right path without even remembering the goal and destination – without knowing what one wants and where one wants to go.

"There is no compulsion in the religion" (***2:256***).

Negates and disapproves compulsion and coercion in religion. Religion is a set of truths which are believed in, and some of them are then acted upon. In short, religion is belief and faith, it is a matter of conscience, and such a thing cannot be created by coercion and compulsion. One may force someone to do a certain physical action against his will but he cannot be forced to believe against his will. Belief follows reason and understanding; and nothing but reason and understanding can create it.

"There is no compulsion in religion" may be treated as a bit of information or a piece of legislation. If it is information of a creative decree, it will give rise to a legislative order that compulsion should not be used in matters of belief and faith. And if it is an order in the form of information then the meaning is clear. Apparently, this alternative is more correct, because the next sentence

"Truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error" (***2:256***).

Gives the reason for this legislation. And this prohibition of compulsion for religion is based on a factor of

creation: the fact that compulsion can influence physical action but not matters connected with the heart and conscience.

"Truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error" (***2:256***).

As mentioned above, it gives the reason for the prohibition of compulsion. A wise person resorts to compulsion only when the truth of the order cannot be explained, either because the person so coerced has no capacity to understand it or for some other reasons. But there is no need for compulsion in an important matter whose advantages and disadvantages are clearly defined and the reward and punishment of accepting and rejecting well-explained. A man, in such a clear matter, should be free to choose his course of action himself - whether he takes it or rejects it, whether he wants the rewards of obedience or is prepared to take the punishment.

The realities of religion have been explained, and its path well-laid; the divine revelation and prophetic explanation have illuminated this highway to the utmost degree. It has now been made clear that the religion is truth, that the only right thing is to accept it and follow it; and that if one deviates from this road he will fall in perdition. Why should anyone, after all these clarifications, compel others to follow the religion?

It is one of the verses that show that Islam is not based on the sword and killing, and that it does not allow Muslims to compel or coerce others to accept Islam. It is contrary to the view held by many Muslims and non-Muslims alike that Islam is the religion of the sword. They bring as their evidence the legislation of *jihad* which is one of the pillars of Islam.

We have already clarified, while writing the commentary on the verses of fighting, that the fighting ordained by Islam is not for the purpose of material advancement nor for spreading the religion by force. It was ordained only for reviving the truth and defending the most precious treasure of nature - the faith of monotheism. Where monotheism is accepted by the people - even if they remain Jew or Christian - Islam does not fight with them. Therefore, the objection arises from clouded thinking.

The verse: "There is no compulsion in the religion", is not abrogated by the verse of the sword, although some writers think so. The order is followed by its reason: "truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error". Such an order cannot be cancelled unless and until its reason is also abrogated. So long as the reason is valid the rule must remain valid. There is no need to emphasize that the verse of the sword cannot negate the clear distinction of the right way from error. For example, the verses:

"…And kill them wherever you find them…" (***4:89***).

"And fight in the way of Allah…" (***2:190***).

Have no effect whatsoever on the clear distinction of truth from falsehood; and therefore, they cannot abrogate an order based on that distinction.

In other words, this order is based on the fact that the right way is made clearly distinct from error. And this distinction is as valid after the revelation of the verses of fighting as it was before that. And as the cause is not changed, the effect, that is, the said order, cannot be changed or cancelled.

Verse 257

Qur'an: Therefore, whoever disbelieves in the rebels (false deities) and believes in Allah, he indeed has laid hold on the strongest handle, for which there is no break off (2:257).

"at-Taghut" (الطَّاغُوْت) means rebellion and transgression. This paradigm conveys an intensification of the meaning of the root like *al-malakut* (المَلَكُوت = great kingdom) and *al -jabarut* (الجَبَرُوْت = great power). *at-Taghut* is used for the agents and causes of rebellion and transgression like false deities and idols, satans, *jinn* and wrong leaders among the human beings; and, in short, everyone who is followed without the permission of Allah. This word is common for masculine and feminine genders, as well as for singular, dual and plural numbers.

In this sentence, disbelief in the rebels has been mentioned before belief in Allah. This sequence keeps in view the next sentence

he indeed has laid hold on the strongest handle (2:257).

When one wants to lay one's hold on a thing, one has to discard all other things before that. In other words, one has first to leave unwanted things, then comes the stage of holding fast to the desired thing. Therefore, the verse mentioned first the rejection (of the rebels) and then the belief (in Allah). *"al-Istimsak"* (الإِسْتِمْسَاك) means to hold fast; *"al-'urwah"* (العُرْوَة) denotes that part of thing which is made to hold it by, like the handle of a bucket, or of a pot. Also, this word is used for evergreen plants and trees. Its root meaning is attachment; it is said *'arahu* (عَرَاه) and *i'tarahu* (إِعْتَريه), both of which mean "was attached to him".

The sentence,

"he indeed has laid hold on the strongest handle" (2:257).

Is based on allegory. It conveys the idea that belief in Allah has the same relation with eternal bliss that a pot's handle has with that pot and its contents. You cannot be sure of your hold unless you keep the handle in your grip; likewise, one cannot be hopeful about eternal and real bliss unless one believes in Allah rejecting all false deities.

Qur'an: For which there is no break off; and Allah is Hearing, Knowing (2:257).

"al-Infisam" (الإِنْفِصَام) is to be cut off, to be broken. The phrase,

"For which there is no break off" (2:257).

describes the condition or state of the handle, and emphasize the phrase, “the strongest handle”. The next sentence,

“And Allah is Hearing, Knowing” (***2:257***).

Points to the fact that belief and disbelief are matters connected with the heart and the tongue.

Qur’an: ***Allah is the Guardian of those who believe; He brings them out of the darkness into the light; and*** (***as to***) ***those who disbelieve their guardians are the rebels, they take them out of the light into the darkness. They are the inmates of the Fire, in it they shall abide*** (***2:257***).

Some explanation has been given, in a previous verse, of “bringing out of the darkness into the light”. It has been described there that this bringing out and other such phrases express real things, and that they are not used in any allegorical sense. There are two other interpretations given by other commentators of the Qur’an, which we shall quote here before commenting upon them:

First Interpretation

This bringing out of the darkness into the light and other such phrases, are allegorical expressions. They are used for man’s actions and physical stillness and movements, and for the good or evil results of such actions. Accordingly, “light” is used for correct belief which removes the darkness of ignorance, the confusion of doubt and the perplexity of the heart. Also, it is a metaphor for good deeds because its connection with the right path is clear and its effect on bliss self–evident.

And the “light” has all these attributes and qualities. On the other hand, “darkness” is metaphorically used for wrong belief, confusion and doubt as well as for evil deeds. According to this interpretation, the bringing out from darkness into the light (attributed to Allah) and taking out of light into the darkness (attributed to the rebels and false deities) refer to only true and wrong beliefs and good and evil deeds respectively – there is nothing other than those beliefs and deeds. Allah or the false deities do not do any action (like bringing out) in this respect, nor is there any effect of such action (like light and darkness).

Second Interpretation

Surely Allah does the actions like bringing the people out of the darkness into the light, giving life, bestowing abundance and mercy and similar things. And surely there appear effects of such actions, like light and darkness; the soul and mercy; and the coming down of the angels. But our intellect cannot comprehend it and our senses cannot perceive it. Even then, we believe, as we have been told by Allah – and Allah speaks the truth – that these things do exist and that they are the actions of Allah, although we do not understand them.

This interpretation, like the first one, treats words like light, darkness, taking out, etc. as metaphors. The only difference between the two is that the first one says that the light and the darkness are our correct

and wrong deeds and beliefs; and this one says that the light and the darkness are things other than our beliefs and deeds, but we have no way of knowing them or comprehending and understanding them.

Both the interpretations are far from the truth. One has failed to reach the target, the other has overshot it. The fact is that these things, which Allah has said He creates and does when we obey Him or disobey Him, are real things; there is no allegory in such expressions, but these divine actions are related to our beliefs and deeds – are inseparable from them. And we have already explained this. Of course, it is admitted that the sentences, "He brings them out of the darkness into the light", and "(they) take them out of the light into the darkness", are metaphors and mean "He guides them" and "they misguide them" respectively.

In other words, there are two separate matters to decide:

(1) Whether the light, the darkness and other such expressions refer to some real things in this life or are merely metaphors?

(2) If they refer to some real things then, is the use, for example, of the word "light" for guidance real or metaphorical? According to what we have already explained, such expressions refer to real things in this life. And using the "light", for example, for guidance is metaphorical.

And in any case, the two sentences mentioned above, are metaphors to denote guidance and misguidance. If we were to interpret them in their literal sense, it would mean that the believer and the disbeliever both have light and darkness together. "Allah brings the believers out of the darkness into the light", if literally interpreted, would mean that the believer was first in the darkness! Conversely, the second sentence would mean that the disbeliever was first in the light! How can this meaning be correct about the overwhelming majorities of believers and disbelievers who are born in believing or disbelieving families and remain in light or in darkness (as the case may be) from their birth? Such literal interpretation would mean that a child remained in light and darkness at one and the same time; and when, on attaining majority, he accepts the true faith by his own choice, he is removed out of the darkness into the light, and if he disbelieved, he was taken out of the light into the darkness. The absurdity of such an interpretation is quite obvious.

(Of course, it may be said that man in his creation, has the light of natural faith. But it is a general light, which needs details and particularization. In this way, he has the natural light; but, at the same time, is in darkness, so far as detailed knowledge and good deeds are concerned. And, looking from these different angles, it is possible for the light and the darkness to be present in one place at one time. When the believer acquires correct faith, he goes out from that darkness into the light of knowledge and good deed. And the disbeliever, by his disbelief goes out from the natural light into the darkness of disbelief and evil deeds.)

Allah in both sentences has used "the light" (in the singular) and "the darkness" (in the plural). It is to indicate that truth is one – there is no difference in it; and that falsehood is multifaced, diverse and

variable – there is no unity in it. Allah says in another place:

"And (know) that this is My path, the straight one, therefore follow it; and follow not (other) ways, for they will scatter you away from His path" (6:153).

Traditions

Abu Dawud, an-Nasa'i, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, an-Nahhas (in his *an-Nasikh wa 'l-mansukh*), Ibn Mandih (in his *al-Ghara'ib*), Ibn Hibban, Ibn Marduwayh, al-Bayhaqi (in his *as-Sunan*), ad-Diya' (in his *al-Mukhtarah*) have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "(It was customary for) a woman of the Ansar that if her child died in infancy, she would make a vow that if her child lived she would turn him into a Jew. Thus, when the tribe of Nadir was banished (from Medina), there were many children of the Ansar among them. They said that they would not leave their sons (to migrate). Then Allah sent down the verse: There is no compulsion in the religion."[1]

The author says: The same thing has been narrated, by other chains, from Sa'id Ibn Jubayr and ash-Sha'bi.

'Abd Ibn Hamid, Ibn Jarir and Ibn al-Mundhir have narrated from Mujahid that he said: "(The tribe of) Nadir had suckled some people from the tribe of Aws. When the Prophet ordered their banishment, their foster sons from the Aws said: 'We shall go with them and enter into their religion.' But their families prevented them and compelled them to (accept) Islam. Then came down the verse about them:

There is no compulsion in the religion (2:256).[2]

The author says: This thing too has been narrated from other sources. It is not in conflict with the preceding tradition (about the vow of the women of the Ansar), as both may be correct.

Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Jarir have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said about the words of Allah: There is no compulsion in the religion: "It was revealed about a man from the Ansar (from the clan of Banu Salim Ibn 'Awf), named al-Husayn, who had two Christian sons, and he himself was a Muslim. So he said to the Prophet: 'Should I not compel them, because they have refused, but (remain) the Christianity.' Thereupon, Allah sent down this (verse) about hint."[3]

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "The light is the progeny of Muhammad and the darkness are their enemies."[4]

The author says: This tradition gives examples of the light and the darkness, or explains its inner meaning or interpretation.

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1. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
2. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
3. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

4. al-Kafi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 258- 260

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِي حَاجَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ قَالَ أَنَا أُحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ
قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ فَبُهِتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

Did you not see him who disputed with Ibrahim about his Lord, because Allah had given him the kingdom? When Ibrahim said: "My Lord is He Who gives life and cause to die", he said: "I give life and cause death." Ibrahim said: "So surely Allah brings the sun from the east, then bring it (you) from the west." Thus he who disbelieved was confounded; and Allah does not guide aright the unjust people (2:258).

أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَىٰ قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَىٰ عُرُوشِهَا قَالَ أَنَّىٰ يُحْيِي هَٰذِهِ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا فَأَمَاتَهُ اللَّهُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ قَالَ
كَمْ لَبِثْتَ قَالَ لَبِثْتُ يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ قَالَ بَلْ لَبِثْتَ مِائَةَ عَامٍ فَانْظُرْ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ يَتَسَنَّهْ وَانْظُرْ إِلَىٰ حِمَارِكَ
وَلِنَجْعَلَكَ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَانْظُرْ إِلَى الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ نُنْشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوهَا لَحْمًا فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ قَالَ أَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
قَدِيرٌ

Or like him who passed by a town, and it had fallen down upon its roofs; he said: "How will Allah give it life after its death?" So Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him to life. He said: "How long have you tarried?" He said: "I have tarried a day, or a part of a day." Said He: "Nay! You have tarried a hundred years; then look at your food and drink - years have not passed over it; and look at your donkey; and that We may make you a sign to men; and look at the bones, how We assemble them together, then clothe them with flesh." So when it became clear to him, he said: "I know that Allah has power over all things" (2:259).

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ قَالَ أَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَلَٰكِنْ لِيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِنَ الطَّيْرِ
فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

And (remember) when Ibrahim said: "My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead." He said: "What! and do you not believe?" He said: "Certainly, but that my heart may be at ease." He said: "Then take four of the birds, then cut them (into pieces), then place on every mountain a

part of them, then call them, they will come to you flying; and know that Allah is Mighty, Wise" (***2:260***).

Commentary

The three verses describe the Oneness of the Creator and His Omnipotence. They have, therefore, some connection with the preceding verses; and possibly these were revealed together with them.

Verse 258

Qur'an: Did you not see him who disputed with Ibrahim about his Lord (***2:258***).

"al-Muhajjah" (المُحَآجَّة) is to bring a proof against the opposite party's, to prove one's own claim or to refute the other party's argument. The basic meaning of *al-hujjah* (الحُجَّة) is intention; now it is generally used for "proof" by which one intends to prove one's claim. The phrase "about his Lord" is connected with the verb "disputed". The pronoun in "His Lord" refers to Ibrahim, as may be inferred from the next sentence,

"Ibrahim said: My Lord is He Who gives life and cause to die" (***2:258***).

The man who disputed with Ibrahim was the king of his time; and according to history and traditions, he was the Babylonian king, Namrud (Nimrod).

We may understand the nature of this argument and the subject of the dispute, if we look at the context of the verse and reflect upon the behaviour of mankind in the past as well as in the present.

Man, by his nature, has always remained submissive to the powers about him which effect, in one way or the other, his life. No student of anthropology, who has studied the behaviour of the ancients, or has looked at the present generations of various nations, can have any doubt about it. We have described it in preceding discourses; and also, it has been pointed out that man, by his nature, accepts that there is a Creator for the universe, Who has brought it into existence, and Who manages it. Every man, by the dictate of nature, believes this – be he a monotheist (a follower of the prophets), a polytheist (like an idol-worshipper) or an atheist (like a materialist). Nature's demand cannot be negated so long as man is man (although the effect of it may at times become weaker or dormant).

Primitive man, in his simplicity, thought of every thing in the light of his own experience. He saw that he performs different acts by means of his different organs and limbs; and likewise, in society's structure, various people discharge various duties and functions. And the natural phenomena in the world happen because of their respective natural causes which are closely related to them. Yet, his nature led him to believe in a Creator who had all the affairs of the universe in His hand. Not surprisingly, he thought that every phenomenon of the world had a special deity of its own – and all those deities were under the authority of a Supreme God. Sometimes he named them deities for various things; for example, the deity

of the earth, the deity of the rivers, the deity of fire, the deity of wind, etc.

At other times, he attributed these functions to the stars, and especially to the planets, the sun and the moon, ascribing to each various faculties believing that each of them affected this world of ours in its own way. This belief was held by the Sabaeans. The next stage was to make images and statues for those lesser deities. Then he started to worship those idols so that the particular image might intercede on behalf of the worshipper with its particular deity, which in its turn was expected to intercede with the Supreme God – thus ensuring bliss and success for the worshipper in this life and after death.

That also explains why the idols were made in different shapes in different tribes. Views and opinions as regard the attributes of various species and the conceptions of their related deities could not be the same in two nations; and even in one nation they changed with the times. Sometimes other considerations and inclinations crept into the system. Gradually, the idols usurped the place of the said deities, and even the Supreme God was relegated to obscurity. Worshippers intended to give their devotion more and more to what was near them, which they could see and touch, and thus they tended to forget what was beyond their five senses. In this way, idols took the place of the Creator. All this happened because initially they thought that those lesser deities had some influence and control over the affairs of their lives – that the will of those deities dominated their own will and that those deities' management prevailed over their own plans and management.

When some powerful personality appeared on the scene and took the reins of the kingdom in his hands, he often exploited this trend of thought; he had their affairs and their lives in his hands, and it was easy for him to claim for himself the status of divinity, declaring himself to be a god. This is what was done by Pharaoh, Namrud and many others. It is interesting to note that such people included themselves in the list of deities, while, like their subjects, they continued to worship the idols of their nations. But invariably they always ended up by usurping the dominant position for themselves. In this design of theirs the same process of thought helped them which had raised the idols' status in their people's eyes: the king's influence, authority and hold over his people were more manifest than those of the other deities. Pharaoh declared before his people:

"I am your most high Lord" (***79:24***).

And he made this claim of supremacy while continuing to worship the other deities. Read for proof the words of Allah giving the import of the talk of the courtiers of Pharaoh with him showing the danger from Musa ('a):

"…and to forsake you and your gods?" (***7:127***).

The same was the claim of Namrud as may be inferred from his assertion: "I give life and cause death." The above discourse may easily explain this dispute between Ibrahim ('a) and Namrud. Namrud believed that there was a Supreme God. Otherwise, he would not have been confounded by the argument of Ibrahim ('a),

“***So surely Allah brings the sun from the East, then bring it (you) from the West”*** (***2:258***).

If he had not believed in a Supreme God, he could have said that it was he (i.e., Namrud) or some other deity, who brought the sun from the east, and not Ibrahim’s Allah. Apart from the Supreme God, he and his people believed in some other deities too. The life story of Ibrahim provides ample proof that they worshipped the sun, the moon and the stars, as well as idols. Also read the talk of Ibrahim with his uncle on the subject of idols, and see how he shattered their idols (except the big one). All of it shows that Namrud believed in the divinity of Allah, as well as in other deities, but at the same time claimed to be a god – indeed the highest god – himself. That was why he tried to prove his own divinity in this dispute with Ibrahim, and did not even mention the other, lesser, deities.

Now we should look at the dispute. It was Ibrahim’s claim that his Lord is Allah, and no one else. Namrud said: “No! I am your Lord and the Lord of everyone else.” Ibrahim argued:

“My Lord is He Who gives life and cause to die” (***2:258***).

Namrud said: “I give life and cause death.” He wanted to show that he held the power which Ibrahim attributed to his Lord; therefore, Ibrahim should submit to him, and worship him, neither Allah nor other lesser deities deserved to be worshipped. Note that he did not add “and” in his reply; he did not say, “and I give life ...” Why? Because the conjunctive “and” would have meant that he shared this power with Allah; and he did not want to admit any such “partnership” he wanted to be worshipped as the most supreme Lord of the universe. And it was for this very reason that he did not say either, “and the gods give life...”

He could not honestly refute the argument of Ibrahim; so he resorted to sophism, fallacy and deception. When Ibrahim mentioned life and death, he meant life and death as we find them in living things. His argument was that these living things could only be created by One who was the source of life. Lifeless nature cannot bestow life on others when it has no life itself. Nor can other living things give life to others, because their life is their existence and their death their extinction – and a thing cannot create or destroy its own self.

If Namrud had interpreted Ibrahim’s argument honestly, he could not have refuted it at all. But he resorted to deception, interpreting life and death with an allegorical meaning. “To give life” really means, for example, to create a living foetus; but it may be used equally correctly (but in metaphorical way) if you rescue someone from an extremely dangerous situation. Likewise, “to cause to die” really means the act of God by which a soul departs from a body; but metaphorically it may be used for murder, etc. Taking advantage of this metaphorical usage, Namrud ordered two prisoners to be brought before him; one he ordered to be killed and the other was set free. It was at this stage that he uttered the words, “I give life and cause death”. The courtiers were taken in by this ruse and accepted the “truth” of the argument. Ibrahim was not in a position to unmask the fallacy of this reply; he saw how Namrud has duped the audience with his deception and how blindly they agreed to his sophism. Nobody would have

agreed with Ibrahim even if he had tried to expose that fallacy. Therefore, he switched to another clearer argument which his obstinate opponent could not twist in any way, and said:

"So surely Allah brings the sun from the east; then bring it (you) from the west" (2:258).

Those people (or some of them) believed the sun to be a deity[1]. But they also believed that these sources of light and their various phases, rising, setting, etc., were ultimately in the hands of Allah, who, according to them, was Lord of Lords, God of gods. When a doer does an act by his own free will, he may just as easily reverse that action if he so changes his intention; the direction of his action follows his will. Therefore, when Ibrahim put this argument before Namrud, he was confounded. He could not say: "The rising of the sun from the east has been, since the very beginning, a matter of chance; it needs no cause", because commonsense demands a cause for an effect. Nor could he say: "This system is not caused or controlled by Allah", because he himself professed to believe in the Lord of Lords who controlled the sun, etc. And he could not say: "It is I who bring it from the east"; because Ibrahim had already closed this line of argument by saying, "then bring it (you) from the west". He was thus ignominiously humiliated and disgraced.

"And Allah does not guide aright the unjust people" (2:258).

Qur'an: Because Allah had given him the kingdom? (2:258).

The import of this sentence is like one's saying: "He mistreated me because I did good to him." The speaker wants to say: I did good to him; it was to be expected that he also would do good to me; instead, he misbehaved towards me. An Arabic proverb points to this very trait of human nature: "Be on guard against the evil of him to whom you did good." A poet says:

His sons rewarded Abu al-Ghaylan, for his old age

and good deeds, as was rewarded Sinimmar.[2]

In this sentence *L* (لِ = because) is deleted but understood. It puts a reason in place of its opposite. This style puts the accusation in a sharper perspective. The rebellion and transgression of Namrud would have been understandable if there had been any ungenerosity shown towards him by Allah. But Allah did nothing to him except good and He gave him the kingdom too. Therefore, this generosity was mentioned as the cause of his rebellion, to emphasize his ingratitude. In a way, it is like the verse:

"And Pharaoh's family took him (Musa) up, so that he might be an enemy and a grief for them" (28:8).

This is one reason why his getting the kingdom has been mentioned here. There is another reason too: to show that his claim was absurd *ab initio*. He claimed to be god because of the kingdom which was given to him by Allah; he did not own it himself. He had become Namrud, the king, the mighty and powerful, because, Allah had made him so. Strip him of this bounty of Allah and what was left of him?

Just a common man with no special quality or attribute. That is the reason why Allah did not mention him by name; he was described just as the one who disputed with Ibrahim about his Lord. This was done to show his insignificance and lowliness.

Why did Allah say that it was He who gave Namrud the kingdom? In previous discourses it has been shown that this cannot be objected to. The kingdom, like all other powers and authorities, is a bounty and grace of Allah; He gives it to whom He pleases and man has been give the knowledge of God in his nature, and because of that natural instinct he inclines towards Him. Now, if he made good use of that kingdom putting every thing in its place, it would be a bliss and blessing for him, as Allah says:

"And seek by means of what Allah has given you the future abode…" (***28:77***).

And if he transgressed the limits and deviated from the right path, it would become a curse and perdition for him, as Allah says:

"Did you not see those who changed Allah's favour for ungratefulness and made their people to alight into the abode of perdition?" (***14:28***).

It has already been explained that every thing is attributed to Allah, but in a way that is befitting to His majesty, glory and sanctity – from the view of the good points of that thing, and not from that of its bad points.

One commentator has erroneously thought that the pronoun, "him", in the phrase, "because Allah had given him the kingdom" refers to Ibrahim. According to him, it means that Namrud disputed with Ibrahim because Allah had given Ibrahim the kingdom; that it refers to the kingdom of Ibrahim mentioned in the Qur'an:

"Or do they envy the people for what Allah has given them of His grace? So indeed we have given to Ibrahim's children the Book and the wisdom, and We have given them a great kingdom" (***4:54***).

According to that commentator, the kingdom in the verse under discussion cannot refer to that of Namrud, because it was a kingdom of oppression and sin; it cannot be said that such a kingdom was given by Allah.

But this assumption is wrong because:

First: The Qur'an attributes such a kingdom and many similar things to Allah. For example, it quotes the believer from the family of Pharaoh as saying:

"O my people! Yours is the kingdom this day, being masters in the land…" (***40:29***).

And the words of Pharaoh himself are quoted (without any adverse comment):

"O my people! Is not the kingdom of Egypt mine?" (***43:51***).

And at the same time, it declares:

"…to Him (***i.e. Allah***) ***belongs the kingdom…"*** (***64:1***).

This verse confines the kingdom to Allah; there is no kingdom but of Him and from Him. The Qur'an quotes Musa ('a) as saying:

"Our Lord! Surely, Thou host given to Pharaoh and his chiefs finery and riches in this world's life…" (***10:88***).

and Allah says about Qarun:

"…and We had given him of the treasures, so much so that its keys would certainly weigh down a company of men possessed of strength…" (***28:76***).

And He says addressing his Prophet:

"Leave Me and him whom I created alone" (***74:11***).

"And I gave him vast riches…" (***74:12***).

There are many similar references.

Second: Such an interpretation does not fit the obvious meaning of the verse. The verse shows that Namrud was disputing with Ibrahim about the latter's belief and monotheism, not that he had any argument with him about his kingdom. The kingdom was already in Namrud's hands and Ibrahim had no worldly kingdom for which Namrud could have disputed with him.

Third: Everything is attributed to Allah, as explained earlier, and kingdom is no exception. There is no snag in attributing it to Allah.

Qur'an: When Ibrahim said: "My Lord is He Who gives life and cause to die" (***2:258***).

Life and death are found even in vegetation; but Ibrahim ('a), in this argument, meant the life and death found in animals and human beings, or he kept in view their general meaning which included human life and death. The evidence for this meaning may be seen in the reply of Namrud: "I give life and cause death". Obviously Namrud, by this claim, did not mean the giving of life to vegetables (through tilling and farming), or animals (by breeding them and bringing the male and female together). This type of life giving was not special to him; any human being could do it. The traditions also support our interpretation: he had two prisoners brought before him, he freed one and killed the other, and then he said: "I give life and cause death".

Ibrahim (‘a) selected for his proof the authority of giving life and causing death, because nature, having no life or sense itself, cannot give life to any thing; and more evidently, it cannot be supposed to give life to animals and humans as it is accompanied by sense and perception. And the same is the case with death. Such a clear and indisputable proof failed to convince the people of Namrud. Their intellectual degradation and mental confusion had sunken far lower than the level which Ibrahim (‘a) had credited them with. They thought that the life and death referred to include the metaphorical meaning of freeing from prison and killing. Thus, Namrud claimed, and they vouched that he gave life and caused death.

This talk shows how low the level of intellectual development was in that time, as far as abstract and non-material ideas were concerned. Do not be misled by their advanced civilization, signs of which are found in the archaeological remains of the Babylonia of the Chaldeans and the Egypt of the Pharaohs. Material advancement is one thing, and progress in abstract and non-material ideas is something else. We see the same phenomenon in this world of ours which has made a fantastic advancement in the material field, and has sunk so terribly low in morality, ethics and spiritual knowledge.

Ibrahim (‘a) did not put before them the argument that the whole universe needed an Omnipotent, Omniscient Originator of the heavens and the earth. He had used this method in his early days; and Allah quotes him as finally saying:

“Surely I have turned my face, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am not of the polytheists” (***6:79***).

No doubt, those people, forced by natural instinct, believed vaguely in a Supreme Creator. But their intellectual capacity was too limited to let them clearly and truly understand about that Creator. Had Ibrahim (‘a) put this argument before them, they could not have appreciated it at all. Look, at what they understood from his argument:

“My Lord is He Who gives life and cause to die!” (***2:258***).

Qur’an: he said: “I give life and cause death” (***2:258***).

Therefore, I am that Lord of yours who, you say, gives life and causes death.

Qur’an: Ibrahim said: “So surely Allah brings the sun from the east, then bring it (***you***) ***from the west”; thus, he who disbelieved was confounded*** (***2:258***).

When Ibrahim (‘a) saw that his argument based on giving life and death had been twisted by his opponent, and that the public had been misled by that deception, he thought it would be useless to clarify what he meant by giving life and causing death. Instead, he switched to another argument. Even then, he based this second argument on his opponent’s claim in the first argument. That is why he began the second argument with “So”; it shows a connection with the preceding sentence, and its import is as follows: If what you say is correct, and you are my Lord, and the Lord, as we both accept, manages

and looks after this universe, then Allah manages the sun by bringing it from the east; so show your authority by bringing from the west. It will clearly prove that you are the Lord, as Allah is the Lord of everything, or that you are Lord of Lords. Thus, the disbeliever was confounded.

Ibrahim (‘a) offered his second argument as an offshoot of Namrud’s claim, to remove the chance of someone thinking that Namrud’s argument was complete, perfect and irrefutable. And he changed the word “my Lord” (used in the first argument) to “Allah” (in this argument) because the opponent had misused that adjective and claimed that it referred to him. To remove the chance of that type of sophistry, Ibrahim (‘a) used the proper name, “Allah”.

It has been described earlier that it was not possible for Namrud to reply to this argument in any way, and, as a result, he was confounded and remained silent.

***Qur’an: And Allah does not guide aright the unjust people* (*2:258*).**

Apparently, it gives the reason for Namrud’ being confounded, not for his disbelief. Allah did not guide him, and, therefore, he was humiliated; had Allah guided him aright, he would have been able to reply to Ibrahim. It does not say that Allah did not guide him and therefore he became an unbeliever. Obviously, the talk centres around his dispute and argument, and is not about his belief.

The word “unjust people” hints at the cause of not being guided. Allah does not guide them because they are unjust. The same point has been kept in view wherever such sentences have been revealed. Allah says:

***“And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah while he is invited to Islam? And Allah does not guide the unjust people”* (*61:7*).**

***“The similitude of those who were placed under the Torah, then they did not hold it, is as the similitude of the donkey bearing books; evil is the similitude of the people who belie the signs of Allah; and Allah does not guide the unjust people”* (*62:5*).**

“Transgression” is likewise the cause of not being guided, as Allah says:

***“But when they turned aside; Allah made their hearts turn aside; and Allah does not guide the transgressing people”* (*61:5*).**

In short, injustice is to turn aside from the path of justice, and to leave aside what should be done, and to do what should not be done. It diverts man from his intended goal and leads him to disappointment and failure in the life hereafter. This fact is made abundantly clear in many verses of the Qur’an, which puts much emphasis on it.

Good And Evil Deeds, Vis-A-Vis Guidance And Misguidance

Good deeds cause guidance and evil deeds make one go astray. It is a universal rule to which there is no exception. The Qur'an describes it in different words, and has based on it many of its realities. Allah says:

Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (***to its goal***) (***20:50***).

It means that everything, after its creation is completed, is guided by Allah to the goals of its creation and to its perfection. For this purpose, it has been bound to other things, and takes their advantage through action and reaction, uniting and separating, associating and dissociating, advancing and retreating, taking and leaving and so on and so forth. No mistake occurs in the effect of the system of creation, and it never misses its targets. For example, when a fire licks dry wood, it does not want to cool it; and when a tree grows it does not intend to make itself smaller. The Qur'an says:

"…surely my Lord is on the straight path" (***11:56***).

Thus, in the world of creation the effect never fails to follow the cause, and there is no discord in it.

The above paragraph gives us two axioms: creative guidance is general and the fact that no mistake ever occurs in creative matters. These two realities are the basis of the system of cause and effect. There is a way, or ways, between a thing and its intended goal, and only through those specific ways it can reach there. A seed grows into a tree only if it passes along its own particular path, complying with all its conditions and means. And a fruit tree grows only its own particular fruit, not something else. In short, each cause creates its own particular effect, and each effect follows its own particular cause. Allah says:

"And as for the good land, its vegetation springs forth (***abundantly***) ***by the permission of its Lord, and*** (***as for***) ***that which is bad*** (***its herbage***) ***comes forth but scantily"*** (***7:58***).

Reason and experience vouch for it; otherwise, the law of cause and effect would go awry.

Creation guides everything to a particular goal; and that goal can be reached through that particular way. It is the system created by Allah who has perfected everything. Every link in this chain of causes leads to a particular end; and if a single link is changed, the effect will invariably change. This much about creation.

The same rule applies to other fields like social affairs. Society too is the result of creative factors and follows the laws of "creation". Social affairs and the activities of society are connected with their own effects: those activities can result only in those particular effects, and those effects can be produced only by those particular activities. Good upbringing can be accomplished only by a "good" tutor; if a "bad" tutor brings up a child, even if he shows himself to be a good man and actually sticks to good and proper

methods in his bringing–up the hidden evil will unfailingly pollute the mind of the child, and it will produce an undesirable and evil result. A hundred veils and a thousand curtains cannot prevent the tutor's spiritual evil effecting the character of the pupil.

When someone unlawfully takes hold of a country, or when an incompetent judge sits and delivers judgements on public disputes, or when someone takes upon himself, without the sanction of the *Shari'ah*, to discharge a social responsibility, its evil effects most certainly manifest themselves in society. Let a wrong disguise itself as right, or an evil masquerade as good, or a lie take the place of truth, or dishonesty appear as honesty, or deception camouflage itself in sincerity – all these disguises may fool the onlookers for a period, but ultimately all the protective coverings must come off, revealing the ugly reality underneath. It is the system created by Allah in His creatures, and:

"You shall not find any alteration in the system of Allah, and you shall not find any change in the system of Allah" (***35:43***).

The truth does not die, nor does its effect fade, even if, for a short time, it is not perceived by lookers on. And a lie can never stand on its feet, nor can its effect be sustained – even if at times it causes confusion. Allah says:

"So that He may manifest the truth of what was true and show the falsehood of what was false…" (***8:8***).

Allah shows the truth of what is true by stabilizing its effect; and manifests the falsehood of what is false by exposing its corruption and depravity and unmasking its reality. He says:

"Have you not seen how Allah sets forth a parable of a good word (***being***) ***like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and whose branches are in heaven"*** (***14:24***).

"Yielding its fruits on every moment by the permission of its Lord? And Allah sets forth parables for men that they may reflect" (***14:25***).

"And the parable of an evil word is as an evil tree pulled up from the earth's surface, it has no stability" (***14:26***).

"Allah confirms those who believe with the sure word in this world's life and in the hereafter, and Allah lets the unjust go astray, and Allah does what He pleases" (***14:27***).

Thus, Allah lets the unjust people go astray in their affairs. And what is their affair? It is that they want their evil ways to lead to good results. As Allah quotes Yusuf ('a) as saying:

"I seek Allah's refuge! Surely my Lord made good my abode: Surely the unjust do not prosper" (***12:23***).

An unjust person cannot prosper in his injustice, nor can his injustice lead him to where a virtuous man is led by his virtue and a pious one by his piety. Allah says:

"And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them unto Our ways; and Allah is most surely with the doers of good" (29:69).

And He says:

"...and the (good) end is for piety" (20:132).

The Qur'anic verses with this meaning are very numerous; but the most complete and most comprehensive is the following:

"He sends down water from the heavens, then the valleys flow according to their measure, and the torrent bears along the swelling foam; and from what they melt in the fire for the sake of (making) ornaments or apparatus arises a scum like it, thus does Allah compare truth and falsehood; then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits the people, it remains in the earth, thus does Allah set forth parables" (13:17).

As mentioned earlier, reason also confirms this truth. The universal system of cause and effect demands it and human experience testifies that it is so. Every man knows one or another episode which shows that the end of unjust people is always bad, and that their endeavours never succeed.

Verse 259

Qur'an: Or like him who passed by a town, and it had fallen down upon its roofs (2:259).

"al-Khawiyah" (الخَاوِيَة) means empty. The Arabs say *khawati 'd-dar* (خَوَتِ الدَّار) to indicate that "the house became empty". *"al-'Urush"* (العُرُوْش) is the plural of *al-'arsh* (العَرْش = trellis); it is a roof-like structure standing on poles or pillars used as support for climbing plants, like vines. Allah says:

"***Garden trellised and un-trellised" (6:141).***

This word is also used for *as-saqf* (السَّقْف = roof). But there is a difference *as-saqf* is only a roof or house-top which is laid on the walls: *al-'arsh* is the top together with its poles or pillars. Because of this difference, it is idiomatic to say for a ruined village that, *"hiya khawiyatun 'ala 'urushiha"* (هِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلي عُرُوْشِهَا) which literally means, "it is empty on its trellis"; but it would be wrong to say: "empty on its roof".

Many explanations have been given by the commentators for the conjunctive "Or" in "Or like him who..." It is said that:

1) It is in conjunction with "him (he) who disputed with Ibrahim", in the previous verse; and *"K"* (ك = like) is in place of *mithl* (مِثْل = like). The meaning accordingly is, "Or have you seen like him who passed..."

This commentator thinks that the word “like” in this context indicates that it is a separate proof.

2) The word “like” is extra. The meaning, accordingly, will be “Did you not see him who disputed with Ibrahim...or him who passed...”

3) The conjunction is of meaning, and not of words. The meaning is, “Have you seen like him who disputed...or like him who passed...”

4) It is the continuation of the argument of Ibrahim in reply to his opponent’s claim. According to this interpretation, Ibrahim told Namrud that if he claimed to give life then he should give life like him who passed by a town...

But you will notice that none of the above explanations is satisfactory.

The author believes that the conjunction is of meaning, as claimed in the third explanation, but not in the way described there. Allah had earlier said:

“Allah is the Guardian of those who believe; He brings them out of darkness into the light; and (as to) those who disbelieve, their guardians are rebels; they take them out of the light into the darkness”. (2:257).

It had shown that Allah guides the believers to the truth, and that He does not guide the disbelievers; instead, they are misled by the guardians whom they have taken for themselves. Now Allah gives three examples, showing three consecutive methods of His guidance. Guidance is of three types, or, let us say, three stages:

First: Guidance through reasoning and argument, as is seen in the story of Namrud who disputed with Ibrahim about his Lord. Allah guided Ibrahim to the truth, and his opponent was misguided by his disbelief. In this story the guidance of Ibrahim is not mentioned clearly; rather more attention is given to his opponent’s affairs, and it has thrown light on a new fact: “Allah does not guide aright the unjust people”.

Second: Guidance through demonstration, as is seen in the story of him who passed by a town which had fallen down upon its roofs. In it, what had seemed difficult to him (i.e. “how Allah would make a thing alive after its death?”) was shown to him actually happening. He was given death and then made alive. In this way he was guided to the truth through demonstration.

Third: Guidance by demonstrating the fact and simultaneously unveiling its cause. It is the most effective method and the highest stage of guidance. This method was used in the third story, in which Ibrahim, by permission of Allah, made the four birds alive.

Let us suppose that a man has not seen cheese, and has some doubt about it. His doubts may be removed if someone who has seen it and tasted it testifies before him about it. The second and more

effective method is to show him a piece of cheese and make him taste it. The third and the most effective way of removing the doubt would be to put a pot of milk before him and make cheese from it before his eyes and then let him taste it.

The three verses describe these three consecutive stages. Each one begins in a different style:

"Did you not see him who…" (***2:258***)

"Or like him who passed by a town…" (***2:259***).

"And (***remember***) ***when Ibrahim said…"*** (***2:260***).

Each of these styles could have been used to describe the three events. It could have been said: Allah guides the believers to the truth; have you not looked at the story of Ibrahim and Namrud, or at the story of him who passed by a town, or at the story of Ibrahim and the birds. Alternatively, it could have been said: Allah guides the believers to the truth; either as He guided Ibrahim in his dispute with Namrud (and it was one way of guidance), or as He guided him who passed by a town (and it was another way of guidance), or as He did in the event of Ibrahim and the birds (and it was the third way of guidance.

Thirdly it could have been said: Allah guides the believers to the truth; remember the episodes which prove it – remember the story of the dispute, and remember him who passed by a town, and remember when Ibrahim said:

"My Lord! show me how Thou givest life to the dead" (***2:260***).

But Allah used a different style for each verse, as it is more refreshing for the mind, and excites a new interest in each episode.

Now we may revert to the original topic, how this verse is in conjunction with the preceding one. The conjunctive "or" in "or like him" joins this sentence with a deleted but understood word in the preceding verse. The reconstructed sentences would be like this: Either like him who disputed with Ibrahim… or like him who passed by a town. Likewise, the conjunctive "and" in the next verse joins it with deleted but understood words in the preceding two verses. The sentences then would be like this: Remember the story of dispute …and remember him who passed by a town …and remember when Ibrahim said …

Allah has not disclosed the identity of him who passed by. Nor has the name of the town or the people who used to live in it been mentioned. Nor have those been identified for whom the said passer-by was made a sign. It would appear that their identities should have been disclosed as it would have removed many doubts. But a far more important consideration made it necessary to keep all these details vague.

The sign shown, that is, giving life to the dead, was a very compelling and overwhelming one, as was the guidance resulting from it; also, the passer-by had used words which reflected his thought that it was not an easy task. Therefore, the norms of eloquence demanded that it be described as a very

insignificant affair, so that the said passer-by as well as the audience of the Qur'an would not be over-awed by it; and so that they could appreciate that it was not a big task as far as the power of Allah was concerned.

Have you not seen that great people talk about great affairs and about their great officers and nobles in a very ordinary manner; they want to emphasize that such affairs or such people have no greatness for the speakers. The same principle has been applied here: bare facts have been mentioned, but all details as to who, where and when have been omitted; it is to show that this affair was not an important one in the eyes of Allah. It was for the same reason that the name of the opponent of Ibrahim (in the first story) was omitted, and the names of the birds and the hills, and the number of pieces the birds were cut into, and so on, in the third story.

Only the name of Ibrahim ('a) has been mentioned in the two stories. The Qur'an accords him a special honour and distinction. For example:

"And this was Our argument which We gave to Ibrahim against his people; We exalt in dignity whom We please…" (***6:83***).

"And thus did We show Ibrahim the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that he might be of those who are sure" (***6:75***).

The same special consideration prompted mentioning his name in the two stories.

The point mentioned above also explains why Allah mentions the matters of giving life and causing death, in most places, as a very unimportant and insignificant thing; as He says:

"And He it is Who originates the creation, then returns it, and it is most easy to Him; and His are the most exalted attributes in the heavens and in the earth, and He is the Mighty, the Wise" (***30:27***).

"He said: "O my Lord! how shall I have a son, and my wife is barren, and I myself have reached indeed the extreme degree of old age?" (***19:8***).

"He said: "So shall it be; your Lord says: It is easy to Me, and indeed I created you before, when you were nothing" (***19:9***).

Qur'an: He said: "How will Allah give it life after its death?" (***2:259***).

"It" refers to the "town"; but it metaphorically means "people of the town". It is like the words of the Qur'an:

"And ask the town in which we were…" (***12:82***).

That is, "the people of the town".

He uttered these words because he felt that it was a very great thing and that it manifested the power of Allah as few other things did; not that he thought life-after-death improbable. That is why he said at the end of the episode,

"I know that Allah has power over all things" (***2:259***).

He did not say, 'Now I know', as the wife of the chief of Egypt had said:

"Now has the truth become established..." (***12:51***).

Further details will be given later.

Furthermore, the passer-by was a prophet to whom Allah had spoken, and was a sign sent to the people; and the prophets are sinless. They can never entertain any doubt or suspicion about Resurrection, which is one of the pillars of the religion.

Qur'an: So Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him to life (***2:259***).

The clear meaning is that he was given death by the taking out of his soul, remained dead for a hundred years, then was made alive by the returning of his soul to him.

One commentator has given a strange explanation of this verse. He says: The "death" mentioned in this verse means a coma, that is, a prolonged loss of consciousness in which the subject remains barely alive but has no sense or feeling. It may continue for days, months and even years, as is evident from the story of the Fellows of the Cave and their sleep in the cave which lasted for three hundred and nine years; then they were awakened. Allah has used that sleep and re-awakening as a proof of Resurrection. Therefore, this story too is like that one.

The said commentator goes on to say: The known duration of coma does not exceed a few years. A coma lasting for a hundred years is an unusual occurrence, but He who puts a man in a coma for a few years also has the power to keep him in that condition for a hundred years; and when it comes to accept what is clearly mentioned in the Qur'an, we believe that we should only see whether it is possible or impossible; and if it is possible, we must accept it. Allah has offered this episode of keeping him in a coma for a hundred years and then returning his senses and feelings to him after such a long period as a proof that life can be returned to the dead after a gap of thousands of years.

This was his explanation. Let us suppose for the time being that the Fellows of the Cave were kept in a coma - the word used for them in the Qur'an is "asleep", not comatose. But how could their supposed coma infect this passer-by? The Qur'an clearly says:

"Allah caused him to die" (***2:259***).

Death means loss of life; and not coma. A commentator has no right to invent a meaning for a word. He

has used analogy where no one has allowed it, and that is in the matter of finding the meaning of a word. And if Allah could keep that passer-by comatose for a hundred years when it is not an usual occurrence, why could not He keep him dead for a hundred years and then resurrect him? One unusual occurrence is like another, according to the said commentator. So why invent one meaning and reject the other which incidentally is the real meaning? The trouble with him is that, for his own reasons, he thinks that the resurrection of the dead in this world is impossible - without giving any reason to support his belief. That is why he has misinterpreted the next sentences,

"And look at the bones, how We assemble them together, then clothe them with flesh" (***2:259***).

We shall comment upon it afterwards.

In short, the meaning of the words:

"Allah caused him to die…then raised him to life" (***2:259***).

Is quite clear, and no doubt can be entertained about it, especially when we look at the preceding and following sentences:

"How will Allah give it life after its death?" (***2:259***).

"…Look at your food and drink - years have not passed over it" (***2:259***).

"And look at your donkey" (***2:259***).

"And look at the bones" (***2:259***).

Qur'an: He said: "How long have you tarried?" He said: "I have tarried a day or a part of a day". Said He: "Nay! You have tarried a hundred years" (***2:259***).

"al-Labth" (**اللَّبْث**) is to tarry, to stay, to abide. The uncertainty in the reply, "a day or a part of a day", shows that the time of day of his resurrection was different from that of his death - for example, the forenoon and afternoon. He thought that he had slept and was now woken, then he looked at the difference in the time, and was uncertain whether a night has passed while he was still asleep. Therefore, he said: "a day" (if a night has passed), "or a part of a day" (if he had woken up the same day). Allah said:

"Nay! you have tarried a hundred years" (***2:259***).

Qur'an: "Then look at your food and drink - years have not passed over it; and look at your donkey; and that We may make you a sign to men; and look at the bones, how We assemble them together, then clothe them with flesh" (***2:259***).

There are many apparently puzzling things in these sentences: The word, "look", has been repeated

three times, when, at a first glance, only one would have been enough; there is mention of food, drink and a donkey, when apparently there was no need for it; and the sentence,

"And that We may make you a sign to men" (***2:259***).

Has been written in between, when seemingly it would have been more appropriate after the next sentence about assembling the bones and clothing them with flesh. Moreover, what he had wondered about, the resurrection of bodies after a long gap, after undergoing all types of deterioration, had been clearly demonstrated by his own resurrection; then what was the need to tell him to look at the bones? But if we ponder deeply on the various implications of this verse, all these doubts will be removed. Let us look at the story, which is as follows:

The verse makes it clear that the passer-by was a virtuous servant of Allah, who was well aware of divine power and majesty, and followed His commandments. Not only this, he was a prophet whom Allah had spoken to. The clear implication of his words:

"I know that Allah has power over all things" (***2:259***).

Is that he was fully aware of the power of Allah even before this episode. And the style of the sentences, "then raised him to life. He said: 'How long have you tarried?'" implies that he was well accustomed to being spoken to by Allah, and that it was not the first revelation. Otherwise, the sentence should have been somewhat like this: '***then when He raised him to life, He said…' See how the first divine talk with Musa has been mentioned:***

So when he came to it, a voice called: O Musa" (***20:11***).

"And when he came to it a voice called from the right side…" (***28:30***).

He had departed from his home for a place which was at some distance from his town. This is inferred from the facts that he rode on his donkey, and took food and drink for his provisions. On the way, he passed by a town which had fallen "on its roofs". It was not his intended destination; but as he passed by it, he stood there, seeing in it a warning lesson for mankind, a town turned into ruins, whose inhabitants had perished, overtaken by death all together, whose rotten bones were scattered everywhere in full view of the passers-by. He pointed to the dead and said: "How will Allah give it life after its death?" He did not mean "How will this town be populated again?" Otherwise, he would have used the word *"yu'ammir"* (**يُعَمِّر** = will make populated), and not *"yuhyi"* (**يُحْيِي** = will make alive) which he did use. Moreover, a ruined town may become inhabited again, and there is nothing extraordinary in this development to cause wonder and awe. How do we know that the bodies and bones were in full view of the passers-by? Because if they had been buried and he had stood looking at their graves, Allah would have clearly mentioned the graves, instead of the town.

Anyhow, he stood taking lessons from the scene before his eyes. He was over-awed by it and thought

about the length of time involved, and the continuing deterioration of the parts of the body until it turns into dust. At this stage, he said: “How will Allah give it life after its death?” This question was based on two factors: The length of time, (How will Allah give it life after such a long gap since its death?) and the deterioration of the body (How will it be resurrected when all its parts and limbs have been scattered and untold number of changes have come over it?) Therefore, Allah explained both questions together. The first question was answered by giving him death and resurrecting him after a hundred years. The second question was answered by giving life to the bones of his donkey under his own eyes.

Thus, Allah gave him death and then raised him from the dead. The two things happened at different times of the day, as has been explained above. Allah asked him:

“How long have you tarried?” He replied: “I have tarried a day or a part of a day” (***2:259***).

Obviously, he was given death in the early part of the day, and resurrected in the afternoon. Had it been the other way round, he would have said, “a day” without any hesitation. Allah pointed out to him:

“Nay! you have tarried a hundred years” (***2:259***).

Thus, he realized that he had thought a hundred years like a day or a part of a day. This was the reply to his question about the length of time.

Then Allah gave him the proof of his remaining dead for a hundred years by saying,

“Then look at your food and drink – years have not passed over it; and look at your donkey” (***2:259***).

As he had not realized that he had died and had been brought to life after such a long time, the information that he had tarried a hundred years was liable to be doubted (not necessarily by him), because his body had not changed at all; and if a man dies and a hundred years pass over him, his body usually undergoes innumerable changes until the bones rot and turn into dust. To remove this possible doubt, Allah ordered him to look at his food and drink which had not changed a bit all this time; and to look at his donkey whose bones had rotted. The condition of the donkey would indicate the length of time and the condition of the food and the drink would show him the possibility of remaining in one condition for such a long period without undergoing any change.

It shows that the donkey had also been given death and had become rotten. But the Qur’an, in its unsurpassed good style, did not like to mention the donkey’s death when it had said that the prophet had been caused to die.

In this way Allah made him realize that his amazement, which was based on the length of time, was not appropriate. He himself admitted that a hundred years were to him like a day or a part of a day. It was the same feeling which the resurrected will show on the Day of Resurrection. Thus, he became aware that the time passed between death and resurrection, whether short or long, has no effect whatsoever

on the power of Allah Who rules over everything. His power is no subservient to time and space. Changes, whether big or small, which occur in a body make no difference to His power. Giving life to old dead bodies is as easy to Him as resurrecting new ones. Old and new, far and near, are all equal to Him. As He says:

"Surely they think it to be far off" (***70:6***).

"And We see it nigh" (***70:7***).

"…The matter of the Hour is but as the twinkling of an eye or it is still nearer…" (***16:77***).

"And that We make you a sign to men": (***2:259***)

The conjunction "and" signifies that there was some other purpose also. It means: We did what We did so that We may explain to you certain things and so that We may make you a sign to men. Thus, there were two aims: the purpose of showing him how Allah assembled the bones and clothed them with flesh was to show him how He gives life to the dead; and the purpose of causing him to die and to make him alive again was to demonstrate that fact to him and to make him a sign for other men. That is why the sentence,

"And that We make you a sign to men" (***2:259***).

Was written before the mention of the bones and their being clothed by flesh.

The above discourse also shows why the word "look" has been repeated thrice in this verse. Each order has a special purpose which is not shared by the other two.

Allah gave him death and then made him alive. In this way, he himself experienced what most people will feel on the Day or Resurrection; as Allah says:

"And at the time when the Hour shall come, the guilty shall swear (***that***) ***they did not tarry but an hour; thus, they used to utter lies"*** (***30:55***).

"And those who are given knowledge and faith will say: Certainly, you tarried according to the decree of Allah till the Day of Resurrection; so, this is, the Day of Resurrection, but you did not know" (***30:56***).

Then Allah explained to him the second aspect of his question: How will the parts and components of the body return to their original shape, after all those innumerable changes? So, Allah told him to "look at the bones, how We assemble them together, then clothe them with flesh". Obviously, it refers to the bones of the donkey, and not to those of the dead people of the town. Otherwise, not he alone, but all the resurrected people of the town would have become "signs" of Allah to the mankind.

The commentator whose misinterpretation of "death" and "life" we have commented upon earlier

explains away this sentence in a strange way as well. He says that the “bones” refer to the bones in a living body; the fact that they grow and are clothed with flesh is a proof of resurrection. The Creator Who gave it life and growth is surely the Resurrector of the dead; surely, He has power over everything. Allah has argued for resurrection in a like manner by referring to the dead earth which is made alive again with vegetation.

Such an interpretation is obviously absurd.

The explanation which we have given above show that the whole story beginning from: “So Allah caused him to die” up to the end of the verse is one single reply to the prophet’s question, “How will Allah give it life after its death?” There is no repetition in it at all.

Qur’an: So when it became clear to him, he said: “I know that Allah has power over all things” (***2:259***).

He returns, after the demonstration, to the knowledge which he already had before that. It seems that when the question as to how Allah could make it alive came into his mind, he satisfied his curiosity by remembering the all-encompassing power of Allah. Then Allah made the matter clear to him by demonstrating how He gives life to the dead. After this reassurance, he clearly knew the truth of his previous knowledge, and spoke to Allah in these words, the import of which is as follows: Thou hast always guided me aright; and what I had always known about Thy Omnipotence was not to be doubted; it was the truth which I should always rely upon.

One may find examples of such reassurance everywhere. Many are the times when a man has definite knowledge of a subject, then some thought occurs in his mind which goes against that, not because of any doubt or ignorance, but because of some other factors. Thereupon he satisfies himself about the previous certainty, till the doubt is removed. Then, he returns to his previous knowledge and says: ‘I know that it is so’. In this way his knowledge is confirmed and his perplexity is removed.

In short, the sentence, “I know that Allah has power over all things”, does not mean that before it became clear to him, he was in some doubt about the power of Allah. Such an interpretation would be wrong, because:

First: He was a prophet, who was spoken to by Allah. And the prophets cannot be ignorant of Allah’s person and attributes; and especially of His Omnipotence which is an attribute of person.

Second: Had he been ignorant of Allah’s power, he would have said, “Now I know…” or “Now I knew…” But he said: “I know”, that is, from before.

Third: What he had seen was a proof that Allah had power to give life to the dead. It did not prove that He had power “over all things”. But he said that he knew that Allah had power over all things. It shows that this knowledge was not based on that demonstration.

Of course, it is possible that a man of lesser strength of character would be stunned and bewildered by such a manifestation of divine power, and would declare, forgetting all other things, that He Who gives life to the dead has power over all things. But it would be just a conjecture, based on fear and awe; it would be wiped out as soon as that fear or awe was removed. Moreover, it would not be acceptable to him who has not experienced that fear or awe. In any case, such an illogical conclusion cannot be relied upon. But we see in this verse that Allah confirms his declaration by putting it under His seal of approval. It naturally, follows that this knowledge had not come to him as a result of that manifestation.

In other words, if he had acquired that knowledge through that manifestation, then all he would have known was that Allah had the power to give life to the dead. He should therefore not have said that Allah had the power over all things. Such talk would be wrong in fact and would be beneath the dignity of a prophet.

Verse 260

Qur'an: And (remember) when Ibrahim said: "My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead" (2:260).

It has been explained earlier that the conjunctive "and" is related to a deleted (but understood) word, "remember"; and that that deleted word governs the adverb "when". Someone has said that the word "when" is governed by "What! and do you not believe?" But this is patently wrong.

The plea of Ibrahim,

"My Lord! show me how Thou givest life to the dead" (2:260).

Proves:

First: that he asked for demonstration, not for logical reasoning. The prophets (and especially a prophet like Ibrahim, the friend of Allah) are too great to believe in resurrection on the Day of Judgement without any logical reason. A belief without reason is either blind following, or also is based on defective intellection. And neither of these two can be attributed to Ibrahim ('a). Moreover, he used the word "how" which is used to ask about the state and condition of a thing, not about the thing itself. When you say: "Have you seen Zayd?", the question is about the seeing itself. But if you say: "How did you see Zayd?", the seeing is already known and accepted; the question is only about the condition of it and its particulars. When Ibrahim ('a) asked, "how Thou givest life to the dead", he already knew by logic and reason that Allah gives life to the dead; now he only wanted to see how it was done.

Second: that the question asked by Ibrahim ('a) could mean either of the two following things:

1) How could the material parts of a dead man come together after being scattered hither and thither, and how could they accept life and become alive? In other words, how could they be governed by the

power of Allah?

2) How does Allah bestow life on the dead. The first question is concerned with the effect and the result; the second one with the reason and the cause. This second aspect is in a way the kingdom, which Allah mentions in the Qur'an:

"His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it, "Be", and it is" (***36:82***).

"Therefore, glory be to Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of all things, and to Him you shall be brought back" (***36:83***).

Which of the two questions did Ibrahim ('a) ask? He asked the second one, and not the first, because:

a) he asked "how Thou givest life". He wanted to see the action of Allah. The effect of the action on the dead was not his primary concern; otherwise, he would have asked "how the dead become alive";

b) if he only wanted to see how dead bodies respond to life, Allah could have given life to any dead animal before the eyes of Ibrahim ('a), and there would have been no need to make it happen in Ibrahim's hands;

c) if he wanted to see how a dead body comes to life, then the story should have been ended on something like, "Know that Allah has the power over all things", and not on the words actually used, "Know that Allah is Mighty, Wise." The Qur'an always uses the appropriate adjectives at the end of verses. The first meaning of the question concerns the power of Allah and if that was the purpose of Ibrahim ('a) in asking, the attribute of power should have been mentioned at the end. But Allah used the attributes of Might and Wisdom which are more appropriate for bestowing of life, rather than for the acceptance of life by matter.

A commentator has interpreted this verse in a strange way, which is given hereunder. (Our comments on this interpretation will be given afterwards.) He says:

When Ibrahim ('a) said: "My Lord! Show me ...", he only wanted to "know" how the dead were given life; he did not want to "see" how it was done. And the reply does not go beyond that information. The said commentator further says: There is nothing in this verse to show that Allah ordered him to give life to the birds. Nor that Ibrahim ('a) did as he was ordered. Not every order is intended to be complied with. Information is often given in the imperative mood. Suppose that someone asks you how ink is made. You tell him: "Take this and that material and then mix it in this way, and your ink shall be ready." You want to explain to him how ink is made; not that you are ordering him to make ink then and there, even though you use the imperative mood.

He further says: There are many verses in the Qur'an in which information has been given in the form of an order. This particular verse gives just a similitude for the resurrection of the dead. It tells Ibrahim: Take four birds, make them tame and train them so that they obey your call. (The birds are the fittest of

all animals for such training.) Then put each bird on a mountain and then call them. See how swiftly they come to you, their separation and their distance from you shall not prevent them from coming to you, flying. The same is the similitude of the decree of your Lord. When He intends to give life to the dead, He calls them with the word of creation, "Be alive", and they at once become alive. It is the same as was in the beginning of creation. He said to the heaven and to the earth, "Come both willingly or unwillingly"; they both said, "We come willingly".

The said commentator has given two "proofs" for his interpretation:

First: The word of Allah, *"fa-surhunna"* (فَصُرْهُن) according to him means "make them inclined". That is, tame them and make them affable towards yourself. It is because of this meaning that it is followed by the preposition *"ila"* (إِلي = to). The verb *sara* (صَار) when followed by *ila* gives the meaning of inclination.

He says that it is wrong to say (as commentators have done) that *fa-surhunna* means, "then cut them into pieces after killing them." This interpretation is not in conformity with the preposition mentioned above.

He further says: Some commentators have said that the preposition is related to the word *"fa-khudh"* (فَخُذ = then take), and the verse in effect says, "then take to you four of the birds, then cut them into pieces". But such an interpretation is against the clear sequence of the words.

Second: Apparently, the pronouns in the words *fa surhunna* (make them inclined), *"minhunna"* (مِنْهُن = a part of them), *"ud'uhunna"* (أُدْعُهُن = call them) and *"ya'tinaka"* (يَأْتِيْنَك = they will come to you), all refer to the "birds". If we accept the interpretation of the commentators that Ibrahim ('a) was told to cut the birds into pieces and that after mixing their parts, he was to put portions of them on mountains, and after that he was to call them, then the pronouns would differ in their meanings: the first two would refer to the birds, and the third and fourth to the pieces of the birds. And such a thing is against the apparent meaning of the Qur'an.

The said commentator wrote the above-mentioned two arguments. Another commentator, who agrees with him, has added three more "proofs", which we append below:

Third: What is the meaning of "showing how a thing is created?" Does it mean demonstrating how the scattered parts and components are joined and assembled and how they change back to their original living shape? If yes, then it could not be shown by cutting the birds into pieces, mixing them together and putting small portions on far away hills. How could Ibrahim ('a) see from such a distance what changes and movements were occurring in the smallest atoms of the pieces? Or, does it mean showing him how Allah gives life to the dead? In other words, does it mean comprehending the reality of the creative decree? But the creative decree is the divine will which brings things into being; and the Qur'an openly says, and Muslims agree, that it is impossible for a human being to comprehend the creative decree of Allah; the attributes of Allah cannot be subjected to "how".

Fourth: The words of the ***Qur'an***

"Then place on every mountain …" (***2:260***).

Point to some delay, and it is in conformity with the idea of taming and training. The same is the import of the words *fa surhunna* which should be translated, "then make them inclined". The idea of killing the birds and cutting them into pieces does not conform with the "delay" implied in *"thumma"* (ثُمَّ = then).

Fifth: If the events occurred as most of the commentators say, then the verse should have ended on the divine name "Powerful" and not on "Mighty, Wise"; because "Mighty" is the one who cannot be comprehended.

The author's comments: The above was the interpretation of this group. But if you ponder on the explanation given by us earlier, you will realize that none of their arguments are valid. The plea of Ibrahim ('a) begins with the word, "show me"; then come the words, "how Thou givest life..."; and the verse goes on describing how this "giving life" was performed in the hands of Ibrahim ('a) himself. Add to it the words, "then place on every mountain a part of them"; clearly "a part" refers to a part of the bird, not a complete and alive bird. All this clearly negates the interpretation offered by these people.

Now let us look at their arguments.

Reply to the first argument: *fa surhunn* definitely means, "then cut them into pieces". The preposition *ila* (to) is used here to imply inclination. This implication of it was described in the commentary of the words *"arrafathu ila nisa'ikum* (الرَّفَثُ اِلي نِسَآئِكُم = to go into your wives) (in verse 187 of this chapter). Thus, its complete meaning is: cut them into pieces inclining them towards you.

Reply to the second argument: All the four pronouns refer to the birds. Now comes the question: how could the pronouns in "call them" and "they will come to you" refer to the birds, when there was no bird at all, when only the pieces of those birds had remained? This question arises because the said commentator does not know the difference between mere verbal speech and creative speech. See, for example, the verse:

"Then He directed Himself to the heaven and it was a vapour, so He said to it and to the earth: "Come both, willingly or unwillingly" They both said: "We come willingly" (***41:11***).

Here Allah addressed the heaven, while it was non-existent; only its matter was present at that time. Likewise, Ibrahim ('a) was told to call the birds, while they did not exist; only their pieces existed at that time. Then there is the verse:

"His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it, 'Be', and it is" (***36:82***).

Here a non-existent thing is addressed by the creative speech "Be".

The fact is that verbal speech requires an addressee to exist before the speech. But the opposite is true in the case of creative speech. There, the existence of the addressee follows that speech. In this case, the talk, address or speech means "creation"; and existence is caused by creation. In the above-mentioned verse 36:82 "and it is" (i.e., existence) depends on the creative word "Be" (i.e., creation).

Reply to the third argument: We believe that the second alternative is correct: that Ibrahim ('a) wanted to see how Allah gives life to the dead; he did not want to see how a dead body accepts life. The said commentator has argued against this alternative. He says that it implies comprehension of the will of Allah, which, being an attribute of Allah, is impossible to comprehend.

But the fact is that the will of Allah is an attribute of action, and is inferred from divine actions like creating, giving life, and so forth. What is impossible to comprehend is the Person of Allah, as He says:

***"…they do not comprehend Him in knowledge"* (*20:110*).**

Will is deduced from action. It is creation accompanied by the existence of the created thing. It is the word "Be" mentioned in verse: ***"…that He says to it 'Be' and it is"* (*36:82*)**. This word, "Be", is the kingdom of everything that is mentioned in the next verse:

***"Therefore, glory be to Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of everything …"* (*36:83*).**

***"And Allah has said that He had shown Ibrahim* ('*a*) *the great kingdom of His creation: And thus, did We show Ibrahim the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that he might be of those who are sure"* (*6:75*).**

Obviously, among the great kingdom shown to Ibrahim ('a) was this giving life to the birds, mentioned in this verse.

Why are these people so confused? It is because they do not understand the force behind such miraculous happenings. They think that when Ibrahim ('a) called the birds and they became alive, or when 'Isa ('a) said to a dead body, "Rise up by permission of Allah" and it rose up, or when Sulayman ('a) ordered the wind to blow and it did so, it was because of some effective cause which was hidden in those words by Allah; or because of the thinking process of these prophets which showed itself in these words (made of letters), as our words lead one to their meanings. These people do not realize that all this was based upon these prophets' spiritual connection with the divine power which can never be overpowered; and with Allah's Omnipotence which knows no bounds and which is the real power that brings everything into being.

Reply to the fourth argument: The delay inferred from the word *thumma* (then) is found in cutting the birds into pieces as well, dividing and mixing the parts and putting them on various mountains. This matter needs no elaboration.

Reply to the fifth argument: This argument, in fact, goes against the objector. What he wants to prove

is that Allah only explained to Ibrahim (‘a), in an academic and theoretical manner, how the things were made alive; He did not show it to him by demonstration. If that was the case, then the verse should have been ended on the adjective “Powerful”, instead of “Mighty, Wise”. We have explained earlier that the adjectives “Mighty” and “Wise” are more appropriate for our explanation of the verse.

Another commentator has interpreted this verse in another wrong way. He thinks that what Ibrahim (‘a) wanted to see was how a dead body accepts life and becomes alive; that his question was concerned with the effect and the result, not with its reason and cause. His argument is as follows:

Ibrahim (‘a) did not ask about any religiously essential matter. He only wanted to know how the dead become alive, so that he might have knowledge of it. It is not necessary for true belief to know “how” the dead are resurrected. Thus Ibrahim (‘a) wanted to acquire some knowledge which was not necessary for true belief. This view is supported by the mode of the question: “how?” This particle is used to ask about a state or condition. If you say “How does Zayd judge between people?”, the fact that he does judge between people, is already known to you. What you want to know is only the condition under which, and the manner in which, he does this work. On the other hand, if you want to enquire about the fact of his judging, you would say “Does Zayd judge between people?” It proves that Ibrahim (‘a) already knew and believed that Allah gives life to the dead; he only wanted to know how it was done. Then why did Allah tell him: “What! and do you not believe?” This question was asked to remove any possible misunderstanding about Ibrahim’s faith.

The mode of questioning, used by Ibrahim, is mainly to ask about the state and condition. But it is also used, at times, to show the disability of the person so addressed. Someone claims that he can lift an extremely heavy weight, and you tell him: “Well, show me how you lift it”. This question shows your conviction that he is unable to do so. As Allah knew that Ibrahim (‘a) had not meant any such thing in his question. He put this counter-question to him, so that he might clarify this point in unambiguous words, and might thus remove any misunderstanding that the wording of the first question could have caused. In this way, his pristine faith was clearly confirmed and no hearer could entertain any doubt about it.

The words “but that my heart may be at ease” mean that Ibrahim (‘a) wanted his heart not to wonder hither and thither thinking about various ways in which a dead body might become alive again. He wanted it to be at ease by seeing it with his own eyes. That his heart was not at ease before had no adverse effect on his faith in the power of Allah to give life to the dead. And when he was shown how the dead were made alive, nothing was added to his already perfect faith. He just acquired some knowledge which was not very necessary for the faith.

Then, after a long discussion, he says: This verse shows the excellence of Ibrahim (‘a). He was at once shown what he had asked for, and that, also, in the easiest way; while ‘Uzayr [3] was shown what he wanted to know after undergoing death for a hundred years.

The author’s comments: Our previous explanation is enough to show that Ibrahim (‘a) wanted to know

how Allah gives life to the dead and not as to how the dead accept life. He wanted to see the cause, not the effect. That is why he said, “how Thou givest life to the dead” (active voice); and did not say, “how the dead are made alive” (passive voice). Then there is the fact that the whole episode was made to happen through the activities of Ibrahim (‘a) himself. If he had wanted to see only the effect (and not the cause), it would have been enough to show him any dead body coming alive, as was shown to the one who passed by a town when it had fallen upon its roofs; Allah told him to “look at the bones, how We assemble them together, then clothe them with flesh”. There would have been no need to make everything happen through the agency of Ibrahim (‘a) himself.

The trouble is that these people measure the spiritual condition of the prophets with the measure of their own common spirits, and in this way fail to understand how the prophets receive divine knowledge and how they perform miracles. They do not appreciate the difference between showing a prophet how the dead became alive and making him the active agent to give life to the dead: for them, both have the same significance! They have lost touch with divine realities, and fallen into this error. And the more they search for the truth, the farther they go from it. See how he interprets the “ease of heart”. He says that Ibrahim (‘a) wanted his heart not to wonder hither and thither thinking about the various ways in which a thing might be made alive. This alleged wondering hither and thither is a nonsense that is utterly impossible for a prophet like Ibrahim (‘a).

Moreover, if Ibrahim (‘a) had wanted to see how dead bodies come alive, the reply was not an answer to his query at all. He said, “how Thou givest life to the dead “. The word used in the question is *“al-mawta”* (**المَوْتي** = the dead ones); it is plural and general. He might have meant the dead men, or the dead ones in general, including dead human beings and all types of animals. But Allah showed him only the resurrection of four birds.

Then the said commentator has shown, according to his thinking, the superiority of Ibrahim (‘a) over ‘Uzayr (whom he identifies as the passer-by, mentioned in the preceding verse). He thinks that the two stories have the same significance; both men wanted to see how the dead were made alive and both were shown. But, as we have mentioned earlier, neither story is concerned in any way with that question. And he has been unable to see the brilliant exposition and deep realities which the two verses contain.

Lastly, if the verse intended just to explain how the dead come alive, it would have been appropriate to end it on the adjective “Omnipotent”, or “Powerful”, and not on “Mighty, Wise”. See, for instance, the following verses:

“And among His signs is this, that you see the earth still, but when We send down on it the water, it stirs and swells: most surely, He Who gives it life is the Giver of life to the dead; surely He has power over all things” (***41:39***).

As you see, the verse explains “how” the dead are given life, and it ends on the attribute of

Omnipotence.

"Have they not seen that Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth and was not tired by their creation, is able to give life to the dead? Aye! He has surely power over all things" (***46:33***).

Here again the "how" is explained through a simile, and the verse ends on the attribute of power.

Qur'an: He said: "What! and do you not believe?" He said: "Certainly, but that my heart may be at ease" (***2:260***).

"Bala" (بَلي = certainly) is used to negate a negative question; and thus the negative of the question becomes positive. For example, Allah asked the souls:

"Am I not your Lord?" They said: "Certainly" (***7:172***).

Had they replied, *na'am* (نَعَم = yes), it would have become infidelity. *at-Tamaninah* (الطَّمَانِيْنَة) and *al-itminan* (الاِطْمِيْنَان) is the quiet of the heart after its being troubled and agitated. It is derived from the words, *itma'annati 'l-ard* (اِطْمَأَنَّتِ الاَرْض = the earth was depressed) and *ardun mutma'innah* (اَرْضٌ مُطْمَئِنَّة = low land) which are used when the earth becomes low, so that if the water comes in, it stays therein and if a stone falls in, it remains motionless.

Allah said: "and do you not believe?" Had He said, 'do you not believe?', it would have shown that the original question ("Show me how Thou givest life to the dead") was asked because of disbelief; and it would have become an admonition and reproach. By adding "and", Allah showed that Ibrahim's question was quite in order, but it should not be associated with disbelief in resurrection. *"wa"* (وَ = and) is a conjunctive and it joins two words, phrases or sentences. When Allah added it in His question, it changed the import of the sentence. Now it means: Your question is in order, but it is associated with disbelief in resurrection? Without this conjunctive, it would have meant: Do you ask it because you do not believe? It would have turned it into a censure and reprimand.

"Belief" mentioned in the divine question is general, it is not used with any condition or restriction. It signifies that one cannot believe in Allah if one is doubtful about the resurrection of the dead. No doubt the question "and do you not believe?" was asked in the context of giving life to the dead. But the context does not restrict the general meaning of the word. "Belief", therefore, retains its unconditional meaning, and shows that nobody could be a believer unless he believed in resurrection.

Likewise, the words of Ibrahim ('a) quoted by Allah "that my heart may be at ease" are unconditional. It means that he wanted to acquire total tranquillity and to cut at the roots of all types of fancies and imaginations. Human imagination is bound to the senses; all its activities are confined within the circle of the things perceived by these senses. It shrinks from those things which are known through reason only, even when a man believes them to be true, like those principles of metaphysics which are beyond the sphere of matter and which cannot be known through any of the five senses. The mind resists those

realities even when their premises are sound and certain.

There always remains some vague doubt about the authenticity of those conclusions. Such doubts and conflicting ideas become strengthened by inclinations and desires, although the spirit firmly accepts the truth of those principles and believes in them unconditionally. Thus, belief and faith should remain firm and intact; the imagination should only harm it by a slight distress, which we may call pricks. A man sleeps in a dark room in which is placed a dead body. He knows that the dead person is just a lump of matter without any sense or will; it cannot harm anybody in any way. But the imagination refuses to accept this truth, it goes on thinking fantastic things concerning that dead body; and it frightens the man to such an extent that it may happen that he loses the balance of his mind, or even dies because of terror.

This example shows that the existence of some thoughts or fantasies conflicting with the sure truths, is not always contrary to faith and belief. But surely it annoys the spirit and robs it of its tranquillity and ease. Such an imaginary distress cannot be removed except by demonstration or sensual perception. That is what is meant by the saying: Seeing has an effect which knowledge does not have. For instance, Allah informed Musa (ʻa), when he was at his appointed place, that his people had gone astray and were worshipping a calf. Hearing it, he believed it. Yet, his distress and anger showed itself only when he returned to them and saw them with his own eyes, in their idolatry. Then his violent grief reached its highest point; he threw down the tablets and seized his brother by the head dragging him towards himself.

From this and the previous explanations it is clear that Ibrahim (ʻa) had not asked to see a phenomenon which could be perceived through the senses; that is, he did not want to see how the parts and pieces of a dead body accept life after death. He wanted to see the action of Allah in giving life to the dead. But this action could not be seen, although it was not unrelated to a perceived phenomenon, that is, the acceptance of life by the pieces of the dead bodies. Thus Ibrahim (ʻa) had in fact asked for an evident truth and certainty.

Qur'an: He said: "Then take four of the birds, then cut them (into pieces), then place on every mountain a part of them, they will come to you" (2:260).

The word *"surhunna"* (صُرْهُن = cut them into pieces) is derived from *sara; yasuru* (صَارَ، يَصُوْر = he cut / he inclined; he is cutting/he is inclining). Another recitation is *sirhunna* (صِرْهُن), derived from *sara; yasiru* (صَارَ، يَصِيْر) with the same meanings. The context shows that it means "cut them". The preposition, *"ila"* (إِلي = to) gives a hint of inclination, as was explained earlier. The meaning, then, will be: cut them (into pieces), inclining them towards you; or, incline them towards you cutting them into pieces.

Anyhow, the above sentences are the answer to the prayer of Ibrahim (ʻa) when he said:

"My Lord! show me how Thou givest life to the dead" (2:260).

Obviously, the answer should fit the question. The norms of eloquence and the wisdom of the speaker leave no room for verbosity; a wise and eloquent speaker does not allow his speech to be encumbered by unnecessary words which have no bearing on the intended meaning. This is especially so with the Qur'an, the best speech, revealed by the best of speakers to the best of hearers. The story is not as simple as it appears at first glance. Had it been so, the answer would have been completed by the giving of life to any dead body in any manner, and the extra details would have been deemed unnecessary.

But the facts tell us otherwise: Allah included in it many extra particulars and details. It was decided that the dead to be given life should be from among the birds; they should be alive, should be four in number, they should be killed and their parts and pieces be mixed together, then the mixed matter should be divided into many portions; then every portion should be placed in places distant from each other like the peak of this mountain and summit of that hill; then they should be given life through Ibrahim ('a), that is, the very man who had asked for it; and thus they should all gather around him alive and none the worse for their experience.

All these details and peculiarities must have had some connection with the aim of the story. The commentators have written many reasons for these points, which only add to the readers' confusion (as may be seen in the more extensive books of exegesis of the Qur'an).

However, these particulars must have been related to the question. We find that there are two aspects in the question of Ibrahim ('a) which require special attention:

First: His use of the active voice, "how Thou givest life". He wanted to see the giving of life, in-as-much as it is an attribute of Allah. He did not want to see it from the other side, that is, how the various parts of a dead body accept life after death.

Second: His use of the plural, "dead ones", which is an added particular.

Keeping these two matters in view, we find that the answer fits the question perfectly, there is nothing unnecessary or extraneous in it.

The first aspect was fully answered by making it happen through Ibrahim ('a) himself. The words "then take", "then cut them" and "then place", were all essential for this purpose. Finally, Allah said, "then call them, they will come to you flying". Their coming to Ibrahim flying, that is, their life, was caused by Ibrahim's call. Allah made his call the cause of the giving of life to the dead birds - and there is no bestowing of life except by the decree of Allah. The call of Ibrahim, by order of Allah, had a sort of connection with the decree of Allah which gives life to all. In this way, Ibrahim saw this bestowing with his own eyes, and saw how the divine decree creates life. Had the call of Ibrahim ('a) not been connected with the decree of Allah (Who, when He intends a thing, say to it "Be', and it is), and had it been connected, like our own talk, with the images in his mind only, it could not create anything, could not give life to any dead thing.

The second aspect, the use of the plural, “dead ones”, shows that the multiplicity of the dead had some bearing on the question. The bodies, after they had died, their components disintegrated, their shapes altered and their conditions totally changed, could not be recognized, nor could there remain any connection or attachment between their former parts; they became lost in the darkness of nothingness, like forgotten myths that exist neither in reality nor in the imagination. Ibrahim (‘a) wanted to see how the life-giving power of Allah would encompass them when there was nothing to be encompassed.

This same question was asked arrogantly by Pharaoh, and Musa (‘a) replied to him by knowledge. Allah says quoting this talk:

“(Pharaoh) said: “Then what is the state of the. former generation?” (20:51).

“He (Musa) said: “The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a book; errs not my Lord, nor does He forget” (20:52).

Anyhow, this aspect of the question was answered by Allah when He ordered Ibrahim (‘a) to take four of the birds (perhaps, the birds were chosen for this demonstration because it could be carried out on them easily and without delay) so that he might observe their ways, see their distinguishing features and particular shapes, and thus might know them perfectly. He was then ordered to kill them, chop and mince them, mixing their small particles completely together. Then he was required to divide that mixture into portions and put each portion on a separate mountain, so that there should not remain any chance of recognition. Then he was to call them, and they would come to him flying. By this demonstration, he would see that the re-establishing of separate identities and the bestowal of life follows the call; and that the call was addressed to their souls. The body follows the soul, it is not the other way round. The body is a dependant of the soul, and not vice versa. The body has the same relation to the soul that a shadow has to the body. The shadow appears when the body exists; it inclines according to the inclination of the body; and when the body ceases to exist, the shadow becomes extinct. Likewise, when Allah creates a living thing, or gives life to a dead animal or man, the creative decree affects, originally, the spirit, and the material parts follow the spirit and come into being, because of the special bond created by Allah between the spirit and its body - the bond which is preserved by Allah and which we cannot comprehend. In this way, the identity of the body follows the identity of the spirit, without any gap and without any hindrance. Allah refers to it in His words, “they will come to you flying”, that is, without any delay whatsoever.

The same principle has been enunciated in these verses:

“And they say: “What! when we have become lost in the earth, shall we then indeed be in a new creation?” Nay! they are disbelievers in the meeting of their Lord” (32:10).

“Say: “The angel of death who is given charge of you causes you to die, then to your Lord you are brought back.” (32:11).

We have explained to some extent this verse while discussing the non-materiality of the soul; further details will be given in a proper place, God willing.

***"Then take four of the birds"* (*2:260*).**

He was given this order so that he might identify them perfectly. Thus, there would be no room for doubt when they had been made whole and alive again. Also, he would observe their particulars and peculiarities and then would see how all distinctions had been lost after death.

***"…then cut them* (into pieces)*, then place on every mountain a part of them"* (*2:260*).**

Kill them, cut them into pieces, mix those pieces all together and divide the portions on the mountains found in your locality. In this way, the parts of each bird would be scattered here and there, and they would not be recognizable.

This order indicates that this event occurred after Ibrahim (ʻa) had migrated from Babylonia to Syria; because there are no mountains in Babylonia.

"Then call them": Call the birds 'O peacock! O this! O that!' The pronoun "them" refers to the "four birds". If Allah had wished Ibrahim to call the pieces of the birds, He would have said *"nadihinna"* (نَادِهِن = cry out to them), because the pieces were on far away mountains, and not *ud'uhunna* (أُدْعُهُن = call them) which is used for calling someone nearby. The order to "call them" indicates that he was to call the birds (i.e., their spirits) themselves.

***"They will come to you flying"* (*2:260*).**

That is, they will get their own bodies and shapes, and will acquire all their faculties and powers including flying.

***Qur'an: And know that Allah is Mighty, Wise* (*2:260*).**

He is Mighty; if a thing ceases to exist, it is not lost to Him. He is Wise; He does not do a thing but by its proper method. He creates bodies by creating souls, and not the other way round.

Traditions

About the words of Allah: Did you not see him who disputed with Ibrahim about his Lord: at-Tayalisi and Ibn Abi Hatim have narrated from 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib that he said: "He who disputed with Ibrahim about his Lord was Namrud (Nimrod), son of Kan'an."[4]

Abu 'Ali at-Tabrisi has said: "There is a difference of opinion as to the time when this dispute occurred. It is said that it was when he shattered the idols, before he was thrown into fire. (It is reported from Muqatil.) Also it is said that it was after he was thrown into fire, and it had become cool and safe for him.

(It is reported from Imam as-Sadiq ('a))"[5]

The author says: The verse does not say when the dispute had taken place. But it may fairly be inferred that it was after Ibrahim had been thrown into fire. The stories written in the Qur'an about the early period of Ibrahim ('a) - when he argued with his uncle and other people and then shattered the idols, give us to understand that he first met Namrud when he was taken to his court accused of breaking their idols; and Namrud ordered him to be burnt alive. At that time Namrud was too busy in sentencing him to have any dialogue with him about his Lord: whether it was Allah or Namrud. Also, if this event had occurred at that time, Namrud would have disputed with him on behalf of the idols, and not for establishing his own divinity.

There are many traditions, narrated by the Sunni and the Shi'ite narrators that the one "who passed by a town and it had fallen down upon its roofs" was the prophet, Armiah. Other traditions say that he was 'Uzayr. But both types of traditions are "solitary", (i.e., not *mutawatir*) and one is not bound to accept any of them. Moreover, the chains of some are weak. The Qur'an too is silent about the passer-by's identity, and the Bible does not mention this story.

The story given in those traditions is long, and there are some differences among them. In any case, those traditions are beyond the scope of our book. Those wishing to read them should look for them into other books.

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) told in a tradition about the words of Allah: And (remember) when Ibrahim said: "My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead ...": "And this verse is allegorical; it means that he (Ibrahim - 'a) asked about 'how'?, and 'how' is an action of Allah, Mighty and Great is He; (it is a thing that) if a knowledgeable person did not know it he cannot be faulted for it nor can any defect be attributed to his belief in monotheism ..."[6]

The author says: The meaning of this tradition may be understood from our earlier explanations.

'Ali Ibn Asbat says that Abu '1-Hasan ar-Ridha' ('a) was asked about the words of Allah: He (Ibrahim) said: "Certainly! but that my heart may be at ease." "Was there any doubt in his heart?" The Imam said: "No! but he wanted an increase (in it) from Allah..."[7]

The author says: This matter has been narrated in *al-Kafi* from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) and al-'Abdu 's-Salih ('a). Its meaning has been explained earlier.

al-Qummi narrated from his father from Ibn Abi 'Umayr from Abu Ayyub from Abu Basir from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) saying: "Verily Ibrahim saw a dead body on a river-bank; aquatic carnivores were eating it, then they attacked each other and some of them ate the others. Ibrahim was astonished (to see it) and said: 'My Lord! show me how Thou givest life to the dead.' Allah said: 'What! and do you not believe?' He said: 'Certainly, but that my heart may be at ease.' Allah said: 'Then take four of the birds, then cut them into pieces, then place on every mountain a part of them, then call them, they will come to you

flying; and know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.' Thereupon, Ibrahim took a peacock, a rooster, a pigeon and a crow. Then Allah said: 'Cut them into pieces and mix their flesh together and place them separately on ten mountains.' Thereafter he (Ibrahim – 'a) called them and said: 'Be alive by the permission of Allah.' The birds began assembling, the flesh and bones of each joining together with its head; and they flew towards Ibrahim. (Seeing it) Ibrahim said: 'Verily, Allah is Mighty, Wise.'"[8]

The author says: al-'Ayyashi has narrated it in his *at-Tafsir* from Abu Basir from Imam as-Sadiq ('a); and it has been narrated through Sunni chains from Ibn 'Abbas.

The words of the Imam: "Verily, Ibrahim saw a dead body ... 'My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead' ", describe the reason why Ibrahim asked this question: he had just seen the pieces of the body being disjoined and scattered, and their condition changed. He observed their dispersal in all directions and the deterioration in their condition which was to such an extent that nothing of the original body remained there.

Question: The tradition apparently says that the doubt was that which is known as the doubt of the eater and the eaten; because it mentions that the carnivores attacked each other and some of them ate the others, and that the wonder and question of Ibrahim ('a) was based on this phenomenon.

Comment: There are two doubts:

1) the scattering and dispersal of the parts of the bodies, the change in their properties and shapes, in short, their complete extinction so that apparently nothing remained to accept the life;

2) the parts of one animal become the parts of another animal; how could the two animals be resurrected whole? The part of one is also the part of another; whichever is resurrected whole, the other one will be incomplete. This is called the doubt of the eater and the eaten.

The answer given by Allah – that the body follows the soul – is sufficient to remove both doubts. But what Ibrahim ('a) was ordered to do was not related to the doubt of the eater and the eaten; it was directly concerned with the first doubt – dispersal of the parts and total extinction, even though the basic answer removes both doubts.

What the tradition mentions some of the carnivores eating the others is not intended to be a part of the explanation of the verse.

The Imam (Imam as-Sadiq ('a)) has said: "Thereupon, Ibrahim took a peacock, a rooster, a pigeon and a crow." Some other traditions say that the birds were a vulture, a duck, a peacock and a rooster. It has been narrated by Imam as-Sadiq in *'Uyun al-akhbar* from Imam ar-Ridha' ('a). It has also been reported from Mujahid, Ibn Jarih, 'Ata' and Ibn Zayd. Still others say that it was a hoopoe, a sparrow-hawk, a peacock and a crow. It has been narrated by al-'Ayyashi, through Ma'ruf Ibn Kharabbudh, from Imam al-Baqir ('a): and is reported from Ibn 'Abbas too. Another Sunni tradition quotes Ibn 'Abbas as saying

that the birds were a crested crane, a peacock, a rooster and a pigeon. There is only one name which appears in every report: peacock.

The Imam said: “place them separately on ten mountains.” That the mountain were ten is unanimously mentioned in the traditions of the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt*. Somone has put their number as four; another as seven.

‘Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Jahm said: “I was present in the court of al-Ma’mun and with him was Imam ar-Ridha’ (‘Ali Ibn Musa). al-Ma’mun said to him: ‘O Son of the Messenger of Allah! Is it not your belief that the prophets were sinless?’ He said: ‘Certainly.’ Then he (al-Ma’mun) asked him (Imam ar-Ridha’ (‘a)) about some verses of the Qur’an, and said to him, among others: ‘Now tell me about the words of Allah: “My Lord! show me how Thou givest life to the dead. “He said: “What! and do you not believe?” He said: “Certainly, but that my heart may be at ease.” Imam ar-Ridha’ said: ‘Verily Allah, Blessed and High is He! had revealed to Ibrahim: “I am going to take from my servants a friend; if he asks me to give life to the dead, I will grant his prayer.” It came into the heart of Ibrahim that he was that friend. Therefore, he said: “My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead. “Allah said: “What! and do you not believe?” Ibrahim said: “Certainly, but that my heart may be at ease about Thy friendship...”””[9]

The author says: We have expressed our views (while discussing about the Garden of Adam) about ‘Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Jahm and about this tradition which he has narrated from Imam ar-Ridha’ (‘a).

However, this tradition throws some light on the fact that the status of the friendship of Allah brings with it the granting of prayers. The language supports this too. *al-Khallah* (الخَلَّة) means ‘need’. The friend is called *al-khalil* (الخَلِيْل) because when friendship is perfect, one friend describes his needs to the other friend – and why should one describe his need if his friend cannot fulfil it?

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1. Look at the story of Ibrahim, concerning the stars, the moon and the sun in the Qur’an 6:77 & 6:78.
2. Sinimmar, an architect of repute, built the palace, al-Khawarnaq, for King Nu’man. When it was completed, he was thrown down from the roof and thus died. The King gave this order so that he could not build such a palace for anyone else.
3. ‘Uzayr = Ezra or Ezrah of the Apocrypha. He is known as Esdras in the Roman Catholic Bible.
4. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
5. Tafsir ul-burhan.
6. Ma’ani ‘l-akhbar.
7. at-Tafsir, al-’Ayyashi.
8. at-Tafsir.
9. ‘Uyun ‘l-akhbar.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 261- 274

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنْبُلَةٍ مِائَةُ حَبَّةٍ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears, in every ear there are a hundred grains; and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases; and Allah is Ample-giving, All-knowing (2:261).

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتْبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَنًّا وَلَا أَذًى لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah, then do not follow up what they have spent with reproach or injury, for them is their reward with their Lord, and they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve (2:262).

قَوْلٌ مَعْرُوفٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ يَتْبَعُهَا أَذًى وَاللَّهُ غَنِيٌّ حَلِيمٌ

A kind word and forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury; and Allah is Self-sufficient, Forbearing (2:263).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَىٰ كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

O you who believe! do not nullify your charity by reproach and injury, like him who spends his wealth to be seen of men and does not believe in Allah and the last day. So his parable is as the parable of a smooth rock with (some) earth upon it, then a heavy rain falls upon it, so it leaves it just a bare stone. They shall not gain anything of what they have earned. And Allah does not guide the unbelieving people (2:264).

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَتَثْبِيتًا مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ جَنَّةٍ بِرَبْوَةٍ أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَآتَتْ أُكُلَهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ فَإِنْ لَمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

And the parable of those who spend their wealth seeking the pleasure of Allah and keeping firm

their souls is as the parable of a garden on an elevated ground, upon which heavy rain falls so it brings forth its fruit twofold; but if heavy rain does not fall upon it, then light rain (is enough). And Allah sees what you do (2:265).

أَيَوَدُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ مِنْ نَخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ وَأَصَابَهُ الْكِبَرُ وَلَهُ ذُرِّيَّةٌ ضُعَفَاءُ فَأَصَابَهَا إِعْصَارٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ فَاحْتَرَقَتْ كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ

Would anyone of you like that he should have a garden of palms and vines with streams flowing beneath it; he has in it all kinds of fruits; and old age has overtaken him and he has weak offspring, when (lo!) a whirlwind with fire in it smites it so it gets burnt up. Thus, Allah makes the signs clear to you, that you may reflect (2:266).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُونَ وَلَسْتُمْ بِآخِذِيهِ إِلَّا أَنْ تُغْمِضُوا فِيهِ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ

O you who believe! spend (benevolently) out of the good things that you have earned and of what We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and do not aim at what is bad of it, that you may spend (in charity), while you would not take it yourselves unless you connived at it; and know that Allah is Self-sufficient, Praiseworth (2:267).

الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُكُمْ مَغْفِرَةً مِنْهُ وَفَضْلًا وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins you to abomination; and Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance; and Allah is Ample-giving, All-knowing (2:268).

يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good; and none but men of understanding mind (2:269).

وَمَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ نَفَقَةٍ أَوْ نَذَرْتُمْ مِنْ نَذْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُهُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ

And whatever alms you give or (whatever) vow you vow, surely Allah knows it, and the oppressors shall have no helpers (2:270).

إِنْ تُبْدُوا الصَّدَقَاتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِيَ وَإِنْ تُخْفُوهَا وَتُؤْتُوهَا الْفُقَرَاءَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَيُكَفِّرُ عَنْكُمْ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

خَبِيرٌ

If you give alms openly, it is well, and if you hide it and give it to poor, it is better for you; and this will remove from you some of your sins; and Allah is aware of what you do (***2:271***).

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَمَا تُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ

To make them walk in the right way is not incumbent on you, but Allah guides aright whom He pleases; and whatever good thing you spend, it is to your own good, and you do not spend but to seek Allah's pleasure, and whatever good thing you spend shall be paid back to you in full, and you shall not be wronged (***2:272***).

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الَّذِينَ أُحْصِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي الْأَرْضِ يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِلْحَافًا وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ

(***Charity is***) ***for the poor who are besieged in the way of Allah – they cannot go about in the land; the ignorant man thinks them to be rich on account of their self-control*** (***from begging***)***; thou wouldst recognize them by their countenance; they do not beg from men importunately; and whatever good thing you spend, surely Allah knows it*** (***2:273***).

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and openly, for them is their reward with their Lord, and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve (***2:274***).

General Comment

The context of the verses indicates that they must have been revealed all together. Their theme is spending in the way of Allah. They begin with a parable to show that charity increases in the hands of Allah, one to seven hundred or even more, by the permission of Allah. Another parable shows that this increase is sure to happen; it cannot fail. They go to forbid insincerity in spending, that is, spending to show others how generous one is, and give one more parable to demonstrate the futility of this, that such spending does not increase and bears no fruit.

Also, they admonish the believers not to follow charity with reproach and injury, because these two evils nullify alms and make their reward forfeit. Then they say that spending should be from their good and lawful wealth, and not from unlawful or worthless things, as it shows niggardliness and miserliness.

Thereafter they prescribe who should be given charity – the poor men who are besieged in the way of Allah. Finally, it again reminds them of the great reward of charity which they shall find with Allah.

In short, the verses exhort the believers to spend and explain to them the following things:

First: The purpose of spending: It should be to seek the pleasure of Allah, not to show off to people.

Second: The fashion and condition of this good work: It should not be followed by reproach and injury.

Third: The quality of the wealth to be spent: It must be lawful and good, not unlawful or worthless.

Fourth: The qualification of the receivers: It should be given to those poor who are besieged in the way of Allah.

Fifth: The rewards of such spending in this world and in the next.

Spending In The Way Of Allah

One of the two pillars of Islam is the Rights of the people; and spending for the welfare of the people is one of the things to which Islam pays the utmost attention. It exhorts a believer to spend for this purpose, and has laid down the rules and opened up the ways for such spending – some of these ways are obligatory and others highly recommended: *zakat, khums* (the one-fifth tax), penalties to expiate certain illegalities, various types of redemption, obligatory spending and recommended charities. Then there are laws to establish and regulate endowments, settlements for residence, or for life, wills, gifts and many similar things.

All this has been done to improve the living standards of the poor classes – the people who cannot meet their expenses without help from others. The intention of Islam is to raise their level to bring them nearer to the people of means.

On the other hand, it has strictly forbidden the rich people from pompous living and showing off their wealth. It has allowed them to live in a reasonable and honourable manner; but has prohibited extravagance and the squandering of wealth in a lavish style which is above the reach of the average person.

The aim of both sets of rules was to create a community life that would be neither too low nor too high, whose various groups would be nearer to each other, and would have a fairly uniform standard of life. Such a society would give life to the institution of unity and co-operation; and would eradicate conflicting designs and uproot enmity and antagonism. The Qur'an holds that the true religion must organize life in all its multifarious activities, putting it in order in such a way that man's bliss is guaranteed in this life as well as in the next one. Such a religion will bless man with true knowledge, noble character and pleasant life; he will be free in this life to enjoy the bounties given to him by Allah, and to remove from himself

unpleasant things and all types of misfortune.

This will be possible only when society enjoys a good life and all its members share its bliss equally or almost equally. This, in its turn, demands that all their needs are fulfilled and the condition of society reformed. All this needs money and wealth. The way to get that money for this most important purpose is by contributions from the members of society – they are required to spend out of what they have earned by their labour. Surely the believers are brothers to each other; and the earth is of Allah, and property and wealth belong to Him.

This is a fact, the truth of which was demonstrated by the Prophet during his lifetime when he had the authority in his hands. He showed its correctness and' demonstrated how it created a stable society, growing, developing and bearing good results.

It was this society for which the Leader of the faithfuls, 'Ali ('a) felt nostalgia, and the passing away of which he remembered sorrowfully, in one of his speeches:

"You live in a period when the steps of virtue are moving backwards, and the steps of evil are moving forward; and Satan is increasing his eagerness to ruin people. This is the time when his equipment is strong, and his traps have been widely spread and his prey has become easy (to catch). Cast your glance wherever you like. Do you see (anything) except a poor man suffering (the pangs of) poverty, or a rich man changing Allah's favour for ungratefulness, or a miser trampling the right of Allah to increase his wealth, or an arrogant person (who behaves) as though his ears hear any counsel with difficulty."[1]

The passage of time has proved the validity of this Qur'anic system – that the various classes should be brought together, the poor should be helped through "spending", and the rich forbidden extravagance, pomposity and vanity. When western culture took the upper hand, people's ideals and outlook changed. They clung to the earthly life, tried their utmost to acquire and keep all worldly trinkets coveted by animal greed and sensual desires, and adopted for it whatever means they could. The result: wealth was confined within a limited circle, the pleasures of life were reserved for a wealthy minority, and the only share of the lower class in it was deprivation. The upper classes continued to swallow each other like cannibals, until a very select group monopolized the blessings and bliss of this life and the vast majority, that is, the common people, were denied even the right of life.

This behaviour generated all evil tendencies on both sides; it gave rise to the saying, "Every man for himself". No one leaves anything nor does he spare anything. It has resulted in a class struggle, and open enmity between the two groups, the rich and the poor, the haves and the have–nots, each side wanting to exterminate the other. This was the basic cause of the World Wars and the emergence of Communism. Truth and nobility have been cast aside, peace of mind and tranquillity of heart have departed from the world, and the human species on the whole does not have any feeling of joy in life. This is the position which the chaos of human society has reached today – what tomorrow holds, is more grievous and horrible.

One of the most damaging factors in this social disorder is the closure of the gate "spending", and the opening of the doors of interest. Allah has explained the evil of this in seven verses coming after these verses of "spending"; Allah had warned the mankind that if interest becomes widespread, the world will fall in disorder. It is one of the prophecies of the Qur'an which has been fulfilled in these days. When the Qur'an was revealed, interest was a foetus; now it has been born from the womb of western economy and is growing by leaps and bounds.

To understand what we have just mentioned, read the following verses:

"Then set your face uprightly for the (right) religion in natural devotion (to the truth); the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no alteration in the creation of Allah; that is the right religion, but most people do not know" (30:30).

"Turning to Him. And be careful of (your duty to) Him, and keep up prayer and be not of the polytheists" (30:31).

"Of those who, divided their religion and became sects, every sect rejoicing in what they have with them" (30:32).

"And when harm afflicts men, they call upon their Lord, turning to Him; then when He makes them taste of mercy from Him, lo! some of them begin to associate (others) with their Lord" (30:33).

"So as to be ungrateful for what We have given them; but enjoy yourselves (for a while), for you shall soon come to know" (30:34).

"So give to the near of kin his due, and to the needy and the wayfarer; this is the best for those who desire Allah's pleasure, and these it is who are successful" (30:38).

"And whatever you lay out as interest, so that it may increase in the property of men, it shall not increase with Allah; and whatever you give in charity, desiring Allah's pleasure – it is these (persons) that shall get manifold" (30:39).

"Disorder has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, so that they may return" (30:41).

"Say: "Travel in the land, then see how was the end of those (who were) before (you); most of them were polytheists." (30:42).

"Then set thy face upright to the right religion before there comes from Allah the day which cannot be averted; on that day they shall become separated" (30:43).

There are verses of the same import in the chapters of Hud, Yunus, the Night journey, the Prophets etc. We shall explain them later on.

This is apparently the reason why these verses of spending exhort the believers and give so much emphasis to "spending".

Commentary

Verse 261

Qur'an: The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain… (***2:261***).

"The way of Allah" means anything which leads to the pleasure of Allah; any religious purpose for which work is done. The phrase in the verse is unconditional, although it comes after the verses of "fighting in the way of Allah", and although the phrase "in the way of Allah" is combined in many verses with fighting. But such recurring usage does not restrict the phrase to fighting.

Some scholars have said: The words, "as the parable of a grain growing seven ears..." actually mean, "as the parable of him who sowed a grain that grew seven ears..." The "grain growing seven ears" is the parable of property spent in the way of Allah, and not "of those who spend" that wealth. And it does not need much explanation.

This interpretation, although sound in itself, is not in total conformity with the Qur'an. On deep contemplation, we find that an overwhelming number of the Qur'anic parables are of this same style. See, for example, the following verses.

"And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who shouts to that which hears not but a call and a cry…" (***2:171***).

As we see, it is the parable of him who calls the disbelievers, not of the disbelievers themselves.

"The likeness of this world's life is only as water which We sent down from the sky; by its mingling, the herbage of the earth which men and cattle eat grows; until when the earth puts on its golden raiment and it becomes garnished, and its people think that they have power over it, Our command comes to it, by night or by day, so We render it as reaped, as though it had not been in existence yesterday; thus do We make clear the signs fora people who reflect" (***10:24***).

"…the parable of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp…" (***24:35***).

Look also at other parables mentioned in these very verses:

"So his parable is as the parable of a smooth rock…" (***2:264***).

"And the parable of those who spend their wealth seeking the pleasure of Allah and keeping firm their souls is as the parable of a garden on an elevated ground…" (***2:261***).

There are many such verses and all of them have one thing in common – all restrict themselves to the main element of the likeness, the essential ingredient of the parable; and omit other factors for the sake of brevity.

A parable is an actual or imagined story which has a marked resemblance to the subject matter in some aspects; it creates a picture in the mind which helps to fully grasp the idea for which the parable has been used. For example, there are the Arabic proverbs, "I have neither she-camel nor he-camel"; and, "In summer you wasted the milk". These sayings remind the hearer of the related true stories by fitting the story to the topic at hand, and at once the picture flashes before his mind's eyes in clear perspective. That is why it is said that proverbs do not change.

Another example: "The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is as the parable of the one who sows a grain, it growing seven ears, in every ear there are a hundred grains." This is an imaginary story.

The basic element of a parable – the essential ingredient of the similarity that produces the clear and well-defined image of the topic – is sometimes the whole story; and occasionally a part of the story. Examples of the former are:

"And the parable of an evil word is as an evil tree pulled up from the earth's surface; it has no stability" (***14:26***).

"The similitude of those who were placed under the Torah, then they did not hold it, is as the similitude of the donkey bearing books" (***62:5***).

The example of the latter, where the basic element is only a part of the story, is this parable under discussion – spending in the way of Allah has been likened to the grain growing seven ears, every ear having a hundred grains. This is the basic element of analogy; but in explaining it we earlier added the words, "of him who sows"; it was added just to complete the story.

In the Qur'anic parables, where the basic element of the analogy is the whole story, Allah has mentioned it without any omission. But where that element is only a part of the story, only that part has been described and others have been left out. Why should the full story have to be described when the purpose of the parable is fully served by the short version. Moreover, this style creates alacrity in the hearer's minds – they do not find what they anticipate and an unexpected picture is flashed before their minds' eyes. But it fully serves the purpose: it is different from the anticipated picture and yet it is the same. This is brevity through alteration in its finest way; and the Qur'an uses it whenever necessary.

Qur'an: Growing seven ears, in every ear there are a hundred grains (***2:261***).

"as-Sunbul" (السُّنْبُل = ear of corn, spike) is on paradigm of *fun'ul* (فُنْعُل). It is said that its root meaning is to draw a curtain. The ear of corn was given this name because it hides the grains in their husks.

A most foolish objection has been levelled against this verse, that it is a simile of a thing which is not found in the world - no ear contains a hundred grains.

Reply: It is not necessary for a similitude that the picture compared with be found outside the imagination. Analogies with imaginary ideas and images are found by their thousands in every language.

Moreover, ears containing a hundred grains, and a single seed yielding seven hundred grains are very often found in many places.

Qur'an: And Allah multiplies for whom He pleases; and Allah is Ample-giving, All-knowing (2:261).

Allah gives more than seven hundred to whom He pleases: He is Ample-giving; no one can put any hindrance on His generosity; nor can anyone restrict His grace. Allah says:

"Who is it that will lend to Allah a goodly loan, so He will multiply it for him manifold" (***2:245***).

In this verse, "manifold" is unrestricted; there is no numerical limit to it.

Someone has said: This sentence means, "Allah increases this much, that is, seven hundred for one, for whom He pleases." According to this interpretation seven hundred would be the limit of multiplication.

But if we accept this interpretation as correct, then this sentence would show the cause of the previous statement (...seven ears, in every ear there are a hundred grains). In that case, it should have begun with the word *inna* (إن = verily, surely, indeed). See for example another verse, where the causative sentence begins with the word "surely":

"Allah is He Who made for you the night that you may rest therein and the day to see; most surely Allah is Gracious to men" (***40:61***).

There are many verses in the same style.

The seven-hundred-fold reward is unrestricted - it is not restricted to the Hereafter. The promise is as valid for this world as it is for the Hereafter.

And on reflection, one has to support this idea. You spend your property in the way of Allah; you may be thinking at first that you have lost that property without getting anything in exchange. But if you ponder a little on this matter you will appreciate that mankind is like one living body; it has various limbs and organs, all of different shapes and with distinctive names, but all of them are united in the goal of life, all are joined together in each other's effects and benefits. If one of these limbs loses its health, becomes weak or falters in its function, the whole body is adversely affected and fails to reach its goal. The eyes

and the hands are two organs with different names and separate functions. But man has been given his eyes so that he may distinguish objects from each other through light, colour and distance.

When this task is accomplished, the hands come into action to take hold of what man should acquire for himself, and to repulse what should be repulsed. If the hands fail in their function, man has to make up the loss through other limbs; but, to begin with, it creates untold misery and hardship for him, and also decreases the normal functions of those limbs to the extent they are used as substitutes for the hands. But if other limbs were to send to the ailing hands some of the blood cells and energy from their own stock and the hands to become restored to health, the whole body would grow better and every limb would share in the benefits – the benefits which may be hundreds and thousands of times more than the small amount of blood, etc., which it expended for the hands.

Likewise, when a man spends for the betterment of the condition of another, it saves the beneficiary from evils which are generally caused by poverty; he feels love for the benefactor in his heart, his tongue speaks his name with respect; and he busies himself in his work with more vigour and energy and thus prospers. The whole of society feels its good effects, and as a member of that society, the benefactor also shares in that social upliftment. This is more evident when the spending is done for social services like education, training, etc. This much about general spending.

When that spending is done in the way of Allah, seeking His pleasure, the increase is sure to occur without fail. If wealth is spent, but not for the pleasure of Allah, then it is done for selfish aims – the rich man spends on a poor man to avert his evils from himself. Or he thinks that if the poor man becomes self-supporting, the whole of society will become a better place to live in, and in this way the benefactor will live in it more happily. This type of spending is a sort of subjugation of the poor who is exploited by the rich for selfish purposes. Such a charity creates bad effects in the poor. Sometimes these hard feelings accumulate and then burst out in riots and revolutions.

But the spending which is done only for the pleasure of Allah is free from these defects; it creates only good, and only bliss and blessings result from it.

Verse 262

***Qur'an: Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah, then do not follow up what they have spent with reproach or injury, for them is their reward with their Lord, and they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve* (*2:262*).**

"al-Itba'" (الإِتْبَاع) is used with both transitive and intransitive meanings. It means 'to follow' and 'to pursue'; and 'to attach one thing to other'. This word has been used in these two meanings in the verses:

***"Then they pursued them at sunrise"* (*26:60*).**

"And We attached to them a curse in this world…" (***28:42***).

"al-Mann" (المَن) means to say what may turn charity into annoyance, for example, to tell the beneficiary: "I gave you this and that". The root- meaning of this word, as has been said, is "to cut". The word has been used in this meaning in the verse:

…For them surely is a reward never to be cut off (***41:8***).

"al-Adha" (الاَذي) is immediate harm, a little injury. *"al-Khawf"* (الخَوْف = fear) is the expectation of harm or trouble. *"al-Huzn"* (الحُزْن = grief) is the sorrow which greatly disturbs the soul, and which is caused by a real or almost real misfortune.

Verse 263

Qur'an: A kind word and forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury and Allah is Self-sufficient, Forbearing (***2:263***).

"Kind word" is that which is not disliked by the common man. It may vary according to circumstances. *"al-Maghfirah"* (المَغْفِرَة = forgiveness) literally means to cover. *"al-Ghina"* (الغِني = self-sufficiency) is the opposite of need and poverty. *"al-Hilm"* (الحِلْم = forbearance) means to remain silent when confronted with disagreeable words or actions.

The contrast between a kind word and forgiveness, on the one hand, and charity followed by injury, on the other, shows that the "kind word" means that if one wants to turn away a suppliant without fulfilling his need and the suppliant has not uttered unpleasant words, one should express one's good wishes and utter good words to him. The "forgiveness" refers to the same situation, provided the suppliant has said unpleasant things about the intended benefactor. In both cases, if one uses a kind word and forgives the suppliant it is far better than fulfilling his need and then following it with reproach and injury.

Such reproach, in fact, shows that the benefactor thinks that what he has spent is a great wealth, and that he is annoyed with the people's requests and supplications. But a believer should be far above such moral defects and petty thoughts. The believer must mould himself on the attributes of Allah. And Allah is Self-sufficient: no bounty is great in His eyes; He gives and bestows whatever He wishes. Also He is Forbearing: He makes no haste in meting out punishment to evil-doers; He does not become angry on His creatures' follies. It was to point out this important matter that the verse ended the sentence, "and Allah is Self-sufficient, Forbearing".

Verse 264

Qur'an: O you who believe! Do not nullify your charity by reproach and injury (***2:264***).

The verse proves that charity becomes forfeited if it is followed by reproach and injury.

Some people say that this verse shows that subsequent sins (and especially big ones) nullify the good deeds preceding them. But this inference is uncalled for. The verse only talks about reproach and injury *vis-a-vis* charity.

The topic of forfeiture has already been explained in detail.

***Qur'an: Like him who spends his wealth to be seen of men and does not believe in Allah and the last day* (*2:264*).**

As the verse is addressed to the believers, and as one who does a good deed to show to men is not a believer (because he does not do that deed for the sake of Allah) the prohibition was not extended to showiness; it was confined to reproach and injury, because there is no danger of showiness for a believer. The verse likens the almsgiver who follows his alms with reproach and injury to the one who spends to show off to men; and the likeness is in the forfeiture of charities, although there is a difference between both. The charity of one who spent to show off to men was null and void ab initio; while that of the one who followed it with reproach and injury was correct and valid to begin with but was later nullified because of these sins.

The verb "does not believe" has the same form and tense as the preceding one, "spends"; it does not say "did not believe". This similarity of tense shows that the disbelief here implies the showing person's disbelief in the divine call of spending and in His promise of its great reward. Had he believed in the divine call to the believers to spend in His way, and also in the last day when the promised reward would be given, he would have done his good deed to seek the pleasure of Allah and would have longed for the reward of the last day, instead of doing it to be seen by men.

It shows that disbelief here does not imply that the showy person does not believe in Allah at all.

Also, it proves that doing a deed with the intention of showing off to men implies that such a doer has no faith in Allah and the last day, in so far as that deed is concerned.

***Qur'an: So, his parable is as the parable of a smooth rock with earth upon it, then a heavy rain falls upon it, so it leaves it bare; they shall not be able to gain anything of what they have earned; and Allah does not guide the unbelieving people* (*2:264*).**

The pronoun, "his" refers to "him who spends his wealth to be seen of men"; the parable is for him. *"as-Safwan"* (الصَّفْوَان) and *"as-safa"* (الصَّفَا) are smooth rock. The same is the meaning of *"as-sald"* (الصَّلْد).

"al-Wabil" (الوَابِل) is heavy rain, descending with force. The pronoun in "They shall not gain" refers to "him who spends to be seen of men", because "him" stands for the whole group of showy persons. The sentence "They shall not gain anything of what they have earned" describes the reason for the analogy; and it is the common factor of the two sides of this simile. The sentence

***"And Allah does not guide the unbelieving people"* (*2:264*).**

describes the general principle: a man who does a deed to show to people is in that particular respect an unbeliever, and Allah does not guide such people. This sentence, therefore, gives the reason for the forfeiture mentioned in this verse.

The man who spends to show off to people can get no reward for such spending. Look at a smooth rock, upon which is some earth, then a heavy rain falls upon it. Now, rain, and especially a heavy downpour, is the apparent cause of the earth coming to life again; it makes it green and adorns it with plants. But if earth settles on a smooth rock it cannot remain in place in a heavy rainfall; it is washed away and the bare rock is left there for everyone to see – the rock which cannot absorb water, nor can it nourish a seed to grow. Rain and earth both together are the most important causes of plant life and growth; but as their place was a smooth rock their effect was totally nullified, although none can attribute any fault or defect to these two life-giving ingredients.

Thus is the case of the man who does a good deed but not with intention of seeking the pleasure of Allah; his action becomes totally null and void, even when the deed, for example, spending in the way of Allah, is among the most effective causes of getting divine reward. But the heart of such a man is like that smooth rock; it is unable to receive divine mercy and grace. And thus, he gets nothing of what he had earned.

The verse shows that the acceptance of a deed depends on sincere intention and on the pure aim of seeking the pleasure of Allah. Sunnis and Shi'ahs have narrated from the Prophet (S) that he said: "Verily, deeds are according to intentions".

Verse 265

Qur'an: And the parable of those who spend their wealth seeking the pleasure of Allah and keeping firm their souls (2:265).

"Seeking the pleasure of Allah" means doing what Allah has ordered His servant to do. When the master gives an order to his servant and the servant complies with that order, the master faces him, pleased with him, Likewise, Allah orders His servant concerning certain things and when the servant obeys His command Allah turns towards him with pleasure and mercy.

The phrase "and keeping firm their souls" has been interpreted in various ways:

a. It means "certitude and confirmation".

b. *"at-Tathbit"* (التَّثْبِيْت = to keep firm) means *at-tathabbut* (التَّثَبُّت = to make sure). The phrase means that they want to make sure where they spend their wealth.

c. It means to make sure how they spend: if it is for the pleasure of Allah, they spend it; if there is any shade of impurity in intention, for example, and eargerness to be seen by men, they desist from spending.

d. It means keeping the souls firm in obedience to Allah.

e. It means establishing the soul firmly in faith by making it accustomed to spending property for the sake of Allah.

Obviously, these interpretations do not fit the verse unless one is prepared to stretch the meaning of the word "keeping firm" beyond its linguistic limit. Probably a more appropriate interpretation (and Allah knows better!) may be as follows:

Allah, first, unconditionally praised spending in His way, and mentioned that it had a very great reward in the presence of Allah. Then He excluded two kinds of spending, because Allah is not pleased with them and no reward will be given for them: 1) spending to show off to people, and such a deed is null and void *ab initio*; 2) spending that is followed by reproach and injury, for although such a deed is valid initially, it becomes nullified because of the subsequent sins of reproach and injury.

In these cases, the deed is nullified, either because the doer does not seek the pleasure of Allah from the very beginning (as in the first case) or because his soul changes the initial correct intention and seeks worldly satisfaction through reproach and injury (as in the second case).

Now Allah describes the condition of His good servants who spend purely for His sake. These are they who spend to seek the pleasure of Allah and then "keep firm their souls" on this pure intention without following it with bad deeds which could nullify it.

In short, "seeking the pleasure of Allah" means that the doer of a good deed should not contaminate his intention with showiness or other such things which would indicate that his action is for other than Allah. And "keeping firm their souls" means that he should fix his soul firmly in that pure and uncontaminated intention.

This "keeping firm" is done by the soul on the soul. Grammatically, *"tathbitan"* (**تَثْبِيْتا** = keeping firm) is *"at-tamyiz"* (**التَّمِيْز** = accusative of specification); *"min"* (**مِنْ** = from) shows origination; *"anfusihim"* (**اَنْفُسِهِم** = their souls) is the subject "from" which the action of "keeping firm" originates; its object is another *"anfusahum"* (**اَنْفُسَهُم** = their souls) which is deleted but understood. Accordingly, the phrase means that their souls keep firm their souls.

Alternatively, the word, “keeping firm” may be *“al-maf’ul al-mutlaq”* (المَفْعُوْلُ الْمُطْلَق = cognate accusative) for emphasis of a deleted but understood verb of the same meaning.

Qur’an: As the parable of a garden on an elevated ground, upon which heavy rain falls so it brings forth its fruit twofold but if heavy rain does not fall upon it, then light rain (is sufficient); and Allah sees what you do (2:265).

The root word *ar-raba’* (الرَّبَاء) means increase. *“ar-Rabwah”* (الرَّبْوَة) means a good earth which increases its growth and gives a high yield. The word is also used as *ar-rubwah* (الرُّبْوَة) and *ar-ribwah* (الرِّبْوَة). *“al-Ukul”* (الأُكُل) is what is eaten, *al Aklah* (الاَكْلَة) means one morsel. *“at-Tall”* (الطَّل) is a drizzle, which has little effect.

The parable has been revealed to show that spending which is done to seek the pleasure of Allah cannot fail to bring about a good effect. The spending was done for Allah and its connection with Allah has continued; therefore, divine care always looks after it, making it grow and flourish; it must surely bring forth its fruits. Of course, the degree of care varies according to variation in the degree of purity of the intention; and the strength of the deed is correlated with the firmness of soul.

There is a garden on a good earth; a heavy rain falls on it and it brings forth its fruits abundantly – although the yield may vary in quality and quantity, according to the amount of rain which falls on it.

As there is bound to be such variation, the verse ended on the sentence, “and Allah is aware of what you do”. He never has any doubt in the matter of rewards; the rewards of various deeds are never confused in His eyes; He does not give this one’s recompense to that one, and that one’s to this one.

Verse 266

Qur’an: Would anyone of you like that he should have a garden of palms and vines with streams flowing beneath it; he has in it all kinds of fruits; and old age has overtaken him and he has weak offspring, when (lo!) a whirlwind with fire in it smites it so it gets burnt up. Thus, Allah makes the signs clear to you, that you may reflect (2:266).

“al-Wudd” (الوُد) is to love, to long for, to yearn *“al-jannah”* (الجَنَّة) is a clump of trees, their branches touching each other. *“al-Jann”* (الجَن) means to cover, to shield. A garden is called *al-jannah* because it covers the earth and protects if from the rays of the sun, and the like. This word is used for a clump of trees only, not for the plot of land upon which those trees stand. That is why it is correct to say, as the verse says, “streams flowing beneath it”; if the word included the earth, the phrase would have been wrong. When the plot or earth is intended, the expression is changed:

…A lofty ground having meadows and springs (23:50).

On the other hand, the phrase, “garden beneath which rivers flow”, repeatedly occurs in the Qur’an.

The preposition “of”, in “a garden of palms and vines”, is for description; it describes the main type of trees and fruits; it does not give a full list of them. If the major part of a garden contains palms, it is generally called a palm garden, although it contains other trees also. That is why Allah said immediately after it, “he has in it all kinds of fruits”. *“al-Kibr”* (الكِبْر) is old age; *“adh-dhurriyyah”* (الذُّرِّيَّة) means children, offspring; *“ad-du’afa’”* (الضُّعَفَآء) is the plural of *“ad-da’if”* (الضَّعِيْف = weak).

This parable joins the old age of the progenitor with the weakness of the progeny to emphasize the utmost need of the said garden, in the absence of any other means of livelihood. Had the garden owner been young and strong he could have earned his livelihood with his hands even if the garden had been burnt down. Alternatively, if he had had no weak offspring, even if he had been an aged person, he would not have felt the effects of this calamity so much; he would have known that his days were numbered and soon he would be free from all troubles.

And if he had been of old age but had had strong offspring who could have work and earn their livelihood, they could have lived on their earning and the loss of the garden would not have caused much distress. But when old age coincides with weak offspring and the garden is burnt down, all possible means of livelihood are cut off. The old man cannot regain his youth and strength, so that he can re-create the garden as he had done before. His offspring are weak and they cannot do it themselves. And the garden is burnt down, it cannot regain its bloom and fruit.

“al-I’sar” (الإِعْصَار) is a cyclone. This parable puts before our eyes the position of those who spend their wealth and then follow it with reproach and injury, and thus their deed is nullified; and there is no way to return that deed to its state of validity again. The parable perfectly fits this situation.

Through this parable Allah expects such people to ponder upon their position. Such deeds are done only when people are overtaken by such evil traits as love of wealth and honour, pride and avarice. These evil traits do not let them contemplate and meditate; do not give them a chance to distinguish between what is beneficial and what is harmful, between good and bad. And if they had stopped to ponder, they would have seen the truth.

Verse 267

Qur’an: O you who believe! Spend (benevolently) out of the good things that you have earned and of what We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and do not aim at what is bad of it, that you may spend (in charity), while you would not take it yourselves unless you connived at it; and know that Allah is Self-sufficient, Praiseworth (2:267).

“at-Tayammum” (التَّيَمُّم) is to aim, to intend; *“al-khabith”* (الخَبِيْث = bad) is opposite of *“at-tayyib”* (الطَّيِّب = good); “of it” is related to the word “bad”. The phrase “that you may spend in charity” shows the “state” of the subject of the verb “do not aim”; the phrase “while you would not take it yourselves” shows the “state” of the subject of the verb “you may spend it”; it is governed by the same verb. The phrase

“unless you connive at it” is in place of an infinitive verb. It is said that a *“li”* (لِ = because) is understood before it – thus it would mean, “except because of your connivance at it”. Others have said that a *“bi”* (بِ = with) is understood here – in this case it would mean “except with your connivance at it”

Whatever the grammatical explanation, the meaning of the verse is a quite clear. Allah explains the condition of the wealth which should be spent: it should be from one’s good property; and not from bad property which the spender himself would not deign to accept unless he connived at it. Giving bad wealth in charity is not generosity at all; it is getting rid of an unwanted item. Such spending will not create any love of generosity in the donor’s heart, nor will it bring to him any spiritual perfection.

That is why the verse ends on the sentence

“And know that Allah is Self-sufficient, Praiseworthy” (***2:267***).

When you spend anything, keep in view the Self-sufficiency and Praiseworthiness of Allah. He needs nothing, yet He appreciates your good spending. Therefore, spend from your good property.

Or, it may mean: He is Self-sufficient and Praiseworthy. You should not bring to Him what is not fit for His Great Sanctity.

Verse 268

Qur’an: Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins you to abomination; and Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance; and Allah is Ample-giving, All-knowing (***2:268***).

The verse explains that choosing a bad thing for charity is not good for the charity-giver; it is only good property which is good for them to spend. The prohibition is for their own good, as the thing prohibited is bad for them. They dislike giving good items in charity because they believe that a good property makes one wealthy and rich; they therefore resist the idea of giving it away in charity. A bad item is worthless, and so they are ready to donate it in alms. But it is the temptation of Satan who frightens his friends with poverty.

The fact is that donating property and spending it in the way of Allah to seek His pleasure is just like any other good trade and dealing – it has its recompense and profit, as Allah has mentioned in these verses. Moreover, it is Allah who makes one rich and bestows abundance; property, by itself, has no power to enrich anyone. Allah says:

“And that He it is Who enriches and gives to hold” (***53:48***).

In short, it was a mistake on their part to withhold the good and likeable items from their charity because of fear of poverty. Allah points this out in the sentence

“Satan threatens you with poverty…” (***2:268***).

This sentence puts the cause (Satan's threatening) in place of its effect (fear of poverty). This figurative expression has been used to indicate that this fear is damaging to their interest, because whatever Satan incites one to do is bound to be wrong and an error – either directly or indirectly, that is, through something disguised as right.

Someone might have thought that this fear of poverty was reasonable, even if it was caused by Satan. The next sentences do not leave any room for such a misunderstanding: "and enjoins you to abomination". This withholding, this heavy-heartedness in spending good things creates in their souls the trait of miserliness and niggardliness, which in its turn leads one to disobey and reject those commands of Allah that effect one's wealth and property; it is clear disbelief in the Great Lord. Also, it casts the needy people into the perdition of poverty, privation and depression, which in its turn leads to loss of lives, and honour, and to every hope of crime and abomination. Allah says: And there are those of them who made a covenant with Allah:

"If He gives us out of His grace, we will certainly give alms and we will certainly be of the good" (***9:75***).

"But when He gave them out of His grace, they became niggardly of it and they turned back and they withdrew" (***9:76***).

"So He made hypocrisy to follow as a consequence into their hearts till the day when they shall meet Him because they failed to perform towards Allah what they had promised with Him and because they told lies" (***9:77***).

"Those who taunt the free-givers of alms among the believers and them who cannot find but their hard earnings, so they scoff at them; Allah will pay them back their scoffing, for them is a painful chastisement" (***9:79***).

"And Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance; and Allah is Ample-giving, All-knowing (***2:268***).

It further removes the earlier-mentioned possible misunderstanding. Allah had already clearly told the believers that there is either truth or falsehood; there is no third alternative. Truth is the straight path, that is from Allah; and falsehood is from Satan., Look at the following verses of the Meccan period:

"…And what is there after the truth but error?" (***10:32***).

"Say: "Allah guides to the truth" (***10:35***).

"…Surely, he (***i.e. Satan***) ***is an enemy, openly leading astray"*** (***28:15***).

In short, the above-mentioned sentence reminds them that the idea of niggardliness coming into your mind because of the fear of poverty is based on a bad judgement; forgiveness of Allah and increase in

wealth (mentioned in previous verses) come from spending from good property, not from niggardliness or from giving away unwanted items.

The sentence "Allah promises..." puts (like the preceding sentence "Satan threatens you ...") the cause in place of its effect. Also, it shows the contrast between the promise of Ample-giving, All-knowing Allah and the threat of Satan, so that the spenders may look at both and choose for themselves what is in their own interest.

The verse, in short says:

You choose bad items for spending, instead of good property, because you are afraid of poverty; and because you are unaware of the good results which accrue from spending good things. So far as the fear of poverty is concerned, it is the evil suggestion of Satan, and Satan always wants to put you in perdition and lead you to falsehood and abomination: you should never follow his evil whisperings. What follows a charity of good things is abundance and forgiveness. And it is sure to follow, because it is Allah Who has promised it, and His promise is true; He is Ample-giving - it is easy for Him to fulfil His promise and to give you abundance and forgiveness from Himself; He is All-knowing, not a single thing or condition is hidden from Him; therefore, what He has promised is based on His All-encompassing knowledge.

Verse 269

Qur'an: He grants wisdom to whom He pleases (2:269).

"al-ita'" (الإِيْتَآء) is to grant, to give. *"al-Hikmah"* (الحِكْمَة = wisdom) is on paradigm of *fi'lah* (فِعْلَه) which denotes a species or a variety of it. Its literal meaning will, therefore, be a sort of precision and perfection, or a species of perfect and precise thing in which there is no defect or flaw. Mostly it is used for intellectual cognition that is true and not liable to falsehood and error at all.

This sentence shows that what has preceded it (spending, its causes and its good effects on human life) is based on wisdom. *al-hikmah* (wisdom) is a true proposition, conforming to the facts; it contains the bliss and felicity of man, because it clarifies the divine realities concerning the origin and the end of the world and mankind, and explains the principles of the physical world in-as-much as it touches on human bliss and felicity; it includes the fundamental truths of nature upon which are based the laws of religion.

Qur'an: And whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good (2:269).

The meaning is clear. The sentence is in the passive voice, although the preceding sentence has clearly said that it is Allah Who grants wisdom; this passive voice has been used to show that wisdom, in itself, is the source of a great good; whoever gets it, is bound to get that great good; and that good is not only because wisdom is given by Allah. If "giving" is attributed to Allah it does not necessarily mean that the thing given is good, or that it will end in good. Allah says about the Qur'an:

"…and We had given him of the treasures, so much that its keys would certainly weigh down a company of men possessed of strength" (***28:76***).

"Thus, We made the earth to swallow up him and his abode; so he has no body of helpers to assist him against Allah …" (***28:81***).

The verse attributes "great good" to wisdom, instead of unqualified "good", although wisdom has a high status and a great splendour. It was to show that every affair depends, for its good end, on the care and help of Allah; and that blessings and bliss are good only when its end are good.

Qur'an: And none but men of understanding mind (***2:269***).

"al-Lubb" (اللُّب) literally means kernel, the softer part within hard shell. It is used in the meaning of *al-'aql* (العَقْل = understanding because understanding has the same position *vis-a-vis* the man as the kernel has *vis-a-vis* its hard shell. It is used in this very meaning in the Qur'an. The use of the noun *al-'aql* with the meaning of understanding, seems to be of a later origin; that is why it has not been used in this form in the Qur'an; although its verb have often been used, for example, "*ya'qilun"* (يَعْقِلُوْن = they understand). *"at-Tadhakkur"* (التَّذَكُّر) means to remember, to mind. It means going from a conclusion to its premises or from the premises to their conclusion. The verse shows that wisdom depends on minding, which in its turn depends on understanding. There is no wisdom where there is no understanding. Some details about understanding have been given earlier in the discussion about the words used for perception.

Verse 270

Qur'an: And whatever alms you give or whatever vow you vow surely Allah knows it; and the oppressors shall have no helpers (***2:270***).

What Allah has called you to spend, and what you have made obligatory on yourselves through a vow is not hidden from Allah. He shall give rewards to him who obeys Him and shall chastise him who is unjust to others and oppresses them. There is a shade of threatening in this sentence (***…Allah knows it***), and this is emphasized by the next sentence: "and the oppressors shall have no helpers".

This last sentence proves four things:

First: The oppression in this verse means the oppression of the needy and poor by not spending on them and by withholding their financial rights. It does not mean other sins and injustices, because there are helpers, atonements and interceders in the case of other sins. For example, there is repentance, the avoidance of great sins, and the intercessors on the Day of Resurrection for the sins concerning the rights of Allah. Allah says:

"…Do not despair of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives the faults altogether…" (***39:53***).

"And return to your Lord…" (***39:54***).

"If you avoid great sins which you are forbidden, We will expiate from you your (***small***) ***sins"*** (***4:31***).

"…And they do not intercede except for him whom He approves…" (***21:28***).

This also explains why this verse mentions "helpers" (in the plural). It is because there shall be many helpers in case of other sins.

Second: This oppression, that is, neglect of charity, is not liable to expiation. Had it been a minor sin, it would have been wiped out by expiation. In other words, it is a great sin. Also, it proves that it is not forgiven by repentance. It gets support from the traditions which say that repentance from sins concerning the rights of people is not accepted unless the sinner returns and gives all the due rights to those who possess them. Nor shall the intercession of the intercessors avail them on the Day of Resurrection, as is clearly seen in the words of Allah:

"Except the people of the right hand" (***74:39***).

"In gardens; they shall ask each other" (***7:40***).

"About the guilty" (***7:41***).

"What has brought you into Hell?" (***7:42***).

"They shall say: "We were not of those who prayed" (***7:43***).

"And we used not to feed the poor…" (***7:44***).

"So the intercession of the intercessors shall not avail them" (***74:48***).

Third: This oppressor is not of those with whom Allah is pleased. Intercession shall be for only those whose religion Allah approves and is pleased with. (Vide the topic of Intercession.) This shows why Allah used, in verse 2:265, the words "seeking the pleasure of Allah", and did not say "seeking the Person of Allah".

Fourth: Not spending property on the needy and poor when they are present and need assistance is a great and mortal sin. Allah has counted some kinds of not spending as equivalent to ascribing partners to Allah and disbelieving in the last day. For example, He says about not giving alms:

"…And woe to the polytheists" (***41:6***).

"Who do not give zakat and they are unbelievers in the hereafter" (***41:7***).

It should be noted that this chapter is from the Meccan period when az-zakat (الزَّكوة = poor rate) as

known to us was not ordained. Therefore, it must refer to general alms.

Verse 271

***Qur'an: If you give alms openly, it is well, and if you hide it and give it to poor, it is better for you; and this will remove from you some of your sins; and Allah is aware of what you do* (*2:271*).**

"al-Ibda'" (الإِبْدَآء) means to show, to exhibit. *"as-Sadaqat"* (الصَّدَقَات) is the plural of *as-sadaqah* (الصَّدَقَة), which means expenditure in the way of Allah; it is a general word used for both obligatory and voluntary spending. Sometimes it is said that its original meaning is voluntary spending.

Allah praises both ways of spending because each has some good effects. Giving alms openly presents a practical example of enjoining good; it encourages people to spend and to be generous. Also, it makes the needy and poor happy – they see that there are in society people who have sympathy with them, that there is some wealth earmarked for them, and kept in reserve for the day they will need it. This, in its turn, removes their pessimistic feelings, gives them a new vigour to pursue their activities, and creates a feeling of oneness between them and the wealthy members of society. And all these effects are good.

Hiding alms and giving secretly to the poor is also good; such an alms-giving is far removed from showiness, reproach and injury; it protects the poor members of society from shame and disgrace, and preserve their honour and prestige in the eyes of the public.

Thus, open charity creates good effects in society much more than secret charity; and secret charity is purer in intention.

The foundation of religion is purity of intention; the more a deed is nearer to this purity, the more it is nearer to excellence. That is why Allah gave more weight to secret alms:

***"And if you hide it and give it to the poor, it is better for you"* (*2:271*).**

Needless to say that "better" is in the comparative.

And Allah is well-aware of the actions of His servants; there is no chance of His mistaking the "better" deed for something else, "and Allah is aware of what you do".

Verse 272

***Qur'an: To make them walk in the right way is not incumbent on you, but Allah guides aright whom He pleases* (*2:272*).**

It is a parenthetic sentence addressed to the Prophet, in between the general talk addressed to the believers. The Apostle of Allah felt that there were many differences in various aspects of the charities

given by the believers: some of them were sincere, while others indulged in reproach and injury, or were reluctant to spend out of their good property. This observation saddened him, because all of them were believers. Therefore, Allah consoled and comforted him by reminding him that the belief found in them and their guidance are in the hands of Allah; He guides whom He pleases to belief and the various degrees of it; it is not in the power of the Prophet to create it or to preserve it. Therefore, it is not the responsibility of the Prophet to preserve their belief, nor should he worry about its weakening or extinction, nor should he be disappointed by the threatening and harsh tone used in some of these verses.

When an infinitive verb is joined to a noun or pronoun in a possessive phrase, it implies that verb's coming into being. In this verse Allah has used the phrase *"hudahum"* (هُدَاهُم) which means "their guidance". As explained above, it implies the "guidance" which actually exists. That is why we have translated it as "To make them walk in the right path".

Apart from this, whenever Allah has attributed guidance to Himself, showing that the Prophet has no power to guide them, it has been done to comfort and console him.

In short, this sentence is parenthetic, inserted between the address to the believers, so that the Prophet may not be disheartened. It is like the verses:

"Do not move your tongue with it to make haste with it" (***75:16***).

"Surely on Us is the collecting of it and the reciting of it" (***75:17***).

"Therefore, when We have recited it, then follow its recitation (***75:18***).

When the purpose was served, the speech reverted to the original talk with the believers.

Qur'an: And whatever good thing you spend, it is to your own good, and you do not spend but to seek Allah's pleasure, and whatever good thing you spend shall be paid back to you in full, and you shall not be wronged (***2:272***).

Now the speech is again addressed to the believers, in a style which is devoid of both good news and warning, unaffected by the tone of mercy or anger. Obviously, it results from the preceding words,

"But Allah guides aright whom He pleases" (***2:272***).

Now the speech only calls them to spend, clearly saying that the speaker has nothing to gain from this call. Whatever benefits are in spending are for their own good – provided they do not spend except to seek Allah's pleasure. The sentence "and you do not spend but to seek Allah's pleasure" shows the state of the principal sentence, and its meaning is: "and whatever good things you spend it is to your own good while you do not spend but to seek Allah's pleasure".

As it was possible for someone to think that this benefit (which was supposed to accrue to them from spending) was just a name without any substance, Allah continued the verse, saying "and whatever good thing you spend shall be paid back to you in full, and you shall not be wronged". These sentences make it clear that the benefit of this recommended spending, that is, the reward promised for it in this world and in the hereafter, is not an imaginary thing; it is a factual and actual existent; Allah shall pay it back in full to the spender, and he shall not be wronged, that is, his repayment shall not be reduced or lost.

The verb, "shall be paid back to you in full", is in the passive voice. The payer (i.e. Allah) has not been mentioned by name. This style was opted for so that the speech may be more effective. Whatever benefit is there, is for the spender only; the Giver of the rewards gains nothing from it; look here, even His name is not mentioned in this verse.

The verse, in short, is like a speech which has no speaker; if there is any benefit from it, it will accrue to the listener only.

Verse 273

***Qur'an:* (*Charity is*) *for the poor who are besieged in the way of Allah – they cannot go about in the land; the ignorant man thinks them to be rich on account of their self-control* (*from begging*)*; thou wouldst recognize them by their countenance; they do not beg from men importunately; and whatever good thing you spend, surely Allah knows it* (*2:273*).**

"al-Hasr" (الحَصْر) gives the meaning of constraint. ar-Raghib has written in his *al-Mufradat*: *al-Hasr* and *"al-ihsar"* (الإِحْصَار) mean to prevent people from the way of the House (of Allah). *al-ihsar* is used for the manifest hindrance (like the enemy) as well as for the hidden snag (like sickness). But *al-hasr* is used for the hidden hindrance only. Therefore, the words of Allah: but if you be prevented (2:196), cover both types of hindrance; so also are the words

***"For the poor who are besieged in the way of Allah"* (*2:273*).**

But the words of Allah "or who come to you, their hearts shrinking" refer to hidden hindrances like cowardice and miserliness.

"*at-Ta'affuf"* (التَّعَفُّف) means to acquire the characteristics of chastity and integrity; *"as-sima"* (السِّيْمَا) is the sign, the mark, *"al-ilhaf"* (الإِلْحَاف) is to beg importunately.

The verse explains the way to use alms – the best use: those poor persons who have been besieged in the way of Allah and are confined in it, because of some factors beyond their control. For example: an enemy who took away their dress and covering, or prevented them from going out to earn their livelihood; a sickness which closed the door of income for them; an activity (like acquiring knowledge) which does not leave them time to earn their livelihood.

The words,

"The ignorant man (i.e., ignorant of their condition) ***thinks them to be rich on account of their self-control"*** (***2:273***).

Mean that they do not display their poverty, except that which cannot be hidden in any way, like the etchings of poverty on their faces, or like old clothes, etc.

It is said that the words

"They do not beg from men importunately" (***2:273***).

Mean that they do not beg from men at all, so that it could push them to importunity. Once a man begs from someone for his needs, he loses his restraint and soon a time comes when he begs from everyone importunately and shamelessly.

More probably, the sentence means what it says; it negates importunity in asking from men, and not discrete asking. Importunate begging may mean such asking which exceeds the limit of the necessary description of one's needs. It should not be forgotten that explaining one's needs in extreme hardship is not only allowed but sometimes becomes even necessary. But exceeding that limit is importunity, and is condemned.

Allah said

"Thou canst recognize them by their countenance" (***2:273***).

And did not say "you can recognize them". It was done to protect their honour and preserve their self-respect, because of which they exercised self-control and did not ask from men indiscreetly. Had Allah said "you can recognize them" it would have meant that their poverty was well-known to everyone; and it would have been against their honour, an open humiliation. But there is no disgrace for them if the Messenger of Allah (S) knows their conditions by looking at their countenance: after all, he is their Prophet, sent to them, has mercy on them and is kind to them. This is the reason - and Allah knows better - why in this sentence the singular pronoun has been used, in contrast to the other pronouns in this verse.

Verse 274

Qur'an: Those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and openly, for them is their reward with their Lord, and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve (***2:274***).

The words "secretly" and "openly" are opposite to each other and they describe the condition of spending. This verse covers all possible times (by night and by day) and conditions (secretly and openly) of spending; it shows how much those spenders were keen on obtaining the reward, and how deep was

their desire or seek the pleasure of Allah.

As a result, Allah turned towards them with mercy and promised them a good promise in the language of kindness and grace:

"For them is their reward with their Lord, and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve" (***2:274***).

Traditions

It is narrated in *ad-Durr al-Manthur*, about the words of Allah: and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases: Ibn Majah has narrated from al-Hasan Ibn 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Abu 'd-Darda', Abu Hurayrah, Abu Amamah al-Bahili, 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar, Jabir Ibn 'Abdullah and 'Imran Ibn Hasin, all of them narrating from the Messenger of Allah (S) that he said: (And Ibn Majah and Ibn Abi Hatim have narrated from 'Imran Ibn Hasin from the Messenger of Allah that he said:) "He who spent a property in the way of Allah and himself stayed in his house, shall get for every dirham seven hundred dirhams; and he, who himself fought in the way of Allah and spent his property in this way, shall get on the Day of Resurrection for every dirham seven hundred thousand dirhams". Then he (the Prophet) recited this verse:

And Allah multiplies for whom He pleases (***2:261***).

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "When a believer does well in his deed, Allah multiplies his deed, every good deed seven hundred times. And this is the word of Allah: and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases. Therefore, make good your deeds which you do to obtain the reward of Allah."[2]

This tradition has been narrated by al-Barqi also.

'Umar Ibn Muslim said: "I heard Abu 'Abdillah ('a) saying: 'When a believer does well in his deed, Allah multiplies his deed, every good deed seven hundred times. And this is the word of Allah: and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases. Therefore, make good your deeds which you do to obtain the reward of Allah.' I (i.e. 'Umar Ibn Muslim) said: 'And what does "making good" mean?' He said: 'When you pray, make your *ruku'* and *sajdah* good, and when you fast, keep away from that which spoils your fast, and when you do *hajj*, be on guard against all that is forbidden to you in your *hajj* and *'umrah.'* Then he said: 'And every deed that you do should be clean from impurity.'"[3]

In the same book there is a tradition from Himran from Abu Ja'far ('a). Himran said: "I asked him (i.e. Abu Ja'far ('a)): 'Do you think that a believer has superiority over a Muslim in anything like inheritance, judgements and orders, so that a believer should have more than a Muslim in inheritance or other things?' He said: 'No. They both proceed on the same path (i.e., are equal) in all this, when the Imam decides between them; but the believer has a superiority over the Muslim in so far as their deeds are concerned.'" He (Himran) said: "I told him: 'Has not Allah said: Whoever brings a good deed he shall have ten like it? And you think that they (i.e., the other Muslims) are gathered together with the believers

in prayer, fasting and the *hajj*?' He (the Imam) said: 'Has not Allah said that Allah multiplies for whom He pleases manifold? Thus, the believers are those for whom the good deeds are multiplied, for every good deed seventy-fold; so this is among their excellence; and Allah multiplies for the believer his good deeds according to the rectitude of his belief a manifold multiplication; and Allah does for the believer what He pleases.'"

The author says: There are other traditions with this meaning. And all of them are based on the view that the sentence: and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases is general, and that it covers doers of other good deeds also, in addition to those who spend in the way of Allah. And this view is the correct one; because the only thing that can be said for limiting it to the spenders is the fact that it was revealed in the context of spending; but we know that if a verse is revealed at a certain time or in a certain context, that time or that context does not restrict the general meaning of the word or the sentence.

And as the verse is not limited to spending, likewise, the word *"yuda'if"* (يُضَاعِف = increases, multiplies) should be treated as general; it implies every kind of increase, in number as well as in other ways. In short, the meaning of the verse will be: And Allah increases, enhances and multiplies a good deed in any way He pleases for anyone He pleases; He multiplies for every doer of good his good deed seven hundred times, or more, or less, as He increases for those who spend more than seven hundred times when He so pleases.

Question: You said earlier that it was wrong to interpret this sentence as saying "and Allah multiplies this multiplication for whom He pleases", and now you interpret it here in this very way.

Reply: What we refuted there was limiting this meaning to those who spend. And this tradition also rejects the idea that the verse is limited in any way.

The words of the Imam "Allah multiplies for whom He pleases manifold" combine two verses together: one, this very verse under discussion, and second, verse 245 of this second chapter: Who is it that will lend to Allah a goodly loan, so He will multiply it for him manifold.

It may be inferred from this tradition that the deeds of (those of) other sects of Islam (apart from the believers) may be accepted and given their reward. We shall discuss this topic under verse 98 of chap. 4:

***"Except the weakened ones from among the men…"* (*4:98*).**

The author of *Majma' al-Bayan* says: This verse is general about spending in all these things (i.e. *jihad* and other ways of charity); and the same is narrated from Abu 'Abdillah ('a).

'Abdu 'r-Razzaq has narrated in his *al-Musannaf* from Ayyub that he said: "A man came to the Prophet from Ra's Tall. Thereupon they (i.e. the companions) said: 'How brave is this man? Would that his bravery were in the way of Allah!' The Prophet said: 'Is only he who was killed in the way of Allah?' Then

he explained: ‘The one who went out in the earth seeking a lawful (earning) to sustain his parents is in the way of Allah; and the one who went out seeking a lawful (earning) to sustain his family is in the way of Allah; and the one who went out seeking a lawful (earning) to sustain himself is in the way of Allah; and the one who went out vying in exuberance is in the way of Satan.’”[4]

Ibn al-Mundhir and al-Hakim have narrated (and the latter has said that it is correct) that the Messenger of Allah (S) asked al-Bara’ Ibn ‘Azib: “O Bara’! How is your spending for your mother?” (And al-Bara’ was generous to his family.) He replied: “O Messenger of Allah! How good it is! (i.e., it is very good).” (The Prophet) said: “Verily, your expenditure on your family and child and servant is alms; therefore, you should not follow it with reproach or injury.”[5]

The author says: The traditions containing this meaning are numerous from the chains of both sects; and those traditions say that every deed which Allah is pleased with is in the way of Allah; and every expenditure in the way of Allah is alms.

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsir* of al-Qummi, under the verse:

“Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah …” (***2:262***).

From Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: “Whoever conferred something good on a believer and then injured him (i.e. his feelings) with his talk or reproached him has surely nullified his charity...” Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said: *as-Safwan* (الصَّفْوَان) is a big rock in a desert. *al-Wabil* (الوَابِل) is rain; and *at-tall* (الطَّل) is what settles at night on trees and plants. *al-I’sar* (الإِعْصَار) is wind.

Ibn Jarir has recorded from ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib (‘a) about the words of Allah: O you who believe! spend (benevolently) out of the good things that you have earned (he said, “from gold and silver”), and of what We have brought forth for you out of the earth, (he said, “from grain and dates and everything in which zakat is prescribed).[6]

Ibn Abi Shaybah, ‘Abd Ibn Hamid, at-Tirmidhi (and he has said that this tradition is correct), Ibn Majah, Ibn Jarir, Ibnu ‘1-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Marduwayh, al-Hakim; (and he has said that it is correct) and al-Bayhaqi (in his *as-Sunan*) have narrated from al-Bara’ Ibn ‘Azib, that he said about the words of Allah, and do not aim at what is bad of it that you may spend (in charity): “It was revealed about us, the group of the Helpers (ansar). We owned date-palms. (It was our custom that) a man used to come from his trees, however numerous or few they might be; and he brought a bunch of dates or two, and hung it in the mosque; and the people of the “raised platform” (*Ahlu ‘s-Suffah*) had nothing to sustain them. Therefore, when one of them felt hungry, he used to come to that bunch and hit it with his stick; thus, unripe and ripe dates dropped down and he ate them. And there were some people, not inclined to generosity, who brought bunches which had gone bad and had dried, and also broken bunches; and they hung them (in the mosque). Thereupon, Allah sent down the verse:

O you who believe! spend (***benevolently***) ***out of the good things that you have earned and what***

We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and do not aim at what is bad of it that you may spend (in charity), while you would not take it yourselves unless you connived at it. (2:267).

Allah commented that if one of you were given a present like that which he gave in charity he would not accept it except if he connived at it or felt shy of rejecting it." al-Bara' then said: "Therefore, everyone of us used to bring the best that he had."[7]

There is a tradition in *al-Kafi*, that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said about the words of Allah: O you who believe! spend (benevolently) out of the good things that you have earned and of what We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and do not aim at what is bad of it that you may spend (in charity): "When the Messenger of Allah (S) ordered *az-zakat* (poor-rate) on dates, some people used to bring various types of dates as poor-rate, (dates) of the worst kind. They took out as their poor-rate the dates called *aj-ju'rur* and *al-mi'afarah*, those with little flesh and big stones. And others brought good dates. Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah (S) said: 'Do not estimate these two (types of) dates and do not bring any of them (as poor-rate).' And concerning this was revealed: and do not aim at what is bad of it that you may spend (in charity), while you would not take it yourselves unless you connived at it. And conniving means to take these two dates."

There is another tradition from Abu 'Abdillah ('a) about the above-mentioned verse, that he said: "The people had earned bad earnings in the (days of) ignorance. When they became Muslims, they wanted to take that (unlawful earning) from their property to give it in charity. But Allah did not allow them except that they should take out from the best of their earnings."

The author says: There are may traditions with this meaning from the chains of the both sects.

It is quoted in *at-Tafsir* of al-Qummi about the words of Allah:

Satan threatens you with poverty…that Allah (2:268).

Means, "Satan tells you, 'Do not spend, otherwise you shall become poor', and Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance", that is, He shall give you if you spend for His sake and shall reimburse you abundantly.

at-Tirmidhi (and he has said that this tradition is correct), an-Nasa'i, Ibn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Hibban and al-Bayhaqi (in his *ash-Shu'ab*) have narrated from Ibn Mas'ud that he said that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: "Verily, Satan has a nearness with the son of Adam and the angel has a nearness (with him). As for the nearness of Satan, it is a threatening with evil and a denying of truth. And as for the nearness of the angel, it is promising of good and a confirming of truth; therefore, whoever felt it, should know that it is from Allah, so let him thank Allah. And whoever felt that other (effect), should seek the protection of Allah against Satan." Then (the Messenger of Allah) recited:

Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins you to abomination… (2:268)[8]

at-Tafsir of al-'Ayyashi quotes Abu Ja'far ('a) about the words of Allah, and whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good, that he said: "The knowledge (of Allah)."

The same book quotes Imam as-Sadiq ('a) as saying: "Verily, wisdom is the knowledge (of Allah) and understanding of the religion."

al-Kafi quotes Imam as-Sadiq ('a) as saying in explanation of this verse: "Obedience to Allah and knowledge of the Imam."

The author says: There are other traditions with the same meaning; and they present some examples of a general meaning.

There is in *al-Kafi* a tradition: from a group of our companions, from Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Khalid, from some of our companions, who mentioned the chain of narrators reaching the Messenger of Allah; the narrator said that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: "Allah did not distribute among (His) servants anything better than wisdom; so, the sleep of the wise is better than the wakefulness of the ignorant, and the staying of the wise is better than the rising of the ignorant. And Allah did not send any prophet nor any apostle till (his) understanding was perfected and his wisdom was superior to all the wisdom of his people. And what the prophet keeps hidden in his mind is superior to the endeavours of the endeavourers. And the servant does not fulfil his obligations (towards) Allah until he knows Him; and all the worshippers together do not reach in the excellence of their worship what a wise (person) attains; and the wise people are the people of understanding; Allah says: and none but men of understanding mind."

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "Wisdom is the light of knowledge, and the weighing scale of piety, and the fruit of truth; and if you were to say that Allah did not bestow upon His servant a bounty greater and higher and better and more magnificent than wisdom, you would be saying (the truth). Allah, Powerful and Great is He, has said:

He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good; and none but men of understanding mind." (***2:269***).

The author says: There are many traditions about the verse: And whatever alms you give ..., concerning the alms, the vow and the injustice, which we shall write, God willing, in more appropriate places.

It is reported in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from several chains from Ibn 'Abbas, Ibn Jubayr, Asma' bint Abi Bakr and others that the Messenger of Allah used to forbid (the giving of) alms to non-Muslims; and the Muslims disliked spending on their non-believing relatives. Then, Allah sent down this verse:

To make them walk in the right way is not incumbent on you... (***2:272***).

Thereupon, (the Messenger of Allah) allowed it.

The author says: It has already been explained that the phrase *"hudahum"* (هُدَاهُم = their guidance; to make them walk in the right way) appropriately means guiding the Muslims themselves by making them follow the right path; it has no connection with the unbelievers. The verse, therefore, is quite unrelated to the story of its revelation mentioned in the above report. Moreover, the very next verse which prescribes the group on which the alms should be spent (for the poor who are besieged in the way of Allah ...) does not support this story.

So far as spending on a non-Muslim is concerned, the generality of the verse is enough to allow it provided it is done in the way of Allah and to seek the pleasure of Allah.

al-Kafi quotes Imam as-Sadiq ('a) about the words of Allah: And if you hide it and give it to the poor, it is better for you, that he said: "It is in other than *az-zakat*; verily *az-zakat* is openly, not secretly."

There is another tradition in the same book from the same Imam: "Whatever Allah has made obligatory on you, announcing it is better than hiding it; and whatever is voluntary, hiding it is better than announcing it."

The author says: There are other traditions with the same meanings as the two above traditions. And its meaning may be clearly understood from earlier explanations.

It is written in *Majma' al-Bayan*, under the verse: (Charity is) for the poor who are besieged in the way of Allah ..., that Abu Ja'far ('a) said: "It was revealed about the companions of the raised platform." the author of *Majma' al-Bayan* goes on to say that the same thing has been narrated by al-Kalbi from Ibn 'Abbas. "And they were about four hundred men; they had no houses in Medina, nor were there any people of their clans where they could find shelter. Therefore, they got themselves settled in the mosque; and they said: 'We shall go out in every expedition sent by the Messenger of Allah.' Therefore, Allah exhorted the people to (help) them. Then (it became a custom that) if a man took his meal and some food was left over, he brought it to them."

In *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi, Abu Ja'far ('a) is quoted as saying: "Verily Allah hates the one who begs importunately."

It is written in *Majma' al-Bayan*, under the words of Allah:

***"Those who spend their wealth by night and by day..."* (*2:274*).**

Ibn 'Abbas said describing the reason of its revelation: "It was revealed about 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib ('a); he had four dirhams; and he gave them in charity, one at night-time, and one in the day-time, one secretly and one openly. Then came down this verse: Those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and openly ..." at-Tabrisi (author of *Majma' al-Bayan*) further said: "And the same is narrated from Abu Ja'far ('a) and Abu 'Abdillah ('a)."

The author says: And this thing has been narrated by al-'Ayyashi in his *at-Tafsir*; al-Mufid in his *al-*

Ikhtisas, and as-Saduq in his *'Uyun al-akhbar*.

'Abdu 'r-Razzaq, 'Abd Ibn Hamid, Ibn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, at-Tabarani and Ibn 'Asakir have narrated through the chain of 'Abdu '1-Wahhab Ibn Mujahid from his father from Ibn 'Abbas about the words of Allah: Those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and openly ..., that he said: "It was revealed about 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib ('a) that he had four dirhams; and he spent them (in charity) at night one dirham, and in the day one dirham, and secretly one dirham, and openly one dirham."[9]

al-Burhan (*Tafsir*) quotes Ibn Shahrashub (in his *al-Manaqib*) who narrated from Ibn 'Abbas, as-Suddi, Mujahid, al-Kalbi, Abu Salih, al-Wahidi, at-Tusi, ath-Tha'labi, at-Tabrisi, al-Mawardi, al-Qushayri, ath-Thumali, an-Naqqash, al-Fattal, 'Abdullah Ibn al-Husayn and 'Ali Ibn Harb at-Ta'i (in their books of *at-Tafsir*) that: 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib had some silver dirhams; so he gave in charity one at night and one in the day, and one secretly, and one openly. Thereupon was revealed (the verse): Those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and openly ...Thus Allah named (his) every dirham a wealth and gave him the good news of acceptance.

It is written in some books of *tafasir* (pl. of tafsir, i.e., commentary) that the verse was revealed about Abu Bakr; he gave in charity forty thousand dinars - ten by night, and ten by day and ten secretly and ten openly.

The author says: al-Alusi has written in his *at-Tafsir* under this tradition: "al-Imamu 's-Suyuti has commented that the report of his (i.e., Abu Bakr's) giving forty thousand dinars in charity has only been narrated by Ibn 'Asakir in his history from 'A'ishah, and there is no mention of the revelation of this verse in that report. It seems that those who claimed it (i.e., the revelation of the verse about Abu Bakr) inferred it from the tradition narrated by Ibn al-Mundhir from Ibn Ishaq that he said: 'When Abu Bakr died and 'Umar became Khalifah, he addressed the people; he thanked Allah and praised Him as He should be praised; then he said: "O people! verily, some avarice is poverty, and some abandoning of hope is self-sufficiency; and verily you gather what you do not eat, and you hope for what you do not get. And know that some miserliness is a branch of hypocrisy; therefore, spend for your own good." Then he said: "So where are the people of this verse?" - and saying it, he recited this verse. And you know that these words do not show in any way that this verse was revealed about Abu Bakr.'"

It is reported in *ad-Durr al-Manthur*, through various chains, from Abu Amamah, Abu 'd-Darda', Ibn 'Abbas and others that the verse was revealed about the people of the horses.

The author says: "The people of the horses" refers to those who kept the horses (for the purpose of *jihad*) and spent on them by night and by day. But the wording of the verse, "secretly and openly", does not fit this interpretation. What would be the sense of this generalization and particularization in the case of spending on horses?

There is also in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from *al-Musayyab* that this whole verse was revealed in praise of

‘Abdu ‘r-Rahman Ibn ‘Awf and ‘Uthman Ibn ‘Affan when they spent on “the army of straitened circumstances” (i.e., army of Tabuk).

The author says: The same objection arises here as has been levelled against the preceding interpretation - that it does not fit the wordings of the Qur’an.

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1. Nahj ul-balaghah, Sermon 129.
2. at-Tafsir of al-’Ayyashi.
3. at-Tafsir of al-’Ayyashi.
4. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
5. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
6. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
7. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
8. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
9. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 275- 281

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبَا وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا فَمَنْ جَاءَهُ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَانْتَهَىٰ فَلَهُ مَا سَلَفَ وَأَمْرُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

Those who swallow down interest cannot stand except as one whom Satan has confounded with (his) touch does stand. That is because they say, trade is only like interest. And Allah has allowed trade and forbidden interest. To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists, for him shall be what has already passed, and his affair rests with Allah; and whoever returns (to it) - these are the inmates of the fire; they shall abide in it (2:275).

يَمْحَقُ اللَّهُ الرِّبَا وَيُرْبِي الصَّدَقَاتِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ أَثِيمٍ

Allah effaces interest, and He causes charities to grow; and Allah does not love any ungrateful sinner (2:276).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Surely, they who believe and do good deeds and establish prayer and pay the poor-rate they shall have their reward with their Lord and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve (2:277).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَذَرُوا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

O you who believe! fear Allah and forgo what remains (due) from interest, if you are believers (2:278).

فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْذَنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُءُوسُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا تَظْلِمُونَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ

But if you do (it) not, then be apprised of war from Allah and His Apostle; and if you repent, then you shall have your capital; neither shall you deal unjustly, nor shall you be dealt with unjustly (2:279).

وَإِنْ كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ وَأَنْ تَصَدَّقُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

And if (the debtor) is in straitened circumstances, then let there be respite until (he is in) ease; and that you remit (it) as alms is better for you, if you knew (2:280).

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

And fear the day in which you shall be returned to Allah; then every soul shall be paid back in full what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly (2:281).

General Comment

These verses were revealed to emphasize the prohibition of interest and to put strong pressure on the interest-takers; they are not the verses that originally legislated the prohibition of interest; their language is not that of legislation. The law forbidding interest was ordained most probably by the following verse of the third chapter:

O you who believe! do not devour interest, making it double and redouble, and fear Allah, that you may succeed (3:130).

Also look at one of the verses under discussion:

"O you who believe! fear Allah and forgo what remains (due) from interest, if you are believers" (2:278).

It shows that the Muslims, even after the previous prohibition, sometimes took interest; and therefore, Allah ordered them to desist from this practice and to remit that part of the interest which remained due from the debtors. With this background, the meaning of the following sentence becomes quite clear:

"To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists, for him shall be what has already passed, and his affair rests with Allah…" (2:275).

Even long before the verse of the third chapter, a Meccan chapter (the 30th), had condemned the practice of taking interest:

And whatever you lay out as interest, so that it may increase in the properties of men, it shall not increase with Allah; and whatever you give in charity, desiring Allah's pleasure – it is these (persons) that shall get manifold (30:39).

It shows that interest was a thing abhorred since the early days of the Call, before the *Hijrah*; then it was clearly forbidden in the third chapter; and finally, it was most forcefully condemned and denounced in these seven verses (under discussion), the style of which clearly shows that interest was forbidden long before they were revealed. It also proves that these seven verses were revealed after the third chapter.

Moreover, interest was prohibited in Judaism, as Allah says about the Jews:

And their (Jews') taking interest, though indeed forbidden were they against it (4:161).

And also He says quoting them:

this is because they say: there is nothing upon us in the matter of the unlearned people (3:75).

Add to it the fact that the Qur'an verified their book and did not abrogate this law. All of this together was enough to make the Muslims understand that interest was prohibited and forbidden in Islam.

These verses of interest have some connection with the preceding verses of spending in the way of Allah. And this connection has been clearly pointed out in these verses: for example, "Allah effaces interest and He causes charities to grow"; "and that you remit (it) as alms is better for you". Likewise, the verse of the thirtieth chapter contrasts it with alms; and that of the third chapter is followed by praise of spending, exhorting the believers to spend benevolently in the way of Allah.

Moreover, reason also recognizes the contrast and mutual opposition of interest and charity. Interest is taking without giving anything in exchange; charity is giving without taking anything in exchange. The evils emanating from interest are poles apart from the good effects of charity. Charity spreads mercy and love, strengthens the morale of the poor members of society, increases wealth, maintains good social

order, and then as a result of mutual love and respect, peace reigns over the land. The evils resulting from interest are exactly opposite to these good effects.

Allah has, in these verses, condemned interest in the most emphatic words. No other deed has been condemned in such a harsh tone. The only exception is befriending the enemies of religion, which also has been execrated with equal force. All other major sins have been condemned emphatically in the Qur'an, but the level of their condemnation is far below that used for these two evils. Not only fornication, liquor and gambling, but even more grievous sins like murder and creating mischief in the earth seem milder than these two – interest and making friends with the enemies of religion. Why? The reason is very clear. The bad effects of the above-mentioned sins remain mostly confined to individuals, one or more; further, they impair only some particular psychological traits of the doer.

But these two evils bring such destruction in their wake that religion is uprooted and even its signs are obliterated; the life-line of human social order is severed; human nature is over-powered by their harmful intoxication, and it loses all its control over the people's thinking and action.

History has shown why the Qur'an had spoken so forcefully against befriending the enemies of religion and against interest. Look at the pitiable condition of the Muslim countries. They started adulating the enemies of Islam, making friends with them and adoring them. They inclined psychologically towards them. And now we see the result: they have fallen down into the pit of perdition; they are plundered and pillaged by the same "beloved" enemies; they have no control over their own destiny; they have lost their wealth, their honour and even their identity; they deserve neither death nor life; they are not allowed to die, and they are not given any breathing space to enjoy the bounties of life. Religion has departed from there, and virtue abandoned them long ago.

As for interest, it caused the treasures of the earth to be concentrated in few select houses, and the wealth to be hoarded by the takers of interest. The money gave them power over other less fortunate human beings. It was the real cause of the world wars. It divided mankind into two opposing groups: the wealthy who enjoy all the blessings of life, and the poor who find it difficult to meet their barest necessities. The grouping has already appeared. It is a calamity which has shaken the earth and levelled the mountains. It is threatening humanity with downfall and the world with destruction.

Then evil was the end of those who did evil (***30: 10***).

You will see that what Allah described about interest and making friends with the enemies of religion was a forecast of the carnage, which has now come true.

Commentary

Verse 275

Qur'an: Those who swallow down interest cannot stand except as one whom Satan has confounded with (his) touch does stand (2:275).

"al-Khabt" (الخَبْط) means to walk unevenly; to grope about awkwardly. They say *khabata 'l-ba'ir* (خَبَطَ الْبَعِيْر = the camel became disorientated in its walk).

Man has a straight path for his life, from which he normally does not deviate. He acts according to the norms of the society in which he lives; those norms are based on reasonable ideas, and man tries to fit his individual and social activities to them. He eats when he is hungry, drinks when thirsty, desires rest when tired, and looks for shelter when staying somewhere, and so on. He feels happy with some things and becomes annoyed with others. When he wants some task done, he produces its cause, and when he needs an effect, he brings about its necessary ingredients.

This, in short, is man's normal way of life – the actions related to the ideas, in a well-balanced relationship. Man was guided to this straight path by a power ingrained in his nature, the power that discriminates between good and bad, differentiates between beneficial and harmful, and distinguishes virtue from evil.

But a man whose discriminating power is confounded sees no difference between good and bad, between beneficial and harmful and between virtue and evil. He treats every thing like its opposite. It is not because he has forgotten the meaning of good and bad – after all, he is a human being who has his own freewill and choice, and a man can only do a man's deeds. Rather, it happens because he believes evil to be virtue, and virtue to be evil. He is, in short, confused and confounded; he applies the rules in completely wrong places, and does not know which demands which.

It is not that he always treats the normal as abnormal and vice versa. If it were so, he would have at least been consistent in his misjudgements. We could have said that he had some organized way of thinking, although he applied his judgements in a wrong way. But he has not even this consistency. Good and bad, virtue and evil, normal and abnormal, all are equal in his eyes. Whatever he wants at a given moment is to be done and obtained – like a camel that has become disorientated; he starts walking forward, no matter which direction he happens to face at that time; he has lost his bearing, and normal and abnormal are the same to him.

This is, then, the condition of the interest-taker.

What do we mean by interest? It is giving a thing and later taking back a similar thing plus an increase. Social life is based on a sound principle. Let us say that Zayd has a property in excess of his needs, and he needs something else which Bakr has got. Now Zayd may give his excess property to Bakr and take in exchange Bakr's property (which, incidentally, is in excess of Bakr's requirements). It is trade and it is the dictate of human nature.

But giving a property and taking back a similar thing with some increase nullifies the demands of nature and destroys the basis of the economy. The property is snatched from the hands of the debtor and accumulates in the coffers of the interest-taker. The interest-taker's wealth grows and grows; but this growth is achieved by adding another man's wealth. Thus, wealth goes on decreasing and diminishing, on the one side, and increasing and accumulating on the other.

The debtor who has to pay interest is burdened with that much extra expenditure; as the days pass, he goes on paying interest, without getting anything in exchange; his need of more and more money increases and he is caught in a vicious circle - he must borrow ever more to fulfil his normal needs as well as to pay the ever-increasing expense of interest. Thus, his life is ruined.

Interest is, therefore, diametrically opposed to the balance and equilibrium of society; it destroys that system which man had created with the guidance of the Divine Creation.

So, this is the interest-taker, confounded like the one touched by Satan. Taking interest makes his reason topsy-turvy; he sees no difference between normal and abnormal, between trade and interest. When he is told to leave interest and stick to trade, he says: "Trade is only like interest; it has no superiority over interest; why should I leave interest and stick to trade?" That is why Allah showed his confusion by quoting his reply, "trade is only like interest".

From the above discourse, the following matters become quite clear:

First: The word "standing" in the phrase, "cannot stand except as one whom Satan has confounded with (his) touch does stand", means "managing" one's life and "looking after" one's livelihood. It is one of the meanings of "standing" which people generally use in their speech. Allah says:

"...so that men may stand with justice" (***57:25***).

"...the heavens and the earth stand by His command" (***30:25***).

"...and that you should stand for the orphans with justice" (***4:127***).

This word has not been used here with the meaning of "standing up" (i.e., as opposed to "sitting"), because such an interpretation would not fit the topic, and the meaning of the verse would not be correct.

Second: "Confoundedness of the touched one in standing" does not refer to the involuntary movements of an epileptic during or after an attack of epilepsy, as some commentators have written. Such a meaning would have no relevance to the topic at hand. Allah has given us the simile of the interest-taker who does not differentiate between trade and interest, and who acts according to that idea. This is done by his own choice and will - the choice that is based on his confused thinking. There is nothing in it like the involuntary convulsions of an epileptic.

This phrase, in short, means that the interest-taker manages the affairs of his life and livelihood as does the one whom Satan has confounded with his touch.

Third: There is a fine point in saying "they say, trade is only like interest" instead of saying "interest is only like trade". The reason for choosing the former expression may be understood from the above explanations. For an interest-taker, normal and abnormal are both alike. We shall explain it in detail later on.

Fourth: The similitude, that is, "as one whom Satan has confounded with (his) touch", gives a hint that this may happen sometimes in cases of lunacy. The verse does not say that every madness is caused by the touch of Satan; but it indicates that some cases of lunacy are the result of Satan's touch. Further, the verse does not say that this touching is done by Iblis himself, because Satan means the evil one; this word (Satan) is used for Iblis as well as for other evil ones among the jinn and human beings. And Iblis is from the jinn. What looks certain from this Qur'anic hint is that the jinn are instrumental in the madness of some persons, if not of all.

Some commentators have opined that this simile is not based on any fact. People in those days believed that lunacy was caused by the touch of the *jinn*; and Allah used that belief of theirs for this similitude; it is just talking to people in their own language. There is, of course, no harm in it, because it is just a similitude; it does not confirm that common belief. Such a comparison is not wrong just because the thing has no actual existence. What the verse, therefore, means is simply this: 'These swallowers of interest are like a lunatic who is confounded by the touch of Satan.' It is against belief in the Justice of Allah to say that madness could be caused by the touch of Satan. Allah is Just; He cannot give Satan authority to overpower the intellect of His servant, or to subdue His believing servant.

But this opinion has many flaws:

1) Allah is too Great to insert any vain or incorrect promise in His talk without indicating its invalidity. Allah has said about His Book:

"And most surely it is a Mighty Book" (***41:41***).

"Falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it, a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One" (***41:42***).

"Most surely it is a decisive word" (***86:13***).

"And it is no joke" (***86:14***).

2) He says that it is against belief in the Justice of Allah to say that Satan can manipulate and disturb the intellect of a person, and can turn him into a lunatic. Well, is it not against belief in the Justice of Allah to say that lunacy occurs because of natural causes? Are not the natural causes created by Allah? And yet they do disturb the mind of man.

The fact is that there is no problem in believing that Allah allows the mind of man to be disturbed – no matter through which agency it is done. Because Allah at once removes all responsibilities away from such man. Of course, there could be a problem if his thinking power were taken away and still the responsibilities of a sane person were imposed on that man. Also it would be against belief in the Justice of Allah to say that Satan can manipulate a sane man in such a way that, in spite of his sanity, he sees truth, falsehood and virtue as evil and vice versa.

But there would be no problem if a man's intellect is disturbed or ceases to exist provided the responsibilities of sanity are also removed from him – no matter whether the disturbance occurred through natural causes or through Satan's touch.

Moreover, when we attribute madness to the touch of Satan we do not mean that he confounds the intellect directly without any middle cause. Rather, we believe that natural causes, like nervous disorders and psychological disturbances are the near causes, and Satan is a cause beyond these causes. Likewise, many miracles are attributed to the angels, although there occur natural causes in between. An example of this may be seen in two verses both of which quote Ayyub ('a) beseeching his Lord after his affliction. In one verse he says:

***"Satan has afflicted me with toil and torment"* (*38:41*).**

***"And in the other he says: Harm has afflicted me and Thou art the Most Merciful of the merciful"* (*21:83*).**

"Harm" here refers to his sickness; and sickness has its own natural causes. See how, in the first verse, he attributes his sickness, caused by natural causes, to Satan.

The root of the trouble is this: When the materialists hear us attributing events to Allah (or attributing some happenings to the spirit, to an angel or to Satan) they think that it amounts to a rejection of natural causes, and that it sets metaphysical agencies in the place of physical causes. They should be somehow made to understand that by such declarations we add one more (metaphysical) link at the farther end of the chain of (physical) causes. We do not replace the physical causes with metaphysical ones. (We have mentioned this fact in previous discussions several times.)

Fifth: Also, it is wrong to say, as some other exegetists have done, that the similitude aims at describing the state of interest-takers on the Day of Resurrection; and that they will rise from their graves on that day like an epileptic who is afflicted by madness.

Evidently, the verse does not support this meaning. The tradition which describes the condition of interest-takers is about the Day of Resurrection; it does not purport to explain the similitude of this verse.

It is written in *al-Manar* (*Tafsir*): "The similitude, that one who swallows interest stands like one who has

been confounded by the touch of Satan, has been explained by Ibn ‘Atiyyah as follows: ‘The aim is to show the likeness of the interest-taker in this world to the one who is confounded and afflicted with epilepsy; as it is said about the man who is convulsed with various involuntary movements, that he has gone mad.’

“I say (the author of *al-Manar*): This is the meaning which comes into my mind on reading this verse. But a major group of commentators have gone against it. They have said: ‘The standing mentioned in the verse refers to the rising from the grave at the time of resurrection; that Allah has made it a sign of the interest-takers on the Day of Resurrection that they shall be raised like epileptics.’ They have narrated it from Ibn ‘Abbas and Ibn Mas’ud; and at-Tabarani has narrated a tradition of ‘Awf Ibn Malik (which he has referred to the Prophet): ‘Beware of the sins that shall not be forgiven: embezzlement, so whoever embezzles anything, shall be brought with it on the Day of Resurrection; and interest, so whoever swallows interest shall be raised on the Day of Resurrection as a lunatic who gropes hither and thither aimlessly.’”

(The author of *al-Manar* goes on saying:) “The commonly under-stood meaning is the one given by Ibn ‘Atiyyah, because when the word ‘standing’ is used, one generally understands it to mean managing some affairs; and there is no association to show that it refers to the rising from grave. So far as traditions are concerned none of them is free from one or another defect in the chains of narrators; and those traditions were not revealed together with the Qur’an, nor does the *al-marfu’* (**المَرْفُع** = tradition raised to the Prophet) purport to interpret this verse. (It only talks about the condition of interest-takers on the Day of Resurrection, without mentioning this verse.) And had not this tradition been there no-one would have interpreted this verse except in the way Ibn ‘Atiyyah has done... And it was the custom of the forgers of traditions, when they were perplexed by the apparent meaning of a Qur’anic verse, to forge a tradition to explain it; and there are few exegetical traditions that are really correct.”

He is right when he exposes the mistake of the exegetists. But he himself has gone wrong when he tries to explain the meaning of this similitude. He says: “What Ibn ‘Atiyyah has said is quite clear. Those who are entangled in the love of wealth do become its slave. Their whole existence revolves around money; they want wealth for the sake of wealth. They have abandoned the natural means of earning, and have concentrated on earning money through money only. In this way, their souls deviate from the straight path of moderation on which most of the people are. This immoderation, this loss of equilibrium, shows itself in their movements and actions.

Look at the speculators on the stock exchange or compulsive gamblers; the more they indulge in these activities the more they become entangled in it, until a time comes when their behaviour becomes illogical, and their movements disorientated. It is this aspect which is the common factor between their activities and the movements of confounded lunatics. The Arabic word translated as “has confounded” is derived from *al-khabt* (**الخَبْط**) which means disorganized movement.”

The author’s comment: To say that the interest-takers’ movement become disorientated and

disorganized is correct in itself. But interest-taking is not the only cause of such disorientation. This occurs when man forgets that he is a servant of his Creator and Master, and when material pleasure becomes his only goal - and this is the final reach of his knowledge! Then he loses self-control (which come through religion) and sobriety of demeanour. And he gets at once affected by every big or small worldly pleasure; and this results in a disorientation of his movements. It may be observed in any person who is immersed in worldly pleasure, and who has forgotten Allah, even if he has not taken a single penny as interest all his life.

Nor is that disorientation the purpose of this similitude. The proof, given in the verse, of their being confounded does not fit this supposed purpose of the similitude. Allah says that they are confounded in their standing, "because they say, trade is only like interest". If that disorientation of their behaviour was the purpose of the similitude, it would have been more appropriate to prove it by their disorganized actions and disorderly movements.

Obviously, what we have described in explanation of this simile and about its purpose, is the only reasonable interpretation.

***Qur'an: That is because they say, trade is only like interest* (*2:275*).**

We have already described why trade was likened to interest, and not interest to trade. A man confounded in his thinking and disorientated in his movements is in an abnormal condition. Good and bad, virtue and evil are both the same to him. If you tell him to leave the bad deed that he is doing and to do the good, he will reply to you - if he replies - that what you tell him to do is like that which you are forbidding him; that has no preference over this.

Now note the difference. If he had said, "what you forbid me to do is like that which you tell me to do", he could not be said to be confounded or mad. At the most he would have been called a sane person who is mistaken in his view. Why? Because his reply would have shown that he knows that the thing ordered is good and should be done; but he mistakenly thinks that the forbidden thing also is good like the former. In other words, he knows and appreciates the superiority of good actions. He does not think that nothing is good or bad, or that all are equal.

Interest-takers say that trade is like interest. It shows that they have lost their bearings; they do not accept that trade has any superiority over interest. If they had said "interest is like trade", it would have meant that they were not confounded, they knew that trade was a good thing; but they thought that interest too was good like trade. In that case; they could have been called rejectors of the *Shari'ah* and sinners against Allah, but not "confounded like the one touched by Satan".

Ponder over the sentence, "That is because they say, trade is only like interest". Apparently, they had not spoken these words by their tongues; it was their state and behaviour which was crying out loudly about their thinking. This style of narrating the state as uttered speech is very common in every language.

Once it is understood, the error of the following two interpretations becomes self-evident:

1) Some people have said: The interest-takers said that trade was like interest, because they treated both in a like manner. The reason why they reversed the simile and said, "trade is like interest" was to emphasize - it was as though interest was the main thing and trade a secondary matter which would become respectable if it was likened to interest.

All this is out of place. They did not utter this sentence in words, so that it should require all this explanation.

2) Someone else has said: Maybe the simile is not reversed. They thought that trade was allowed so that one might earn profit. And profit was a certain thing in interest and rather uncertain in other means of earning. Therefore, they gave primacy to interest and assigned a secondary place to trade.

The same comment applies here as was written about the first.

Verse 276

Qur'an: And Allah has allowed trade and forbidden interest (2:276).

It is a new sentence. It is not in conjunction with the preceding sentence, and does not show the state of that sentence. In other words, it does not mean: "they say trade is only like interest, while Allah has allowed trade and forbidden interest". If a sentence, beginning with a verb in the past tense, is inserted to denote the state of the preceding sentence, it invariably always begins with *qad* (قَد = a prefix, used before past and aorist tenses); for example, "Zayd came to me" *wa qad daraba 'Umar* (وَ قَدْ ضَرَبَ عُمَرَ = when he had beaten 'Umar). In this verse, the meaning of the preceding sentence does not allow one to say that this sentence is its 'state'. The phrase denoting 'state' restricts the main sentence to the time and state denoted. If we treat this sentence as a phrase of state, it would mean: "The interest-takers' confoundedness (because of their saying that trade is only like interest) is confined to the time when Allah allowed trade and forbade interest". But the fact is otherwise. They were confounded before this legislation as much as they were after it.

Therefore, this is an independent sentence, and not a phrase of state. Also, this sentence is not the original legislation forbidding interest. As mentioned in the beginning, these verses evidently show that interest was already prohibited before they were revealed. They explain and emphasize what was legislated by the following verse of the third chapter:

"O you who believe! do not devour interest making it double and redouble, and fear Allah, that you may succeed" (3:130).

Therefore, the sentence, "And Allah has allowed trade ..." does not ordain a new law; it just refers to a previously given order, and paves the way for the next sentence, "To whomsoever then the admonition

has come from his Lord, then he desists, he shall have what has already passed ...” This is the apparent meaning of the verse.

Someone has said: The words, “And Allah has allowed trade and forbidden interest” are meant to refute the interest-takers’ assertion, “trade is only like interest”. If their claim were correct, the legal position of trade and interest would not have been different from each other in divine legislation, while the fact is that Allah has allowed one and forbidden the other.

Reply: The argument mentioned above is correct in itself; but it is not in conformity with the wording of the verse. It could be correct only if this sentence were a phrase of state. But it is not so.

Someone else has written another explanation: The sentence, “And Allah has allowed ...”, means that the increase of wealth through trade is not like its increase through interest, because “I have allowed trade and forbidden interest; and order is My order, and creatures are My creatures; I ordain about them as I wish, and make them obey My command in any manner I please; none among them has any right to protest against My decision.”

Reply: This also is dependent on the wrong theory that this sentence is a phrase of state. Moreover, it is based on a denial of any relationship of cause and effect between religious laws and their benefits. If you accept this interpretation, you will have to reject the relationship of cause and effect in the whole universe, and to attribute every action to Allah without apparent and middle causes. Evidently such an idea is wrong. Further, this explanation is against the Qur’anic style. The Qur’an often explains the reason for a given order, and mentions the general or special benefits emanating from a particular law. Even in the present instance, various sentences hint at the reason upon which this rule is based:

“...And forgo what remains (due) from interest if you are believers” (2:278).

“Neither shall you deal unjustly, nor shall you be dealt with unjustly” (2:279).

“Those who swallow down interest cannot stand except as one whom Satan has confounded with (his) touch does stand. That is because they say, trade is only like interest” (2:275).

All these, hint at the reason why trade has been allowed: It is in conformity with nature’s demand; and why interest has been forbidden. First, it is a deviation from the straight path of life; second, it is not in conformity with belief in Allah; and third, it is injustice.

Qur’an: To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists, for him shall be what has already passed, and his affair rests with Allah; and whoever returns (to it) – these are the inmates of the fire; they shall abide in it (2:275).

These sentences branch out from the preceding sentence, “And Allah has allowed trade ...” The principle laid down in this statement is not restricted to interest; it is a general rule although it is mentioned in a particular context. The meaning, therefore, will be as follows: “What We have told you on

the subject of interest, is an admonition; and to whomsoever the admonition comes from his Lord and he desists, for him shall be what has already passed and his affair rests with Allah; accordingly, if you now desist from interest, you shall have what you have already taken, and your affair rests with Allah".

It is clear from the above explanation that

"The admonition has come…" (***2:275***).

Means "the information of the law ordained by Allah has reached";

"Then he desists…" (***2:275***).

Means "then he repents and desists from the forbidden action";

"For him shall be what has already passed," (***2:275***).

Means "the ordained law shall not be applied retrospectively, rather it shall be enforced from the time the information has reached him";

"For him shall be what has already passed and his affair rests with Allah" (***2:275***).

Means that he shall not be affected by the ever-lasting punishment mentioned in the next sentence

And whoever returns (**to it**) **-** ***these are the inmates of the fire; they shall abide in it*** (***2:275***).

In this way, they shall be allowed the benefit of their previous action, still their affair is in the hands of Allah - He may leave them free in some matters, and may sometimes oblige them to make up for the past shortcomings.

This verse needs special attention. Beginning from the words

"To whosoever then the admonition has come" (***2:275***).

Up to the end of the verse, in spite of the given concession and the severe threatening, a basic principle is explained; it is a general law covering all mortal sins. Yet people have missed this clear point, and have interpreted it as though it were confined to the topic of interest only.

In view of the above-mentioned generality, the words, "for him shall be what has already passed, and his affair rests with Allah", can be taken only as a general principle - its particulars depending on the nature of the sin concerned. Whoever desists from a sin after receiving the admonition from his Lord, shall be forgiven the sins committed in the past - no matter whether the transgression was against Allah or against the people. But it does not mean that he shall automatically be absolved from its other consequences. His affair is in the hands of Allah:

He may prescribe for him some expiation or amendment - as, for example, if he neglects prayers, he

should pray and make up the arrears; if he did not fast, he should fast the same number of other days; if he took any property unlawfully, he should return it to the lawful owner, and he should undergo the prescribed penal sentences in relevant cases – all this going hand in hand with repentance and desisting from that sin in the future; and thus the past sins are forgiven. Or, Allah may forgive the sin altogether, after repentance, without imposing any penalty or expiation – as, for example, when a polytheist repents and enters into Islam, or when a liquor–drinker or a singer repents and desists from these sins. The words, "To whosoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists", are general; they cover all the believers and unbelievers of the Prophet's time as well as all those who came later or shall come afterwards.

"And whoever returns (to it) – these are the inmates of the Fire; they shall abide in it": The word, "returns" here is in contrast to the word, "desists", in the preceding sentence. Therefore, it means, "does not desist". Thus, it refers to the person who goes on committing that sin and does not accept the divine command. Such an attitude exposes the infidelity or apostasy that is hidden in his heart even if he does not utter a single word to show it. Whoever returns to a sin and does not desist from it, and does not even feel ashamed of it, has in fact not submitted to the command of Allah; and he shall never succeed. Thus, the two sides mentioned in this verse are:

(1) accepting and obeying the divine command which creates the resolve that one will not go against the law;

(2) continuing in the sin which proves that one has not accepted that divine command, which, in its turn, makes one liable to remain in the Fire for ever.

The Mu'tazilites offer this verse as a proof of their belief that the one who commits a major sin shall remain in the Fire forever.

The author's comment: No doubt that the verse shows that not only the one who commits a major sin, but anyone who commits any sin, shall remain in chastisement for ever. But it is conditional; it refers to only that sinner who commits a sin and does not accept the divine command. And such a person will admittedly abide in the Fire. But it is different from the view of the Mu'tazilites.

Other commentators have mentioned many possibilities and explanations about the words of Allah, "for him shall be what has already passed", "his affair rests with Allah", and "whoever returns ..." But all those discussions are based on their erroneous understanding of the verse (as we have explained earlier). It is not worthwhile mentioning them here, since their very basis is wrong.

Qur'an: Allah effaces interest, and causes charities to grow (2:276).

"al–Mahq" (المَحْق) is gradual decrease and deterioration leading to extinction; *"al–irba'"* (الإِرْبَآء) is to make grow; *"al–athim"* (الآثِيْم) is the sinner. The verse contrasts the growing of charities with the effacement of interest. It has been described earlier how the growing and multiplication of charities is not

confined to the hereafter; it is its general characteristic which is found in this world as well as in the hereafter. Therefore, effacement and obliteration of interest must also be common to this world and the hereafter.

It is the characteristic of charity that it grows and grows, necessarily and inevitably. It spreads love, propagates mercy, creates good accord, unites hearts and brings peace and security in society; it protects the psyche from evil thoughts and anger. The members of such a society never think to usurp other's property, or to take it openly by force, or stealthily by theft, and so forth. Charity leads them to unity, co-operation and mutual help. As a result, most of the ways in which property can deteriorate become closed; and it helps in making property grow, and grow many times.

On the other hand, it is the characteristic of interest that it gradually obliterates and destroys wealth. It spreads hard-heartedness and cruelty, creates enmity and distrust, destroys peace and security and incites the "have nots" to take revenge from the "haves" in any possible way - be it by talk or by action, be it directly or indirectly; in short, it leads towards disunity and discord. As a result, most of the ways of deterioration and destruction of the property are opened; and wealth becomes a target misfortune and calamity.

These two items - charity and interest - have a direct impact on the life of the poor section of society. Needless to say, poverty and need inflame their feelings, and they are provoked to defend their rights and are ready to confront the others, come what may. With this background, if society treats them with kindness and does good to them without asking for anything in exchange, their noble feelings are stirred and they welcome this generosity with goodwill and brotherly feelings; and it creates loving effects. If, on the other hand, they are treated with hard-heartedness and greed, and are faced with danger to their property, honour and life, they stand up to take their revenge from their oppressors in any possible way. Those who have seen and heard about those who swallow interest know that such people seldom escape the evil effects of such confrontation. Often their properties are lost, their houses are ruined and their endeavours go in vain.

It is necessary to mention here two things:

First: The causes upon which social effects are based differ from physical and creative causes in one important aspect. While the perfect physical and creative causes can never fail to produce their effects, social factors and causes bring about the expected result in most, but not all, cases. We deal with someone in a certain manner and expect those results which appear in the wake of that behaviour - in most cases.

If we ponder upon the Qur'anic verses which describe the benefits and harms of the given actions, we shall find that the Qur'an (when it shows the relation between actions and their causes, and between actions and their effects) has adopted this very system, and mentions a frequently recurring effect as an ever-recurring one.

Second: Society is like an individual in its various conditions and states. An individual is born, lives, dies, acts and leaves his footprints on the sand of life. Likewise, a society has its own birth, life, death, actions and effects. Allah says in the Qur'an:

"And never did We destroy a town but it had a fixed-term" (***15:4***).

"No people can hasten on their doom nor can they postpone (***it***)***"*** (***15:5***).

But an individual's life and death are different from a society's as are the effects of their respective activities.

Now, if an individual's characteristic spreads to the whole of society, the ways of its existence and extinction, as well as its effects will change considerably. Let us look, for example, at chastity and licentiousness. They have an effect on life, when they are found in an individual. People generally look down upon a profligate man, they do not like to set up marriage with him; his company is avoided and he is not trusted. It all happens when it remains an individual's vice, and if society on the whole is free from this evil. But if this debauchery spreads in society, and people become used to it, the above-mentioned effects simply vanish away. Those effects were the product of general abhorrence and common distaste of this evil; when it spreads to the whole of society, that abhorrence and distaste give way to general acceptance. In this way, this effect of an individual's immorality ceases to exist when that immorality spreads to the whole of society. Yet its other evil effects will surely follow: venereal disease will spread, reproduction will be affected; and other undesirable social evils would increase - for example, natural affinities will be destroyed and relationships will be upset.

Also, the effects of a characteristic found in an individual are felt very soon, while those of the same characteristic found in a society take a longer time to appear.

Allah effaces interest and makes charities grow. But there is a difference between an individual taking interest and a society doing so. When an individual indulges in this sin, the interest almost always destroys him; few and far between are the cases in which an interest-taker, because of some other mitigating factors, escapes this punishment. But retaliation is not so swift in case of a society wallowing in interest. Look at today's world: interest is a recognized institution of all societies and governments; the economy is founded, and laws are made, on the foundation of interest, and it is interest that is the corner-stone of banking. Now some of the evil effects mentioned above may not happen in this case, because society has adopted it and people never pause to think about its evils and wickedness. Yet, its natural results must follow: the accumulation of wealth on one side, and an all-pervasive need on the other. Complete separation of, and confrontation between, the two - the have and have-nots - have already appeared; and its ill effects are already darkening the world's atmosphere. This has taken longer to appear than in case of an individual; yet judging from the life-span of society it has appeared rather soon. The life of society is different from an individual's; and a day for society may be equal to an aeon in the eyes of an individual. Allah says:

"And We bring these days to men by turns" (***3: 140***).

This "day" refers to the time when people stand against people, nations against nations, governments confronting governments, and states opposing states.

It is necessary that man's bliss be always cared for, be it of an individual, of society or of the whole of humanity. The Qur'an looks after both types of bliss – of an individual as well as of the whole of mankind. It was sent down to manage the man's affairs, and to safeguard the world's happiness and felicity – of the individual as well as of the species, in the present day as well as in the time to come.

Let us now look at the words of Allah:

"Allah effaces interest and He causes charities to grow" (***2:276***).

These sentences describe the ultimate state of these two activities – whether done by individuals or by society. Effacement is the inseparable characteristic of interest, as growth is that of charity. Interest is effaced, although it is named *ar-riba* (الرِّبَا = growth); and charity continuously grows, although it is not called by any such name. And to this reality Allah draws our attention in these words:

"Allah effaces interest, and He causes charities to grow" (***2:276***).

thus, He attributes "growth" to charities of all kinds, and describes interest *ar-riba* (literally, growth) in a word, effacement, which is its opposite in meaning.

After this explanation, the weakness of the following interpretations of other exegetists becomes obvious:

1) Someone has written: the effacement of interest does not mean that such money is lost or that such endeavours do not succeed. Because experience proves otherwise. What is actually meant by the sentence "Allah effaces interest" is that Allah deprives the interest-taker from the main objective of this activity. The interest-taker aims at hoarding wealth through interest so that he may enjoy a good life; but he never gets a chance to rejoice in his wealth, as he remains too busy in adding money to money. Then he has to remain on guard against defaulters; and ultimately, he passes his days in disappointment when he finds that he has become unpopular and is especially hated by the poor.

The weakness of this interpretation is obvious.

2) Other exegetists have said: The frame of reference for this effacement is the life hereafter. The one who takes interest neglects many good deeds because of his involvement in interest; and his many acts of worship are nullified because he uses money gained by interest in them.

The author's comment: No doubt, this explanation gives examples of effacement. But effacement is not restricted to the life hereafter.

3) The Mu'tazilites attempt to prove from the words,

***"And whoever returns* (to it) *– these are the inmates of the Fire; they shall abide in it"* (*2:275*).**

That one who commits a major sin shall remain in Hell for ever.

We have already shown the defect of this argument and described the true import of this sentence.

***Qur'an: And Allah does not love any ungrateful sinner* (*2:276*).**

"al-Kaffar" (الكَفَّار) translated here as "ungrateful" is on a paradigm which is used for emphasis. Thus, it means, "inveterately ungrateful"; "obstinately unbelieving".

This sentence gives the main reason of the effacement of interest. The swallower of interest shows his obstinacy and ingratitude for the countless bounties of Allah. He puts obstructions in the natural path of human life, that is, in natural modes of dealing; he rejects a major part of the rules about worship and mutual dealings; he uses the unlawful money of interest for his food, drink, clothing and housing, and in this way nullifies most of his acts of worship. Also, by using that money in his commercial transactions, he invalidates most of his dealings and usurps others' property, and the liability for such things remains on his own head.

Further, he tramples ethical values under foot, remains immersed in greed and avarice, becomes hard-hearted and uses force and coercion to collect from his debtors what he thinks is his due. In this way, all his faculties and actions are submerged in disbelief and ingratitude. And also he is *"athim"* (أَثِيْم), that is, sin is ingrained in his nature. And Allah does not love him, because He does not love anyone sunk in ingratitude, sin and disbelief.

Verse 277

***Qur'an: Surely, they who believe and do good deeds and establish prayer and pay the poor-rate they shall have their reward with their Lord and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve* (*2:277*).**

It is a general principle – those who believe and obey the divine law,

***"They shall have no fear nor shall they grieve"* (*2:277*).**

This general rule fits those who spend in charities and desist from swallowing interest, which Allah has forbidden.

Verse 278

***Qur'an: O you who believe! fear Allah and forgo what remains* (*due*) *from interest, if you are believers* (*2:278*).**

The verse addresses them with their attribute of belief and faith and then reminds them to fear Allah. It

prepares the ground for the order which follows,

***"And forgo what remains* (*due*) *from interest"* (*2:278*).**

It shows that when these verses were revealed, there were some believers who indulged in this sin and their debtors still owned them some interest payments. Therefore, Allah ordered them to forgo that amount. This order was followed by the threat

***"But if you do* (*it*) *not, then be apprised of war from Allah and His Apostle"* (*2:279*).**

It supports the tradition (to be quoted later) which gives the reason why these verses were revealed.

The verse ends on the words, "if you are believers". This shows that desisting from interest is an inseparable characteristic of belief. It puts more emphasis on the preceding sentences:

***"And whoever returns* (to it) *– these are the inmates of the Fire"* (*2:275*).**

And

***"Allah does not love any ungrateful* (unbeliever) *sinner"* (*2:276*).**

Verse 279

***Qur'an: But if you do* (*it*) *not, then be apprised of war from Allah and His Apostle* (*2:279*).**

"al-Idhn" (الإِذْن) means to know. *"Fa'dhanu"* (فَأْذَنُوْا = be apprised, know) has also been recited as *fa'adhinu* (فَأَذِنُوْا = announce) imperative mood of *al-'idhan* (الإِيْذَان = to announce). The preposition *"bi"* (ب) in *"biharbin"* (بِحَرْبٍ = of war) gives the meaning of certainty. The meaning thus shall be: Be sure of war from Allah and His Apostle. "War" is used as a common noun, to hint that it shall be a great war, or to refer to various kinds of war. The war is attributed to Allah and His Apostle because it is in connection with a law which was legislated by Allah and promulgated by His Apostle. Had it been connected with Allah only, it would have been a creative decree. So far as His Apostle is concerned, he is not independent of Allah in any affair; Allah says:

"***You have no concern in the affair"* (*3:128*).**

How do Allah and His Apostle wage war with one who does not obey a law? They fight with such a disobedient Muslim to compel him to submit to divine authority, as is declared in the Qur'an:

***"…Then fight that* (*party*) *which acts wrongfully until it returns to Allah's command"* (*49:9*).**

Moreover, Allah has another way of defending His laws; and that is fighting against the offenders through the agency of nature. He lets the masses flare up against them; and in this way their lands are devastated and their footprints obliterated. Allah says:

"And when We wish to destroy a town, We send Our commandment to the people of it who lead easy lives, but they transgress therein; thus the word proves true against it, so We destroy it with utter destruction" (***17:16***).

Verse 280

Qur'an: And if (***the debtor***) ***is in straitened circumstances, then let there be respite until*** (***he is in***) ***ease*** (***2:280***).

"Kana" (كَانَ = is) in the beginning of the verse has not been used as an auxiliary verb; it is an independent verb and means "exists"; *"an-nazirah"* (النَّظِرَة) is respite, a moratorium. *"al-Maysarah"* (المَيْسَرَة) is ease, affluence; it is the opposite of *"al-'usrah"* (العُسْرَة = straitened circumstances).

The verse says: If there is one of your debtors who is at present unable to repay your loan, then give him respite until he is affluent enough to repay it.

The verse is general and not restricted to the loan given with interest, although it covers such cases also. They used to demand repayment when the stipulated time came; if the debtor was not in a position to pay, he asked for some more time, agreeing to pay more interest. The verse forbids this interest and tells the creditor to give his debtor respite until he is in ease.

Qur'an: And that you remit (***it***) ***as alms is better for you, if you knew*** (***2:280***).

If you forgo the loan and remit it as charity, it shall be better for you; because by this remittance you will change into charity what you intended to increase through interest; in other words, you will change what was sure to be effaced with what is sure to grow many times.

Verse 281

Qur'an: And fear the day in which you shall be returned to Allah; then every soul shall be paid back in full what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly (***2:281***).

This is the epilogue of the preceding verses of interest; it reminds the believers of the Day of Resurrection and mentions some of its aspects which are relevant to this topic. The verse prepares the audience to fear Allah and desist from the things forbidden by Allah, especially concerning the people's rights upon which whole edifice of life is founded. It says that a day is coming in which you shall be returned to Allah and then every soul shall be paid back in full what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly.

What is the meaning of being returned to Allah while we are never far from Him? And what is this "paying back in full"? We shall explain it, God willing, in the sixth chapter (The Cattle).

It has been said that this verse was the last one to be revealed to the Apostle of Allah (S).

A tradition to this effect will be found in the following discussion.

Traditions

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsir* of al-Qummi, under the verse:

***"Those who swallow down interest…"* (*2:275*).**

That Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: "When I was taken to the heavens, I saw such a group that if any of them wanted to stand up, he could not do so, because of the bulkiness of his stomach. I said: 'Who are they, O Gabriel?' He said: 'These are they who swallow up interest; they cannot stand except as one whom Satan has confounded with (his) touch stands; and lo! they are on the path of the people of Pharaoh; they are exposed to the Fire in morning and at night, and they say: "Our Lord! when shall the Hour come?""'

The author says: It is an illustrative example pertaining to the period between death and resurrection. It confirms the Prophet's words: "As you live, so shall you die; and as you die, so shall you be raised."

al-Isfahani has narrated, in his *at-Targhib*, from Anas (Ibn Malik) that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) said: 'The swallower of interest shall come on the Day of Resurrection, confounded, dragging both his sides.' Saying it, he recited: they cannot stand except as one whom Satan has confounded with (his) touch stands."[1]

The author says: There have come numerous traditions about the punishment for interest, both from Shi'ah and Sunni chains. Some of them say that interest is equal to seventy acts of incest the swallower of interest would have committed with his mother.

There is a tradition in *at-Tahdhib* that 'Umar Ibn Yazid Bayya' as-Sabiri said: "I said to Abu 'Abdillah ('a): 'May I be your ransom! Verily, people say that taking profit from a "needy" person is unlawful.' He said: 'Have you seen anyone, whether rich or poor, purchasing anything unless he "needs" it? O 'Umar! Allah has allowed trade and forbidden interest. Therefore, take profit; but do not take interest.' I said: 'And what is interest?' He said: 'Dirhams by dirhams, two against one; and wheat by wheat, double (weight) against single (weight).'"

'Ubayd Ibn Zurarah narrates from Abu 'Abdillah ('a) that he said: "There is no interest except in that which is measured or weighed."[2]

The author says: There is a difference of opinion as to which things are liable to interest. It is the *madhhab* of *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) that there is no interest except in gold and silver and those things which are measured or weighed. Further details are beyond the scope of this book, as the topic concerns Islamic jurisprudence.

There is a tradition in *al-Kafi* from one of the two Imams (Imam al-Baqir or Imam as-Sadiq ('a)) and in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) about the words of Allah:

***To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord* (*2:275*).**

That he said: "The admonition is repentance."

Muhammad Ibn Muslim said: "There came to Abu 'Abdillah ('a) a man from Khurasan who had dealt with interest till he had amassed a fortune. 'He asked the scholars of jurisprudence, and they said: No deed of yours shall be accepted until you return it (the interest) to its owners.' Then he came to Abu Ja'far ('a) and told him his story. Abu Ja'far ('a) said: 'Your way out is the verse from the Book of Allah, Mighty and Great is He!

***To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists, for him shall be what has already passed, and his affair rests with Allah* (*2:275*).**

Then he (the Imam) said: 'Admonition is repentance.'"[3]

There is a tradition in *al-Kafi* and *Man la Yahduruh al-Faqih* that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "Every interest which people swallowed because of ignorance, and then they repented, it shall be accepted from them when the repentance is known from them." And he said: "If a man inherits a property from his father, and he knows that that property includes interest, but it is mixed up with (the money of) trade, then it is lawful for him; so let him consume it. And if he recognizes something of it (interest) then he should keep his principal and return the excess."

A tradition is narrated in *Man la Yahduruh al-Faqih* and '*Uyun al-akhbar* from Imam ar-Ridha' ('a): "It (interest) is a major sin, after explanation." And he said: "And to treat it as a small matter is to enter into disbelief."

The Imam was asked about a man who consumes interest thinking that it is lawful. He said: "There is no harm for him in it until he takes it on purpose (i.e. knowing that it is unlawful). When he indulges in it on purpose, then he shall be (liable) to the place which Allah has mentioned."[4]

It is reported in *al-Kafi* and *Man la Yahduruh al-Faqih* that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) was asked about the words of Allah:

***Allah effaces interest, and He causes charities to grow* (*2:276*).**

And was told (by the asker): "I have seen (many a man) who swallows interest and his wealth increases." He (the Imam) said: "What effacement could be more effective than that of the dirham of interest? It obliterates religion; and if he repented, his wealth would go and he would become poor."

The author says: The tradition, as you see, explains effacement in terms of religious obliteration – he

does not become owner of that property and he is not allowed to use it. Charity is just its opposite in these respects. This tradition does not go against the general meaning of effacement which we have written earlier.

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) said: “The Messenger of Allah (S) has cursed five persons concerned with interest: the one who consumes (i.e. takes) it, the one who gives it to be consumed, its two witnesses and its writer.”5

The author says: The same thing has been narrated in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from the Holy Prophet through several chains.

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsir* of al-Ayyashi from Imam al-Baqir (‘a) that he said: “Allah, High is He, has said: ‘I have given (some) authority to others (i.e. angels etc.) about things, except charity, because I take hold of it with My (own) hand. So much so that a man or a woman gives half a date in alms, and I nurture it for him as one of you nurtures his calf and colt; until I shall leave (i.e., return) it on the Day of Resurrection (and it shall be) bigger than the (mountain) of Uhud.’”

The same book quotes ‘Ali Ibn al-Husayn (peace be on them both) narrating from the Prophet that he said: “Verily, Allah nurtures the alms for one of you, as one of you brings up his child; until he (the alms-giver) shall find it on the Day of Resurrection, and it shall be like Uhud.”

The author says: The matter has been narrated also through a Sunni chain from many companions like Abu Hurayrah, ‘A’ishah, Ibn ‘Umar, Abu Barzah al-Aslami, all from the Prophet.

It is written in *at-Tafsir* of al-Qummi that when Allah sent down (the verse): Those who swallow down interest ..., Khalid Ibn al-Walid stood up before the Messenger of Allah and said: “O Messenger of Allah! My father lent (money) with interest in the (tribe of) Thaqif, and he told me at the time of his death to collect it. Thereupon Allah revealed:

***O you who believe! fear Allah and forgo what remains* (due) *from it...”* (*2:278*).**

The author says: Nearly the same thing has been narrated in *Majma’ al-Bayan* from Imam al-Baqir (‘a)

as-Suddi and ‘Ikrimah have said: (This verse) was revealed about the balance of interest due to al-‘Abbas and Khalid Ibn al-Walid; they were partners in pre-Islamic days, they lent with interest to some people of Banu ‘Amr Ibn ‘Umayr, a clan of the (tribe of) Thaqif. Then came Islam, and they had great riches in interest. Thereupon, Allah revealed this verse. So the Prophet said: “Now, surely every interest of the pre-Islamic days is waived, and the first interest which I waive is that of al-‘Abbas Ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib; and all the blood of pre-Islamic days is waived, and the first blood which I waive is that of Rabi’ah Ibn al-Harith Ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib” (He was given to Banu Layth for suckling and was killed by Banu Hudhayl.)6

The author says: This has been narrated in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from Ibn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn

Abi Hatim from as-Suddi. But there the name of Khalid is not mentioned openly. It says that it was revealed about al-'Abbas Ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib and a man from Banu al-Mughirah.

Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi (who has said that it is correct), an-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, Ibn Abi Hatim and al-Bayhaqi (in his *as-Sunan*) have narrated from 'Amr Ibn al-Ahwas that he participated in the last pilgrimage with the Messenger of Allah (S); so he (the Messenger of Allah) said: "Now surely every interest of the days of ignorance is waived, you shall have your capital, neither shall you deal unjustly, nor shall you be dealt with unjustly."[7]

The author says: There are numerous traditions with a similar meaning. What is deduced from Shi'ah and Sunni traditions is that the verse was revealed about some interest money which Banu al-Mughirah had due from Thaqif; and they used to lend money to them with interest in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance. When Islam came, Banu al-Mughirah demanded from Thaqif the balance which was due; they refused to pay (interest) because Islam had waived it. Their case was put before the Messenger of Allah (S); then this verse was revealed.

It supports what we have mentioned in the General Comment that interest was prohibited in Islam long before these verses were revealed; and that the aim of these verses was to emphasize that prohibition.

With this background, those few traditions which say that the law prohibiting interest was revealed in the last days of the Apostle of Allah, and that he died before he could explain the rules concerning interest are not worthy of interest. Such traditions are reported in *ad-Durr al-Manthur*, through Ibn Jarir and Ibn Marduwayh from 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab that he said in a lecture "Among the last verses to be revealed was that of interest; and the Apostle of Allah died and he had not explained it to us. Therefore, leave what seems doubtful to you for what is not doubtful to you."

Moreover, it is the *madhhab* of the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* that Allah did not give death to His Prophet until He had legislated all that was needed by people for their religious affairs, and until His Prophet had explained it all to his people.

It is reported in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* through several chains from Ibn 'Abbas, as-Suddi, 'Atiyyah al-'Awfi, Abu Salih and Sa'id Ibn Jubayr that the last verse to be revealed was:

***And fear the day in which…shall not be dealt with unjustly* (*2:281*).**

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "Much stress was laid on the prohibition of interest so that people should not refrain from doing good through loan or charity."[8]

The same book narrates from Imam 'Ali ('a): "When Allah intends to destroy a town, interest appears among them."

The author says: The earlier comments make the meanings of these traditions clear.

The author of *Majma' al-Bayan* writes under the verse, "And if (the debtor) is in straitened circumstances, then let there be respite until (he is in) ease": "There is a difference of opinion regarding the definition of straitened circumstances. And it has been narrated from Abu 'Abdillah ('a) that he said: 'It is when he does not have anything in excess of his own sustenance and that of his dependants, in the sense of economics.' ...to give respite to a poor man is compulsory in every religion, as is narrated from Ibn 'Abbas, ad-Dahhak and al-Hasan; and similar traditions have come from Abu Ja'far and Abu 'Abdillah (peace be upon them both). Imam al-Baqir ('a) said: 'Until (he is in) ease', means, until his report reaches the Imam; then the Imam shall repay (on his behalf) out of the share of 'those in debt', provided he had spent that loan on lawful expenses."

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "The Messenger of Allah ascended the pulpit one day; he thanked Allah and praised Him and asked for His blessings on His prophets, and then said: 'O people! he who is present should convey (it) to him who is absent. Now, whoever gives respite to a poor person, Allah shall credit him every day with charity equal to his money (given in loan), until he recovers it.'" Then Abu 'Abdillah (Imam as-Sadiq ('a)) said:

"And if (the debtor) is in straitened circumstances, then let there be respite until (he is in) ease; and that you remit (it) as alms is better for you, if you knew that he is in straitened circumstances, then give him your money (principle) as alms, as it is better for you." (2:280). [9]

The author says: This tradition explains the divine words "if you knew"; and its other meaning has been mentioned earlier. The tradition on this and related subjects are very numerous; and the reader is advised to refer to the chapters concerning loans in the books of Islamic jurisprudence.

About Interest

It has been repeatedly mentioned that man has only one aim in sight when he does any work. That aim is to gain perfection in his life; in other words, to fulfil his physical and material needs. He does a work and obtains the necessities of life. Thus, he is the rightful owner of his work and of the things made by him. The word "work" is used here with a comprehensive meaning; it includes his actions and reactions as well as every relationship with other things which produces an effect on them, and which society acknowledges. He acquires and reserves for himself what effect he has produced on a matter and believes that it is his lawful property; the sane persons of society also accept his ownership of that item.

But it was not possible for him to fulfil all his needs by his own labour. This led to mutual co-operation in society; it became inevitable for one to benefit from others' endeavours. This resulted in the mutual exchange of properties. It became customary that a man worked in one or a more vocations, and produced many necessary items, then kept for himself according to his needs, and exchanged the excess items for what he needed from another man's products. This was the foundation of mutual dealing and barter.

Now, it was found that most of the products and items were totally different from each other; many were of completely different species; some were in great demand while others were not needed so frequently; one thing was found in large quantity while the other was rare, and so on. This created difficulties in bartering. Fruit is used for eating, a donkey for carrying loads, water for satisfying the thirst, and pearls and gems for jewellery, and so on. All these things have different values as necessities of life and are totally unrelated to each other. How can they be exchanged with justice and fairness?

Thus arose the need to fix the value of a thing in terms of money. They took a rare item, like gold, and turned it into a standard by which the value of other products and goods could be decided. They also fixed units of length, mass and weight, for example, the metre, the litre and the kilogram to measure and weigh goods. In this way, confusion and complication was removed, and the worth of a thing in relation to other things could be decided by comparing both with gold. Let us say that a carat of diamond is equal to four dinars, and a certain heap of wheat flour is equal to one-tenth of a dinar. Now we can easily decide that a carat of diamond is equal to forty such heaps of wheat flour.

Gradually, it was found more practicable to make coins of some other metals also, like silver, copper, bronze and nickel; finally, currency notes made of paper came into being. The details about this may be found in books on economics.

Now the road of trade and commerce was open. Some people took for themselves the occupation of keeping various commodities with them and exchanging them for money or other goods. Their purpose was to earn profit by this exchange. The profit represented the extra price obtained from the customer for the goods sold.

Then a time came when people began treating money as though it was all that was needed for life. The price almost usurped the place of the commodity itself. It was because by acquiring money man could acquire all the necessities of life.

Some people treated it as a commodity to be sold and purchased. These people are called money-changers. They change foreign and local currencies and earn profit by this transaction.

This is an outline of the story of trade and money. It will be seen from above that its basic element is bartering one thing for another, because someone needed one thing more than another; or exchanging an item for its price, because one needs the profit. In all these cases, the thing given is always different from the thing received in exchange. It is this difference upon which commercial life is based.

So far as exchanging a commodity for the same type of commodity (e.g. wheat for wheat) is concerned, it could be either without any increase or with increase. If it is without increase (e.g. lending money or food grain and taking it back without any increase), then it is a reasonable dealing, which sometimes becomes necessary; it corrects the imbalance of society, fulfils the needs of the poor, and no harm comes out of it. But if it is with increase on the side of repayment, then it is interest. Now, let us see what its effect can be.

The basic element of interest is the exchange of one commodity for the same commodity with an increase in repayment; for example, lending ten dirhams for a fixed time and taking back twelve dirhams; or selling an item on credit at ten dirhams and recovering twelve at the end of the stipulated term. Why does a buyer or debtor take any money or commodity on loan? Because his needs are greater than his earnings. Let us say that he earns ten dirhams daily, while his necessities cost him twenty. He is obliged on the first day to take a loan of ten dirhams, with interest of two dirhams. On the second day, he has to pay two dirhams of interest from his earnings of ten; now he is left with eight dirhams only, so he has to take another loan of twelve dirhams with larger interest. This is the beginning of his ruin. Day by day, ever larger portions of his earnings go in paying ever–increasing interest, until a day comes when the interest eats up his total earnings; he pays ten in interest and is left without a single dirham to meet his needs. It is sheer destruction of life and livelihood.

And the lender gets back his own ten, plus the ten of the debtor; he gets the whole twenty. The wealth of both sides accumulates on one side, while the other side is left in the lurch without any money.[10]

In this way, interest leads to the destruction of the poor section of society, and all wealth gravitates towards the already wealthy group. Because of this financial strength, they become arrogant, they manipulate the money market, and rule over people's properties, honour and lives in any way they wish and desire (exploitation of others is, after all, ingrained in human nature). On the other hand, the deprived and exploited people try their best to protect themselves from this humiliation, and to free themselves from the domination and exploitation by wealthy persons; they use all means of defence and offence available to them. As a result of this confrontation, chaos appears on the earth, and disorder and violence spread in society. Humanity races towards extinction and civilization towards obliteration.

This is apart from the periodic loss of capital – not every debtor is able, or willing, to pay the accumulated principal plus interest.

This much about loans which rich people give to poor persons. In other cases of interest, for example, commercial loans given by banks to traders to increase their trade, the defects are not so transparent. But their least harm. is that they gradually pull wealth to those trading houses by increasing their capital far in excess of their actual capacity and strength. Then those commercial concerns try to compete with each other; the more powerful ones, swallow up the weaker ones. In this manner, weaker traders go out of business; the list of needy persons becomes longer and longer; and wealth concentrates in a few houses.

The scholars of economics must admit that the only reason why communism was started, and why socialism spread so much, was the preposterous and exorbitant accumulation of wealth within a few houses, while the overwhelming majority was deprived of the bare necessities of life. The reader should be made aware of an interesting phenomenon. The wealthy minority always swore in the name of civilization, justice and freedom; they preached equality and human rights. They said with their mouths what was not in their hearts. They used words for totally opposite ideas. By this method, they hoped to

keep the common people, the exploited masses, in their place, to keep them lulled in their servitude, so that they might go on oppressing them more and more. But very soon it boomeranged back to them; the cunning phrases of the exploiters came back to haunt them; they planned, and Allah also planned, and Allah is the best of planners; thus, evil was the end of those who did evil.

And only Allah knows what the future holds for this troubled humanity.

Another evil effect of interest springs from the facility it provides for accumulating wealth in the hands of a few. Huge amounts of money, in millions and billions, are kept idle in the strong rooms of banks. Some people enjoy extravagant living and inexhaustible luxuries, idling their times on the thrones of their financial empires; at the same time, there are others who spend their lives in idleness, but for a totally different reason; these hungry masses remain idle, because they are unemployed. One group does not work because of its superabundant treasures; the other group does not work because it is deprived of employment. Both become idle – an affront to human nature which says that man must work for his livelihood.

Another Discourse About Interest

al–Ghazali has written in his *Ihya' al–'ulum* (chapter of "Thanks") as follows:

"One of the bounties of Allah is the creation of the dirham and the dinar; and the world cannot do without them. They are two metals, which are of no use in themselves; still mankind depends upon them. Every man needs a multitude of items like food, clothing and various other necessities. Sometimes he does not have what he needs and has in his hands what is not needed by him. For example, he has in his possession a quantity of saffron, but he is in need of a camel to ride. And someone else has a camel which he has no use of, and he needs saffron. Both should exchange their properties. But it is necessary to estimate the worth of the things so changed. Naturally, the owner of the camel will not give away his camel in lieu of a small quantity of saffron. And there is no correlation between camel and saffron, so that it can be said that the camel owner should be given saffron, for example, equal in weight to the camel. The same difficulty would arise if one wanted to purchase a house with cloth, or flour with a donkey. These things have no correlation with each other. Exchange would be extremely difficult in this way.

"These unrelated and dissimilar items need an intermediary who can decide between them with justice, and can fix each item's place, worth and rank. By this assignment of ranks, it would be known which things are equal and which are unequal.

"Accordingly, Allah created the dirham and the dinar as two judges for, and intermediaries between, properties, so that properties might be measured by them. Now, it can be said that this camel is worth one hundred dinars, and this much saffron is equal to one hundred dinars, therefore, this camel is equal in value to this amount of saffron.

“This comparison by means of the two metals is possible because they are not wanted in themselves. If they, like other commodities, were wanted in themselves, somebody would have needed them and another could have refused to accept them if he had no use of them at that actual time. And the whole system would have been disturbed. Therefore, Allah created them to circulate in the hands of people, and to decide between properties with justice.

“There was also another benefit: One may acquire all things through the dirham and the dinar. It is because they are precious items in themselves, and they are of no use in themselves. Their relationship with all other commodities is the same. Therefore, for anyone who owns them, it is as though he owns everything. This benefit is not found in other thing. A man who owns a cloth has only that cloth; if he needs food, he cannot be sure that the owner of the food will accept his cloth in exchange; perhaps that man needs a horse; why should he take cloth? Hence the need of a thing which in appearance is nothing, and in reality, is everything.

“Only that thing which has no particular form of its own can have an equal relation to various different things. A mirror has no colour of its own, therefore it reflects every colour which comes before it; prepositions have no independent meaning of their own, so they make other words’ meanings clear. Likewise, coins serve no purpose on their own, that is why all purposes are served through them. This is the second benefit; there are other benefits also; but they are not mentioned here for the sake of brevity.”

After this al-Ghazali expresses his views, the gist of which is as follows:

“As these two coins are the bounties of Allah (because of the benefits mentioned above) anyone who uses them in a way that nullifies their originally intended benefits is guilty of ingratitude against the bounties of Allah.”

After this, he infers the reasons for many laws from his above- mentioned principle:

According to him “it is because of this principle that the hoarding of the dirham and the dinar is prohibited, as this is injustice and nullifies their benefit. Hoarding them is like putting a judge in prison - it prevents him from discharging his duties and creates disorder in society.”

He also says: “It is because of this reason that one is not allowed to make or use pots of gold or silver. Using them as pots turns them into things that are wanted for their own sake, while they have been created only as a means to acquire other things. This also is injustice; it is like forcing a judge to work as a weaver, to collect levies or to do other such jobs which are done by lowly people.”

And he has justified the prohibition of interest in the dirham and the dinar by the same principle. According to him, it is injustice and ingratitude against the bounties of Allah, because gold and silver have been created for the sake of other things, not for their own, as there is no need which can be fulfilled by gold and silver in the same way as gold and silver.

This was, in short, al-Ghazali's explanation. But he seems confused in his principle, as well as in the reasons by which he has inferred various rules from that principle.

First: He says that gold and silver are not sought for their own sake. If so, then how could they determine the value of other things? The hand is used to measure the lengths of things. How is that done? By the length of the hand itself. A piece of iron is used to determine the weight of a thing. How is it done? By the weight of the iron itself. If gold and silver were unwanted in themselves, how could they decide the worth, that is, "wantedness", of other things?

Further, he admits that they are precious items in themselves. How can they be precious in themselves unless they are wanted for their own sake? How can a thing be called "precious" if it is not wanted?

Moreover, if they were created only as a means to acquire other things, then there should be no difference between gold and silver in worth and prestige. But the fact is otherwise. According to al-Ghazali's principle, both metals should be equal in value!

Second: The reason why the hoarding of gold and silver is prohibited is not that which al-Ghazali has thought - that a hoarder treats them as though they were wanted for their own sake. The real reason has been mentioned in the words of Allah:

***And* (*as for*) *those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah's way, announce to them a painful chastisement* (*9:34*).**

It is clear that their hoarding is prohibited because it deprives the poor of their dues; and also because they are needed for keeping the cycle of work, payment and exchange in motion.

Third: The reason which he has ascribed to the prohibition of making and using pots of gold or silver, that it is injustice and ingratitude, is equally applicable to ornaments made of gold and silver, as well as to money changing. And these things have not been prohibited by the *Shari'ah,* nor are they considered by religion as injustice or ingratitude.

Fourth: What he has written as the reason for the prohibition of interest in gold and silver neither includes all cases of interest nor excludes cases of "non-interest". If the reason given by him, that is, injustice and ingratitude, were the real reason, it would have prohibited even money-changing and foreign exchange, just like those financial dealings in which interest is involved. And it would not have prevented interest in other things which are measured or weighed, like wheat and milk.

Therefore, his whole explanation is wrong in basic principle as well as in the other topics based on that principle.

The real reason for the prohibition, which Allah has mentioned, fits perfectly the explanation given before by us: that the excess amount is taken without giving anything in exchange. Allah says:

"And whatever you lay out as interest, so that it may increase in the properties of men, it shall not increase with Allah; and whatever you give in charity, desiring Allah's pleasure – it is these that shall get manifold" (***30:39***).

This verse shows that interest increases "in the properties of men"; in other words, it increases by adding to itself parts of other people's properties, as a seed grows by nourishing itself on earth, and adding parts of the earth to itself. Likewise, interest grows and grows while other people's properties go on decreasing until they are totally expended.

It is this Qur'anic reason which we have described earlier.

Also, look at the words of Allah, "and if you repent, then you shall have your capital; neither shall you deal unjustly, nor shall you be dealt with unjustly". The verse says that you shall not deal with people unjustly, nor shall you be dealt with unjustly by the people or by Allah. It means that interest is injustice against the people.

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1. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
2. Man la Yahduruh al-Faqih.
3. at-Tahdhib.
4. al-Kafi.
5. Majma' ul-Bayan.
6. Majma' ul-Bayan.
7. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
8. Majma' ul-Bayan.
9. al-Kafi.
10. This is now happening on a much larger scale in dealings between developed and developing nations. The former started giving interest-bearing loans to the latter, to "help" them out of their troubles. (Of course, this "generosity" had many strings attached to it; but that is not our concern here). Every poor nation fell into this trap. Many such loans accumulated; and after a short respite the interest on them began falling due in rapid succession. Many nations, unable to meet their obligations, took further loans to repay the interest due. It is an open secret that many a poor nation has already been swallowed up to its neck in this quicksand.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 282 - 283

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تَدَايَنْتُمْ بِدَيْنٍ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوهُ وَلْيَكْتُبْ بَيْنَكُمْ كَاتِبٌ بِالْعَدْلِ وَلَا يَأْبَ كَاتِبٌ أَنْ يَكْتُبَ كَمَا
عَلَّمَهُ اللَّهُ فَلْيَكْتُبْ وَلْيُمْلِلِ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا يَبْخَسْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا فَإِنْ كَانَ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ سَفِيهًا أَوْ

ضَعِيفًا أَوْ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يُمِلَّ هُوَ فَلْيُمْلِلْ وَلِيُّهُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَاسْتَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ مِمَّنْ تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَاءِ أَنْ تَضِلَّ إِحْدَاهُمَا فَتُذَكِّرَ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَىٰ وَلَا يَأْبَ الشُّهَدَاءُ إِذَا مَا دُعُوا وَلَا تَسْأَمُوا أَنْ تَكْتُبُوهُ صَغِيرًا أَوْ كَبِيرًا إِلَىٰ أَجَلِهِ ذَٰلِكُمْ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأَقْوَمُ لِلشَّهَادَةِ وَأَدْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَرْتَابُوا إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً حَاضِرَةً تُدِيرُونَهَا بَيْنَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَلَّا تَكْتُبُوهَا وَأَشْهِدُوا إِذَا تَبَايَعْتُمْ وَلَا يُضَارَّ كَاتِبٌ وَلَا شَهِيدٌ وَإِنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَإِنَّهُ فُسُوقٌ بِكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

O you who believe! when you deal with each other in contracting a loan for a fixed time, then write it down; and let a scribe write it down between you with justice; and the scribe should not refuse to write as Allah has taught him, so he should write; and let him who owes the debt dictate, and he should fear Allah, his Lord, and not diminish anything from it, but if he who owes the debt is unsound in understanding, or weak, or (if) he is not able to dictate himself, then let his guardian dictate with justice; and call in to witness from among your men two witnesses; but if there are not two men, then one man and two women from among those whom you approve of the witnesses, so that if one of the two errs, the (second) one of the two may remind the other; and the witnesses should not refuse when they are summoned; and disdain not of writing it (whether it is) small or large, with its fixed time, this is more equitable with Allah and assures greater accuracy in testimony, and the nearest (way) that you may not entertain doubts (afterwards); except when it is ready merchandise which you give and take among yourselves from hand to hand, then there is no blame on you in not writing it down; and have witnesses when you trade with one another; and let no harm be done to the scribe or to the witnesses; and if you do (it) then surely it will be a transgression in you, and fear Allah; and Allah teaches you, and Allah knows all things (2:282).

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ وَلَمْ تَجِدُوا كَاتِبًا فَرِهَانٌ مَقْبُوضَةٌ فَإِنْ أَمِنَ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا فَلْيُؤَدِّ الَّذِي اؤْتُمِنَ أَمَانَتَهُ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ وَمَنْ يَكْتُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ آثِمٌ قَلْبُهُ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ

And if you are on a journey and you do not find a scribe, then (there may be) a security taken into possession; but if one of you trusts another, then he who is trusted should deliver his trust, and let him fear Allah, his Lord; and do not conceal testimony, and whoever conceals it, his heart is surely sinful; and Allah knows what you do (2:283).

Commentary

Verse 282

Qur'an: O you who believe! when you deal with each other in contracting a loan for a fixed time, then write it down; and let a scribe write it down between you with justice; and the scribe should not refuse to write as Allah has taught him, so he should write; and let him who owes the debt dictate, and he should fear Allah, his Lord, and not diminish anything from it, but if he who owes

the debt is unsound in understanding, or weak, or (if) he is not able to dictate himself, then let his guardian dictate with justice; and call in to witness from among your men two witnesses; but if there are not two men, then one man and two women from among those whom you approve of the witnesses, so that if one of the two errs, the (second) one of the two may remind the other; and the witnesses should not refuse when they are summoned; and disdain not of writing it (whether it is) small or large, with its fixed time, this is more equitable with Allah and assures greater accuracy in testimony, and the nearest (way) that you may not entertain doubts (afterwards); except when it is ready merchandise which you give and take among yourselves from hand to hand, then there is no blame on you in not writing it down; and have witnesses when you trade with one another; and let no harm be done to the scribe or to the witnesses; and if you do (it) then surely it will be a transgression in you, and fear Allah; and Allah teaches you, and Allah knows all things (2:282).

"at-Tadayun" (التَّدَايُن) is to give a loan to another; *"al-imlal"* (الإِمْلاَل) and *"al-imla'"* (الإِمْلآء) both mean 'to dictate'; *"al-bakhs"* (البَخْس) is to diminish, to do justice; *"as-sa'mah"* (السَّأْمَة) is to be fed up; to disdain; *"al-mudarrah"* (المُضَآرَّة) on the paradigm of *"al-mufa'ilah"* (المُفَاعِلَة) from *"ad-darar"* (الضَّرَر = harm) means to harm one another; *"al-fusuq"* (الفُسُوْق) is transgression, refusal to obey; *"ar-rihan"* (الرِّهَان) has also been recited as *ar-ruhun* (الرُّهُن), both are the plurals of *ar-rahn* (الرَّهْن = the thing mortgaged, pawned or deposited as security).

"And let him who owes the debt dictate…but if he who owes the debt is unsound in understanding…" (2:282).

The whole phrase "he who owes the debt" has been repeated here instead of using a pronoun. It was done to remove any possible misunderstanding, as a pronoun could easily be mistaken to refer to the "scribe" mentioned in the preceding sentence.

"…Or* (if) *he is not able to dictate himself, then let his guardian dictate…" (2:282)

The manifest and separate pronoun *"huwa"* (هُو = translated here as "himself") has been included in the sentence to show that in this particular case the debtor and his guardian both have the right to dictate. In the first two situations, when the debtor is deficient in understanding or is weak (in body or mind), the guardian has total authority, and the debtor himself cannot deal in his own affairs. But in this third situation when the debtor is, for any reason, unable to dictate himself, then the guardian shall have joint authority to do so. Therefore, this pronoun has given the following meaning to the phrase: "what such a debtor himself can do, he should do it; but what he is unable to do, his guardian shall do it".

"… So that if one of the two errs, the (second) one of the two may remind the other" (2:282).

In this sentence a word, *hadhar* (حَذَر) is understood before an (أَنْ); together they literally mean, "lest one of the two errs ..."; the words, "one of the two" have been repeated in this sentence. While at first glance it would appear that the second phrase could be replaced by a pronoun, the fact is that the two phrases

do not have the same significance. The first phrase (if one of the two errs) refers to either of the two without pointing to a particular woman; the second phrase (the one of the two may remind ...) points particularly to the second who has not erred. That is why we have added the word (second) in its translation.

“And fear Allah”; The believers should guard themselves against disobeying the orders and prohibitions promulgated in this verse. “And Allah teaches you”; it is an independent sentence, not connected with the preceding one, “and fear Allah”. The sentence describes the grace of Allah bestowed on the believers. In this respect it is like the words of Allah in the verse of inheritance:

“Allah makes it clear to you lest you err” (***4:176***).

Allah in both these sentences shows that He has bestowed His bounties upon the believers by teaching them the rules of religion and by instructing them as to what they were allowed to do and what not.

Some people have said that the sentence, “and fear Allah, and Allah teaches you”, were connected to each other. According to them, they show that there is a relation of cause and effect between the two – when people fear Allah then Allah teaches them.

Comment: The principle mentioned above is correct in itself, and is supported by other verses of the Qur’an and by traditions. But this verse has nothing to do with that principle. The second sentence begins with “and”; if it had wanted to enunciate that principle, the word “and” would not have been there; the sentence would have been like this: “and fear Allah, He will teach you”. Moreover, the said interpretation is not supported by the context; if we accept it then the end of the verse will be quite irrelevant to the main topic of the verse.

The above-mentioned reconstruction of the verse gives us another argument against that interpretation. Had that meaning been correct, the divine name, Allah, would not have been repeated in “and Allah teaches you”, a pronoun would have been more appropriate.

In these three consecutive short sentences, the divine name, Allah, has been repeated three times. It was necessary in the first sentence, “and fear Allah”; it had to be repeated in “and Allah teaches you”, because it was an independent sentence; and in the last sentence, “and Allah knows all things”, the name gives the proof of this statement – He knows all things because He is Allah.

The two verses contain nearly twenty basic rules concerning loan, mortgage, evidence, etc. There are numerous traditions about these and related topics. But the proper place to go into these details are the books of jurisprudence. Therefore, we shall not quote them here.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verse 284

لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِنْ تُبْدُوا مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ يُحَاسِبْكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ فَيَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's; and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allah will call you to account for it, then He will forgive whom He pleases and chastise whom He pleases; and Allah is powerful over all things (***2:284***).

Commentary

Qur'an: Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's (***2:284***).

Allah is the Owner of all creation, whether it is in the heavens or in the earth. This declaration paves the way for the next sentence, "and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allah will call you to account for it". To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth; and among those things are you as well as your actions, and all that your souls have earned. Therefore, Allah encompasses you and preserve your deeds; it makes no difference to Him whether your actions are manifest or hidden, He will call you to account for them.

It has been said that the heavens have an affinity with the mind's faculties, psychological traits and spiritual characteristics. What is in our souls or minds is a part of what is in the heavens, and it belongs to Allah. When the hidden traits and characteristics manifest themselves through the actions of the body; they become a part of what is in the earth, and that also belongs to Allah. Thus, whatever is found in our minds, whether it is manifested or remains hidden, belongs to Allah, and He will decide about it after calling us to account for it.

Qur'an: And whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allah will call you to account for it (***2:284***).

"al-Ibda'" (**الإِبْدَاء** = to manifest) is opposite of *"al-ikhfa'"* (**الإِخْفَاء** = to hide).

"What is in your souls" means "what is settled in your minds"; it is the meaning that is understood by scholars of the language as well as the general public. It refers to traits and characteristics, whether good or bad, like belief and disbelief, love and hate, strength or weakness of the will, and so on. These traits may be manifest or hidden. They are manifested through the actions of body, which may be perceived by others and which prove the existence of those traits in the doer. One knows that but for those particular traits, for example, love or hate, belief or disbelief, inclination or repulsion, those deeds could not be done. In this manner, actions manifest the motives that are fixed in the minds of the doers.

Conversely, these traits may remain hidden if one does not do any action that could prove their existence in one's mind.

We have said above that "what is in your souls" means what is settled in your minds. It does not mean ineradicable and firmly rooted characteristics; rather it refers to the substantial existence of such characteristics from which actions may emanate.

The two alternatives, "whether you manifest ..." and "hide it", show that those characteristics are capable of being shown or hidden; it may be a well-ingrained trait or some appropriate psychological state. But it does not, and cannot, mean passing notions and transient ideas that invade one's mind without one's intention; for example, the mental image of a sin when one has no intention or inclination to do it. The words of the verse do not include such involuntary notions, because they are not "settled" in the mind, nor does any action emanate from them.

The verse, in short, says that mental states, the characteristics and traits settled in mind, are the basis of a man's actions, obedient as well as disobedient; and Allah will call man to account for them. In this respect, this verse has the same significance as the following verses:

"Allah will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned" (***2:225***).

"…his heart is surely sinful" (***2:283***).

"…surely the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these, shall be questioned about that" (***17:36***).

These verses prove that there are some conditions and characteristics of hearts, that is, minds, for which man will be called to account. The following verse also proves it:

"Surely (***as for***) ***those who love that scandal should circulate respecting those who believe, they shall have a grievous chastisement in this world and the hereafter…"*** (***24:19***).

It shows that the chastisement shall be because of the "love" of circulating scandal; and love is a state of mind.

This is the apparent and clear meaning of this verse. It proves that man shall be called to account for what is settled in his mind, whether he hides it or shows it. But the verse is silent on the questions as to whether the chastisement in all cases – manifesting it or hiding it, acting according to one's intention or not doing so, succeeding in the intended transgression or not succeeding – will be the same or different.

Most of the commentators have misunderstood the significance of the verse. They have thought that it is said that man will be asked about even a passing notion that invades the mind, even if it has not settled therein and even when it is beyond the control of a man. Holding a man responsible for such fleeting

notions is, without doubt, imposing a duty beyond the limit of one's ability. From this point on, these commentators have differed among themselves.

a) Some have admitted that Allah might impose on a soul a duty beyond its furthest limit.

Others have tried to escape from this difficulty in various ways:

b) Some have accepted that the verse ordained for man what was in fact a duty beyond his ability. But, they claimed, it was abrogated by the sentence in the next verse:

"Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability" (***2:286***).

Comment: It has been clearly shown that the verse does not include such transitory ideas and notions. Therefore, the whole argument and interpretation is out of place. Moreover, imposing a duty beyond one's ability is, *ab initio*, against reason; Allah cannot do so even for a single moment. He has declared that He never ordained anything in religion beyond our ability:

"…and (***He***) ***did not lay upon you any hardship in religion"*** (***22:78***).

c) Some others said that the verse was connected with the preceding one, and that it speaks particularly about the hiding of testimony.

Comment: This restriction of meaning is clearly against the general nature of the verse.

d) Still others have said that it was restricted to the unbelievers. Only they shall be called to account for their fleeting fantasies.

Comment: This restriction too is against the generality of the verse.

e) Someone else has interpreted the verse in this way: If you manifest your hidden evil by committing transgression openly, or if you keep it hidden by committing sins secretly, in both cases Allah will call you to account for it. According to this interpretation, the chastisement shall be, not for the ideas, but for the sins.

Comment: Such interpretation is totally against the apparent and clear meaning of the verse.

f) Yet others have said that "what is in your souls" means any kind of idea, whether fixed or otherwise. But "Allah will call you to account for it" means "Allah will inform you of it". According to this interpretation, the verse is similar to the verse:

"… So He will inform you of what you did" (***5:105***).

Whether we manifest such ideas and notions or hide them, Allah will tell us about them on the Day of Resurrection.

Comment: This interpretation too, like the preceding one, is totally against the clear meaning of the verse.

***Qur'an: Then He will forgive whom He pleases and chastise whom He pleases; and Allah is powerful over all things* (*2:284*).**

The alternatives of "forgiveness" and "chastisement" give a hint that "what is in your souls" refers especially to evil thoughts and characteristics. Although "forgiveness" has also been used in the Qur'an in a few such cases where no sin was involved, it is a very uncommon, indeed a rare, usage, and there should be some strong reason and clear association before the word "forgiveness" is being diverted to such meaning.

***"And Allah is powerful over all things"* (*2:284*).**

It gives the reason for the said forgiving and chastising; or it may show the reason for the whole verse.

Traditions

It is narrated in *as-Sahih* of Muslim from Abu Hurayrah that he said: "When the verse:

***Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's; and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allah will call you to account for it...* (*2:284*).**

Was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (S), the companions of the Messenger of Allah (S) were very much perturbed. They came to the Messenger of Allah and crouched down (before him) and said: 'O Messenger of Allah! we were ordered to do what we were able to do - prayer, fasting, fighting and charity; but (now) Allah has sent down this verse and it is beyond the extent of our ability.'

Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah said: 'Do you want to say as the people of the book before you said, "We hear and we disobey"? Rather, you should say, "We hear and obey; our Lord! Thy forgiveness (do we crave) and to Thee is (our) march."' When they recited it, and their tongues had been subdued by it, Allah immediately revealed:

***The Apostle believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and* (so do) *the believers... and to Thee is* (our) *march.* (*2:285*)**

When they did so, Allah abrogated that (law) and revealed (the verse):

***Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability..."* (*2:286*)**

The author says: as-Suyuti has narrated in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* through Ahmad, Muslim, Abu Dawud (in his *an-Nasikh wa 'l-mansukh*), Ibn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abi Hatim from Abu Hurayrah; and he has narrated another tradition with nearly the same meaning through several chains from Ibn 'Abbas.

And the abrogation has been narrated through several chains from other companions too, like Ibn Mas'ud and 'A'ishah.

And it has been narrated from ar-Rabi' Ibn Anas that the verse is confirmed and unabrogated; and that "calling to account" means that Allah will inform the servant, on the Day of Resurrection, about his deeds which he did in this world.

And it has been narrated from Ibn 'Abbas through several chains that the verse is restricted to hiding and giving testimony. Accordingly, it is a confirmed verse, not abrogated.

And it has been narrated from 'A'ishah that calling to account means the vexation and grief which a man feels when he intends to commit a sin and does not do it. This interpretation also treats the verse as confirmed and unabrogated.

And it has been narrated, through the chains of 'Ali, from Ibn 'Abbas about the words of Allah: and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it (i.e. all your hidden and manifest affairs) Allah will call you to account for it, that it is not abrogated. When Allah gathers the creatures on the Day of Resurrection, He shall say: "I shall inform you of what you had hidden in your souls which my angels were not aware of." Then, as for the believers, He shall tell them what they had imagined in their souls, and will forgive them. It is the word of Allah: Allah will call you to account for it, that is, will inform you. And as for the people of doubt and suspicion, He shall inform them of the denial of truth which they had kept hidden; and it is the word of Allah:

...But He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned. (***2:225***)

The author says: All these traditions, in spite of their mutual differences have one thing in common: All are against the clear meaning of the Qur'an, as explained earlier. The verse clearly says that men will be called to account for what their hearts have earned either directly or through other limbs; and there is no "earning" in passing notions and fleeting images which invade the mind. And testimony does not differ in this from other affairs, nor is there any difference in this matter between a believer and an unbeliever; and "calling to account" evidently does not mean informing someone of his transitory thoughts; it obviously means calling one to account for reward or punishment. This is the clear meaning of this verse, and all other verses confirm this meaning.

So far as those traditions are concerned which say that this verse was abrogated, there are several defects in them.

First: They are against the evident meaning of the Verse, as explained above.

Second: They claim that there is no injustice in imposing a duty on a soul beyond the limits of its ability. Such a thing is evidently invalid, and especially so if it is attributed to Allah. The subsequent abrogation cannot right this wrong, rather the incongruity will increase; the tradition says, "...when they recited

it…Allah abrogated…", in other words, the order was abrogated before it was acted upon. And such an abrogation is not acceptable in Islam.

Third: You will see in the commentary of the next verses that the sentence,

"Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability" (***2:286***).

Is not capable of abrogating any rule. That verse says that every soul is confronted by whatever it has earned, whether it finds it hard to bear or easy. If such a thing was imposed upon a soul which it did not have the strength to bear, or if such a burden was laid upon it as was laid upon those before us, it was all the result of what the soul had itself earned, because of its wrong choice; it should not blame anyone but itself. With this background, the sentence: Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability: looks like a parenthetic sentence, written to remove any possible misunderstanding.

Fourth: The subject of the next two verses has nothing to do with fleeting thoughts and transitory ideas; nor do those verses stand face to face with this verse as an abrogating verse stands in relation to an abrogated one.

In short, the purpose of the next verses is quite different from the aim of this verse, as you will see.

[1] [1]
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Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 285- 286

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ

The Apostle believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (***so do***) ***the believers; they all believe in Allah and His angels and His books and His apostles; We make no difference between any of His apostles; and they say: "We hear and obey; our Lord! Thy forgiveness*** (***do we crave***)***, and to Thee is*** (***our***) ***march"*** (***2:285***).

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إِصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ

Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability; for it is (the benefit of) what it has earned, and upon it (the evil of) what it has wrought; "Our Lord! do not punish us if we forget or do a mistake; Our Lord! do not lay on us a burden as Thou didst lay on those before us; Our Lord! do not impose upon us that which we have not the strength to bear; and pardon us and forgive us and have mercy on us; Thou art our Guardian, so help us against the unbelieving people" (2:286).

General Comment

These are the last verses of this chapter. They summarize the details given in it and recapitulate its main objective. As we mentioned at the beginning, the chapter aimed to show that it was an integral part of the worship of Allah to believe in all that He sent to His creatures through His apostles, without making any difference between those apostles. It is this reality which is described in the first of these verses:

"The Apostle believes…between any of His apostles" (2:285).

The chapter then gives many stories of the Israelites: How Allah bestowed upon them His countless bounties, like the Book, the prophethood, the kingdom, etc., and how they answered it with disobedience, rebellion, breach of covenant and even infidelity. It is these stories that are obliquely hinted at in the remaining part of the first and the whole of the second verse, where the believers are reported as saying "We hear and obey", and then they go on seeking the protection, forgiveness and help of Allah.

Thus, these verses connect the end of the chapter with its beginning. The epilogue is a mirror of the prologue.

Allah opens this chapter by describing the qualities that are essential for a God-fearing people, and without which they cannot discharge their duties towards their Lord. He says that His pious and God-fearing servants believe in the unseen, keep up prayer, spend out of the sustenance given to them by Allah, believe in that which was revealed to the Apostle and to the previous apostles and are sure of the life hereafter (vide verses 2 – 5 of this chapter). Allah guides them through the Qur'an; and then He shows the contrast between them and the infidels and hypocrites.

Then the talk turns to the affairs of the people of the Book and especially the Jews. It explains how Allah, in His grace, guided them, and exalted them with His bounties and favours. And what was their response to all those favours? They became arrogant, disobeyed the commandments of Allah, and repaid His bounties with ingratitude; they stood against Allah and His apostles, bore malice against His angels, and made differences between one apostle and the other, and one book and the other. As a result, Allah laid on them heavy burdens, like the order to kill their own people; and imposed upon them that which they had no strength to bear, like turning them into apes, and sending lightening and plague from the sky on them.

After going into all these details, Allah recounts in these two verses the good attributes of the Apostle and the believers who have followed him; He shows that their condition is in clear contrast with that of the people of the Book. They have responded to the divine bounties and guidance with submission and obedience; they believe in Allah, His angels, His books and His apostles, without making any difference between any of the apostles. And they know their own limitations as powerless mortals and recognize the all-pervasive power of Allah.

Although they have unconditionally submitted to the Caller towards the truth, they confess that they cannot do justice to that Call because of their inherent weakness and ignorance. They are afraid that they may transgress the limit by forgetfulness or mistake, or that they may fall short in their duties of divine worship; they are worried lest a sinful act puts them in disgrace, as happened with the people of the Book before them. Therefore, they beseech the All-merciful Lord and pray to Him not to punish them if they forget or make a mistake, not to lay on them a burden and not to impose upon them that which they have not the strength to bear; they entreat Him to pardon them, to forgive their mistakes and to have mercy on them, and to help them against the unbelieving people.

This is the true place of these two verses in the scheme of this chapter; they are a sort of resume of the chapter. This observation should be enough to further repudiate the claims of the commentators:

a) that these verses were connected with the preceding one:

"And whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allah will call you to account for it" (***2:284***).

b) that this preceding verse imposed a duty upon every soul beyond the limit of its ability;

c) that the first of these verses,

"The Apostle believes …and to Thee is (***our***) ***march"*** (***2:285***)

Describes how the companions submitted to, and accepted, this imposition of duty beyond the limit of their ability;

d) And that the second of these verses,

"Allah does not impose…help us against the unbelieving people" (***2:286***)

abrogated that verse which imposed such duty.

Moreover, our explanation is in perfect harmony with the reported "reason of revelation" of this chapter, that it was the first chapter revealed at Medina. The Prophet emigrated to Medina, and settled therein; the Medinite believers, that is, the Helpers (*ansar*), eagerly accepted the divine religion, and stood up to help the Apostle of Allah with their properties and lives; the Emigrant believers (*muhajirun*) abandoned

their properties and homes, and left their families and children in the cause of Islam, and came to Medina to remain with the Messenger of Allah (S). That was indeed the time when Allah should have praised them for their answering the Call of His Prophet with acceptance and obedience and thanked them for their submission.

The last sentence

"Thou art our Guardian, so help us against the unbelieving people" (***2:286***).

Also indicates that this prayer was at a time when Islam had begun its march forward, and when there was danger of attack from the unbelievers.

This verse contains wonders of elocution; there is generality followed by specification, and brevity by amplification; it shows the servants of Allah the perfect way of submission and servitude; and, in short, contains all the basic elements of perfection and felicity.

Commentary

Verse 285

Qur'an: The Apostle believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (***so do***) ***the believers*** (***2:285***).

This makes known the belief of the Apostle and the believers. The Apostle has been mentioned separately as the one who believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord; then the believers have been joined to him in this virtue; it has been done to maintain the dignity of the Apostle. It is the usual style of the Qur'an: On such occasions, it first mentions the name of the Apostle separately, and thereafter the believers are joined to him. Look, for example, at following verses:

"…then Allah sent down His tranquillity on His Apostle and on the believers" (***48:26***).

"…on the day on which Allah will not abase the Prophet and those who believe with him …" (***66:8***).

Qur'an: They all believe in Allah and His angels and His books and His apostles (***2:285***).

This specifies the generality of the preceding sentence: "What has been revealed" to the Messenger of Allah demands belief in Allah and acceptance of the truth of the books and apostles and angels who are Allah's honoured servants. Whoever believes in what has been revealed to the Messenger of Allah must believe in all those things, in a suitable manner.

Qur'an: We make no difference between any of His apostles (***2:285***).

It is the quotation of the believers' saying, without using the introductory verb, "They said". We have explained in the commentary of verse:

"And when Ibrahim and Isma'il were raising the foundations of the House; "Our Lord! accept from us; surely Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing" (***2:127***).

The general reason for this type of quotation, and how it is one of the most elegant styles of the Qur'an. Apart from that basic reason of portraying the speakers before the eyes and ears of the imagination there was in this case one particular reason for omission of the words 'They said': this speech depicts the believers' state of mind; it does not describe their verbal declaration. Even if we suppose that they actually uttered these words, each of them must have done so individually and in his heart; they never said it jointly and together by their tongues. It was only their shared faith that announced this belief, not in words but in their state of minds, which spoke louder than the words.

This verse quotes two sayings of the believers, one after another, but with different styles:

"We make no difference…" (***2:285***).

Is without the words 'They said'; then the sentence is followed immediately by,

"And they say: 'We hear and obey …'" (***2:285***).

Which, as we see, is introduced with, "they say". Yet both are the believers' sayings when they answered the Call of the Prophet. The reason for this difference is that the first sentence describes the state of their minds, while the second was actually uttered by them in words.

The verse begins by describing the belief of all the believers, "every one of them" taken separately. Then it turns to plural verbs and pronouns (We make no difference ...), and it continues up to the end. What was done in this respect by the people of the Book was done by their whole of their nations. The Jews made a difference between Musa on the one hand, and 'Isa and Muhammad on the other; the Christians made a difference between Musa and 'Isa on one hand, and Muhammad on the other. Thus, they became divided into many groups and sects, although Allah had created them one people. Also, they were chastised and heavy burdens were imposed on the whole of their groups jointly, not separately. And the prayer at the end of the verse 'to be helped against the unbelieving people' was, likewise, a collective affair. Therefore, all these things demanded plural words. In contrast to this, "belief" is a personal and individual matter, and it was appropriate to describe it in an individualistic style and a singular number.

Qur'an: And they say: "We hear and obey; Our Lord! Thy forgiveness (***do we crave***)***, and to Thee is*** (***our***) ***march"*** (***2:285***).

"We hear and obey" is not information; it is the declaration of their submission to the divine command. To hear allegorically means to accept and believe in; to obey is used for complying with order. Together

these two words point to the acceptance of the call through believing with the heart and doing one's duty with the body. Thus, hearing and obeying refer to perfect belief.

Their declaration to hear and obey is, thus, fulfilment of the rights Allah has on His servants; it is the sum total of the duties that Allah has imposed upon them: to hear and to obey. It is the "worship" mentioned in the following verses:

"And I did not create the jinn and the human beings except that they should worship Me" (***51:56***).

"I do not desire from them any sustenance and I do not desire that they should feed Me" (***51:57***).

"Did I not enjoin you, O children of Adam! that you should not worship the Satan? Surely, he is you open enemy" (***36:60***).

"And that you should worship Me; this is the right way" (***36:61***).

And Allah has decreed on His Own Self a right for His servants, in consideration of the above-mentioned duty imposed on them, that is, forgiveness. It is a thing which nobody can do without - right from the apostles and the prophets to an ordinary believer. Allah promised them that He would forgive them if they obeyed and worshipped Him. This promise was the first thing ordained when the *Shari'ah* was given to Adam:

"We said: Get down you therefrom all together; and when there comes to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve" (***2:38***).

And it is what forgiveness means.

The believers said "We hear and obey"; their declaration of faith and obedience was unconditional; they did what was expected of them about the rights of their Lord. Then they asked the Lord to bestow upon them His promised grace, that is, forgiveness. They said: "Thy forgiveness (do we crave), and to Thee is (our) march." *"al-Maghfirah"* (**المَغْفِرَة**), and *al-ghufran* (**الغُفْرَان**), both of which are translated as "forgiveness", literally mean "to cover". When Allah forgives the sin of a servant, the due punishment is averted from him; in other words, Allah covers and hides his shortcomings. This grace will be bestowed upon the servant when he reaches His Lord. That is why they said, soon after praying for forgiveness, "and to Thee is (our) march."

Verse 286

Qur'an: Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability; for it is (***the benefit of***) ***what it has earned, and upon it*** (***the evil of***) ***what it has wrought*** (***2:286***).

"al-Wus'" (**الوُسْع**) is ability and power. Originally, the word was used for dimension, to show the area or

capacity of a place or receptacle; then the power of man was thought of as a receptacle from which his actions come forth. A man has the ability to do a certain task; it is as though they said task is accommodated in his ability. On the other hand, a task which he cannot do is too great for his power and ability. In this way, the word 'dimension' came to mean power and ability.

As mentioned above, it is the sum total of the rights of Allah on man that he should hear and obey. Obviously, man can say "I hear" only about that which he can understand; how can he answer by hearing and accepting what he cannot understand? Also, he can say "I obey" only about that which can be performed by his faculties and organs directly or through some tools. Obedience means that man follows the given order, and his faculties and organs are actuated to perform accordingly. The question of obedience does not arise about things that cannot be done; for example, if one is told to hear by his eyes, or to sit in two rooms at the same time, or that one should be born from his parents a second time.

No such order can be given by any sane person. When the believers answer the Call of religion with hearing and obedience, it means that the Call is about such things that are within their power and ability; and it is these things which man obeys or disobeys, earning for himself what will benefit him or harm him. The "earning", mentioned in this verse, is the best proof to show that what man earns, he earns through his ability and power.

The words of Allah

"Allah does not impose upon any soul…" (***2:286***).

Describe the divinely established system that Allah does not impose upon His servants what is beyond their power; for example, He does not tell them to believe in that which is beyond their understanding; nor does He ordain for them a duty which they cannot do. This is, also, the custom of all sane persons. It is a sentence that is neither more nor less than the believers' declaration "We hear and obey"; it agrees with it perfectly.

This sentence, that is, ***"Allah does not impose upon any soul…"*** (***2:286***), is in perfect harmony with the preceding and the following sentences. It is related to the preceding one, as it shows that Allah does not impose any duty except that which the servants can hear and obey, that is, which is within their ability and power.

And it is related to the following sentences, as it shows that what the Apostle and the believers prayed for – that Allah should not punish them if they forget or do a mistake, and should not lay on them burden as He laid on past nations, and should not impose upon them anything which they do not have strength to bear – was not an imposition beyond the extent of their ability, although such things, if imposed, could cause hardship. When Allah imposes upon a group that which they have not the strength to bear, it is not the imposition of a duty; it is the imposition of a punishment for their transgression and rebellion.

Forgetfulness and committing mistakes, *per se*, are beyond man's power; but, more often than not, it is

man himself who paves the way for them. It is possible to prevent these two (forgetfulness and erring) by desisting from those things which cause them. It is especially true in cases where one forgets or commits a mistake because of his wrong choice.

The same may be said about laying on one a burden like that which was laid upon previous people. It refers to the cases in which Allah imposed hard rules in place of easy ones, when those people went against those easy rules. It was not the unwarrantable imposition of duty beyond one's ability; it was brough upon them by those people themselves because of their wrong choice. And such punishing rules are not bad in law.

***Qur'an: Our Lord! Do not punish us if we forget or do a mistake* (*2:286*).**

They first said, "We hear and obey" which showed their unconditional surrender and obedience. Then they looked at themselves and became aware of their intrinsically weak and imperfect being. Also, they remembered what had happened to previous nations. This prompted them to beseech their Lord for mercy, and they prayed to Him not to take them to task as He had done with past people. They sought His protection because Allah had taught them that there was no power or strength except from Allah, and that nothing can save from Allah's displeasure except His mercy.

Why did the Apostle prayed to Allah in these words when he was sinless and protected from mistake and forgetfulness? He did so because his sinlessness had come from Allah; he was protected from mistake and forgetfulness by Allah's protection. Therefore, it was quite in order for him to include himself in the group of believers to ask from his Lord what he knew was a grace of the Lord.

***Qur'an: Our Lord! Do not lay on us a burden as Thou didst lay on those before us* (*2:286*).**

"al-Isr" (الإِصْر = burden) is also interpreted as detaining a thing by force. This is not very far from the first meaning: If a thing is confined and detained forcefully it puts a heavy burden on it.

"Those before us" refers to the people of the Book and especially the Jews, because this chapter describes many stories about them; and because the seventh chapter, *inter alia*, refers to the Apostle of Islam in these words:

***"... And removes from them* (*the people of Torah and Injil*) *their burden and the shackles which were upon them..."* (*7:157*).**

***Qur'an: Our Lord! Do not impose upon us that which we have not the strength to bear* (*2:286*).**

It does not refer to unbearable rules of the *Shari'ah*, because reason does not allow such rules and Allah has Himself said that He does not impose any duty beyond one's limit of ability; and the words of the believers "We hear and obey" show that Allah's commandments are within their ability to understand and act.

This sentence in fact refers to severe punishments meted out to previous peoples – the imposition of retaliatory hard rules, sending upon them severe chastisements or transforming them into animals or insects.

***Qur'an: And pardon us and forgive us and have mercy on us* (*2:286*).**

"al-'Afw" (العَفْو) is to erase the signs of a thing; *al-maghfirah* is to cover it; *"ar-rahmah"* (الرَّحْمَة) is mercy. From the linguistic point of view, the three sentences proceed from branch to root and from particular to general. The believers beseech Allah first to erase and eradicate the sign of their sin (by removing its due punishment from them), then they ask Him to cover and hide the sin (by letting all concerned forget about it completely); lastly, they crave for His mercy that will cover the sin and make them worthy of His grace.

The three sentences are in conjunction with the previous ones: "Our Lord! do not punish us if we forget or do a mistake ..." The context shows that the pardon, forgiveness and mercy asked for are in connection with such sins which they might commit by forgetfulness or mistake. Therefore, the forgiveness asked for in this verse is in a particular context; it is not like the forgiveness asked for in the previous verse, "Thy forgiveness (do we crave) ", which is an unrestricted and unconditional forgiveness in consideration of the believers' unrestricted and unconditional acceptance of the Call.

It is clear from the above that there is no repetition of the prayer of forgiveness, because both are in separate contexts.

In these prayers the word "Lord" has been repeated four times. This was done to invoke the divine mercy. The name "Lord" by contrast, hints to the servitude and total dependence of the beseecher.

***Qur'an: Thou art our Guardian, so help us against the unbelieving people* (*2:286*).**

It is an independent sentence and a separate prayer. *"al-Mawla"* (المَوْلي) means 'helper' – not any helper, but that one who looks after the affairs of the helped one. The root word is *al-wilayah* (الوِلَايَة = to govern, to rule, to take charge of). Allah is the Ruler of the believers; therefore, He is their Guardian in all their affairs. Allah says:

***"...and Allah is the Guardian of the believers"* (*3:68*).**

***"That is because Allah is the Master of those who believe, and because the unbelievers have no master for them"* (*47:11*).**

This prayer of theirs shows that their only desire, after hearing and obeying the basic religion, was to spread the true faith and to fight in the way of Allah to establish the word of truth, so that all the nations could unite in that cause. Allah says:

"Say: "This is my way: I invite you unto Allah; with clear sight* (*are*) *I and he who follows me; and

glory be to Allah, and I am not of the polytheists" (***12: 108***).

To call to the faith of monotheism is the way of true religion. It involves one in fighting, enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, and in all the methods of propagation of religion. This is done to remove the root of discord from the human species. The importance attached to this endeavour may be understood from the verse:

"He has prescribed for you of the religion what He enjoined upon Nuh and that which We have revealed unto you, and that which We enjoined upon Ibrahim and Musa and 'Isa, that establish the religion and be not divided therein" (***42: 13***).

This prayer of the believers (***Thou are our Guardian, so help us…***) proves that the first thing that came into their minds after firmly deciding to hear and obey, was the general call to invite the whole of mankind to the religion of truth. And Allah knows better.

Wa al-hamdu li 'l-Lah (**And praise and thank be to Allah**).

[1] [1]
SHARES

Appendix A: A Chronological List of the Fourteen Infallibles ('a)

SL. No.	Designation	Agnomen (*Kunya*)	Name	Father's name	Title (*Laqab*)	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Martyred by means of	Place of burial
1.	The Last Prophet of Allah	Abu 'l Qasim	Muhammad (Ahmad) (Al-Mustafa)	'Abdullah	Rasulu'llah, Nabiyyu'llah, An-Nabiyy, Khatamu'n- Nabiyyin	17th Rabi' I, in the year of the Elephant. (25.8.570 AD)	28th Safar, 11 AH (25.5.632 AD)	Natural	Holy Medina, al-Munawwa-rah, Saudi Arabia
2.	One of the Fourteen Infallibles	Umm Abiha	Fatimah	Muhammad	az-Zahra', as-Siddiqah, al-Batul, Sayyidatu'n- Nisa'.	20th Jumada II, in the fifth Year after the declaration of the Prophet-hood. (2.1.615 AD)	3rd Jumada II, 11 AH (26.8.632)	Injured	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia

SL. No.	Designation	Agnomen (*Kunya*)	Name	Father's name	Title (*Laqab*)	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Martyred by means of	Place of burial
3.	1st Imam	Abu 'l-Hasan, Abu 'l-Hasanayn, Abu Turab.	'Ali	Abu Talib	Amir al-Mu'minin, al-Wasiyy, al-Murtada, (Haydar).	13th Rajab, 10 Years before the declaration of the Prophethood. (25.5.600 AD)	Struck on 19th Ramadan (25th January); Died on 21st Ramadan 40AH (27.1.661 AD)	Sword – while he was engaged in prayers.	Holy an-Najaf al-Ashraf, Iraq. (al-Ghariyy)
4.	2nd Imam	Abu Muhammad	al-Hasan	'Ali	Al-Mujtaba, as-Sibt (al-Akbar).	15th Ramadan, 3AH (1.3.625 AD)	7th Safar, 50 AH (6.3.670 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
5.	3rd Imam	Abu 'Abdillah	al-Husayn	'Ali	Sayyidu'sh-Shuhada, as-Sibt (al-Asghar).	3rd Sha'ban, 4 AH (8.1.626 AD)	10th Muharram, 61 AH (10.10.680 AD)	Sword – in the Battle of 'Ashura	Holy Karbala' (at-Taff), Iraq.
6.	4th Imam	Abu Muhammad	'Ali	al-Husayn	Zaynu'l-Abidin, Sayyidu's-Sajidin, as-Sajjad.	5th Sha'ban, 38 AH (6.1.659 AD)	25th Muharram, 94/95 AH (31.10.712 / 20.10.713 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
7.	5th Imam	Abu Ja'far	Muhammad	'Ali	al-Baqir.	3rd Safar, 57 AH (16.12.676 AD)	7th Dhi'l-hijjah, 114 AH (28.1.733 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
8.	6th Imam	Abu 'Abdillah, Abu Musa.	Ja'far	Muhammad	as-Sadiq.	17th Rabi' I, 83 AH (20.4.702 AD)	25th Shawwal, 148 AH (14.12.765 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
9.	7th Imam	Abu 'l-Hasan (al-Awwal – The First), Abu Ibrahim	Musa	Ja'far	al-Kazim, al-'Abd as-Salih, al-'Alim.	7th Safar, 129 AH (28.10.746 AD)	25th Rajab, 183 AH (1.9.799 AD)	Poison	Holy al-Kazimiyyah, Iraq.
10.	8th Imam	Abu 'l-Hasan (al-Thani – The Second),	'Ali	Musa	Ar-Rida.	11th Dhi 'l-qi'dah, 148 AH (29.12.765 AD)	17th Safar, 203 AH (24.8.818 AD)	Poison	Holy Mashhad, (Tus – Kurasan), Iran.

SL. No.	Designation	Agnomen (*Kunya*)	Name	Father's name	Title (*Laqab*)	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Martyred by means of	Place of burial
11.	9th Imam	Abu Ja'far (ath-Thani – The Second)	Muhammad	'Ali	at-Taqi, al-Jawad.	10th Rajab, 195 AH (8.4.811 AD)	30th Dhi 'l-qi'dah, 220 AH (25.11.835 AD)	Poison	Holy al-Kazimiyyah, Iraq.
12.	10th Imam	Abu 'l-Hasan (ath-Thalith – The Third)	'Ali	Muhammad	an-Naqi, al-Hadi.	2nd Rajab, 212 AH (27.9.827 AD)	3rd Rajab, 254 AH (28.6.868 AD)	Poison	Holy Samarra' (Surra-man-ra'a), Iraq.
13.	11th Imam	Abu Muhammad	al-Hasan	'Ali	al-'Askari.	8th Rabi 'II, 232 AH (3.12.846 AD)	8th Rabi 'II, 260 AH (1.1.874 AD)	Poison	Holy Samarra' Iraq.
14.	12th Imam	Abu 'l Qasim	Muhammad	al-Hasan	al-Mahdi, al-Qa'im, al-Hujjah, al-Gha'ib, Sahibu 'z-Zaman, Sahibu 'l-Amr, al-Muntazar.	15th Sha'ban, 255 AH (29.7.869)	Still alive, but in occultation.	----	----

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SHARES

Appendix B: List of Names and Numbers of the Surahs of the Holy Qur'an

In this book the references of the Qur'anic verses have been given by writing serial number of the relevant chapter, followed by a colon (:) that is followed by the number/s of the Verse/s. The names of the chapters have been omitted for the sake of brevity.

The names of the chapters with their serial numbers are given here for the guidance of the readers.

To find, for instance, the verse 5:67 in the Qur'an, the reader should open the fifth chapter, that is, *al-Ma'idah* (اَلمَآئِدة = The Table) and then find the 67th verse.

SL. No.	Arabic Names of the Chapters	Transliteration	Meaning

1.	فاتِحَةُ الكِتاب	*Fatihatu 'l-kitab*	The Opening of The Book
2.	البَقَرة	*al-Baqarah*	The Cow
3.	آل عِمران	*Al 'Imran*	The House of Imran
4.	النِّساء	*an-Nisa'*	Women
5.	المَائِدة	*al-Ma'idah*	The Table
6.	الأنْعام	*al-An'am*	Cattle
7.	الأعراف	*al-A'raf*	The Battlements
8.	الأنْفال	*al-Anfal*	The Spoils
9.	التَّوْبَة	*at-Tawbah*	Repentance
10.	يُونُس	*Yunus*	Jonah
11.	هُود	*Hud*	Hood
12.	يُوسُف	*Yusuf*	Joseph
13.	الرَّعد	*ar-Ra'd*	Thunder
14.	اِبراهيم	*Ibrahim*	Abraham
15.	الحِجْر	*al-Hijr*	El-Hijr
16.	النَّحل	*an-Nahl*	The Bee
17.	الاِسْرآء	*al-Isra'*	The Night Journey
18.	الكَهْف	*al-Kahf*	The Cave
19.	مَريَم	*Maryam*	Mary
20.	طه	*Ta Ha*	Ta Ha

21.	الأَنْبِيآء	***al-Anbiya'***	**Prophets**
22.	الحَجّ	***al-Hajj***	**The Pilgrimage**
23.	المؤمِنون	***al-Mu'minun***	**The Believers**
24.	النّور	***an-Nur***	**Light**
25.	الفُرقان	***al-Furqan***	**Discrimination (Salvation)**
26.	الشُّعَراء	***ash-Shu'ara'***	**The Poets**
27.	النَّمْل	***an-Naml***	**The Ant**
28.	القَصَص	***al-Qasas***	**The Stories**
29.	العَنْكَبُوت	***al-'Ankabut***	**The Spider**
30.	الرُّوم	***Ar-Rum***	**The Greeks**
31.	لُقْمان	***Luqman***	**Lokman**
32.	السَّجْدة	***as-Sajdah***	**Prostration**
33.	الأحزاب	***al-Ahzab***	**The Confederates**
34.	سَبَأ	***Saba'***	**Sheba**
35.	فاطِر (المَلائِكة)	***Fatir* (*or, al-Mala'ikah*)**	**The Originator (or The Angels)**
36.	يس	***Ya Sin***	**Ya Sin**
37.	الصّافّات	***as-Saffat***	**The Rangers**
38.	ص	***Sad***	**Sad**
39.	الزُّمَر	***az-Zumar***	**The Companies**
40.	المُؤْمِن	***al-Mu'min***	**The Believer**

41.	فُصِّلَت	*Fussilat*	Distinguished
42.	الشُّورى	*ash-Shura*	Counsel
43.	الزُّخْرُف	*az-Zukhruf*	Ornaments
44.	الدُّخان	*ad-Dukhan*	Smoke
45.	الجاثِية	*al-Jathiyah*	Hobbling
46.	الأحقاف	*al-Ahqaf*	The Sand-Dunes
47.	مُحَمّد (ص)	*Muhammad*	Muhammad
48.	الفَتْح	*al-Fath*	Victory
49.	الحُجُرات	*al Hujurat*	Apartments
50.	ق	*Qaf*	Qaf
51.	الذّارِيات	*adh-Dhariyat*	The Scatterers
52.	الطُّور	*at-Tur*	The Mount
53.	النَّجْم	*an-Najm*	The Star
54.	القَمَر	*al-Qamar*	The Moon
55.	الرَّحمن	*ar-Rahman*	The All-merciful
56.	الواقِعَة	*al-Waqi'ah*	The Terror
57.	الحَديد	*al-Hadid*	Iron
58.	المُجادَلة	*Al-Mujadalah*	The Disputer
59.	الحَشْر	*al-Hashr*	The Mustering
60.	المُمتَحَنة	*al-Mumtahanah*	The Woman Tested

61.	الصَّف	*as-Saff*	The Ranks
62.	الجُمُعة	*al-Jumu'ah*	Congregation
63.	المُنافِقُون	*al-Munafiqun*	The Hypocrites
64.	التَّغابُن	*at-Taghabun*	Mutual Fraud
65.	الطَّلاق	*at-Talaq*	Divorce
66,	التَّحْريم	*at-tahrim*	The Forbidding
67.	المُلْك	*al-Mulk*	The Kingdom
68.	القَلَم	*al-Qalam*	The Pen
69.	الحَاقّة	*al-Haqqah*	The Indubitable
70.	المَعارِج	*al-Ma'arij*	The Stairways
71.	نُوح	*Nuh*	Noah
72.	الجِنّ	*Al-Jinn*	The Jinn
73.	المُزَّمِّل	*al-Muzzammil*	Enwrapped
74.	المُدَّثِّر	*al-Muddaththir*	Shrouded
75.	القِيامَة	*al-Qiyamah*	The Resurrection
76.	الدَّهر (الإنسان)	*ad-Dahr* (or, *al-Insan*)	The Time (or, Man)
77.	المُرسَلات	*al-Mursalat*	The Loosed Ones
78.	النَّبأ	*an-Naba'*	The Tiding
79.	النّازِعات	*an-Nazi'at*	The Pluckers
80.	عَبَس	*'Abas*	He Frowned

81.	التَّكْوير	*at-Takwir*	The Darkening
82.	الإنفِطار	*al-Infitar*	The Splitting
83.	المُطَفِّفين	*al-Mutaffifin*	The Stinters
84.	الإنشِقاق	*al-Inshiqaq*	The Rending
85.	البُروج	*al-Buruj*	The Constellations
86.	الطّارق	*at-Tariq*	The Night-star
87.	الأعلى	*al-A'la*	The Most High
88.	الغاشِيَة	*al-Ghashiyah*	The Enveloper
89.	الفَجْر	*al-Fajr*	The Dawn
90.	البَلَد	*al-Balad*	The Land
91.	الشَّمْس	*ash-Shams*	The Sun
92.	اللَّيل	*al-Layl*	The Night
93.	الضُّحى	*ad-Duha*	The Forenoon
94.	الإنشِراح	*al-Inshirah*	The Expanding
95.	التِّين	*at-Tin*	The Fig
96.	العَلَق	*al-'laq*	The Blood-clot
97.	القَدر	*al -Qadr*	Power
98.	البَيِّنَة	*al-Bayyinah*	The Clear Sign
99.	الزِّلزال	*Az-Zilzal*	The Earthquake
100.	العَاديات	*al-'Adiyat*	The Chargers

101.	القارِعَة	***al-Qari'ah***	**The Clatterer**
102.	التَكاثُر	***at-Takathur***	**Rivalry**
103.	العَصْر	***al-'Asr***	**Afternoon**
104.	الهُمَزَة	***al-Humazah***	**The Backbiter**
109.	الفيل	***al-Fil***	**The Elephant**
106.	قُرَيْش	***Quraysh***	**Quraish**
107.	الماعُون	***al-Ma'un***	**Charity**
108.	الكَوْثَر	***al-Kawthar***	**Abundance**
109.	الكافِرون	***al-Kafirun***	**The Unbelievers**
110.	النَّصر	***An-Nasr***	**Help**
111.	تَبَّت	***Tabbat*** **(or,** ***Lahab*****)**	**Perish (or, The Flame)**
112.	الإخْلاص (التَّوحيد)	***al Ikhlas*** **(or,** ***at-Tawhid*****)**	**Sincere Religion (or, Divine Unity)**
113.	الفَلَق	***al-Falaq***	**Daybreak**
114.	النَّاس	***an-Nas***	**Men**

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Al-Mizan - An Exegesis of The Qur'an - Volume 5

Al-Mizan - An Exegesis Of The Qur'an - Volume 5

Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i

Translated by
Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi

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This is the fifth volume of this renowned commentary on the Holy Qur'an written by Allamah Tabataba'i, one of its greatest modern commentators, and translated by Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi. This volume contains the exegesis of Surah 'Aal–'Imran, n.3, from verse 1 to verse 41.

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Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi [7]

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Important notice:

The Ahlul Bayt DILP team would like to inform readers of the following regarding this digitised text.

During the editing and digitisation process, the DILP team identified various typographical, spelling, transliteration, and referencing inconsistencies. To improve clarity, readability, and accuracy, grammatical and orthographic corrections have been made, and the transliteration of Arabic names and terms has been standardised where appropriate.

In addition, sections and subheadings have been introduced to improve navigation and make the content more searchable in an online environment. As a result, the digital version diverges from the printed volume.

Users wishing to see the translation as it was published should refer to printed copies available in bookshops. Those who understand are advised to refer directly to the original text.

Foreword

1. al-'Allamah as-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i (1321/1904 - 1402/1981) - may Allah have mercy upon him - was a famous scholar, thinker and the most celebrated contemporary Islamic philosopher. We have introduced him briefly in the first volume of the English translation of al-Mizan which will be published, by the help of Allah, in the near future.

2. al-'Allamah at-Tabataba'i is well-known for a number of his works of which the most important is his great exegesis **al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Qur'an** which is rightly counted as the fundamental pillar of scholarly work which the 'Allamah has achieved in the Islamic world.

3. We felt the necessity of publishing an exegesis of the Holy Qur'an in English. After a thorough consultation, we came to choose al-Mizan because we found that it contained in itself, to a considerable extent, the points which should necessarily be expounded in a perfect exegesis of the Holy Qur'an and the points which appeal to the mind of the contemporary Muslim reader. Therefore, we proposed to al-Ustadh al-'Allamah as-Sayyid Sa'id Akhtar ar-Radawi to undertake this task because we were familiar with his intellectual ability to understand the Arabic text of al-Mizan and his literary capability in expression and translation. So we relied on him for this work and consider him responsible for the English translation as al-'Allamah at-Tabataba'i was responsible for the Arabic text of al-Mizan and its discussions.

4. We have proceeded to publish the translation of the second volume of the Arabic al-Mizan earlier as it was ready for printing, whereas the first volume is not ready yet for the reasons which we do not wish to state here. So, we saw no reason in delaying its printing. We have included two appendixes: one for the authors cited in all the volumes of al-Mizan, and the other for the books cited therein. These two appendixes have been attached to the first volume of the English translation. Apart from this, the reader will find two appendixes in all the volumes of the translation of al-Mizan.

* * * * *

We implore upon Allah to affect our work purely for His pleasure, and to help us to complete this work which we have started. May Allah guide us in this step which we have taken and in the future steps, for He is the best Master and the best Helper.

World Organization for Islamic Services

(Board of Writing, Translation and Publication)

6/4/1402

1/2/1982

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Surah ‘Aal-‘Imran: Verses 1 – 6

Chapter Three – Aali ‘Imran, The House of Imran

200 verses – Medina

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

الم

Alif lam mim (***3:1***).

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ

Allah is He besides Whom there is no god, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist (***3:2***).

نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَأَنْزَلَ التَّوْرَاةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ

He has revealed to thee the Book with truth, verifying that which is before it, and He revealed the Torah and the Injil aforetime, a guidance for the people, and He sent down the al-Furqan. (***3:3***).

مِنْ قَبْلُ هُدًى لِلنَّاسِ وَأَنْزَلَ الْفُرْقَانَ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ

Surely, they who disbelieve in the signs of Allah – they shall have a severe chastisement; and Allah is Mighty, the Lord of retribution (***3:4***).

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَخْفَىٰ عَلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ

Allah, surely, nothing is hidden from Him in the earth or in the heaven (***3:5***).

هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَوِّرُكُمْ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He likes; there is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise (***3:6***).

General Comment

This chapter aims at exhorting the believers to remain united in religion and to defend its cause with patience, forbearance and determination. It makes them aware of the dangers surrounding them: Their enemies, the Jews, the Christians and the polytheists, have made their preparations, and are determined to extinguish the Light of Allah with their hands and mouths.

In all likelihood, the chapter was revealed all together; its verses – 200 in all – seem to be well–connected and adhere to a laid down scheme. From the beginning to the end, the verses are related to one another and have consistent aims.

It looks as if this chapter was revealed when Islam had begun to spread in Arabia, but had not yet established a firm foothold outside Medina. It mentions the battle of Uhud, describes the planned imprecation with the Christians of Najran; speaks about the Jews and exhorts the believers against the polytheists; and in all these discourses, there is a constant refrain telling them to remain patient and united. It supports the view that this chapter was revealed at a time when the Muslims were engaged in defense of religion with all their might and when all their resources were devoted to this one task. On one side, they had to remain alert against internal sabotage planned by the Jews and the Christians; the believers had not only to refute their arguments, but also to neutralize their craftily–planned subterfuges to demoralize the Muslims. On the other, they had to fight the polytheists; they lived in a state of war, and peace seemed a forlorn hope. The call of Islam was reaching far and wide; this had prompted the enemies of truth – the Jews, the Christians and the Arabian polytheists – to attack the Muslims, in order to annihilate them before it was too late. Beyond the boundary of Arabia, the Byzantines and the Persians had the same design.

Allah in this chapter reminds the believers of the realities of religion that would make them happy and remove from their hearts the rust of doubts and satanic suggestions; and will keep them on guard against the deceptions of the People of the Book. He makes it clear that He has not relinquished the management of His kingdom for a single moment; nor have His creatures made Him weary. He has chosen the religion for them and has guided a group of His servants to it – according to His established

system: the system of cause and effect. Believer and unbeliever both walk on this very path. One day it is the unbeliever that looks victorious, the other day the believer vanquishes the unbeliever. The world is the place of tests and trials; the time is the time of action; and the result will be known tomorrow – not today.

Commentary

Verse 2

Qur'an: ***Allah is He besides Whom there is no god, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist*** (***3:2***).

Its explanation has been given in "the verse of the Chair" (2:255). It might be inferred from it that Allah looks after the affairs of creation and management in the most comprehensive and perfect way. The whole universe, all the things and their actions and reactions, are managed by Allah. This management is not like that of the physical and natural causes that create an effect on an object but have no sense or understanding themselves. His management is that of "life" that entails knowledge and power. The Divine knowledge is comprehensive – nothing is hidden from Him; the Divine power controls everything – nothing can happen unless He intends it to happen and allows it to appear.

That is the reason why, after two more verses, it has been said:

Allah, surely, nothing is hidden from Him in the earth or in the heaven (***3:5***).

He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He likes (***3:6***).

These six verses are a sort of prologue of this chapter, giving in a nutshell what the chapter contains in detail. Of these verses, this one is a sort of introducing speech, describing a basic truth that leads to the intended result. And the fifth and sixth verses, mentioned above, give the reason of the preceding verses. Therefore, the main theme of the prologue is contained in the two verses of the middle:

He has revealed to thee the Book with truth, verifying that which is before it, and He revealed the Torah and the Injil aforetime, a guidance for the people, and He sent down the al-Furqan (***3:3***).

Surely, they who disbelieve in the signs of Allah – they shall have a severe chastisement; and Allah is Mighty, the Lord of retribution (***3:4***).

According to these verses, the believers must remember that Allah, in Whom they believe, is One in His Godhead, maintains the creation and manages its affairs – a living management; He cannot be overpowered in His kingdom, nor there happens anything therein except what He intends and allows to happen: If they believe in it, they shall know that it is He Who has revealed the Book that guides to the truth; the Separator that distinguishes the right from the wrong. They shall appreciate that in this matter

also, He has decreed the same system of cause and effect, and has therefore given the man freedom of choice; he who believes shall have his reward; he who disbelieves, shall get its chastisement, because Allah is Mighty, the Lord of retribution. It is because He is Allah, besides Whom there is no god to decide in these affairs; nothing of His servants' affairs is hidden from Him; their belief and disbelief is not independent of His will and decree.

Verse 3

Qur'an: ***He has revealed to thee the Book with truth, verifying that which is before it*** (***3:3***)

The word translated as "revealed" is a verbal form of *"at-tanzil"* (التَّنْزِيْلُ). It was explained in the second volume that *at-tanzil* (to send down) implies gradualness, while *"al-inzal"* (اَلْاِنْزَالُ) shows sending down all at once.

It may be argued that the following verses go against this implied gradualness:

Why has not the Qur'an been revealed to him all at once? (***25:32***).

...Is thy Lord able to send down to us food from heaven? (***5:112***).

...Why has not a sign been sent down to him from his Lord? Say: Surely, Allah is able to send down a sign... (***6:37***).

In all the four instances, verbs derived from *at-tanzil* have been used, but they do not mean gradual descent. An exegete has tried to overcome this difficulty by suggesting that the words, "sent down (i.e., revealed) to you the Book", means: sent it down sending after sending.

Reply: Gradualness in revelation (sending down) does not necessarily mean considerable gap between revelation of one part and the other. There are composite things whose existence is the same as that of their parts, like rain. Sometimes the speaker looks at the rain as a whole, and treats it as one undivided thing – it is quite in order, in this case, to describe it with the verb *al-inzal* (sending down all at once), as Allah says using this same verb:

He sends down water from the heavens (***13:17***).

At other times, He looks at its parts, that is, drops of water, descending one after the other – it does not matter whether the gap between two drops is considerable or minimal – and then it may be described with the verb *at-tanzil* (sending down gradually), as Allah has done in another verse:

And He it is Who sends down the rain... (***42:28***).

It appears from above that the verses, put forth against our explanation that *at-tanzil* is for sending down gradually, are not against it at all. For example, the verse:

Why has not the Qur'an been revealed to him all at once? (***25:32***).

Means: Why has not the Qur'an been revealed to him verse after verse at one stretch without considerable gaps between their revelation? Other verses may be correctly understood in this light. So far as the said exegete's proposed meaning is concerned, it, first of all, necessitates inventing a meaning according to one's own liking, and it is not permissible in any language. And even then, the suggested meaning does not remove the objection in any way.

Allah frequently uses the words, *at-tanzil* and *al-inzal* when describing the revelation of the Book to the Prophet. "Coming down" requires a higher level from which a thing departs and a lower level where it reaches and settles. Allah has used for His Person the attribute of highness, as He says, for example:

... surely, He is High, Wise (***42:51***).

And He has said about His Book that it is from Him:

And when there came to them a Book from Allah verifying that which they have... (***2:89***).

Therefore, it is very appropriate to use the word, "coming down", when describing the revelation settling down into the heart of the Apostle of Allah (S).

"al-Haqq" (اَلْحَقُّ) and *"as-sidq"* (اَلْصِّدْقُ) both are translated as "truth". But *"al-Haqq"* is the information inasmuch as there is an established fact in front of it; and *as-sidq* is the information inasmuch as it conforms with a such a fact. The emphasis in the former is on the established fact, while in the latter it is on conformity.

According to this explanation, the word *"al-Haqq"* is used for Allah and for other existing realities, because they are true and actual facts about which the information is given. Anyhow, the word "truth", as used in this verse, means an established fact that cannot be invalidated.

The preposition *"bi"* (بِ = with) in *"bi 'l-Haqq"* (بِالْحَقِّ = with truth) is for togetherness. The verse, therefore, means: He has revealed to you the Book, a revealing accompanied by truth. Naturally, this accompanying would mean that untruth and falsehood could never mix with it; it is always safe from falling a prey to falsity and lie. The verse, thus, hints at this fact obliquely.

Some other exegetes have explained the preposition, "with", in some other ways; but none of them is free from defects.

"at-Tasdiq" (اَلتَّصْدِيْقُ) is derived from *as-sidq* (truth) and means to verify, to acknowledge the truth of, to believe one to be truthful in the given information. "That which is before it", refers to the Torah and Injil. Allah says:

Surely, We sent down the Torah in which was guidance...and We gave (***'Isa***) ***the Injil in which was***

guidance… (***5:44***).

And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth, verifying what is before it of the book and a guardian over it… (***5:48***).

These verses show that the Old and the New Testaments that are today in the hands of the Jews and the Christians contain between them some of the revelations sent to Musa and 'Isa ('a), although they are not free from omissions and alterations. The Torah and the Injil found in the days of the Apostle of Allah were the same Pentateuch and the same four Gospels that are known to us today; and the Qur'an verifies the same scriptures that were in existence then and have continued to our days. But this verification is partial, not total. There are many Qur'anic verses that speak of omission and alteration in these two scriptures. Allah says

…We cursed them (**the Jews**) ***and made their hearts hard; they alter the words from their places, and have forgotten a part of what they were admonished with …*** (***5:13***).

And of those who say, "Verily, we are Nazarenes[1]", We did take their covenant, but they forgot a portion of what they were admonished with… (***5:14***).

Qur'an: ***and He revealed the Torah and the Injil aforetime, a guidance for the people*** (***3:3***).

Torah is a Hebrew word for "law". Injil is the Arabic rendering of a Greek word, meaning 'good news'[2]. Some people say that it is derived from a Persian word[3]. We shall discuss in detail about these two books under the verse:

Surely, We sent down the Torah in which was guidance and light… (***5:44***).

The Qur'an insists on naming the book of 'Isa as Inji1 (Gospel, in singular) and on saying that it was sent down from Allah. It is in spite of the fact that there are several Gospels, and the four attributed to Mathew, Mark, Luke and John, existed since before the revelation of the Qur'an, and were well-known at that time. These two factors - the use of singular, Gospel, and the declaration that it was sent down from Allah - clearly show the Qur'anic belief that there was a Gospel, revealed to 'Isa ('a) that was later altered and deleted.

Anyhow, the references to these two books so early in the beginning is an allusion to the Jews and the Christians, hinting that the affairs of these two groups (including the story of 'Isa) are to be described in this chapter.

Qur'an: ***…and He sent down the al-Furqan*** (***3:3***)

"al-Furqan" (**اَلْفُرْقَانُ**) as explained in *as-Sihah*, is what distinguishes truth from falsehood. The word, literally, means "that which distinguishes one thing from another". Allah says:

…on the day of distinction, the day on which the two parties met… (***8:41***)***;***

…He will grant you a distinction… (***8:29***)***.***

The distinction and discrimination, that Allah approves in matter of guidance, is the distinction between truth and falsehood in belief and knowledge, and between what constitutes the duty of a servant of Allah and what does not do so. Thus, *al-Furqan* (distinction) may correctly be used for all basic principles and adjunct matters revealed by Allah to His prophets – whether it is in form of a book or not. Allah says:

And certainly We gave to Musa and Harun the al-Furqan… (***21:48***)***.***

And when We gave Musa the Book and the distinction (**al-Furqan**) ***…*** (***2:53***)***.***

Blessed is He Who sent down the al-Furqan upon His servant that he may be a warner to the nations (***25:1***)***.***

Allah has also described the same meaning with the word, *"al-mizan"* (**اَلْمِيْزَانُ** = weighing scale, balance) in the verse:

Certainly, We sent Our apostles with clear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the balance that men may conduct themselves with equity (***57:25***)***.***

This verse has the same import as the verse:

Mankind was but one people; so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the Book with truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed (***2:213***)***.***

The balance, like the distinction, is the religion that decides between the people with equity and contains the true knowledge and explains the duties of the servants towards their Lord.

Others have interpreted the word 'distinction' in various ways: It has been said that the word means the Qur'an; the proof that separates right from wrong; the convincing argument of the Prophet against those who talked with him about 'Isa; the (Divine) help; or the wisdom. But what we have said gives the basic meaning and implication of the word.

Verse 4

Qur'an: ***Surely, they who disbelieve in the signs of Allah – they shall have a severe chastisement; and Allah is Mighty, the Lord of retribution*** (***3:4***)***.***

"al-Intiqam" (**اَلْاِنْتِقَامُ** = retribution) is said to mean punishing the wrong-doer for his wrong. It is not done necessarily to satisfy the feeling of the wronged party. Of course, this happens in man's retribution; when one does a wrong to us, it causes a damage or shortcoming on our side, and we make that up by severe

retribution that assuages our heart feelings. But Allah is too great to get any profit or loss from any action of His servants. Yet, He has given us a promise – and His promise is true – that He shall surely, judge between His servants with truth, and will give them their dues – if good, then good, and if evil, then evil. He has said:

And Allah judges with the truth (***40:20***).

…that He may reward those who do evil according to what they do, and (**that**) ***He may reward those who do good with goodness*** (***53:31***).

He is Mighty in the most comprehensive meaning of the might, nobody and nothing can do any harm to Him. (It has been said that the basic meaning of the "might" is invincibility.)

The verse says that surely, those who disbelieve in the signs of Allah – they shall have a severe chastisement. The chastisement is not restricted to the Day of Resurrection or to the next world. The verse, therefore, may refer to chastisement in both worlds – this life as well as the life hereafter. This is a Qur'anic dictum to which the scholars have paid little attention. This neglect betrays a basic misunderstanding of ours: We never think that a thing is a chastisement unless it inflicts pain upon our body or causes decrease or deterioration in our material belongings. Loss of property, death of kith and kin and weakness or sickness of body are the examples of chastisement in our eyes. But the Qur'an gives us a totally different concept of chastisement.

Chastisement as Explained by The Qur'an

In the eyes of the Qur'an, a man who forgets his Lord lives a straitened life – even though in our eyes he may be living most luxuriously. Allah says:

And whoever turns away from My remembrance, his shall surely, be a straitened life… (***20:124***).

And it counts even the wealth and the children as chastisements, even though we count them as pleasant blessings:

And let not their properties and their children excite your admiration; Allah only wishes to chastise them with these in this world and (***that***) ***their souls may depart while they are unbelievers*** (***9:85***).

It was described, in short, under the verse:

And We said: 'O Adam! dwell you and your wife in the garden… (***2:35***)

That:

First: Man's joy and sorrow, pleasure and displeasure, attraction and repulsion, enjoyment and

suffering, all depend on his views as to what constitutes his good fortune, and what his misfortune.

Second: Comfort and discomfort etc., vary according to the subjects to which they are related. The spirit has its own joy and sorrow; and the body its own comfort and discomfort. Likewise, animal's sense of ease or pain is not on the same level as that of man.

A man having material outlook does not acquire the Divine attributes, and his characteristics do not reflect the light of sublime virtues. Such a man counts the material felicity as the true felicity; in his eyes, spiritual bliss is not a bliss at all. He remains inordinately engrossed in wealth, children, prestige and worldly power and domination. It is reasonable to suppose that once he gets these things, he would be happy and his bliss would be complete. But reality belies expectation. What he wanted was pure blessing free from every shade of distress. What he got was a pleasure surrounded by a thousand agonies. When he had not got what he longed for, he was distressed because of deprivation; when he got it, he was grieved because it was very different from what he expected. Each acquirement brought with it a lot of stings; the causes he relied upon failed to bring about the desired effects. And as he had not established any connection with the 'real cause' beyond the apparent causes, he could not find solace in any misery, nor could he get peace of mind in any adversity. Thus, even after getting what he strived for, he remained in despair and desolation.

Such dissatisfaction of man with what he gets spurs him to even farther goals, in the hope of a really blessed future. And the story is repeated again and again. He remains worried before getting his objective; he becomes distressed after getting it.

The Qur'an, on the other hand, teaches us that man is made of two things: a spirit that is eternal, and a body that is subject to changes and deterioration. He remains like this, until he returns to his Lord; then he gets eternity without any change or deterioration. Whatever constitutes the bliss of the spirit, (for example, knowledge) is his real bliss; and whatever is the bliss of the spirit and the body together, like property and children, is also his bliss and felicity – and what a good thing it is! – provided it does not divert his attention from Allah and does not tie him down to materialistic ideas. In the same way, a thing which causes discomfort, or even destruction, to the body, but brings about spiritual blessings, is his blessing (like being killed in the way of Allah, destruction of property in the cause of religion and so on). It is like tolerating, for a moment, the bitter taste of a medicine to secure permanent health.

On the contrary, what brings about a comfort to the body but harms the spirit, is the real suffering of man; it is his chastisement and evil reward. The Qur'an calls the comfort of the body only as a brief enjoyment:

Let it not deceive you that those who disbelieve go to and fro in the cities **(fearlessly)** ***(3:196).***

A brief enjoyment! Then their abode is hell, and evil is the resting place ***(3:197).***

Also, that which harms the body and spirit both, is called by the Qur'an a chastisement. The unbelievers

too call it a chastisement, but their reasoning is different from that of the Qur'an. The Qur'an calls it a chastisement because it harms the spirit; they call it a chastisement, because it harms the body. Look, for example, at various retributions sent down to previous nations. Allah says:

Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with 'Ad (***89:6***).

The (**people of**) ***Iram, possessors of many-columned buildings*** (***89:7***).

The like of which were not created in the cities (***89:8***).

And (**with**) ***Thamud, who hewed out the rocks in the valley*** (***89:9***).

And (**with**) ***Pharaoh, the lord of the stakes*** (***89:10***).

Who transgressed in the cities (***89:11***).

So they made great mischief therein? (***89:12***).

Therefore, your Lord let fall upon them the whip of chastisement (***89:13***).

Most surely, your Lord is on watch (***89:14***).

The pleasure and displeasure, for sentient things, depend on feeling and perception. We do not count a pleasant thing used by us, as a blessing, if we did not feel it. Likewise, a painful experience is not painful to us if we do not feel its effect.

It shows that what the Qur'an teaches us about the happiness and unhappiness is quite different from material comfort and discomfort. Man, surrounded by material things, needs some especial training to perceive the real happiness as happiness, and the real unhappiness as unhappiness. It is for the purpose of this training, that the Qur'an asks its people not to attach their hearts to other than Allah; to realize that their Lord is the Real Owner Who owns everything; everything depends on Him; nothing should be obtained but for His sake.

A man having this outlook will always find in this world unlimited sources of happiness: either the bliss of spirit and body together, or that of the spirit only. Other things, he will count as misfortune and as sources of unhappiness.

But a man who is entangled in worldly pleasure and material comfort, thinks, at least in the beginning, that what he has acquired of the trinkets of this world is a blessing and good fortune for him, that it is the root of his happiness. But soon he realizes that he is wandering aimlessly in a desert full of dangerous beasts, poisonous snakes and tormenting scorpions. What he thought to be his good fortune turns into greatest misfortune. Allah says:

Therefore, leave them to go on with (**false**) ***discourses and sport until they come face to face with***

that day of theirs which they are promised (***70:42***).

Certainly, you were heedless of it; but now We have removed from you your veil, so your sight today is sharp (***50:22***).

Therefore, turn aside from him who turns his back upon Our reminder and does not dec 're anything but this world's life (***53:29***).

That is the (**last**) ***reach of the knowledge…*** (***53:30***).

Whatever pleasure they get is contaminated with a lot of worry and distress.

This leads us to believe that the perception and thinking found in the people of Allah and the Qur'an, are quite different from those of other people, although both groups are human beings. And between the two extremes there are countless ranks of those believers who have not yet perfected their divine character.

This, in short, is the chastisement, as explained by the Qur'an. Of course, the Qur'an uses the word torment or chastisement for bodily discomfort and pain also. But it counts it as the discomfort of body, unrelated to the real, that is, spiritual chastisement. Allah quotes Ayyub ('a) as saying:

The Satan has affected me with toil and torment (*'adhab*, ***38:41***) (**عَذَاب**).

also He says:

And when We delivered you from Pharaoh's people who subjected you to severe punishment (*su'a 'l–'adhab,* **سُوْءَ الْعَذَابِ**), ***killing your sons and sparing your women, and in this there was a great trial from your Lord*** (***7:141***).

Note how Allah calls what they were subjected to as a trial and test from Allah, but a torment in itself – not from Allah.

Verse 5

Qur'an: ***Allah, surely, nothing is hidden from Him in the earth or in the heaven*** (***3:5***).

In the preceding verse, Allah mentioned, as the reason of His punishing the disbelievers, the fact that He "is Mighty, the Lord of retribution". But there was a possibility of misunderstanding there – someone might think that the Mighty Lord of retribution might remain unaware of one's disbelief and thus one might escape His retribution. Hence, this verse that shows that He is such a Mighty One that nothing is hidden from Him.

Possibly, what is "in the earth" and "in the heaven" may refer to the actions done by the body's organs, and the ideas settled in the mind, respectively, as we had hinted in commentary of the verse:

…and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allah will call you to account for it (2:284).

Verse 6

Qur'an: ***He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He likes (3:6).***

"at-Taswir" (اَلتَّصْوِيْرُ) is to give *"as-surah* (اَلصُّوْرَةُ) form a thing. The "form" means two-dimensional pictures as well as three-dimensional objects - or, as they say in Arabic, that which does not have a shadow, and that which has; "womb" is uterus, the organ in female mammal in which child or young is conceived and nourished till birth.

This verse takes the discourse to a level higher than the preceding two. First it was said that Allah would chastise those who disbelieve in His signs, because He is Mighty, Lord of retribution Who knows what is hidden and what is manifest; He is not overpowered in His affairs; He it is Who dominates everything. Now this verse says that the reality is even greater than that. The one who rejects Allah's signs and disobeys His commandments has no power of his own to do any work - even when He disbelieves in Divine signs and thinks that he is independent of Allah in his actions, he does so by the power given to him by none other than Allah.

It is not that he overpowers the decree of Allah, nor that he disturbs the fine system which Allah has established for His creatures; nor does his will overcome the will of Allah. The fact is that Allah Himself has given him the latitude to do as he wishes - whether he walks on the straight path of belief and obedience or wanders away in the wilderness of disbelief and disobedience. Allah has given this freedom of choice to man so that the test may be meaningful; so that whosoever wishes so, may believe, and whosoever wishes so, may disbelieve. And they do not wish except that Allah wishes, the Lord of the universe.

Everything - including the belief and disbelief - is from a Divine decree: Allah has created everything and programmed it in such a way that it smoothly proceeds towards its intended goal and acquires its objective. And this Divine decree is all-encompassing and predominates all wills and power. And Allah is Predominant in His affairs, Overpowering in His will, Guardian over His creatures. Man, in his ignorance, thinks that he does what he does, by his own will and choice, and that when he goes against the commandments of Allah, he disturbs the system which Allah has established. But the reality is otherwise.

Man is irremovably imprisoned in the above-mentioned Divine system; and even this transgression and rebellion is governed by that very system - the system of free will and choice. To this, hints the sentence, "He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He likes". Your existence is so programmed from the earliest days of your foetal life that you irresistibly proceed on the road Allah has opened for you - opened it by giving you freedom of will, not by compelling you to follow a certain path.

The verse only mentions the decree so far as man is concerned; it does not involve itself with other things; thus, it keeps itself confined to the topic at hand. Also, it is an oblique hint against the Christians concerning their belief about Jesus Christ; even the Christians do no deny Christ's development inside the womb; and that he did not make himself.

Allah changed the pronoun from singular (revealed to "thee") to plural (shape "you") in this verse to show that even the belief of the believers, just like the disbelief of the disbelievers, is not independent of that decree. By appreciating this truth, the believers will be happy with the mercy and bounties that Allah has bestowed on them; and will not be depressed on hearing about the retribution that shall be meted out to disbelievers.

Qur'an: *There is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise* (*3:6*).

The verse reverts to the initial topic, that is, monotheism. It, in a way, condenses the arguments for the sake of emphasis. The topics described in the preceding verses – guiding the creatures after creating them, revealing the book and establishing a criterion for discrimination between right and wrong, confirming the arrangement by punishing the disbelievers – all need a god to manage them; and as there is no god except Allah, then it is He Who guides the people, reveals the Book and sends down the distinction, and chastises those who disbelieve in His signs; and whatever He does, He does it by His Might and His wisdom.

Traditions

It is reported in *Majma' Al-Bayan*, from al-Kalbi, Muhammad Ibn Ishaq and ar-Rabi' Ibn Anas that eighty odd verses from the beginning of the chapter were revealed about the delegation of Najran. And they were sixty riders; they came to the Apostle of Allah (S); and among them were fourteen persons from their nobles; and three among those fourteen had the final authority in their hands:

(1) al-'Aqib, the leader of his people and their counsellor, they did nothing without his advice, and his name was 'Abdu 'l-Masih;

(2) as-Sayyid, their patron and leader of their caravan, and his name was al-Ayham; and

(3) Abu Harithah Ibn 'Alqamah, their bishop, prelate, religious leader, and head of their schools; he had very high prestige in their eyes and had studied their books; the Byzantine emperors accorded him great respect, and had built for him many churches; all this was because of his learning and energetic efforts.

So, they came to the Apostle of Allah (S) in Medina, and entered his mosque when he had finished the afternoon prayer. They had put on fine Yemenite clothes: cloaks and mantles; (they were) handsome like the people of Balharith Ibn Ka'b. Some of the companions of the Apostle of Allah (S); who had seen them, have said: "We never saw a delegation like them." Then the time of their prayer came, and they started ringing their bell and stood up and prayed in the Mosque of the Apostle of Allah (S). The

companions said: “O Apostle of Allah. This (is happening) in your mosque?” The Apostle of Allah (S) said: “Do not disturb them”. So they prayed facing towards the east. Then as-Sayyid and al-’Aqib had a talk with the Apostle of Allah (S). The Apostle of Allah (S) then invited them to become Muslim. They replied: “We had been Muslims (i.e., believers) before you.”

He said: “You both tell wrong. What prevents you from accepting Islam is your claim that Allah has a son, and your worship of the cross and your eating the pig.”

They said: “If he (i.e., Jesus Christ) was not son of God, then who was his father?”

Then they all started arguing about Jesus. Thereupon, the Prophet told them: “Do you not know that there is no son but that he resembles his father?”

They said: “Yes.”

He said: “Do you not know that our Lord is Ever-living, He shall not die? And that ‘Isa will die?”

They said: “Yes.”

He said: “Do you not know that our Lord is the Guardian of everything; He protects it and gives it sustenance?”

They said: “Yes.”

He said: “Does ‘Isa possess any such power?”

They said: “No.”

He said: “Do you not know that nothing is hidden from Him in the earth or in the heaven?”

They said: “Yes.”

He said: “Then does ‘Isa know anything of it except that which he was taught?”

They said: “No.”

He said: “So our Lord shaped ‘Isa in the womb as He liked; and our Lord neither eats, drinks nor does He discharge excrement?”

They said: “Yes.”

He said: “Do you not know about ‘Isa that his mother kept him (in womb) as a woman does, and gave birth to him as a woman does; then he was fed as a child is fed; then he used to eat, drink and discharge excrement?”

They said: “Yes.”

He said: “Then how can it be as you think?”

Thereupon, they remained silent. Then Allah revealed about them eighty odd verses from the beginning of the Chapter of “The Family of ‘Imran”.

The author says: The same thing has been narrated by as-Suyuti in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from Abu Ishaq, Ibn Jarir and Ibn al-Mundhir from Muhammad Ibn Ja’far Ibn az-Zubayr; and also from Ibn Ishaq from Muhammad Ibn Sahl Ibn Abi Amamah.

The story shall be quoted later; as regards their claim that (only) the first eighty odd verses were revealed in this connection, it appears that it was their personal opinion; otherwise, as earlier explained, the context and style obviously show that the whole chapter was revealed all together.

It is narrated from the Prophet: The unfortunate is he who became unfortunate in the womb of his mother; and the fortunate is he who became fortunate in the womb of his mother.

It is narrated in *al-Kafi* from Imam al-Baqir (‘a) that he said: “When Allah wants to create a semen – and it is among that from which covenant was taken from the loin of Adam – (or as He may decide later); and (wants) to put it in the womb, He excites the man for sexual intercourse, and reveals to the womb, ‘Open thy door so that My creature and My firm decree may enter into thee.’ So, it opens its door. The sperm reaches the womb, and moves therein for forty days: then it becomes a clot for forty days; then becomes a lump of flesh for forty days, then flow in it interlaced veins. Then Allah sends two creator angels who make in the wombs what Allah wishes; they enter into the belly of the woman, from the woman’s mouth; so they reach the womb, and in it is the ancient spirit, that was transferred into loins of men and wombs of women. Then they blow in it the spirit of life and eternity, and they create openings for his hearing and sight, and (make) his limbs and all that is in the stomach, by permission of Allah. Then Allah reveals to the two angels: ‘Write on him My decree and My destiny and firm order; and write down that I may change that which you write.’ They say: ‘O Lord! what are we to write?’

Thereupon Allah reveals to them to raise their heads towards the head of the mother. They raise their heads, and lo! there is a tablet striking the mother’s forehead. They look into it and find in it his features, his embellishment, his death time, his covenant – whether he shall be a fortunate or an unfortunate one, and all his affairs. Thereupon, one of them dictates to the other; thus, they write down all that is in the tablet, and make it conditional on the final decision (of Allah). Then they seal the writing and put it between his eyes. Then they make him stand upright in the womb of his mother.” (The Imam) said: “Sometimes he disobeys and turns upside down, and it does not happen except in case of an arrogant and rebellious one.

And when time comes for the foetus to come out, developed or undeveloped, Allah reveals to the womb: ‘Open thy door so that My creature may go out to My earth, and My order may be enforced about him,

because now time has come for him to go out.' "(The Imam) said: "Then the womb opens the door of the child; so he turns upside down, his feet go over his head, his head reaches the lower part of the (mother's) stomach. (It is done) so that delivery may be easier for the woman and the child. Then Allah sends to him an angel, named 'the Admonisher', who sternly tells him to go out; the child becomes frightened; when it delays some more, the angel tells him once again to get out; the child becomes (even more) frightened and falls on the earth crying, terrified because of that rebuke."

The author says: The words of the Imam, "When Allah wants to create a semen", mean, when Allah wants to create a well-made perfect human being from a semen. The parenthetic sentence, "it is among that from which covenant was taken" alludes to the fact that man before coming into this world existed in a world, called in the traditions as "the world of motes" and "the world of covenant"; and this life follows the pattern of that one. Whatever soul made covenant in that world must surely, be born in this world well-made and perfect. The other parenthetic sentence, "or as He may decide later", refers to that foetus that is not from among those who had covenanted in that world; such foetus does not develop to its perfection and is miscarried. The phrase, "and to put it in the womb" is in conjunction with the preceding words, "when Allah wants to create".

"They enter into the belly of the woman, from the woman's mouth": There is a possibility that the phrase, "from the woman's mouth", is an explanatory note added by the narrator of the tradition; this possibility is supported by the fact that the word "woman's" has been repeated instead of saying "from her mouth". But if it is the word of the Imam then it shows that their entrance is not as a body enters into another body. The way into womb is from vagina; the only other way may be through blood-vessels including that through which menstrual blood reaches uterus. Surely, this passage is not easier than the vagina. And it proves that their entering through mouth has some reason other than the ease of passage. "And in it is the ancient spirit that was transferred into loins of men and wombs of women": Probably it is the spirit of vegetation that is the source of nourishment and growth. "Then they blow in it the spirit of life and eternity": Apparently, the pronoun, "it", refers to the ancient spirit; accordingly, the spirit of life and eternity is blown into the spirit of vegetation. If the pronoun stands for the "lump of flesh", then it would mean that the spirit of life and eternity is blown into the lump of flesh that has already got vegetative life. In any case, it shows that flowing of human spirit into foetus is a forward step of vegetative life; and that at that stage it gets a new vigour and vitality.

The above explanation also throws light on transference of the ancient spirit into loins of men and wombs of women. The spirit exists with the body, that is, the semen and the menstrual blood that feeds the foetus; and these two things are parts of the bodies of the parents. Thus, the foetus has its share from the lives of its parents, and they in their turn are parts of the lives of their parents, and so on. Whatever happens to a man is somewhat a reflection of the lives of his father and mother. In a miniature form he represents all his ancestors - he is in a way the "contents" of the book that existed before him.[4]

This also may explain the sentence, "Allah reveals to (the angels) to raise their heads towards the head

of the mother". So far as the decrees concerning the child are concerned, their link with his father was disconnected when the semen separated from him; now his only relation is with the mother. It is referred to in these words: "and lo! there is a tablet striking the mother's forehead." The forehead is centre of perceptive powers and a main feature of one's appearance. The angels on studying it find in it the child's features, appearance and life as well as his covenant, whether he will be a fortune or an unfortunate person; in short, they see in it all his affairs; one of the angels dictates it all to the other – their mutual relationship is like that of an active agent and a passive one. They write all that is in the tablet. "And make it conditional on the final decision of Allah": The feature does not contain all the causes and factors affecting a man's life. External events and circumstances also play important part in it. Hence the need of this conditional phrase.5

This tradition attributes to Allah all the details of conception and birth of a child: Allah excites the man; reveals to the womb, sends two angels to shape the child, and another angel to get him out of the womb, and so on. The tradition does not deny the existence of natural causes for these events. According to Islam, there are two sets of perfect causes for every happening – one metaphysical and the other physical. They are not against one another; nor do they together constitute a joint perfect cause. Both are perfect causes – each on its own level.

Allah sends the prophets and Imams, to guide the people to their spiritual bliss and happiness; and to lead them to their spiritual perfection, The path laid down for it is spiritual. It is those divine leaders' duty to talk to their people in a way that they may proceed and progress on this path. For this purpose, it is essential that the people be reminded of their Lord at every step. That is why the religious guides attribute man's all affairs to Allah, mention the agency of angels and explain that good fortune and felicity depend on their help; and that misfortunate and trouble are caused by the Satans and their deception; then they remind that ultimately everything is attributed to Allah, so far as it is proper for His sanctity and sublimity. Thus, the people come to understand guidance and misguidance, profit and harm and, in short, every affair of the life hereafter.

But those leaders did not deny the natural causes, nor did they put it in second place. Physical and natural causes are one of the two pillars of human life; they are the foundations upon which is based the life of this world. It is essential for man to know all about these causes too as it is for him to know all about metaphysical and spiritual causes. Only then he will know his own "self"; and that will lead him to know his Lord.

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1. Nasara = Christians.

2. Greek word, euangelion, means "good news". In old English it was translated to 'godspell' (good tidings, good news) which later became gospel, a name now used in English for the Injil (tr.).

3. There is no evidence to support this claim (tr.).

4. Probably, this phenomenon may be illustrated by DNA, the hereditary material of life, found in chromosomes, in viruses, and in bacteria. This microscopic compound is the instrument through which hereditary characteristics are transmitted to

the next generation. (tr.).

5. Probably, the author wants to say that the angels write down his affairs as much as his hereditary characteristics reveal; but leave out the changes that may be affected in it by factors of environment. (tr.).

[1] [1]

SHARES

Surah ‘Aal-‘Imran: Verses 7 - 9

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book, of it there are some verses decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are ambiguous; then as for those in whose hearts there is perversity, they follow the part of it which is ambiguous, seeking to mislead, and seeking to give it (their own) interpretation, but none knows its interpretation except Allah; and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: “We believe in it, it is all from our Lord”; and none do mind except those having understanding (3:7).

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ

Our Lord! Make not our hearts to deviate after Thou hast guided us (aright); and grant us from Thee mercy; surely, Thou art the most liberal Giver (3:8).

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ جَامِعُ النَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ

Our Lord! Surely, Thou art the Gatherer of men on a day about which there is no doubt; surely, Allah fails not (His) promise (3:9).

Commentary

Verse 7

Qur’an: ***He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book (3:7).***

In this verse, the verbal form *"al-inzal"* (اَلْإِنْزَالُ = to send down all together) has been used, instead of *at-tanzil* (اَلتَّنْزِيْلُ = to send down gradually) that was used in the verse 3:3. It is because this verse looks at the whole Book in its entirety, and describes some especial characteristics of the complete Book. It discloses that the Book on the whole contains some decisive verses and some ambiguous ones, import of which may be known by returning them to the decisive ones. As the Book is here looked at as one entity, the use of the verbal form *'al-inzal'* was more appropriate.

Qur'an: ***Of it there are some verses decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are ambiguous*** **(*3:7*).**

"al-Muhkamat" (اَلْمُحْكَمَاتُ = translated here as decisive) is derived from the root word *h - k- m* (حكم); this root implies that a thing is so protected that nothing can pervert or break it or interfere with it. Some infinitive verbs made from it are *al-ihkam* (اَلْإِحْكَامُ = to make precise, to confirm, to strengthen), *at-tahkim* (اَلتَّحْكِيْمُ = to arbitrate) and *al-hukm* (اَلْحُكْمُ = to judge); some other words are *al-hikmah* (اَلْحِكْمَةُ = perfect knowledge, wisdom) and *al-hakamah* (اَلْحَكَمَةُ = bit of a horse's bridle). All these meanings have the elements of protection and preciseness in them. Some people say that the root-word gives the meaning of protection and reformation.

al-Ihkam of the verses means making them so precise that no ambiguity remains therein, contrary to *"al-mutashabihat"* (اَلْمُتَشَابِهَاتُ = ambiguous) ones.

Before going further, it should be mentioned here that in various places, Allah has described all the verses as being *al-muhkamat*; and again the whole Book has been called *al-mutashabih* (اَلْمُتَشَابِهُ). But the words have been used in those verses for meanings other than "decisive" and "ambiguous" respectively. Allah says:

(This is) ***a Book, whose verses were confirmed*** (*uhkimat* (أُحْكِمَتْ)), ***then they were divided, from one Wise All-Aware*** **(*11:1*).**

This verse uses the verbal form of *al-ihkam* (to confirm, to make precise); but it goes on to mention "division"; this association shows that the verb *al-ihkam* (to confirm) refers to that state when the Book, before its revelation, was an indivisible one; it points to that "confirmation" and stability which was found in it before it was subjected to particularization for the purpose of revelation. This confirmation is an attribute of the whole Book; and obviously it is something different from *al-ihkam* (decisiveness), mentioned in the verse under discussion, which is an attribute of only a part of the Book - those verses that are unambiguous in their meaning.

In other words, when Allah divided the verses of the Book in two categories, the decisive (i.e., unambiguous) and ambiguous, it was self-evident that the preciseness and decisiveness mentioned in this verse was not the same preciseness and confirmation which was attributed to the whole Book in verse 11:1. Likewise, Allah says:

Allah has revealed the best discourse, a Book (*mutashabihan* (مُتَشَابِهاً)), ***conforming*** **(in its various parts)** ***oft-repeated…*** **(*39:23*).**

Here the whole Book has been called *mutashabihan* (conforming); so we know that in this verse it means something other than *mutashabihat* (ambiguous), mentioned in the verse under discussion, in which only a part of the Book is given this name.

The decisive, unambiguous verses have been called *"umm al-kitab"* (أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ = translated here as the "basis of the Book"). *"al-Umm"* (اَلْأُمُّ) literally means a thing to which another thing returns; in which it takes refuge. That is why the mother is called *al-umm*. The decisive and unambiguous verses have been given this title because the ambiguous verses return to them. One part of the Book (i.e., the ambiguous verses) returns to the other part, (i.e., to the unambiguous ones). The possessive case "the basis of the Book" does not imply that this basis is something different from the Book, as is the case, for example, in "the mother of the children" - the mother is different from the children. Rather it denotes a portion or part, as in the phrase, "women of the nation" women are a part of the nation; in the same way the basis of the Book is a part or portion of the Book. The Book contains some verses that are the basis of the other verses. "Basis" is singular; it shows that there is no difference in the unambiguous decisive verses; all are united and well-connected.

The verse contrasts the decisive verses with the ambiguous ones - which it calls *mutashabihat. "at-Tashabuh"* (اَلتَّشَابُهُ) means similarity of different things in some of their characteristics and conditions. As mentioned above, Allah has praised the Qur'an with this word in the verse:

Allah has revealed to thee the best discourse, a Book conforming **(in its various parts)*, oft-repeated, whereat do shudder the skins of those who fear their Lord…*** **(*39:23*).**

Obviously, it refers to the fact that there is a consistency in the style of the Qur'an; eloquent composition and elegant modality, coupled with unveiling of realities and guidance to unalloyed truth (as the words used in this verse show) are the common and ever-present features of the Book.

But *at-tashabuh* mentioned in the verse under discussion means something different. The verse contrasts such verses with the decisive ones that are the basis of the Book, and then goes on to say that those in whose heart there is perversity follow such verses seeking to mislead people and to give them their own interpretation. This context makes it clear that the adjective *mutashabihat,* refers here to ambiguous verse whose connotation cannot be decided by the hearer just by hearing; his mind remains undecided between one meaning and the other; this continues until he refers to the decisive verses and only then is able to fix the true connotation and semantic value of the ambiguous one. At this stage, the ambiguous verse too becomes decisive and unambiguous but with the aid of decisive verse; while the decisive verse is decisive by itself.

For example, when man first hears the verse:

The Beneficent God (*istawa* (اِسْتَوي)) ***firmly sat upon the Throne*** (***20:5***).

He is unable to decide whether these words have been used in their literal sense. Then he refers to other verses like:

Nothing is like a likeness of Him (***42:11***)

Then only he understands that "firmly sitting on the Throne" means mastery over the kingdom and dominance over the creatures; that it does not mean sitting in a place or on a thing, because it is an attribute of body and Allah is not a body, because nothing is like Him. Thus, by returning that ambiguous verse to a decisive one, he will translate it as, "The Beneficent God is firm in power".

Another example: When the verse:

Looking to their Lord (***75:23***),

is returned to the verse:

Visions comprehend Him not, and He comprehends (**all**) ***visions*** (***6:103***),

it becomes clear that "looking at" in the former does not mean "seeing" with the eyes.

In the same way, when an abrogated verse is returned to the abrogating one, it is known that the order given in the former was for a limited time until the latter was revealed. And so on.

This is the meaning of "decisive" and "ambiguous", as an average man may easily understand, looking at the whole verse together. At least this verse is surely, "decisive", even if all others be not.

Just think of the troubles that would crop up if this verse is said to be ambiguous: First, the whole Qur'an would be ambiguous, as no other verse has clearer meaning; second, the categories (decisive and ambiguous) mentioned in it would be meaningless; third, the remedy shown in the words, "they are the basis of the Book", would be useless; fourth, the words of Allah:

A Book of which the verses are made plain, an Arabic Qur'an for a people who know (***41:3***).

A herald of good news and a warner but most of them turn aside so they hear not (***41:4***).

Would not be true; fifth, the argument contained in the verse:

Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy (***4:82***).

Would not signify anything. Add to it all those verses that say that the Qur'an is a light, a guidance, a clarification, an explanation and an open reminder, etc., that shall be deprived of meaning if this verse under discussion is said to be ambiguous.

No one can find a single verse in the Qur'an whose words or phrases are bereft of meaning. Each and every verse points to its true meaning – either it is the only meaning understood by an Arabic–speaking person, or is one of several meanings which may be inferred from it. When a verse is ambiguous and can be interpreted in more than one way, the true meaning is surely, one of those interpretations. The true meaning cannot go against the accepted principles of the Qur'an, like the existence of the Creator, His Oneness, coming of the prophets, promulgation of the law, the Day of Judgment etc. It conforms with those principles, and is based on them; and those principles decide which of the possible meanings is the true one. Thus, some parts of the Qur'an explain the others; some verses are the basis to which the others are returned.

When such a reader shall read this verse,

Of it there are some verses decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are ambiguous; (***3:7***)

he will certainly know that the decisive are those verses that contain the accepted principles of religion, and ambiguous those whose meaning can be decided through these principles.

Question: In every subject there are some principles and some adjuncts; the latter are invariably always referred to the former. It is true in other writings as much as about the Qur'an. But it does not create ambiguity in other books. So why in the Qur'an?

Reply: The Qur'an contains two sets of realities, and there is possibility of ambiguity in each:

First: There are high spiritual and metaphysical realities that are beyond the scope of perception or matter. A man of average understanding, on hearing such verse, is perplexed whether the words have been used in their literal (that is often physical) meaning or denote something higher. For example, when he hears the words:

Most surely, your Lord is on watch (***89: 14***)***.***

And your Lord comes… (***89:22***)***.***

his mind races at first to the literal senses of these words, which if accepted, would show that Allah is a body! The uncertainty is removed when he refers these verses to the Qur'anic principles which show that Allah is not a body, and that matter and actions and reactions connected with matter cannot be attributed to Him.

This type of ambiguity occurs in all metaphysical and spiritual talks and writings; it is not peculiar to the Qur'an. Other scriptures – the unaltered parts – when talking of high spiritual things face the same difficulty. Even philosophy suffers from this handicap. To this fact, the Qur'an refers in the following verse:

***He sends down water from the heavens, then the valleys flow according to their measure, and the torrent bears along the swelling foam; and from what they melt in the fire for the sake of* (*making*) *ornaments or apparatus arises a scum like it; thus does Allah compare truth and falsehood; then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits the people, it remains in the earth; thus does Allah set forth parables* (*13:17*).**

***Surely, We have made it an Arabic Qur'an, so that you may understand* (*43:3*).**

***And surely, it is in the Original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom* (*43:4*).**

Second: There are social legislations and other rules. Some rules, when the reasons for which they were legislated were no longer valid, were abrogated. Moreover, the verses were revealed piecemeal. These two factors create ambiguity in such verses; and it is necessary to return the abrogated verses to the abrogating ones; and then the ambiguousness goes away.

Qur'an: ***Then as for those in whose hearts there is perversity, they follow the part of it which is ambiguous, seeking to mislead, and seeking to give it* (their own) *interpretation* (*3:7*).**

"az-Zaygh" (**اَلزَّيْغُ**) is deviation; it is accompanied by anxiety and disquiet. The verse goes on to contrast such people with those who are firmly rooted in knowledge, who say: "We believe in it, it is all from our Lord." It divides the people, so far as their behaviour regarding the Qur'an is concerned, in two categories: There are they in whose hearts is deviation, who are worried and perturbed – they follow the ambiguous verses to mislead the people and to interpret the verses according to their own liking. And there are those who are firmly rooted in knowledge, with stable mind – they follow the decisive verses, and believes in the ambiguous ones but do not act upon them, and pray to Allah not to make their hearts deviate after guidance has come to them.

It shows that "following ambiguous verses" means to act upon them. They are condemned because they follow the ambiguous verses without returning (i.e., referring) them to the decisive ones. Had they referred them to decisive verses before acting upon them, it would, in effect, have been acting upon the decisive verses; and they would have been free from reproach.

"al-Fitnah" (**اَلْفِتْنَةُ** = literally, mischief) means here to mislead the people. Making mischief and misleading are near in meaning. Allah says that they follow ambiguous verses so that they may mislead the people. Not only this – they want something even more grievous: They seek to acquire the knowledge of the interpretation of the Qur'an; their aim is to find everything from ambiguous verses, so that they would be independent of the decisive ones, and thus the foundation of the religion of Allah would be destroyed completely.

"al-ta'wil" (**اَلتَّأْوِيْلُ**) is derived from *al-awl* (**اَلْأَوْلُ** = to return). *at-ta'wil* of an ambiguous verse is its "returning base" to which it is returned. *at-ta'wil* of the Qur'an is the source from which it gets its realities. For want of a better word, it is mostly translated as interpretation, final interpretation, or the end;

although these words do not convey its true connotation. We shall try to lead the reader step by step to its real significance.

Allah has used the word *at–ta'wil* in various places in the Qur'an:

1. ***And certainly, We have brought them a Book which We have made clear with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe*** (***7:52***).

Do they wait for aught but its final interpretation? On the day when its final interpretation comes about, those who neglected it before will says: "Indeed the apostles of our Lord had brought the truth…" (***7:53***).

That is, what the apostles told their people was all truth: that Allah is their True Lord; that what they call upon besides Allah has no reality at all; that the prophethood is truth and the religion is truth; that Allah will surely, raise those who are in graves; in short, all the information about the unseen, truth of which will be manifest on the Day of Resurrection.

Keeping in view this manifestation, it has been said that *at–ta'wil* of a verse is the fact with which that verse conforms, and that it would be manifested later on; like the happenings on the Day of Judgment that would be in conformity with the pieces of information given by the prophets and the Books.

But this explanation is not comprehensive. It covers only those verses that describe the Divine attributes and actions and explain the events of the Day of Judgment. But many more verses have no "facts" that would manifest themselves later on: the verses containing law and rules – they give orders, not information, and thus have no facts to conform with; the ones describing what is a clear rational proposition, for example, many ethical teachings – their *ta'wil* (in the proposed events) is within themselves, it is not to appear later; those narrating the stories of the prophets and past nations – their *ta'wil* has already appeared, it is not to appear on the Day of Judgment. And the verse under discussion is talking about *at–ta'wil* of the whole Book: *"Ta'wilahu"* (تَأْوِيْلَهُ = its), i.e., Book's, final interpretation. Clearly the suggested meaning of *at–ta'wil* cannot be applied here, because, as described above, it is true for only a portion of the Book, not for the whole.

2. ***And this Qur'an is not such as could be forged by those besides Allah, but it is a verification of that which is before it and a clear explanation of the Book, there is no doubt in it, from the Lord of the worlds*** (***10:37***).

Or do they say: "He has forged it?" Say: 'Then bring a chapter like this and call whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful (***10:38***).

Nay, they have rejected that of which they have no comprehensive knowledge, and its final interpretation has not yet come to them; even thus did those before them reject (***the truth***)***; see then what was the end of the unjust"*** (***10:39***).

Here again *at-ta'wil* has been attributed to the whole Book.

Someone has improved upon the definition of *at-ta'wil* suggested in (1); he has said: *at-ta'wil* is the real fact upon which the talk depends. If the talk contains an information, then the event or fact mentioned is its "interpretation" - it does not matter whether the events have already passed, like those of the prophets and past nations, or will be manifested in future, as concerning the verses describing the attributes, names and promises of Allah and all that is to happen on the Day of Judgment; and if it promulgates a law, then the benefit emanating from it is its "interpretation". Look, for example, at the words of Allah:

***And give full measure when you measure out, and weigh with a true balance; this is good and the fairest in the end* (*17:35*).**

The original word, translated here as "in the end", is "*ta'wil*a" (تَأْوِيْلاً). It shows that the "final interpretation" of giving full measure and weighing with true balance is the benefit accruing to the society from honest dealing.

But this explanation too is defective, as will be seen from the following clarifications.

First: The verse of measure and weight is clear on one point: the "final interpretation", that is, the social benefit, depends on people's doing what they have been told to do, that is, on their actually giving full measure and correct weight; those benefits would not occur merely by promulgating this rule. In other words, the final interpretation is a real fact (benefit to the society) that emanates from a real fact (measuring and weighing correctly).

Obviously, the "final interpretation" is a real fact; and the thing that "returns" to it, or, let us say, through which that final interpretation emanates is also a real fact - it is not only an information or order. When Allah says that the verses of the Book have "final interpretation", it means that those verses narrate some real facts (as, for example, in the stories) or are concerned with actually existing practical matters (as, for example, in the verses promulgating laws), which, in their turn, have a final interpretation. This capability of having a final interpretation is not an attribute of the speech; it is the property of the subject matter of the speech.

Second: As explained earlier, *at-ta'wil* literally means to return, or the returning base. But it is not every return or returning base, but a special type of it. A dependent returns to his principal, but the principal is not his "final interpretation"; all numbers return to "one", but "one" is not their final interpretation.

To understand it more clearly let us look at the Qur'anic story of Musa and Khidr ('a). Khidr ('a) used the word *at-ta'wil* twice when he told Musa:

***...now I will inform you of the interpretation of that with which you could not have patience* (*18:78*).**

This is the interpretation of that with which you could not have patience (***18:82***).

What he explained to Musa was the true significance of his three actions which Musa had misjudged because of his unawareness of their real purposes.

The three events were as follows:

…until when they embarked in the boat, he made a hole in it… (***18:71***).

…until when they met a boy, he slew him (***18:74***).

…until when they came to the people of a town, they asked them for food, but they refused to receive them as guests. Then they found in it a wall which was on the point of falling, so he set it upright (***18:77***).

And this is how Musa ('a) misconstrued these events:

(**Musa**) ***said: "Have you made a hole in it to drown its inmates? Certainly, you have done a grievous thing"*** (***18:71***).

(**Musa**) ***said: "Have you slain an innocent person otherwise than for manslaughter? Certainly, you have done a horrible thing"*** (***18:74***).

(**Musa**) ***said: "If you had pleased, you might certainly have taken a recompense for it"*** (***18:77***).

And the following are the "final interpretations" of them, as explained by Khidr ('a):

"As for the boat, it belonged to (***some***) ***poor men who worked on the river and I wished that I should damage it, and there was behind them a king who seized every boat by force"*** (***18:79***).

"And as for the boy, his parents were believers and we feared lest he should oppress them by disobedience (***to them***) ***and disbelief*** (**in God**) (***18:80***).

So we desired that their Lord might give them in his place one better than him in purity and nearer to having compassion" (***18:81***).

"And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure belonging to them, and their father was a righteous man; so your Lord desired that they should attain their maturity and take out their treasure, a mercy from your Lord…" (***18:82***).

Then he answered all the objection of Musa ('a) in a short sentence:

"And I did not do it of my own accord…" (***18:82***).

It is now obvious that the "return" mentioned in these verses is just as a punishment given to a child

“returns” to his character–building – he is punished for the “purpose” of his reform. It is this type of “return” that is meant by *at–ta’wil* in the above–mentioned verses. It does not mean that conformity which a true information has with its fact – as the sentence, Zayd came, has with the coming of Zayd.

For further clarification let us look at uses of this word in Chapter 12 (Joseph):

1. ***When Joseph said to his father: ‘O my father! surely, I saw eleven stars and the sun and the moon – I saw them prostrating before me’”*** (***12:4***).

And he raised his parents upon the throne and they (***all***) ***fell down in prostration before him, and he said: “O my father! this is the interpretation of my vision of old; my Lord has indeed made it to be true…*** (***12:100***).

In this instance, the dream he saw of the sun, the moon and eleven stars prostrating before him “returned” to the prostration of his parents and eleven brothers. But this “returning” was just as an allegory returns to the thing for which it is used.

The same is the case with the following verses:

2. ***And the king said: ‘Surely, I see eleven fat kine which seven lean ones devoured; and seven green ears and*** (***seven***) ***others dry; O Chiefs! explain to me my dream, if you can interpret the dream*** (***12:43***).

They said: ‘Confused dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of (***such***) ***dreams’*** (***12:44***).

And of the two (***prisoners***) ***he who had found deliverance and remembered after a long time said: ‘I will inform you of its interpretation, so let me go’*** (***12:45***).

Joseph! O truthful one! explain to us seven fat kine which seven lean ones devoured, and seven green ears and (***seven***) ***others dry, that I may go back to the people so that they may know*** (***12:46***).

He said: ‘You shall sow for seven years continuously, then what you reap leave it in its ear except a little of which you eat’ (***12:47***).

Then there shall come after that seven years of hardship which shall eat away all that you have beforehand and laid up in store for them, except a little of what you shall have preserved (***12:48***).

3. ***And two youths entered the prison with him. One of them said: “I saw myself pressing wine.” And the other said: “I saw myself carrying bread on my head, of which birds ate. Inform us of its interpretation; surely, we see you to be of the doers of good”*** (***12:36***).

“O my two mates of the prison! as for one of you, he shall give his lord to drink wine; and as for the other, he shall be crucified, so that the birds shall eat from his head; the matter is decreed

concerning which you enquired" (***12: 41***).

4. ***"…and teach you the interpretation of saying..".*** (***12:6***).

5. ***…and that We might teach him the interpretation of sayings…*** (***12: 21***).

6. ***"… and taught me of the interpretation of sayings…"*** (***12:101***).

The word *at-ta'wil* in all these verses is used for the events to which the dreams referred. The dreamers saw the events not as they actually happened but in their allegorical forms; and Joseph "retuned" those allegories to the real events which they represented. The dreams were the forms, and their interpretations were the substances behind those forms. In other words, *at-ta'wil* (interpretation) is the reality that is allegorically represented by the words or expressions; those words or expressions must be "returned" to the realities which they represent, if one wants to know their true significance.

The verse quoted above in the story of Musa and Khidr ('a) also were of the same nature, as are the words of Allah mentioned earlier:

And give full measure when you measure out, and weigh with a true balance; this is good and the fairest in the end (***17:35***).

Pondering over the verses about the Day of Judgment, one realizes that this word has been used in the same meaning in the earlier-mentioned verses:

Nay, they have rejected that of which they have no comprehensive knowledge, and its final interpretation has not yet come to them (***10:39***).

Do they wait for aught but its final interpretations? On the day when its final interpretation comes about… (***7:53***).

Look at verses such as:

Certainly, you were heedless of it, but now We have removed from you your veil, so your sight today is sharp (***50:22***).

It shows that the vision with which man will see the pieces of information brought by the prophets and the Book turning into reality will be of a different kind - that perception will not be like this physical perception, which we are used to in this world. Even the manifestation of the Day of Judgment as well as the governing principle of that day shall be something beyond the worldly perception of ours. (It will be further explained somewhere else.) Therefore, when it is said that the pieces of information given in the Book and tradition shall "return" to their true meanings on the Day of Judgment it is not the same thing as fulfilment of a forecast in future.

From the above discourse, it becomes clear that:

First: The sentence, "This verse has an *at-ta'wil* to which it returns", conveys a meaning different from the sentence, "this verse is ambiguous and it returns to a decisive verse ".

Second: *at-ta'wil* is not a peculiarity of the ambiguous verses; it is an attribute of the whole Qur'an; decisive verses have their *at-ta'wil*, as do the ambiguous ones.

Third: *at-ta'wil* is not the meaning of a word; it is some real fact found outside the imagination. When we say that this verse has an *at-ta'wil*, we mean that the verse describes a real fact (past or future) or a real happening, which in its turn points to another reality - and that is its *at-ta'wil*, or final interpretation.

Note: In later days, this word was taken to mean "the interpretation that is against the apparent meaning of the word". But it is not interpretation; it is misinterpretation, an abuse of language. This wrong connotation was unknown at the time when the Qur'an was revealed, and there is no evidence to suggest that this late meaning is intended in this verse.

Qur'an: ***but none knows its interpretation except Allah*** (***3:7***).

Apparently, the pronoun, "its" refers to "the part of it which is ambiguous"; also, the pronoun, "it" in the immediately preceding phrase, "to give it (their own) interpretation", refers to the same. But it does not necessarily mean that only the ambiguous verses have their "final interpretations".

Another possibility: This "its" may refer to "the Book", as does the pronoun, "it", of the phrase, "they follow the part of it".

The restriction, "none...except", apparently means that the knowledge of its interpretation is restricted to Allah. The word, "and", in the next words, "and those firmly rooted in knowledge" is to begin a new sentence; and this new sentence describes the state of the second category which is in clear contrast with the first one, "those in whose hearts there is perversity". People, in their acceptance of the Book, are of two categories; those who follow the ambiguous part of the Qur'an, and those who, when coming to such a verse, say, "We believe in it, it is all from our Lord". And what is the basis of this difference? It is the perversity of the hearts, on one side, and firmly rooted knowledge, on the other.

The word, "and", in "and those firmly rooted in knowledge..." is not a conjunctive, that is, it does not say that "those firmly rooted in knowledge" know, as Allah does, the interpretation of the ambiguous verses. Had it been so, the Apostle of Allah (S) would certainly have been one of them; rather he would be the first and foremost of them - it is unthinkable that the Qur'an was revealed to him and he did not know what it meant! And, as mentioned in volume 4[1], whenever the Qur'an mentions a group or describes the virtue of a people and the Apostle is among them, it invariably always mentions his name separately and first of all, and then the whole group is mentioned together. This protocol maintains the dignity and prestige of the Apostle. Look for example at the following verses:

The Apostle believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (***so do***) ***the believers"***

(***2:285***).

Then Allah sent down His tranquillity upon His Apostle and upon the believes (***9:26***).

But the Apostle and those who believe with him… (***9:88***).

…and this Prophet and those who believe… (***3:68***).

…on the day on which Allah will not abase the Prophet and those who believe with him (***66:8***).

Therefore, if Allah had intended to say that "those firmly rooted in knowledge" knew the final interpretation of the ambiguous verses – and the Apostle of Allah (S) is certainly one of them – He would have mentioned his name separately and said: "none knows its interpretation except Allah and His Apostle and those firmly rooted in knowledge". However, it may be argued that as the verse had begun with the words, "He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book", it necessarily showed that the Apostle knew the Book; therefore, there was no need to mention his name again.

Apparently, the knowledge of the interpretation is restricted to Allah – so far as this verse is concerned. Although there are exceptions to it, they only serve to prove the rule. There are, for instance, several verses that say that the knowledge of the unseen is restricted to Allah; yet an exception is given in the verses:

The Knower of the unseen! so He does not reveal His secrets to any (***72:26***).

Except to whom He chooses of an apostle… (***72:27***).

Also, there would be no difficulty if other verses were to show that the very people who were firmly rooted in knowledge were exempted from this restriction. This verse describes one characteristic of those people – that they believe in the ambiguous verses, but refrain from acting upon them and leave the matter in the hand of Allah, contrary to the behaviour of those whose hearts are perverted. If other verses showed that all or some of those who were firmly rooted in knowledge knew the reality of the Qur'an and the interpretation of its verses, then it could not be said that they were contradictory to this verse – because their subject matter would be quite different from this one.

Qur'an: ***And those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: "We believe in it, it is all from our Lord"*** (***3:7***).

"ar-Rusukh" (اَلرُّسُوْخُ) is to be firmly rooted, fixed or established. The contrast shown between them and those whose hearts are perverted, and then the praise that they say, "We believe in it, it is all from our Lord" , gives their full description: They have knowledge of Allah and of His signs, a knowledge that is immune from every doubt and suspicion; their knowledge of decisive verses is firmly established, there is no uncertainty in it; they believe in it and act upon it; and when they find an ambiguous verse, their hearts are not perturbed, nor it affects their knowledge of the decisive verses; so they believe in that

ambiguous verse, but refrain from acting upon it.

Their declaration,

We believe in it, it is all from our Lord (***3:7***)

gives both the proof and the conclusion. Decisive verses and ambiguous ones, all are from Allah – therefore, one must believe in all of them. Decisive verses have clear meanings; therefore, one must also act upon them; the ambiguous ones also must be believed in, because they are from Allah; but only that meaning can be accepted and acted upon that does not go against a decisive verse. In other words, ambiguous verses must be returned to the decisive ones.

Therefore, the sentence, "it is all from our Lord", is the proof of two things: (i) Decisive verses must be believed in and followed; (ii) Ambiguous ones must be believed in, but for the purpose of action they should be returned to the decisive ones.

Qur'an: ***"And none do mind except those having understanding"*** (***3:7***).

"at-Tadhakkur" (اَلتَّذَكُّرُ = translated here as "to mind") means to turn towards the premises to get to the conclusion. It has been mentioned above that the believers' declaration, "it is all from our Lord", was their proof by which they found the righteousness of their behaviour; therefore, Allah called it *"at-tadhakkur"* and praised them for it.

"al-Albab" (اَلْاَلْبَابُ) is plural of *al-lubb* (اَللُّبُّ) which means an understanding, clear and free from defects. The people of understanding have been praised very handsomely by Allah in His Book. According to the Qur'an, it is they who believe in Allah, turn towards Him and follow the best word; it is they who always remember their Lord, and consequently acquire true knowledge through its premises, and they become the people of wisdom and knowledge. Read the following verses:

And (***as for***) ***those who keep off from the worship of the idols and turn to Allah, they shall have good news; therefore, give good news to My servants*** (***39:17***).

Those who listen to the word, then follow the best of it; those are they whom Allah has guided, and those it is who are the men of understanding (***39:18***).

Most surely, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day there are signs for men of understanding (***3:190***).

Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth… (***3:191***).

This unceasing remembrance, and the resulting humility and submissiveness keep them pondering on the signs of Allah from which they get the true and real knowledge. Allah says:

…and none minds but he who turns (to Him) again and again (40:13).

…and none do mind except those having understanding (2:269; 3:7).

Verse 8

Qur'an: ***Our Lord! Make not our hearts to deviate after Thou hast guided us* (aright)*; and grant us from Thee mercy; surely, Thou art the most liberal Giver (3:8).***

This prayer is an indication of their firmly rooted knowledge. They know their Lord and understand His power. They believe that everything belongs to Him only, and that they have no authority whatsoever on their own selves. There is a possibility that Allah may cause their hearts to deviate even after their firmly rooted knowledge. Therefore, they seek refuge in their Lord and ask Him not to make their hearts deviate after He has guided them aright, and to grant them His own mercy so that this bounty may remain with them for ever and ever, helping them to walk on the straight path, bringing them nearer and nearer to their Lord.

Why did they ask from Allah to grant them mercy from Himself, when they had already asked Him not to make their hearts deviate? It is because non-deviation of heart does not necessarily mean remaining firmly rooted in knowledge. It is possible that one's heart is not deviated, but at the same time is deprived of the knowledge – one in this condition would be figuratively speaking in a vegetative state: neither blessed with knowledge nor cursed with deviation; rather in a state of ignorance and feebleness. But they know that their firmly rooted knowledge is a must for them; so, they pray for the Divine mercy, so as not to be deprived of that knowledge.

Apart from that, they are still on their way; and before the journey is completed, they are in need of every type of mercy – the mercies that cannot be known or counted except by Allah. Those knowledgeable believers are fully aware of this great need of theirs. The sentence coming after this verse,

Our Lord! Surely, Thou art the Gatherer of men on a day about which there is no doubt (3:9)

Shows their awareness of their dependence on Divine mercy till the end of this journey.

The first prayer (make not our hearts deviate after Thou hast guided us aright) seeks to ward off a misfortune; the second one (and grant us from Thee mercy) pleads for the greatest fortune, the Divine mercy that would keep their hearts alive for ever. The word, "mercy" has been used as a common noun, and it has been qualified with the phrase, "from Thee"; they have used this style to show that they do not know anything about this mercy; the only thing they know is that, but for this mercy of their Lord, they cannot succeed in any way.

They sought refuge in Allah from the deviation of their hearts and asked from Him His mercy. It proves that they knew that everything belonged to Allah; their eyes were directly on the Real Cause, ignoring all

the middle causes.

Verse 9

Qur'an: ***Our Lord! Surely, Thou art the Gatherer of men on a day about which there is no doubt; surely, Allah fails not*** **(His)** ***promise*** **(*3:9*).**

This pleading of theirs gives the reason of their prayer for mercy. They know that this system of creation, this call to the religion, this striving by man in his path of life, all are precursors of their gathering together on the Day of Resurrection when no one shall avail anyone and none shall be helped except by the Divine mercy. Allah says:

Surely, the Day of Discrimination is their appointed time, of all of them **(*44:40*).**

The Day on which a friend shall not avail **(*his*)** ***friend aught, nor shall they be helped*** **(*44:41*).**

Save those on whom Allah shall have mercy… **(*44:42*).**

That is why they prayed to Him for His mercy; and left all its details to His discretion, so that it be of real benefit to them.

They said that there was no doubt about that day. It showed their deep concern about the mercy asked for. Then they ended their prayer on the sentence,

Surely, Allah fails not **(*His*)** ***promise.*** **(*3:9*)**

They were firmly rooted in knowledge; knowledge about a thing is not firmly established unless one knows the cause from which that thing emanates. They had no doubt about the Day of Resurrection, because it had been promised by Allah; and Allah does not fail His promise.

This pleading contains a proposition followed by its reason. They have used the same style in the whole invocation from the very beginning:

They said, "We believe in it", and gave its reason in the next sentence, "it is all from our Lord".

Then they prayed, "Our Lord! make not our hearts deviate" and added a phrase that gives a sort of its reason, "after Thou hast guided us (aright)".

Then came the pleading, "and grant us from Thee mercy", followed by its reason, "surely, Thou art the most liberal Giver". In fact there is a double proposition and likewise a double reason in this prayer. They did not ask for "any" mercy, but a mercy "from Thee". Thereafter, the sentence giving the reason contains two singular pronouns of second person: *"Ka"* (كَ = Thou) and *"anta"* (أَنْتَ = Thou) and the predicate has been given the definite article, *"al"* (أَلْ = the); these two restrictive devices emphasize that the only Giver is Allah; and hence they have asked for only His mercy.

They are the people who believed in their Lord and remained firm on it. Therefore, Allah guided them aright and perfected their wisdom. Now they do not utter any word except with knowledge, nor do they do any work that is not based on knowledge. Consequently, Allah praised them by calling them as "those firmly rooted in knowledge"; and gave them the title of "people of understanding".

If you read once again how Allah has praised the people of understanding, you will see that all those attributes perfectly fit these people. Look again, for example, at the verses:

And (as for) those who keep off from the worship of the idols and turn to Allah, they shall have good news; therefore, give good news to My servants (39: 17).

Those who listen to the word, then follow the best of it; those are they whom Allah has guided, and those it is who are the men of understanding (39: 18).

These verses say that the people of understanding have faith, follow the best of the word and turn to Allah. The same characteristics have been attributed in this verse to those who are firmly rooted in knowledge.

They have used the second person singular pronouns for Allah throughout the prayer; but have ended it with mentioning the Divine name (and thus switching to third person) and said: "surely, Allah fails not (His) promise". It is because this promise is not especially for them; it is a general promise; therefore, they changed the phrase, "Our Lord!" to the Divine name "Allah", as this name shows His sovereignty over all things.

A Detailed Discourse About The Decisive And Ambiguous Verses And The Interpretation

What we have explained above about the meaning of decisive and ambiguous verses, as well as their "interpretation", is what one understands after deep consideration of the Qur'anic verses and the traditions of our Imams.

But the Muslims have entangled themselves in sharp controversies about every aspect of these subjects right from the early days; and divergent views have been quoted regarding every detail even from the companions of the Prophet and their disciples. And in all this confusing polemics, not a single explanation conforms with ours; we may say that none of them even superficially resembles it.

The main cause of this conflict is the confusion which exists about the subject matter – they have mixed the discussion of decisive and ambiguous verses with that of interpretation. As a result, they are in a muddle concerning the issues to be decided; there is disorderliness in their ways of arguments and they are confused about the conclusions drawn from their discourses. We propose to give a systematic analysis of all their opinions under different headings.

1. The Decisive And The Ambiguous Verses

"al-Ihkam" (اَلْإِحْكَامُ = to make precise, to conform, to make decisive, to strengthen) and *"at-tashabuh"* (اَلتَّشَابُه = conformity of one thing with other, ambiguity) are commonly used words with clear meanings. Allah has attributed these adjectives and verbs to the whole Book:

(This is) ***a Book whose verses were confirmed...*** **(*11:1*)**

...a Book conforming **(*in its various parts*)*, oft-repeated...*** **(*39:23*).**

These verses point to the fact that the whole Book has a forceful eloquence, and a well-integrated style, and that its various parts conform with each other in structural elegance and elocutionary beauty - and its every word leads to sublime realities.

But when we look at the verse,

He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book, of it there are some verses decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are ambiguous... **(*3:7*).**

We know that the adjectives, *"al-muhkamat"* (اَلْمُحْكَمَاتُ = confirmed, decisive) and *"al-mutashabihat"* (اَلْمُتَشَابِهَاتُ = conforming, ambiguous), as used in this verse, mean something different from the earlier mentioned two verses. Why? Because this verse divides the verses in two categories and then says that only one is "decisive" and the other is "ambiguous". These words in this verse cannot have the same meanings which were applicable to the whole Book.

The exegetes should have endeavoured to find out from the Qur'anic verses themselves which meanings could be applied in this case. Instead, various people have interpreted them, according to their own thinking, in more than fifteen ways:

First: The decisive are the three verses in Chapter 6 (Cattle):

Say: Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you-- **(remember)** ***that you do not associate anything with Him and show kindness to your parents, and do not slay your children for*** **(fear of)** ***poverty-- We provide for you and for them-- and do not draw nigh to indecencies, those of them which are apparent and those which are concealed, and do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden except for the requirements of justice; this He has enjoined you with that you may understand*** **(*6:151*).**

And do not approach the property of the orphan except in the best manner until he attains his maturity, and give full measure and weight with justice-- We do not impose on any soul a duty except to the extent of its ability; and when you speak, then be just though it be **(against)** ***a relative, and fulfil Allah's covenant; this He has enjoined you with that you may be mindful*** **(*6:152*).**

And **(know)** ***that this is My path, the right one therefore follow it, and follow not*** **(other)** ***ways, for they will lead you away from His way; this He has enjoined you with that you may guard*** **(against evil)** **(*6:153*).**

And the ambiguous are those parts that confused the Jews, and they are the "letter symbols" revealed at the beginning of many Qur'anic chapters, like *Alif lam mim ra, Ha mim*, etc. As it happened, the Jews tried to interpret them in the light of their numerical values, and they thought that *Alif lam mim* hinted that the Muslim nation would continue for only 71 (1+30 +40) years. Then other "letter symbols" were revealed, and the Jews became confused.

This opinion has been attributed to Ibn 'Abbas, a companion of the Prophet (S).

Comment: First, it is an opinion without any proof or evidence. Second, there is no evidence that decisive and ambiguous verses are only those three and the letter symbols respectively. Third, if we accept this view, then almost the whole Qur'an – except those three verses and the letter symbols – would fall in a third category "non-decisive, non-ambiguous"; but the verse clearly divides the whole Book in two categories only.

The fact is that attribution of this view to Ibn 'Abbas is out of place. According to the narration, he had said that the three verses were decisive – he had not said that the decisive verses were only these three. It is reported in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from Sa'id Ibn Mansur, Ibn Abi Hatim, al-Hakim (who said that the tradition was correct) and Ibn Marduwayh that 'Abdullah Ibn Qays said: "I heard Ibn 'Abbas saying about the words of Allah: of it there are some verses decisive; he said: three verses at the end of the Chapter of the Cattle are decisive: Say: 'Come...' and two following verses."

That he mentioned these verses just as an example, is supported by another tradition narrated from him by the same author – that explaining the words of Allah, "verses decisive", he said: "From here, Say: 'Come...' up to three verses, and from here, "And your Lord has commanded that you shall not worship (any) but Him..." up to three verses".[2]

Both traditions clearly show that he mentioned these verses as examples of decisive verses; not that the decisive verses were only these.

Second: Opposite of the first view: The decisive are the letter symbols at the beginning of various chapters; and ambiguous are all the other verses.

It has been attributed to Abu Fakhitah; he said about the words of Allah, they are the basis of the Book, that they are the opening words of the chapters; the Qur'an is composed from them:

Alif lam mim **(*2:1*).**

This Book, there is no doubt in it **(*2:2*).**

The Chapter of the Cow is composed from them:

***Alif lam mim* (*3:1*).**

***Allah is He besides Whom there is no god* (*3:2*).**

The Chapter of the Family of ‘Imran is composed from them.

A similar interpretation is reported from Sa’id Ibn Jubayr, about the words: they are the basis of the Book. He said: “The basis of the Book, because they are written in all the books.”

It appears that, according to Abu Fakhitah and Sa’id Ibn Jubayr, the letter symbols at the beginning of the chapters are just that – the symbols of the alphabets; and that by putting them in the beginning, Allah has drawn the attention of the hearers to the fact that this Book, which is revealed to you, is made up of these alphabets from which words and sentences are made, and yet no one can bring a like of it.

It is one of the views about the significance of the letter symbols.

Comment: First, it is based on a premise (the supposed significance of the letter symbols) which itself is without any proof or evidence. Second, it is not in conformity with the verse under discussion. According to this interpretation the whole Qur’an, other than the letter symbols, is “ambiguous”; and Allah has in this verse condemned those who follow the ambiguous verses, and has said that it results from perversity of their hearts; it means that one should not follow any verse of the Qur’an, except the letter symbols – and there is nothing to follow in those symbols! On the other hand, Allah praises those who follow the Qur’an; in fact, to follow it is the most important obligation. For example, He says:

***…and follow the light which has been sent down with him, these it is that are the successful* (*7:157*).**

Third: Ambiguous means unspecified, indistinct, vague verses, and decisive are the specified and clear ones.

Comment: The particulars mentioned in the verse, about the decisive and ambiguous verses, do not fit this interpretation.

A word is called vague and indistinct, when various aspects of its meaning are mixed together and it is difficult to disentangle them and to know which one is really intended. Such a word is not acted upon unless it is joined by another clarifying word which makes its meaning clear, and then it is acted upon and followed.

It must be noted here that, in the above-mentioned case, what is followed is the same previously indistinct and vague word as clarified by the distinct and clear one. The clarifying word, in itself, is not followed.

Therefore, if ambiguous means the vague and indistinct verse and decisive is the distinct and clear one, then it is the ambiguous verse that should be followed when clarified by the decisive one – and not the decisive verse itself. Accordingly, to follow an ambiguous verse should not invite condemnation and should not be associated with perversity of heart.

And coming to the practical side, no one – neither those whose hearts are perverted nor those who are firmly rooted in knowledge – follows a vague word unless it is clarified. But Allah condemns the former for following ambiguous verses. It means that ambiguous verses are not vague.

Fourth: Ambiguous are those verses which were abrogated; one believes in them but does not act upon them. Decisive are the verses that abrogated the former, because they are believed in and acted upon.

This opinion has been ascribed to Ibn 'Abbas, Ibn Mas'ud and some other companions. And that is why Ibn 'Abbas used to say that he knew the interpretation of the Qur'an.

Comment: First, even if we accept this explanation as correct, there is no proof that only the abrogated verses are ambiguous. The description that some people follow the ambiguous verses to mislead the people and to interpret them in their own way, is true about a lot of unabrogated verses too, like the ones about the attributes and actions of Allah. Second, this explanation leaves a majority of the verses unaccounted for – those that neither abrogated any, nor were abrogated by any. Was there a third category, which Allah did not mention?

And so far as the view of Ibn 'Abbas is concerned, it is known that his explanation of decisive and ambiguous verses was more comprehensive, and that he mentioned these two types – abrogated ones and those that abrogate – just as examples. It is quoted in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from Ibn Jarir, Ibnu 'l-Mundhir and Ibn Abi Hatim, through the chain of 'Ali, from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "The decisive verses are the ones that abrogated other verses, contain the lawful and unlawful, describe the limits and duties, and (in short) those which are believed in (and acted upon); and the ambiguous are the ones that are abrogated, in which there is some juxtaposition, the parables, the oaths, and that which is believed in but not acted upon."

Fifth: Decisive are those verses whose proof is clear and evident, like the proofs of Oneness of Allah, and of His power and wisdom. And ambiguous are those which require thinking and consideration.

Comment: What is the meaning of a verse having clear and evident proof? Does it mean that the main idea of a verse should have a rational and self-evident proof? If so, then all verses containing the laws or explaining the duties would become ambiguous, because not a single such law has a self-evident rational proof. Consequently, acting upon the verses containing the rules of the *Shari'ah* would be condemnable! And Islam says that they must be followed and acted upon! Or does it mean that the idea of a verse should have a clear proof from the Book itself? If so, then all the verses do have this quality. And why not? After all, it is a Book, conforming in its various parts, oft repeated, a light, a clear discourse. So, according to this interpretation, all the verses would be decisive, and there would remain

no ambiguous one. But the Qur'an says that some of its verses are ambiguous.

Sixth: Decisive is everything that can be known with the help of a clear or hidden proof; and ambiguous is that which cannot be known in any way, like the time of resurrection.

Comment: Being decisive or ambiguous are the characteristics of the verses of the Book. The Arabic name of a verse is *al-ayah* (اَلْاٰيَةُ = sign), because it shows a reality from the Divine realities. Whatever is described by a Qur'anic verse cannot be said, by any stretch of imagination, to be "unknowable"; nor is it incomprehensible - it may surely, be correctly understood either by itself or with the help of other verses. How can it be said that a verse intends to say something but its words fail to convey the intended meaning? Allah has described His Book as the guidance, the light and the clarification; and that even unbelievers could comprehend it - let alone the believers:

***A revelation from the Beneficent, the Merciful Allah* (*41:2*).**

***A Book of which the verses are made plain, an Arabic Qur'an for a people who know* (*41:3*).**

***A herald of good news and a warner but most of them turn aside so they hear not* (*41:4*).**

***Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy* (*4:82*).**

Obviously, no subject matter dealt with in the Qur'an is incomprehensible or unknowable. And what cannot be known, like the time of resurrection and other secrets of the unseen, has not been touched by any verse. So, how can any verse be called ambiguous in the suggested meaning?

In fact, this explanation confuses between the meanings of "ambiguous" and "final interpretation", (the true significance of which has already been described by us in the beginning).

Seventh: Decisive are the verses containing the laws and the *Shari'ah*; and ambiguous are the other verses, some of which affects the others.

This opinion has been attributed to Mujahid among others.

Comment: This interpretation is wrong in both ways: Apparently "affecting each other" means helping in fixation of the intended meaning, as a. specifying word qualifies a general one; or as a context pin-points the idea conveyed. If so, then even the verses containing the laws should be counted as ambiguous, because they too are subject to this interaction.

On the other hand, this interpretation gives an impression about the basic characteristic of a decisive verse: That there is no vagueness in its meaning; it distinctly points to its intended idea; that its import is known by itself, while others' sense is understood by its help. If it is so, and if it is accepted that only the verses containing the laws are decisive, then nothing of the Qur'anic knowledge and realities (except the

rules of the *Shari'ah*) can be known; there is supposedly no decisive verse in that group and, therefore, those verses cannot be referred to any decisive one, and consequently, their substance would remain unknowable for ever.

Eighth: Decisive is the verse that cannot be interpreted except in one way; ambiguous is the one that may be interpreted in more than one way.

It has been ascribed to ash-Shafi'i. Probably, he means that the decisive verse "apparently" has only one meaning; and the ambiguous has more than one "apparent" meaning.

Comment: This "explanation" just changes one word with another: "decisive" has been changed to "one having only one meaning", and "ambiguous" to "one having more than one meaning".

Apart from that in his view, *at-ta'wil* (interpretation) signifies the meaning of the word; and, as we have earlier explained, it is not correct. If "interpretation" is the same thing as the meaning of a word, then its knowledge could not be restricted to Allah, (or to Allah and those firmly rooted in knowledge). We know that the verses of the Qur'an explain the meanings of each other; and believers and unbelievers; those firmly rooted in knowledge and those in whose hearts is perversity - all equally understand this meaning.

Ninth: Decisive are those verses which have been confirmed and in which the news of the prophets and their peoples has been given in detail; and those "conforming to each other" are those stories that have been repeatedly mentioned in various chapters and whose words conform to each other.

According to this interpretation, the two categories - decisive and ambiguous - are confined to the stories only.

Comment: First, there is no proof that the Qur'anic division is confined to the verses of the stories. Second, the given characteristics of decisive and ambiguous verses - that those who follow the ambiguous do so to mislead the people and to give the verse their own interpretation; and that following the decisive verse has no such defect - do not agree with this explanation. These characteristics are found in other verses as much as in stories, and in once narrated story (like instituting the *khilafah* in the earth) as well as in oft-repeated ones.

Tenth: Ambiguous is that verse which needs explanation; decisive one does not need it. This view is ascribed to Ahmad Ibn Hanbal.

Comment: The verse containing the *Shari'ah* need to be explained by the Prophet, although they are certainly among the decisive ones. On the other hand, the abrogated verses are among the ambiguous ones (as was described earlier), and they do not need any explanation (because they are not acter upon), even though in all other respects they are like any other verse of the *Shari'ah*.

The suggested meaning is, therefore, neither all-inclusive nor exclusive.

Eleventh: Decisive is the verse that is believed in and acted upon; and ambiguous is believed in but not acted upon.

It has been attributed to Ibn Taymiyyah. Perhaps, he wanted to say that the stories and information were ambiguous, and those containing the laws were decisive. If this is the idea behind this explanation, then it could be counted as a separate view; otherwise, it could be fitted to many of the previously mentioned opinions.

Comment: It would mean that all verses, other than those concerning the *Shari'ah*, would be ambiguous. In other words, it would be impossible to have knowledge of any Divine reality or any spiritual fact mentioned in the Qur'an (other than the matters of law) because there would be no decisive verse in that group to which the rest of it could be referred.

On the other hand, abrogated verses are concerned with the *Shari'ah*, but certainly they are not decisive.

Apparently, he looked at the words,

***…those in whose hearts there is perversity, they follow the part of it which is ambiguous* (*3:7*),**

and

***those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: 'We believe in it, it is all from our Lord'* (*3:7*)**

and then paraphrased it in these words that decisive verses are believed in and acted upon while ambiguous ones are believed in but not acted upon. He did not realize that this believing in and following, or only believing without following, expresses the duty of the believer 'after' he has distinguished between the decisive and ambiguous verses. In other words, it is not the criterion by which one may know the decisive verses from the ambiguous; there must be some other test to distinguish between the two categories.

Twelfth: Ambiguous are those verses which describe the attributes, whether of Allah, for example, All-knowing, Powerful, Wise and All-aware, or of His prophets, for example, the verse about 'Isa ('a):

***…and His Word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a Spirit* (*proceeding*) *from Him…* (*4:171*).**

And other verses of this type.

It too has been attributed to Ibn Taymiyyah.

Comment: Accepted that the verses of attributes are ambiguous; but there is no evidence that ambiguous verses are confined to only those.

He has written a long passage from which it appears that he takes these two terms in their literal

meaning. A gist of his discourse is as follows:

“Decisive is the verse whose meaning is distinct; ambiguous is the one which has two or more possible meanings. The two concepts are relative: may be a verse is ambiguous for an ordinary man, and distinct and decisive for a more knowledgeable one. This relativity manifests itself very clearly in the verses of attributes. Most of the people fail to understand their significance. Their comprehension does not go beyond the limits of the matter. They interpret the Divine Attributes – knowledge, power, sight, hearing, pleasure, displeasure, hand, eye and other such expressions – in material terms, or in wrong ways. Thus, people are misled, wrong beliefs and practices crop up and various schools of thoughts come into being.

“So this is the meaning of decisive and ambiguous. Both are within the purview of human knowledge. What cannot be known is the interpretation of ambiguous verses, that is, the reality that is hidden behind such verses. Let us say that we know the meaning of the words of Allah: Most surely, Allah has power over everything, and Most surely, Allah knows everything. Still, we do not know the reality of His power and knowledge. The same is true about all Divine Attributes and actions. It is this final interpretation of the ambiguous verses which no one knows except Allah.”

We shall comment on it when discussing the subject of “interpretation”.

Thirteenth: Decisive is what can be reached by the understanding; ambiguous is opposite to it.

Comment: First, it is an opinion that is not supported by any proof. Second, it is correct that the Qur’anic verses may be divided in this way; but this division is totally different from that which groups the verses in two categories of decisive and ambiguous. The characteristics of decisive and ambiguous do not fit to the two sides of this division. Third, it is not all inclusive; the verses of the *Shari‘ah* are surely, decisive, and human understanding has no way to reach them.

Fourteenth: Ambiguous is a verse whose interpretation is against the apparent meaning of its words. Decisive is opposite to it; its interpretation is the same as its apparent meaning. This is the view popular among the later scholars; and they use the word *at-ta’wil* for an interpretation that is against the apparent meaning of the words.

Perhaps, the same was meant by the scholar who said: Decisive is that verse whose interpretation is the same as its revelation, and ambiguous is the one that cannot be comprehended except through interpretation.

Comment: It is a new terminology and the given characteristics of decisive and ambiguous verses do not agree with it.

Ambiguous is an expression that is capable of more than one meaning; but only one of those meanings is intended. And that intended meaning is not its “interpretation”. The interpretation, as explained earlier,

is a common factor of all the Qur'anic verses, the decisive and the ambiguous alike.

Moreover, there is not a single verse in the Qur'an whose connotation is against its apparent meaning. A few verses that give such impression, are governed by the decisive verses – and the Qur'anic verses explain each other. Obviously, a meaning based on context and associations cannot be said to be against the apparent meaning; and especially when the Speaker Himself declares beforehand that various parts of His speech are all related to each other and should be understood with each other's help, and that no difference can be found in it if one ponders over it:

Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy (***4:82***).

Fifteenth: If there is unanimity about the interpretation of a verse, then it is decisive; otherwise, it is ambiguous.

This opinion is ascribed to al-Asamm. Perhaps, what he says may be expressed in other words: There is no difference of opinion as to what a decisive verse means; while there is always such a difference about an ambiguous one.

Comment: If that be the criterion, then the whole Qur'an would become ambiguous, contrary to the division mentioned in this verse. Not a single verse is free from controversy; there is always some difference either about its word or its meaning; always some disagreement whether its apparent meaning is intended. This has led some people to say that the whole Qur'an is ambiguous; and he offers the verse:

…a Book conforming in its various parts (***39:23***),

as his proof. He seems oblivious of the inherent contradiction in this reasoning: This argument means that at least this verse is decisive so that it may be relied upon, while he wants to prove from it that not a single verse is decisive!

Some others, believing that the whole Qur'an was ambiguous, said that the apparent meanings of the Qur'an are not a proof at all.

Sixteenth: Ambiguous is the verse that is difficult to explain, because it resembles another verse – the difficulty may arise because of the word or because of the meaning.

It is the opinion of al-Raghib. He has written in *Mufradat al-Qur'an*:

"Ambiguous verses of the Qur'an are those that are difficult to explain because of their resemblance to other verses – it is either in word or in meaning. The religious scholars have said: 'The ambiguous is the verse whose apparent meaning does not indicate its real connotation.' The fact is that the verses, when compared to each other, are of three kinds: The decisive, the ambiguous, and that which is decisive in

some respects and ambiguous in others.

“The ambiguous, in all, is of three kinds: ambiguous in word, ambiguous in meaning, and ambiguous in word and meaning both.

“The ambiguous in word is of two kinds: Where ambiguousness is caused by one word – it is not a commonly used word, like *al–abb* (اَلْاَبُّ = herbage) and *yaziffun* (يَزِفُّوْنَ = they are hastening); or has more than one meaning, like *al–yad* (اَلْيَدُ = hand, power) and *al–’ayn* (اَلْعَيْنُ = eye, sun, supervision) – and where ambiguousness results from the structure of the sentence. This may happen in one of the three ways: when some explanatory words are omitted for the sake of brevity, for example:

***And if you fear that you cannot act equitably towards orphans, then marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and four* (*4:3*).**

***When some words are added into the sentence for some reason, for example: There is nothing like the likeness of Him* (*42:11*).**

It would have been easier to understand for a common man if it were said, ‘there is nothing like Him’; and when a word is transferred from its usual place for rhyming or other reasons, for example:

***…Who revealed the Book to His servant and did not make in it any crookedness* (*18:1*).**

***Rightly directing…* (*18:2*).**

The word, ‘Rightly directing’ describes the state of “the Book” and should have come soon after it; another example:

***…and were it not for believing men and believing women…had they been widely separated…* (*48:25*).**

“And the ambiguous according to meaning are the attributes of Allah and details of the Day of Resurrection. These things are beyond the limit of our imagination – we cannot imagine a thing that is not perceived by us, or does not resemble any such perceived thing, at least.

“And the ambiguous in word and meaning both is of five kinds: First, the ambiguity, because of quantity; when it is arguable whether the word is used in its general or particular meaning, for example, “kill the polytheists”. Second, the ambiguity because of quality; whether the given order is obligatory or recommended, for example, “then marry such woman as seem good to you”. Third, the ambiguity because of time, when it is arguable which of the two given orders is abrogated and which one abrogated it. Forth, ambiguity because of the place and the incident about which the verse was revealed, for example:

***And it is not righteousness that you should enter the houses from their backs…* (*2:189*).**

and

Postponing (***of the sacred month***) ***is only an addition in unbelief*** (***9:37***).

It is difficult for a man who does not know the pre-Islamic Arabs' customs to understand these references. Fifth, ambiguity because of the conditions that make an action valid or void, for example, the conditions of prayer and marriage.

"If you ponder on these divisions, you will see that all that the exegetes have written or said concerning the meaning of the 'ambiguous', comes under one or the other of its headings and sub-headings; for example, the saying that ambiguous are the letter symbols, or Qatadah's opinion that the ambiguous is the abrogated verse, and the decisive is that which abrogated it, and the view of al-Asamm that there is unanimity about the interpretation of decisive verses, while there is no such unanimity about ambiguous ones.

"Then all the ambiguous verses - whatever the reasons of their ambiguity - are of three categories: First, that which cannot be known by anyone in any way, like the time of resurrection, the appearance of the walker of the earth, and what that walker is, etc. Second, that which may be understood by man, like the uncommon words and complicated syntax. Third, that which may be comprehended by some of those who are firmly rooted in knowledge, and may remain hidden from others. It is this third category, about which the Prophet prayed for 'Ali (may Allah be pleased with him), 'O Allah! give him the knowledge of religion and teach him the "interpretation"'; and prayed like this for Ibn 'Abbas too."

This was the opinion of ar-Raghib; it is the most comprehensive of all such views; and combines many of the previously mentioned opinions.

Comment: First, it is against the obvious meaning of the verse to say that "ambiguousness" includes such cases as the uncommon words, complicated sentence-structure, generality and particularity of expressions etc. The verse says that the ambiguous verses may be understood by referring them to the decisive ones. But the above-mentioned word problems cannot be solved by the decisive verses; there are other methods to solve them, like the grammar, dictionary etc.

Moreover, the verse says that those who follow the ambiguous verses do so to misguide and to interpret them in their own ways. But nobody follows a general word without knowing its particulars, or an uncommon word without ascertaining from the dictionary what it means. If anyone did so, people would not listen to him, because it would be against the universally accepted principles of language; and, as no one would listen to him, there could be no misleading and no misinterpreting.

Second, his final division of the ambiguous into three categories - that which can be understood by common man, that which cannot be understood, and that which can be understood by some and not by others - shows that he thinks that "interpretation" is a peculiarity of ambiguous verses. But we have already explained that "interpretation" is common to both ambiguous and decisive ones.

These were the opinions of the scholars about the meanings of the decisive and ambiguous verses. As you have seen, none of them is free from defects, nor does any conform with the clear purport of the verse. What one understands from the verse is this: An ambiguous verse is capable of more than one meaning, but the more apparent meaning is doubtful – not because of any difficulty of language or syntax (which can easily be removed with the help of well-recognised literary and linguistic methods), but because it is against the semantic value of a decisive verse. Therefore, the actually intended meaning may be ascertained only with the help of that decisive verse.

Obviously, the apparent meaning of an ambiguous verse should be familiar to the common people and the simple minds would readily accept it and believe in it. Or if both meanings require some explanation, then the explanation leading to unintended meaning would be easier to understand for an uninitiated and unlearned man.

Look at the innovations and wrong sectarian beliefs; study the never-ending schisms that have been shattering the Muslim community since the moment the Prophet left this world; try to find out the basic cause of their differences in matters of belief and law – and you will see that most of them have resulted from following the ambiguous verses and from interpreting them in a way not approved by Allah.

Every sect proves its beliefs from the Qur'anic verses: A party finds in it evidence that Allah is a body; a group proves from it that man has no free will concerning his actions, while another faction tries to show that man is totally independent of Allah in this respect; some people argue that the prophets committed mistakes and sins, and they quote the verses in their support; a circle says and proves it from the Qur'an, that Allah is so sublime that even "Divine Attributes" should not be attributed to Him, while another faction says, and proves it too from the Qur'an, that Allah is just like His creatures and His attributes are separate from His Person. And so on and so forth. All this is a result of following the ambiguous verses without "returning" them to the relevant decisive ones.

Then look at a group saying that the laws of the *Shari'ah* were ordained to serve as a path to reach the goal; if one finds a shorter route that leads to the same destination, it would be obligatory to walk on this new route, because the main thing is to reach there, through any easy way. Another one says that the rules of the *Shari'ah* were promulgated to lead the man to perfection; there is no justification of burdening a man with them after he has reached that goal – therefore, one who has attained perfection is not obliged to observe the rules of the *Shari'ah*.

All the rules of the *Shari'ah*, all the religious obligations, the complete penal code and all Islamic policies were established and enforced in the days of the Prophet, not a single item was neglected or kept in abeyance. Then, after his departure, the Muslim governments began suspending law after law. It was a continual process. Whenever a law or a penalty was discarded, those who were responsible for it argued: The religion was sent down for the good of the world and the good of the man; what we have adopted now, in place of the old outmoded law, is far better for the people.

Now, we have reached a stage where it is said: The only purpose of the *Shari'ah* was to make the world a good place to live in; the world, nowadays, is not in a mood to accept the policies and punishments prescribed by Islam – it cannot digest it; the advanced civilization demands advanced and civilized laws – the laws of Islam are not good for this stage. Also, it is said: The religious rites were established so that they might purify the hearts and lead the minds to correct perception; those hearts that have been well-trained by the society and those spirits that are solely devoted to the service of mankind, do not need such purifications as ablution, obligatory bath, prayer and fast etc.

Ponder over such views – and their number is beyond counting – and then study the words of Allah, "then as for those in whose hearts there is perversity, they follow the part of it which is ambiguous, seeking to mislead, and seeking to give it (their own) interpretation", and you will have to admit that all those disorders and calamities that befell Islam and the Muslims, have emanated from only one source – following the ambiguous verses seeking to give them one's own interpretation.

That is the reason – and Allah knows better – why the Qur'an has used such a tough language in this respect, most strictly forbidding the Muslims to follow the ambiguous verses seeking to mislead the people, and to interpret them according to one's own liking; and why it has condemned the tendency of distorting the signs and words of Allah, explaining them without true knowledge, and following the footsteps of Satan. It is the usual practice of the Qur'an to put greatest emphasis on condemning those matters that were likely to destroy any fundamental part of the religion, which, in its turn, could lead to ruination of the whole structure. Look, for example, at the severest admonitions against befriending the unbelievers; about the love of the near relatives of the Prophet; for staying of the wives of the Prophet inside their houses; against the interest; and concerning the unity in the word of religion etc.

What is the basic source of perversity of heart and of the tendency to mislead the people? It happens when one is inclined towards this material world, loves to remain on the earth for ever and succumbs to desires. How can the rust of perversity be removed? How can the door of misdirection be closed shut? The only way is to remember the Day of Reckoning, as Allah says:

(as for) ***those who go astray from the path of Allah, for them surely, is a severe punishment because they forgot the Day of Reckoning*** **(*38:26*).**

That is why those who are firmly rooted in knowledge and who do not wish to interpret the Qur'an in a way their Lord does not approve, point to this fact at the end of their prayer:

Our Lord! Surely, Thou art the Gatherer of men on a day about which there is no doubt; surely, Allah fails not (His) promise. **(*3:9*)**

2. "The Decisive Verses Are The Basis Of The Book" What Does It Mean?

A group says: The decisive verses are the basis of the Book – it means that they are the foundation of the Book upon which the edifice of religion, its principles and laws, are built up; and religion is only a

collection of beliefs and deeds. Therefore, such verses are believed in and acted upon. So far as the ambiguous verses are concerned, they are believed in but not acted upon, because their meanings are not distinct and their connotations are vague.

Comment: This meaning necessarily emanates from some of the opinions about the meaning of the decisive and ambiguous verses. If one believes that ambiguous is the verse whose interpretation is difficult to comprehend, or that its ambiguousness may be removed totally or partially with the help of reason, grammar, dictionary or other means used to solve a word-problem, then he would have to explain the "basis of the Book" in the way written above.

Others say that the sentence, "Decisive verses are the basis of the Book", refers to the fact that ambiguous verses return, that is, are referred, to them. But what is the meaning of this "return" or reference? Some people say: It means that ambiguous verses should be believed in, but when it comes to action, only the relevant decisive verse should be followed. For example, an abrogated verse should be believed in, but at the time of action it should be returned to its relevant decisive verse, that is, the one that abrogated it.

Comment: This explanation is not very different from the first one.

There is a third explanation, and it is the correct one: The decisive verses are the basis of the Book, inasmuch as they clarify and explain the ambiguous ones and remove their ambiguousness.

As explained in the Commentary, *"al-umm"* (**اَلْأُمُّ =** translated here as "basis") literary means a thing to which another thing returns. The word "basis" or foundation does not convey the full sense of this word. The first explanation interprets it merely as the foundation; but it does not explain its full import. The word *al-umm* points to a special kind of return - as a part- returns to its whole, or a branch returns to its roots; the thing that returns is derived from, and is a part of, the thing to which it returns. This word, therefore, indicates that ambiguous verses have such meanings that branch out from, and return to, the decisive ones. And that is why the decisive ones explain and clarify the ambiguous ones.

Moreover, the ambiguous is given this name because it is capable of more than one meaning; and not because it has an "interpretation" - interpretation is found in decisive verses also; the Qur'anic verses explain each other, and it is only decisive verses that can clarify the ambiguous ones. Let us repeat the example of the verse:

Looking to their Lord (***75:23***);

it is ambiguous; but when it is returned to the words of Allah:

nothing is like a likeness of Him (***42:11***).

Visions comprehend Him not (***6:103***).

It becomes clear that “looking at” in this phrase means something different from the optical vision connected with the eyes. Likewise, Allah has said:

The (Prophet’s) heart belied not what he saw (53:11).

What! do you then dispute with him as to what he saw? (53:12).

Certainly, he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord (53:18).

The verses prove that the heart has a sight of its own. And this vision of heart is something different from “thinking” and “consideration”. Because the thought and consideration is a process that consists of a subject and a predicate; while vision is a single action, it looks at the object without joining it to any subject or predicate. Therefore, this vision of heart is neither a material nor a mental consideration; it is the orientation of heart towards the object.

The same is the case with all other ambiguous verses.

3. The Meaning Of *“At-Ta’wil”*

According to some exegetes *at-ta’wil* (interpretation) is synonymous for exegesis, explanation or meaning of the sentence. Meanings of some parts of the Qur’an are certainly known to the people. Accordingly, the interpretation mentioned in the verse

(***seeking to give it their own interpretation, but none knows its interpretation except Allah***) (***3:7***)

must be restricted to the meaning of the ambiguous verses. Therefore, they say that none can know, in any way, the meaning of an ambiguous verse, except Allah - or except Allah and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge.

Another group says that “interpretation” is the meaning that is against the apparent meaning of the word. This explanation has become so widespread that, at present, it has become the real meaning of *at-ta’wil*, while originally this word meant “to return” or “the returning place”. Anyhow, this explanation is popular among the later exegetes, while the first-mentioned explanation was familiar to the ancients, whether they believed that its knowledge was restricted to Allah only, or said that they too, who were firmly rooted in knowledge, knew it; for example, it has been narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas that he used to say: “I am one of those who are firmly rooted in knowledge and I know its interpretation.”

A third group says: “Interpretation” is that meaning of the verse which is not known except to Allah (or to Allah and the ones firmly rooted in knowledge), and which is against the apparent meaning of the word. In other words, an ambiguous verse has many meanings - one behind the other; some meanings are showing themselves just behind the words, and may be perceived by one and all; others are far behind and none knows them except Allah (or except Allah and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge).

There is, within this group, a difference of opinion as to how those various meanings are related to the word. It is sure that all of them are not on the same level; otherwise, it would mean that one word is used in more than one meaning at the same time, and that is not permissible in language (as has been explained in the Fundamentals of Jurisprudence). Therefore, those meanings must be taken consecutively. Now comes the difference: Some say that one meaning is the real one; the second is its concomitant; the third is the second's concomitant and so on. Others say that the meanings are all ranked one behind the other, as an esoteric meaning is hidden behind a manifest one. When a man speaks a word, he intends it to convey its familiar meaning, and with the same intention he aims at its esoteric meaning. You say: Give me water to drink. You ask only for drink; but that very word is also a demand to satiate your thirst; and this in its turn is a call to satisfy a need of life, and then a determination to acquire the perfection of existence. Note that you had not given four orders; you only told him to give you water to drink, but this one demand contained in itself all the unspoken but intended demands – one inside the other.

There is a fourth explanation: Interpretation is not a sort of a meaning intended from the word. It is a thing really existing outside imagination, upon which the talk is based. If the speech is of imperative mood – enjoining or forbidding – then its interpretation is that reason for which the said commandment is given. There is an order: Establish prayer. Its interpretation is that spiritual perfection which illuminates the soul of the one who prays, and prevents him from evil and sin. If the speech is an information – of a past event – then that event itself is its interpretation. Look, for example, at the verses narrating the stories of the prophets and their peoples. And if it is an information of a present or future happening, then it is of two kinds:

(1) If the subject may be perceived by one of the senses or comprehended by mind, then its interpretation is the same subject as it exists or shall exist in reality: For example, Allah says:

And among you are those who hearken for their sake (***9:47***).

And:

The Romans are vanquished (***30:2***).

In a near land, and they, after being vanquished, shall overcome (***30:3***).

Within a few years… (***30:4***).

(2) If it is a future event of unseen that cannot be perceived by worldly perceptions, nor can it be comprehended by our minds, like the affairs of the Day of Resurrection, the time of its happening, the raising of the dead and their gathering together, the questioning, the reckoning, the flying of the books of deeds etc., and like the reality of the Divine Attributes and Actions. (These latter are above the reach of time and beyond the limit of minds), then too their interpretation is the same reality that exists or shall exist outside imagination.

There is a big difference between the verses that describe these last-mentioned realities (attributes and actions of Allah and the affairs related to the Day of Resurrection) and those describing other subjects. It is possible to know the interpretation of the verses that describe other subjects; but so far as the verses describing the Divine Attributes etc., are concerned, none knows their interpretation except Allah; although those who are firmly rooted in knowledge may be given this knowledge by Allah to the extent of their mental capacities and spiritual perfection. Still, the reality, that is, the full and final interpretation, is not given to any creature at all.

These are the four main opinions concerning the meaning of "interpretation". There are some other views also; they are, in fact, various branches of the first opinion although those who expressed them have not acknowledged this fact:

1. Exegesis is more general than interpretation. Exegesis is mostly used for explanation of words; interpretation is mostly used for explanation of the meanings and sentences. The term, "interpretation" is generally used only for the Divine Books; while exegesis is used for other books too.

2. Exegesis is explanation of a word that has only one meaning; interpretation is choosing, with help of some rules and reason, one meaning out of several possible ones.

3. Exegesis shows the definite meaning of the word; interpretation chooses one among many possible meanings. (It is not very different from no. 2).

4. Exegesis shows the reason of the meaning; interpretation explains the reality of the meaning. For example, look at the verse: Most surely, your Lord is on watch (89:14). Its exegesis shall be as follows: *"al-Mirsad"* (اَلْمِرْصَادُ = watching place) is on paradigm of *al-mif'al* (اَلْمِفْعَالُ) from the verb *rasada; yarsudu* (رَصَدَ ، يَرْصُدُ = he watched; he is watching). And its interpretation is the warning against slackening in matters of the *Shari'ah* and thinking little of the commandments of Allah.

5. Exegesis is a description of the clear meaning of a word; interpretation is the explanation of its difficult meaning.

6. Exegesis is concerned with tradition and narration; interpretation is related to reason.

7. Exegesis is limited to following and listening (what the ancients said); interpretation is concerned with inference and reason.

These seven are in fact various facets of the first opinion; and all objections levelled against that are valid about these too. Anyhow, one cannot rely on any of the four opinions or their branches.

One defect is common to all: They presume that "interpretation" is the meaning of the verse, or that it is the happening or cause to which the verse refers. But it has been explained in the Commentary that "interpretation" is not the meaning of a verse – it does not matter whether the meaning is the apparent one or is against it. Also, it has been clarified therein that although interpretation is a real event or fact, but not every event – it is that fact with which the word has the same relation as a proverb has with its purpose; or as an exterior has with its interior.

The detailed comments on the four opinions are as follows:

About the first opinion: One who believes it, must also believe that at least some of the Qur'anic verses are unintelligible; that its "interpretation", that is, exegesis cannot be understood from its words. But there is no such verse in the Qur'an; the Qur'an clearly says that it has been revealed so that an average mind may easily understand it.

A man having this opinion cannot avoid this difficulty except by saying that the only ambiguous verses are the letter-symbols at the beginning of some chapters, as their meanings are not known to the people. But, there is no proof that only the letter-symbols are "ambiguous"; and just because *at-ta'wil* means to return and *at-tafsir* (اَلتَّفْسِيْرُ = exegesis) also has a shade of this meaning in it, it does not follow that both are synonymous – a mother is the returning place for her children, but she is not their "interpretation"; a principal is the returning place of his dependents, but he is not their "interpretation". Moreover, according to the verse, one of the characteristics of the ambiguous verses is that perverted persons follow them to mislead the people. But who has ever been misled by letter-symbols? Most of the misguidance in Muslim community has occurred because of following those verses that describe the attributes of Allah and other such things.

About the second opinion: It says that there are verses in the Qur'an whose intended import is against their apparent meanings, and those apparent meanings cause misguidance in religion as they are against the decisive verses. This statement boils down to this: The verses of the Qur'an are contradictory to each other and that contradiction cannot be removed unless some verses are deprived of their open meanings and given some such connotations that, in normal course, would not be understood from them.

This, in its turn, would invalidate the argument contained in the words of Allah:

Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy (***4:82***).

If the discrepancy between two verses can be removed only by saying that one or both do not mean what their words apparently say; that they have an interpretation (i.e., a meaning against the apparent one) that is not known to anyone other than Allah, then the verse 4:82, written above, cannot prove that the Qur'an is from Allah. One can easily remove contradiction and discrepancy from any literary or academic work of any author, if one were to change the apparent meanings of contradictory statements and give them new connotations unknown to any linguist. But such removal of contradiction would not prove that that work is a Divine revelation.

The fact is that every speech – even one that is admittedly false or is just a jumble of words – can be presented as a true fact or a serious discourse if its words were given some hitherto unknown meanings against their clear connotations. But such an absence of discrepancy would not mean that that speech was from a Speaker Who is above the changes, Whose decrees and statements do not contradict each other, Who is not liable to forgetfulness and error, Who is All perfect by Himself and has not acquired perfection through trial and error, experience and passage of time.

The verse 4:82, proves that the Qur'an is understandable to common minds and may be pondered and meditated upon; that no verse of it has a meaning that is against the clear dictate of Arabic language; in short, it does not contain puzzles and riddles.

About the third opinion: No one who has meditated on the Qur'an would deny that the Qur'anic verses have various consecutive connotations – one behind the other. But all those connotations are, in fact, various levels of the meanings of the words – and especially so if we say that they are concomitants of the first meaning. And their understandability varies according to the intelligence levels of the readers. But this idea has no resemblance with *at–ta'wil* (interpretation). Remember what Allah has said about the "interpretation" of the Qur'an that none knows it except Allah. And note the fact that one does not need piety and spiritual purity to understand a complicated or deep philosophical discourse; what one requires is a sharp intelligence. Then you will realize that it would be inappropriate to say that only Allah knew the interpretation (in the meaning given in this opinion) of the Qur'an. (It does not mean that piety and spiritual purity do not help in comprehension of Divine knowledge and realities; but they are not the main foundation of this comprehension. This place is reserved for intelligence and scholarship.)

About the fourth opinion: He is right when he says that *at–ta'wil* (interpretation) is not restricted to the ambiguous verses, it is found in the whole Qur'an. Also, he is right in saying that interpretation is not the meaning of the word; it is a real fact on which the speech is based. But he is wrong when he says that every fact, referred to by the verse, is its interpretation, and when he says, for example, that the past events or the future happenings are the interpretations of the relevant verses. Again, he is wrong in

thinking that only the verses describing the Divine Attributes and the events of the Day of Resurrection are ambiguous. Why do we say that he is wrong in these assumptions? The answer is as follows:

What is the meaning of the words: "and seeking to give it (their own) interpretation, but none knows its interpretation except Allah"? Do the pronoun "it" and "its" refer to "the Book"? In other words, does the verse say that none knows the interpretation of the whole Book except Allah? If the interpretation means real events and causes mentioned in the verses, then the above statement would not be correct, because interpretations (in the. meaning just described) of a great many verses are known to many other than Allah and other than those who are firmly rooted in knowledge; in fact, it may be known to even those in whose hearts there is perversity – such are the verses narrating the stories of the past nations and the current events, and even the verses dealing with laws and ethics. Everyone can acquire the knowledge of these things, and no one can fail to understand their interpretation (in this meaning).

Or do the pronouns, "it" and "its" refer to "the part of the Book that is ambiguous"? If so, then it will be correct to restrict the knowledge of its interpretation to Allah (or to Allah and those firmly rooted in knowledge). And then it would be the import of the verse that none, except Allah (and those firmly rooted in knowledge) should seek to interpret the ambiguous verses; otherwise, the people would be misled and misguided.

But it would be wrong in this case to say that only the verses describing the attributes and actions of Allah, and those connected with the Day of Judgement were ambiguous. Misguidance is caused by misinterpretation of other types of verses too; for example, the verses related to the *Shari'ah* and the stories of the prophets and their nations. It has been claimed by a group that the main purpose of the law is to reform and develop the society; if the good of the society depends on a law other than the one ordained by religion, or if that ordained law is no longer suitable for this enlightened era, a new law should be adopted and the religious command should be discarded. Likewise, it has been claimed that the miracles attributed by the Qur'an to the prophets were not supernatural events; they were normal occurrences, which the Qur'an narrated in a way as to put on them a halo of mystery; as a result of this dramatic style, it succeeded in attracting the attention of the audience and to make them submit to what they thought to be a super-power, above all powers. Such misleading explanations and interpretations are found in their hundreds in all the sects that have deviated from true Islam. And all are the result of interpreting the Qur'an according to one's own liking, seeking to mislead the people. Therefore, it is wrong to say that only those verses are ambiguous which describe the Divine Attributes and the affairs of the Day of Resurrection.

Now, it should be clear that the meaning of "interpretation" given by us in the Commentary is the only true one:

Interpretation is that reality to which a verse refers; it is found in all verses, the decisive and the ambiguous alike; it is not a sort of a meaning of the word; it is a real fact that is too sublime for words; Allah has dressed them with words so as to bring them a bit nearer to our minds; in this respect they are

like proverbs that are used to create a picture in the mind and thus help the hearer to clearly grasp the intended idea. That is why Allah has said:

(I swear) ***by the Book that makes manifest*** **(the truth)** (***43:2***).

Surely, We have made it an Arabic Qur'an, so that you may understand (***43:3***).

And surely, it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom (***43:4***).

And this thing has been explicitly and implicitly mentioned in several Qur'anic verses.

Moreover, you have seen in the Commentary that whenever the Qur'an uses the word, "interpretation" (and it has been used seventeen times), it intends this very meaning, described by us.

4. Does Anyone, Other Than Allah, Know The "Interpretation" Of The Qur'an

This issue too has caused sharp controversy among the exegetes. The main reason of the controversy is the meaning of "and", in the sentence, "and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: We believe in it, it is all from our Lord". Is it a conjunctive? Or, has it been used only to begin a new sentence?

Some early exegetes, some Shafi'ites and most of the Shi'ites believe that it is a conjunctive; that the verse says that those too who are firmly rooted in knowledge know the interpretation of the ambiguous verses of the Qur'an.

Most of the early exegetes and the Hanafites believe that with this "and" a new sentence begins; that none knows the interpretation of the ambiguous except Allah, Who has kept this knowledge to Himself. Both groups bring in their support a lot of academic explanations and traditions; the polemics goes on, arguments are put forward, are refuted by the opposite group, then the refutations in their turn are refuted; thus, it goes on and on.

Both sides suffer from confusion about the issue to be decided. They have confused the interpretation of the Qur'an with returning the ambiguous verse to the decisive. Therefore, it will be a waste of time and space to quote here their arguments and counter-arguments. So far as the traditions are concerned, they are against the clear meaning of the Qur'an:

1. Let us look, to begin with, at the traditions that say that those who are firmly rooted in knowledge know the interpretation. These traditions use "interpretation" as synonymous for the "intended meaning of the ambiguous"; but, as mentioned repeatedly, interpretation of the Qur'an is something else.

It has been narrated through the Sunni chains that the Prophet prayed for Ibn 'Abbas: "O Allah! give him knowledge of the religion and teach him the interpretation." And Ibn 'Abbas is reported as saying: "I am among those who are firmly rooted in knowledge and I know its interpretation." Also, he said: "The decisive are the verses that abrogated and the ambiguous are the abrogated ones." All these traditions

put together give an impression that the decisive verse is the interpretation of the ambiguous one.

But we have already explained that this verse is not concerned with this sort of interpretation.

2. Now we come to those traditions that show that knowledge of the interpretation of the ambiguous verses is restricted to Allah:

a) Ibn 'Abbas is reported to recite the verse in this way: "and none knows its interpretation except Allah, and say those who are firmly rooted in knowledge: 'We believe in it...'" The same recitation is ascribed to Ubay Ibn Ka'b. Likewise, Ibn Mas'ud is reported to recite: "And its interpretation is not except with Allah. And those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: 'We believe in it...'"

But such traditions can prove nothing: First, because such uncommon recitations are of no value at all; secondly, utmost that can be shown from them is that this verse does not prove that those who are firmly rooted in knowledge know the interpretation; but there is a world of difference between not proving that Zayd exists and proving that he does not exist.

b) It is narrated by at-Tabarani from Abu Malik al-Ash'ari that he heard the Messenger of Allah (S) saying: "I am not afraid for my *ummah* but from three things: that their wealth would increase, and they would envy each other and kill each other; and that the Book would be opened for them, and the believer would take it seeking to interpret it, and none knows its interpretation except Allah; and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say:

'We believe in it, it is all from our Lord'; and none do mind except those having understanding; (***3:7***)

and that their knowledge would increase and they would waste and neglect it."[3]

This tradition - if we accept that it has any relation with the subject matter - would only show that common believers did not know the interpretation; but it could not be proved from it that those too who were firmly rooted in knowledge did not have its knowledge. And the controversy is about this latter group; it is not about general believers.

c) Some people offer those traditions as their proof which say that the decisive verses should be followed and ambiguous ones should only be believed in.

But such traditions have no relevance to the issue under dispute.

d) al-Alusi has quoted in his *at-Tafsir: al-Marfu'* (4(اَلْمَرْفُوْعُ tradition through Ibn Jarir from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "The Qur'an has been revealed on four words: The lawful, and the prohibited (none is excused from acquiring its knowledge); and the explanation (it is done by the scholars); and the ambiguous, none knows it except Allah, and the one who claims to know it (except Allah) is a liar."

Let us have a cursory glance at this tradition: First, some names from the chain of its narrators are omitted. Secondly, it is against the previously mentioned traditions that say that the Prophet prayed for him to be given the knowledge of interpretation, and against his own claim that he had this knowledge. Thirdly, it is against the clear import of the Qur'an that interpretation is something other than the meaning of the ambiguous.

What is, then, the reply to the question asked in the beginning? Does anyone, other than Allah, know the interpretation of the Qur'an? The answer is: Yes, the Qur'an proves the possibility of the knowledge of its interpretation to someone other than Allah; although this verse does not prove it.

Let us explain the second statement first. The context shows the theme of this verse: It wants to say that the Book is divided in two categories – the decisive and the ambiguous – and also the people are of two types: there is a group which, because of perversity of hearts, seeks to follow the ambiguous verses; and there is another group that is firmly rooted in knowledge and therefore follows the decisive verses and believes in the ambiguous ones. It is clear, in this light, that the phrase, "those who are firmly rooted in knowledge", is used here primarily to describe their good faith and behaviour *vis–a–vis* the Qur'an, and to extol their virtue in contrast to those in whose hearts there is perversity. The sentence aims at nothing else. And there is no reason, so far as this verse is concerned, to join those who are firmly rooted in knowledge, with Allah, in knowledge of the Book's interpretation. The arguments put forward in this respect are defective, as we have shown above.

In short, the restriction, "none knows its interpretation except Allah", remains valid, without any opposing or qualifying clause – there is no conjunction, exception or qualification in this absolute statement. Therefore, so far as this verse is concerned, the knowledge of the Qur'an's interpretation is reserved for Allah.

Nevertheless, there may be other proofs to show that someone, other than Allah, may be knowing this interpretation. There are in the Qur'an instances in which an absolute restriction of one verse has been qualified by another. Take the example of the knowledge of the unseen. The Qur'an has declared in many verses that it is confined to Allah:

Say: "No one in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen but Allah" (***27:65***).

Say: "The unseen is only for Allah" (***10:20***).

And with Him are the keys of the unseen – none knows them but He (***6:59***).

And after all these restricting statements, comes the following verses:

The Knower of the unseen! so He does not reveal His secrets to any (***72:26***).

Except to him whom He chooses of an apostle (***72:27***).

This verse clearly says that some persons other than Allah, that is, the chosen apostles, are given the knowledge of the unseen.

Now time has come to discuss the first statement: Other verses of the Qur'an prove that it is possible for someone, other than Allah, to have the knowledge of the Qur'an's interpretation:

As repeatedly explained, interpretation is a real fact existing outside imagination, and the meaning of the verse has the same relation with it as a proverb has with its purpose and purport. Interpretation is not the meaning of the verse; rather it transpires through that meaning – a special sort of transpiration. There is a proverb in Arabic used when someone intends to do a work but has already destroyed its means: "In summer you spoiled the milk." When it is used, its literal meaning (a woman's spoiling the milk in summer) does not fit the occasion, yet it presents a clear picture before the eyes of the audience, and that picture leads to the purpose of the talk.

The same is the case of the interpretation. There is a spiritual reality which is the main objective of ordaining a law, or basic aim of describing a Divine Attribute; there is an actual significance to which a Qur'anic story refers. That spiritual reality or actual significance is not seen in the words or the meaning of the verse – that order, prohibition, explanation, or narration does not mention that spiritual reality or actual significance in its words. But it transpires from that order etc., because the order etc., is founded it We may as well say that the order or story etc., points to that spiritual reality or significance. A man tells his servant: "Give me water to drink."

This order emanates from the natural instinct of man to perfect his existence. It is this basic reality that demands preservation of self; this in its turn arranges to replace what is used up in the body; this requires replenishment with food and drink; this need is announced through hunger and thirst; thirst demands satiation, which in its turn causes the man to give that order to his servant. The interpretation of the said order, therefore, is the natural instinct of man to perfect his existence. If this reality, this natural instinct, changes for any reason, the order, "Give me water", also would change.

Likewise, various societies have some recognized ethical and social norms based on what they think to be good or evil. This in its turn, depends on a set of customs and traditions that are firmly settled in the doer's mind, through heredity and environment. This compound cause is the interpretation of his action and inaction. If those social factors change for any reason, his action and inaction will also change.

A subject – whether it is an order, a story or any other topic – that has an interpretation will certainly change if that interpretation changes. Now ponder on the words of Allah:

"Then as for those in whose hearts there is perversity, they follow the part of it which is ambiguous, seeking to mislead, and seeking to give it (***their own***) ***interpretation, but none knows its interpretation except Allah"*** (***3:7***).

Note that they have been condemned because they try to give that verse their own interpretation which

is not the real one; and this misinterpretation causes misguidance and makes people go astray. Had they followed its true interpretation then it could not be condemned. They would have followed truth and reality, it would have led them to the relevant decisive verses, and it would have been a praiseworthy act.

Now it is clear that the interpretations of the Qur'an are the facts actually existing outside imagination; the Qur'anic verses its spiritual realities, laws and stories – are based upon them; if supposedly any of those facts changes for any reason, the relevant verses would also surely, change.

This fits perfectly the purport of the verses:

(We swear) ***by the Book that makes manifest*** **(*the truth*),** **(*43:2*).**

surely, We have made it an Arabic Qur'an, so that you may understand. **(*43:3*).**

And surely, it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom **(*43:4*).**

This verse shows that the Qur'an, when it was with Allah, was too elevated to be comprehended by human understanding; too precise and firm to admit any break or fragmentation. But Allah, because of His mercy, made it into a Book to be recited, and clothed it with Arabic language, so that people may understand what they could not comprehend as long as it was in the original, or basis, of the Book. This original or basis of the Book has been mentioned in these verses:

Allah effaces what He pleases and establishes **(likewise)*, and with Him is the basis of the Book*** **(*13:39*).**

Nay! it is a glorious Qur'an **(*85:21*).**

In a guarded tablet **(*85:22*).**

And in a general way the following verse also proves it:

(This is) ***a Book, whose verses were confirmed*** **(or, made decisive)*, then they were divided, from one Wise, All-aware*** **(*11:1*).**

The confirmation and decisiveness refer to its condition when it was with Allah without any fragmentation or break, and the division refers to that state when it was made into chapters and verses and was revealed to the Prophet.

This last condition (division), which is based on the first (confirmation), is mentioned in the verse:

And a Qur'an which We revealed in portions so that you may read it to the people by slow degrees, and We sent it down **(i.e., revealed it)** ***in portions*** **(*17:106*).**

It is clear that the Qur'an, in its original, was undivided, then it was made into portions and sent down piecemeal and revealed gradually.

The above statement does not mean that the whole Qur'an, when it was with Allah, was arranged in chapters and verses, a sort of a book written and bound, and then it was divided into pieces and sent to the Prophet a little bit at a time, so that he might read to the people by slow degrees, as a teacher divides a book in portions and teaches the student every day a portion according to his mental capacity. There is a basic difference between revealing the Qur'an to the Prophet in portions and teaching a student a book, piece by piece. The verses were revealed according to the events that had a bearing on their revelation. But there is no such thing in teaching of a student. Various pieces that are to be taught to a student may be, and are, gathered and put together in a book form beforehand; then the teacher teaches a piece or a portion every day, as he thinks fit. But it cannot be said about many Qur'anic verses, such as the following:

So, forgive them and pass over them (***5:13***).

Fight those of the unbelievers who are near to you (***9:123***).

Allah has surely, heard the plea of her who pleads with you about her husband and complains to Allah (***58:1***).

Take alms out of their wealth, you would cleanse them and purify them thereby (***9:103***).

There are numerous such verses. It is not possible to ignore the reasons and occasions that resulted in their revelation; one cannot arbitrarily say that this or that verse was revealed in the earlier or later days of the Call, discarding the reasons of its revelation. Therefore, it cannot be said that the Qur'an was with Allah in chapters and verses, as we know, it today.

And it shows that the "Qur'an" mentioned in the verse, "And a Qur'an which We revealed in portions", refers to a Qur'an other than this one which is made of chapters and verses.

What one understands from the above verses, is that there is something, beyond this Qur'an which is read and understood by us. And that "something" has the same relation with this Qur'an as the spirit has with the body, or as the significance of a proverb has with that proverb. It is that spirit of this Qur'an which is called by Allah as:

The confirmed (**or wise**) ***Book*** (***10:1***).

The Qur'anic teachings and meanings depend upon it. That spirit of the Qur'an is not made of words or words' meanings.

The above-mentioned characteristics of the spirit of the Qur'an are the same as those of the "interpretation" of the Qur'an. The above discourse makes it even clearer; and makes us realize why it is

said that the interpretation of the Qur'an cannot be even touched by common minds and unclean spirits. Then Allah says:

Most surely, it is an honoured Qur'an (***56:77***).

In a Book that is hidden (***56:78***).

None do touch it save the purified ones (***56:79***).

These verses clearly say that the purified servants of Allah do touch the honoured Book which is hidden and protected from any change; minds cannot reach it, because that also would be a sort of a change. Anyhow, the purified ones do touch it – the only meaning of the words – "touch" in this context is that they know it and understand it. Also, it is known that this hidden Book is the same "basis of the Book" and "original of the Book" mentioned in the verses:

Allah effaces what He pleases and establishes (**likewise**)***, and with Him is the basis of the Book*** (***13:39***).

And surely, it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom (***43:4***).

Those are the people whose heart are purified; and this purification emanates from none other than Allah, because He has attributed this purifying to Himself:

Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanliness from you, O People of the House! and to purify you a (**thorough**) ***purifying*** (***33:33***)

…but He intends to purify you" (***5:6***).

Wherever in the Qur'an, the spiritual purification is mentioned Allah has attributed it to Himself or to His permission. What is this purity? It is removal of impurity and uncleanliness from the heart. What is meant by "heart" in this context? It is the means of perception, understanding and will. The purity of heart, then, is the purity of the soul in knowledge and belief as well as in will. Thus, the heart remains firm in its true beliefs, without any doubt or confusion; and this firmness makes it steadfast in following and acting upon that true belief and knowledge, obeying the commandments of Allah, without deviating to the path of desire, without breaking the covenant of knowledge. Such a man is said to be firmly rooted in knowledge. Because the same are the characteristics, described by Allah, of those who are firmly rooted in knowledge. Allah has praised them that they are rightly guided and steadfastly firm on what they know; that there is no perversity in their hearts and they do not seek to mislead the people. These are the same characteristics as of the purified ones. It means that the purified ones are firmly rooted in knowledge.

But there is a fine distinction that should not be overlooked. What has been proved above is this: The purified ones know the interpretation of the Qur'an; and it is a concomitant of their purity that they are

also firmly rooted in knowledge – because that purification is attributed to Allah Who cannot fail in what He intends.

But it does not mean that the knowledge of the Qur'anic interpretation is given to them because of their being firmly rooted in knowledge. In other words, the firmly rooted knowledge is not the cause of their knowledge of the Qur'anic interpretation, because the verse does not prove it; rather it may be inferred from its context that they were not conversant with that interpretation:

(***they***) ***say: 'We believe in it, it is all from our Lord'*** (***3:7***).

Moreover, Allah has praised some of the people of the Book that they were firmly rooted in knowledge and has extolled them for their acceptance of true faith and good deeds; and still it does not show that they knew the interpretation of the Book. The relevant verse is as follows:

But those firmly rooted in knowledge among them as well as the believers believe in what has been sent down to you and what has been sent down before you… (***4:162***).

Also, it should be noted that the verse:

None do touch it save the purified ones (***56:79***)

Proves only that the purified ones "touch" the hidden Book; in other words, they know the interpretation of the Qur'an to a certain extent. But it does not say that they have comprehensive knowledge of its complete interpretation, or that they are not unacquainted of any portion of its interpretation at any time. The verse is silent on this matter. If it is to be proved, some other evidence should be brought for it.

5. Why The Book Contains The Ambiguous Verses

One of the objections levelled against the Qur'an is the one based on the presence of the ambiguous verses in it. They say: The Muslims claim that whatever the mankind would need for its guidance up to the Day of Resurrection is in the Qur'an; that it is a decisive word that distinguishes between truth and falsehood. And then we see that every group, among the innumerable Muslim sects, relies on the Qur'an to prove the correctness of its beliefs and actions. It would not have been possible if there were no ambiguity in its verses. Had this Book been made clear and kept free from this maze of ambiguous verses, it would have served its purpose in a better way, and there would not have been any chance of controversy and perversity.

The Muslims have variously replied to this objection; some of the replies are patently absurd and foolish. For example:

"The presence of ambiguous verses makes it hard to get to the truth, and entails intense search and research. This makes the true believer eligible to better and greater reward! "

“Had it clearly supported a certain sect, all other sects would have left it unread and unstudied. It is because of the ambiguous verses that all of them look into, and ponder on it; and thus there remains a possibility that they would see the right path and follow it.”

“The ambiguous verses have made it necessary to seek support of one’s views from rational arguments. Thus, these verses take the Muslims out of the darkness of blind following into the light of contemplation and research.”

“The presence of such verses compelled the Muslims to argue about their various interpretations; and this is in its turn led them to master various branches of knowledge, like language, conjugation, syntax, and fundamentals of jurisprudence! “

Such replies do not merit any comment. There are three other replies which we append below with our comments:

First: The Qur’an contains ambiguous verses, so that the hearts may be purified by believing in them. Had all the verses been distinct, decisive and clear – about which nobody could have any doubt – believing in them would have not been a meaningful and significant thing; it would have not entailed surrender to the words of Allah and submission to His apostles.

Comment: Submission is the reaction of a weaker person in front of a stronger force. A man surrenders before a thing, the greatness of which he comprehends; or before a thing that is beyond his comprehension, and with whose greatness he is completely overwhelmed; like the power, greatness and other Attributes of Allah – when man tries to understand them, he feels stunned and bewildered.

But why should he submit to a thing which, although beyond his comprehension, seems to him within his grasp? If a man mistakenly believes that he knows the interpretation of an ambiguous verse (although in fact he does not know it), he will never submit himself to it nor will he surrender before its greatness.

Second: Ambiguous verses were revealed to motivate the minds to meditate and research. Had all the verses been distinct there would not have been any need for mental exercise and the power of understanding would have withered away. And understanding is the most precious element of human life; it must be nourished and developed for the sake of human perfection.

Comment: Allah has ordered the man to meditate and ponder on the signs found in the universe and in the man himself – this exhortation is sometimes phrased in general terms and often with reference to particular subjects, like the creation of the heavens, the earth, the mountains, the trees, the animals and the human beings; the difference in colours and languages of mankind etc. He has called him to think and meditate, to walk in the earth and take lesson from the previous nations’ affairs. He has forcefully urged them to apply the minds to the wonders of the world and to think hard. And He has extolled knowledge and cognition in the best terms.

Was not all this enough for sharpening the mind and intensifying the intelligence? Was there any further need of sending down ambiguous verses – to trap the minds and ensnare the intellect?

Third: The prophets were sent to all the people – the average ones and the above average, the intelligent and the dull, the learned and the ignorant. Some realities and ideas cannot be explained in plain language. Such subjects must necessarily be described in a language clothed with allegory and metaphor. Only the learned, intelligent and the above average persons will be able to understand it; common people must necessarily be told to believe in it and leave the matter to Allah.

Comment: The Book, according to the verse under discussion, contains some ambiguous verses, and some decisive ones which are the basis of the Book, and which do explain the ambiguous verses when they are returned to them (decisive ones). In other words, the ambiguous verses do not contain any ideas other than those which may be clarified by the decisive ones. And it leaves the question still unanswered: What is the use of the ambiguous verses when all their meanings are clearly described by the decisive ones?

The exegete, who wrote this reply, seems a bit confused. He has divided the meanings of the Qur'an into two mutually exclusive groups: Meanings that may be understood by one and all (and they are the meanings of the decisive verses), and those that cannot be understood except by some special people (and they are the connotations of the ambiguous ones). If we accept this classification, then the ambiguous verses shall not be returned to the decisive ones – but it is against the clear declarations of the Qur'an that its verses explain each other.

If no reply is free from defect, then what is the answer to the question given in the beginning?

The fact is that the presence of ambiguous verses is necessary in the Qur'an, and it has resulted from the existence of the interpretation. When we use the word, "interpretation", we refer to its true connotation explained under the third heading. Various ambiguous verses, when compared with each other, lead to the said interpretation.

To understand this statement, one should first ponder on the style of the Qur'an, the factors on which the Divine teachings are based, and the ultimate aim of the revelation. We may describe it as following:

1. Allah has said that there is an interpretation for His Book. All the Qur'anic realities, laws and teachings move around that interpretation. But the said interpretation is a sublime reality; minds cannot grasp it; intelligence cannot reach it; and imagination cannot perceive it. The only exception is of those purified souls from whom Allah has removed every impurity; only they can touch it.

It is the ultimate that Allah demands from human beings – that they should answer His call to acquire the real knowledge of His Book. This Book has the explanation of everything, and the key to its secrets is the Divine Purification. Allah says:

Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty, but He wishes to purify you (***5:7***).

In other words, the ultimate aim of ordination of the *Shari'ah* is the said Divine Purification.

This human perfection, like other ideals, is not attained except by a few special persons, although the Call is addressed to all. The religious training creates purity in various degrees in various people. Some reach its highest point, some to various points in between. It is like the piety (i.e., fear of Allah) to which Islam invites:

…fear Allah as is due to Him… (***3:102***).

But only a handful of believers acquire perfect piety; others remain behind them, and a third band behind the second, and so on. It happens because people differ in their aptitudes and understanding.

The same is the case with social norms. The society expects every member to reach the zenith of all desirable characteristics, like knowledge, industry, riches, comfort etc. – but only a few attain this goal; others remain behind at various points in the way, because of difference in their abilities.

Although society never remains without some individuals who attain the highest possible rank in all perfections, not everyone reaches there.

2. The Qur'an declares that the only way by which a man can reach this destination is to know himself, by acquiring true knowledge and acting upon it. On the side of knowledge, he should be taught the realities about his beginning and end as well as about what is between these two points; then he may truly know himself, in the context of all relevant realities. On the side of action, he should be made to follow the social rules – the rules that would make him live a good social life, and would not hinder him from the pursuit of knowledge and contemplation; then he should be told to perform rites of Divine Worship – these rites, if performed regularly, draw the soul towards the Creator, help the heart in concentrating on one's beginning and end, and bring it nearer to the spiritual perfection and purity, keeping it clean from the filth and dirt of materialism.

First study the verse:

To Him do ascend the good words; and the good deed lifts them up (***35:10***).

Then add to it the following, among other such verses:

Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty, but He wishes to purify you and that He may complete His favour on you… (***5:7***).

O you who believe! take care of your souls; he who errs cannot hurt you when you are on the right way (***5:105***).

Allah will exalt those of you who believe and those who are given knowledge, in high degrees

(***58: 11***).

Then you will clearly see what was the aim of Allah in sending down the religion and guiding the man to it, and appreciate the way He used for this guidance.

Through all this, we reach to an important conclusion:

The social laws of Islam are the stepping stones for the rites of Divine Worship, which in their turn lead the man to the knowledge of Allah and of His Signs. Even a minor infringement of, and change or alteration in, these social laws would disturb and deflect the commandments concerning Divine Worship; and that in its turn would disrupt the man's knowledge of Allah.

It is a clear conclusion; and the experience shows its truth. If you ponder on the manner in which corruption stealthily crept into Islamic affairs and find out how it began and where it has reached, you will see that it began with social laws, then surreptitiously it contaminated the rites of worship and ended with the rejection of the spiritual realities and man's knowledge of Allah.

Also, it was described earlier that the misleading began with following the ambiguous verses, seeking to interpret them according to the people's own liking.

3. Religious guidance is based on two pillars: Prohibition of blind following, and progress of knowledge among the religionists to the furthest limit. It is in conformity with the ultimate goal of Islam, that is, the knowledge. There is not a single Divine Book, nor a single religion, that puts so much emphasis on knowledge, and so forcefully exhorts its followers to seek it to the farthest corners of the world as Islam does.

That is why the Qur'an explains first, the spiritual realities, and then shows the relation of its practical laws to those realities. It tells the man that he exists because Allah has created him by His own power; and has appointed some intermediate agents for his creation and survival, like the angels, the skies, the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the vegetables, the animals and, in short, the time and the space. Now he is being irresistibly driven towards his returning place and time; striving hard to reach his Lord to meet Him; then he shall be recompensed for what he has done – either to the paradise or to the hell. This is the first set of the spiritual knowledge.

Then the Qur'an teaches him which deeds would lead him to the felicity of the paradise, and which to the infelicity of the hell. In other words, it teaches him the rules of Divine Worship and the social laws. This is the second set of that knowledge.

Then it makes him understand that these laws and commandments lead to the bliss in the next world. In other words, it tells him that the second set is related to the first; that these laws have been ordained for his own benefit, as they contain his good of this world as of the next. This is the third set.

The second set is like the preliminary; the first is like its conclusion; and the, third is like the binding cord

that joins the second set with the first. The verses describing all these sets are numerous and clear in their meaning; and it is not necessary to quote them here.

4. People, generally, do not comprehend what cannot be perceived by the five senses; they do not understand ideas and realities beyond the limit of matter and nature. And those who train their minds through academic exercises to understand abstract ideas and spiritual meanings, are not all on the same level – each attains a certain degree of intellectual development and can–not understand that which is beyond it. This phenomenon causes sharp divergence in their perception of spiritual and metaphysical subjects. This vast difference is a fact that none can deny.

When we want to explain to someone a certain new idea we can do so only with the help of his previously acquired knowledge. If his perception is limited to the natural phenomena, that new idea can only be explained within the framework of that limited understanding. For example, if one wants to explain the "taste" of marriage to a minor child, one could only say that it was sweet like honey. And if that person has some advanced intellectual capacity, we may explain those spiritual realities to the extent of his ability.

Also, it should be understood that the religious guidance is not for a special group; it is for all the people.

5. These two factors – the difference in people's understanding and the fact that religious guidance is meant for all the people – together with the existence of the interpretation for the Qur'an, made it necessary that the spiritual realities be described in the words and phrases akin to proverbs and simile. It takes what the man already knows and uses it, because of a certain similarity, to create a picture of what he does not know. As a commodity is weighed with a stone or iron weight – there is no resemblance between the stone or iron and that commodity in form or substance, mass or volume, kind or species; the only similarity is in weight.

The Qur'an, in the verses quoted earlier e.g.:

Surely, We have made it an Arabic Qur'an, so that you may understand (***43:3***).

And surely, it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom (***43:4***).

has hinted to this fact. But it has not stopped there. It has described it clearly with the help of a parable concerning truth and falsehood; He sends down water from the heavens, then the valleys flow according to their measure, and the torrent bears along the swelling form, and from what they melt in the fire for the sake of (making) ornaments or apparatus arises a scum like it; thus does Allah compare truth and falsehood:

Then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits the people, it remains in the earth; thus does Allah set forth parables (***13:17***).

This parable is as much true about Allah's action as it is about His word. His action, like His word, is

meant for truth; but both are accompanied by some unintended things. Those unintended things temporarily cover, and come above, the intended truth; but they soon go away; the truth remains and survives to benefit the people, and the scum is removed by another truth.

The above-mentioned phenomenon is a mirror of the ambiguous verses. Such a verse contains a true meaning that is actually intended; but it is accompanied by another unintended meaning that hides the intended one and races to the minds before it. But soon it is overcome and removed by another truth (a decisive verse) that identifies the true meaning, and erases the unintended one, although it had temporarily gained the upper hand. It is so that the truth is shown to be truth by His words, and falsehood is seen to be falsehood, even though the guilty may be averse to it.

This explanation shows how the parable fits the Divine words; it may in the same manner be applied to His actions.

The parable shows that the Divine realities and spiritual knowledge are like the water which Allah sends down from the heavens. At that time, it is water, in the pure sense of the word, unencumbered with any other condition. Then it starts flowing in the valleys; and now it takes the shape of the watercourse – a wide river, a narrow stream and so on. These shapes and measures are established facts; they are not imaginary things. (In this respect they resemble the benefits of the rules of the *Shari'ah* – we have said that they are the binding cord that connect those rules with the spiritual truths. This characteristic of the rules is an established fact; it does not depend on verbal description.)

Those rules, in the course of their flow, are often accompanied by swelling foam that appears for a time being and then vanishes. An example may be given of an abrogated verse; in the nature of thing, it should have remained in force permanently, but another verse comes along, abrogates it, and puts another rule in its place. This development also is an established fact; it does not matter whether this religious reality has been clothed with words.

The spiritual realities and metaphysical ideas, inasmuch as they are placed in the containers of the words, take the shape of those containers; and are fettered with the demands of the word and the language – though originally, they had no such limitation or restraint. These words are true and fact, because they were chosen by the truthful Speaker to convey His message. Yet they are like a similitude that represents the real meaning – the meaning that is unfettered by the words, unencumbered by the shapes of these containers. Therefore, the words pass through the minds of the hearers and unintended meanings surround them and ride high above them. It happens because the minds look at the words in the light of their previously acquired ideas. This mostly happens about those realities that are not familiar to common minds, like the spiritual facts, the real reason for which a certain rule was ordained and so on. But so far as the rules themselves are concerned, there occurs no change, because invariably always they talk about what is within the sphere of man's own activities, and is, therefore, familiar to him. This discourse shows that ambiguous verses are ambiguous because they contain the spiritual realities and not the rules of religion and *Shari'ah*.

6. Now we have reached the stage where we may explain why the presence of ambiguous verses was necessary in the Qur'an.

The verbal expressions of the Qur'an are like similitudes to the sublime Divine realities. Those realities have been brought down, in these verses, to the level of common minds. An average mind does not perceive except the natural phenomena; it cannot comprehend the abstract Divine realities unless they are put in the mould of concrete expressions.

When pure spiritual facts are expressed in terms of body and matter, either of the two things may happen – both of them dangerous:

a) The mind may stop at those material expressions, taking them to mean natural phenomena. It will thus fail to see the reality beyond those expressions. It will, in short, take a proverb in its literal sense, not knowing that it signifies something else; and that that something is often not shown by its letters. Thus, the intended meaning will be neglected. The minds will not try to look behind the screen of the words, as it will not know that it has missed anything.

b) If the mind realizes that the verse is a sort of a similitude and tries to see beyond the curtain of the words, by removing from it unwanted elements that have no bearing on its intended significance, then there is a danger that it may discard some important element or leave intact some unnecessary one.

There is an Arabic proverb: "In the morning, the travellers appreciate the previous night's journey." Because we know the story behind this saying, when we hear it, we dispense with all its surrounding details, like the morning, the travellers and the previous night's journey. What we understand from the proverb is this: A work is appreciated only when it is completed and its good results begin to appear; but so long as the man is engaged in that work and is undergoing hardships in that activity, he does not like it. If we did not know the story, and stopped at the literal meaning of the proverb, we would not know its significance, and the proverb would turn into a proposition or news.

On the other hand, if we did not know the story but realized that it was a proverb, we would not know how much of it should be discarded and what was its true significance.

There is only one way to avoid these two dangers, and that is to express that one significance in various proverbs, moulding each in a different mould – one proverb would contain some details that would be missing from the other, and the former would not have some details of the latter, and so on. In this way, those sentences would, through comparison and action and reaction, clarify each other and all together would show their true significance. First, the hearer, on hearing various expressions, would realize that they were not used in their literal sense; they were like the similitudes describing an abstract idea in the moulds of various concrete expressions. Thereafter, he would be in a position to know which details were to be discarded and which to be retained – because the essential factors would be present in every sentence, while unnecessary ones would be missing from one or the other.

This device to explain difficult ideas and complicated thoughts is not peculiar to the Qur'an. It is found in every language, every nation and every place. Man, by his nature, knows that if only one story, proverb or similitude is given to illustrate an abstract idea, unessential details would confuse the minds, and might convey to them a wrong meaning. Therefore, he tries to make the audience understand his idea with the help of a lot of stories and varied similitudes. So that they may distinguish the true significance from the unnecessary details.

It is now crystal clear that it was necessary – nay, essential – that the Qur'an should contain ambiguous verses; and that that ambiguousness should be removed with the help of other unambiguous verses. Those who object on the presence of such verses in the Qur'an do not know what they are talking about.

6. Conclusion

This discourse on ambiguous and decisive verses and the Qur'anic interpretation has become a bit lengthy. But through it, we have been able to clarify the following ten points:

First: The Qur'an contains two kinds of verses, the decisive and the ambiguous. If a verse, seen alone, is capable of more than one meaning, it is ambiguous; otherwise, it is decisive.

Second: The whole Qur'an, with all its decisive and ambiguous verses, has its interpretation. That interpretation is not the connotation of its words; it is an actually existing reality; a reality that has the same relation with the knowledge, facts and ideas mentioned in the Qur'an, as the significance of a proverb has with that proverb. All the Qur'anic knowledge is like a similitude for the Qur'anic interpretation that is with Allah.

Third: The interpretation may be known to the purified servants of Allah; they are the ones who are also firmly rooted in knowledge.

Fourth: It has been said in the second conclusion that the Qur'anic knowledge and ideas are like a similitude for the Qur'anic interpretation. Now, we come to a further lower level, that is, the Qur'anic words and expressions. These words and expressions, in their turn, are like a similitude to the abovementioned Qur'anic knowledge, facts, and ideas.

Fifth: It was as essential for the Qur'an to include some ambiguous verses, as it was to have some decisive ones.

Sixth: The decisive verses are the basis of the Book, to which the ambiguous ones are returned, that is, the latter are explained with the help of the former.

Seventh: Decisiveness and ambiguousness are relative qualities. The same verse may be decisive in one context and ambiguous in another. Also, it may be decisive in comparison to one verse and ambiguous in relation to the other.

There is no absolutely ambiguous verse in the Qur'an; although there is no reason why one or more verses may not be decisive.

Eighth: It is essential that the verses of the Qur'an should explain each other.

Ninth: The meaning of the Qur'an has various grades. They are placed vertically one behind the other. They are not ranked side by side, horizontally; otherwise, it would entail the use of one word in more than one meaning – and it is not permissible. Nor are they like real and metaphorical meanings; nor like various adjunct meanings attached to a real one. Rather, they are all various grades of the one real meaning – thus, they all are its real meanings, and the peoples' minds comprehend its various grades, according to their intellectual and spiritual capacity.

This statement requires some elaboration:

Allah has said:

***Fear Allah as is due to Him* (*3:102*).**

The word, *"at-taqwa"* (**اَلتَّقْوي =** piety, fear of Allah), denotes abstaining from what Allah has forbidden and doing what He has ordered. As the verse shows, the highest grade of piety is the one mentioned therein: "as is due to Allah". By inference, there must be other lower grades. "Piety", or in other words, "good deeds", are therefore of various grades, one above the other.

Also, He says:

***Is then he who follows the pleasure of Allah like him who has brought upon himself the wrath from Allah, and whose abode is hell? And it is an evil destination.* (*3:162*)**

***They are of* (diverse) *grades with Allah, and Allah sees what they do* (*3:163*).**

It shows that all deeds – good and evil alike – are of various grades and ranks. That the diverse grades mentioned in the verse refer to the deeds, is clear from the concluding sentence, "and Allah sees what they do". Two more verses are as follows:

***And for all are grades according to what they did, and so that He may pay them back fully their deeds and they shall not be dealt with unjustly* (*46:19*).**

***And all have grades according to what they do; and your Lord is not heedless of what they do* (*6:132*).**

There are many verses of this tenor, and among them are those that show that the grades of the paradise and depths of the hell are based on the grades and degrees of the good and bad deeds respectively.

It is known that action, of whatever kind it may be, emanates from knowledge, that is, from the relevant conviction of the heart. That is why Allah has proved infidelity of the Jews, evil intentions of the polytheists, and duplicity of the hypocrites from their actions; as the belief and faith of the prophets and the believers has been proved from their actions. The verses having this semantic flow are very numerous and there is no need to quote them here.

Every action emanates from a relevant knowledge and demonstrates it. And then that action enhances that relevant knowledge and belief and makes it firmly settled in the mind and soul. As Allah says:

***And* (as for) *those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them onto Our ways; and Allah is most surely, with the doers of good* (*29:69*).**

***And worship thou thy Lord until there comes to you the certainty* (or, that which is certain) (*15:99*).**

***Then evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the signs of Allah and used to mock them* (*30:10*).**

***So, He made hypocrisy to follow as a consequence into their hearts till the day when they shall meet Him because they failed to perform towards Allah what they had promised with Him and because they told lies* (*9:77*).**

There are a lot of verses of this significance; and they show that every action – good or bad – creates knowledge or ignorance (i.e., wrong knowledge) respectively.

There is a verse that contains the gist of this topic about good deeds and useful knowledge:

***To Him do ascend the good words; and the good deed lifts them up* (*35:10*).**

It clearly says that the good word, that is, true belief, ascends to Allah and brings the believers nearer to Him; and the good deeds lifts this knowledge and belief up. The ascension of knowledge and belief depends on their purity from doubt and confusion; and on undisturbed attention of the soul towards Allah. The more intense this purity, the higher the reach of that knowledge and belief.

The words used in the verse hint to this fact: The good words do ascend, and the good deeds do lift them up. Ascension is opposite of descension, and lifting up is opposite of putting down. When a thing moves from a lower to a higher level it is described in these two terms that look at the two points of the movement. It is said to be ascending, because it moves towards the higher level, coming nearer to it; and is said to be rising or lifting up, because it leaves the lower place moving away from it.

The good deeds lift the man up and remove him away from this transient world and its base desires. They do not let him ensnare himself in the trinkets of this material life, or to go and get lost in the maze of the unenduring and ever-changing “knowledge”. The more the good deeds lift him up, the higher his

good words do ascend, and purer becomes his spiritual knowledge, farther from the impurities of confusion, doubt and imagination.

The good deeds are of diverse grades and degrees; and every grade lifts the good words and creates the knowledge of Divine realities according to its own strength and condition.

The same details are true, in reverse, for the evil deeds and bad words, that is, wrong knowledge. Evil deeds sink down the man into the yawning depths of ignorance, hypocrisy and infidelity. This subject was discussed in short in the Commentary of the verse:

Guide us to the Straight Path (***1:6***).

Now, it is clear from above that people are of different grades and ranks, so far as their nearness or distance from Allah is concerned. It all depends on their good or evil deeds and good or evil words, that is, knowledge. It goes without saying that what people of a certain grade would understand from a Divine Speech would be quite different from what those on a higher or lower level would understand from the same. That is what we mean when we say that the Qur'an has various meanings, all ranked vertically one behind the other.

Allah has mentioned in the Qur'an various categories of His servants, and has reserved for each a special kind of knowledge and cognition, For example:

a) Those who are freed (from sins) – they have been given knowledge of the attributes of their Lord:

Hallowed be Allah, from what they ascribe (***37:159***).

Except the servants of Allah, freed (**from sins**) (***37:160***).

They have also been given some other knowledge, which we shall describe, Allah willing, in some other place.

b) Those who are sure – they have the distinction. of being shown the kingdom of the heavens and the earth:

And thus, did We show Ibrahim the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and that he might be of those who are sure (***6:75***).

c) Those who turn to Him again and again – they have been favoured with minding:

…and none minds but he who turns (**to Him**) ***again and again*** (***40:13***).

d) The learned ones – they understand the parables of the Qur'an:

And these examples, We set them forth for the people, and none understand them but the

learned (***29:43***).

They are also the people of understanding who meditate on the Qur'an:

Do they not then reflect on the Qur'an? Nay, on the hearts there are locks (***47:24***).

Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy (***4:82***).

The three verses point to the same meaning – those who understand and meditate on the Qur'an, know the true meaning of the ambiguous verses returning them to the decisive ones.

e) The purified ones – they have the special distinction of the knowledge of the interpretation of the Book:

Most surely, it is an honoured Qur'an (***56:77***).

In a Book that is hidden (***56:78***).

None do touch it save the purified ones (***56:79***).

f) The friends of Allah – they are the people submerged in the love of Allah; they are inattentive to everything other than Allah; that is why they are afraid of nothing and grieve for nothing:

Now surely, the friends of Allah – they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve (***10:62***).

Likewise, there are those who are near to Allah, the chosen ones, the truthful ones, the good ones and the believers. Each of these groups has a special kind of knowledge and perception reserved to it; and we shall describe them under relevant verses.

Face to face with these, are the grades of evil and falsehood, every grade having a peculiar type of misinformation and ignorance. The people of those grades are called unbelievers, sinners, unjust and so on. They are inclined to misinterpret the signs of Allah, and not to grasp the spiritual realities and their knowledge. For the sake of brevity, the verses are not given here.

Tenth: The Qur'anic verses have the capacity to be applied wherever their meanings come true. A verse is not confined to the event or circumstances in which it was revealed. It covers all situations that are akin to the circumstances of its revelation. In this respect also they are like the proverbs that are not restricted to their original occasion but are applied to all similar situations. The principle is called the "flow of the Qur'an", of which a short description was written in the beginning of the first volume.

Traditions

It is written in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi: Abu 'Abdillah ('a) was asked about the decisive and the ambiguous verses. He said: "The decisive is that which is acted upon; and the ambiguous is that which is doubtful for the one who is ignorant of it."

The author says: There is a hint in the last sentence that the knowledge of the meaning of the ambiguous verse is possible to him who is not ignorant of it.

The same book quotes the same Imam as saying: "The Qur'an is decisive and ambiguous. As for the decisive, you believe in it, act upon it and submit to it; and as for the ambiguous, you believe in it but do not act upon it. And it is the word of Allah, Mighty and Great is He: then as for those in whose hearts there is perversity, they follow the part of it which is ambiguous, seeking to mislead, and seeking to give it (their own) interpretation, but none knows its interpretation except Allah; and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: 'We believe in it, it is all from our Lord.' And those who are firmly rooted in knowledge are the progeny of Muhammad (S)."

The author says: We shall discuss the last sentence later.

The same book quotes Mas'adah Ibn Sadaqah as saying: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah ('a) about the abrogating (verse), and the abrogated, and the decisive and ambiguous (ones). He said: 'The abrogating is the firm (verse) that is acted upon; and the abrogated is the one that was acted upon and then came the verse that abrogated it; and the ambiguous is the one that is doubtful to him who is ignorant of it.'"

In another tradition this reply is reported as follows: "The abrogating is the firm (verse); and the abrogated is the one that passed away; and the decisive is the one that is acted upon; and the ambiguous is the one whose one part resembles the other."

Imam al-Baqir ('a) said, *inter alia*, in a tradition: "So the abrogated (verses) are among the ambiguous ones."[5]

Imam Ar-Ridha'('a) said: "He who returned the ambiguous (part) of the Qur'an to its decisive (part), was guided to the straight path." Then he said: "Verily, there is ambiguous in our traditions, like the ambiguous of the Qur'an; therefore, return its ambiguous to its decisive, and do not follow its ambiguous, lest you go astray."[6]

The author says: All the above-mentioned traditions explain the term "ambiguous" in nearly the same way. All of them support our earlier statement that the verses' ambiguousness may be removed by explaining them in the light of the decisive verses. Also, it was explained why the abrogated verse was counted among the ambiguous: It is because it seems to promulgate a perpetual law and then comes the abrogating verse and shows that its "perpetuity" is cut short. The word of the Imam, that there was ambiguous in their traditions like the ambiguous of the Qur'an and decisive like the decisive of the

Qur'an, is supported by many other traditions of *Ahl Al-Bayt* ('a), that are nearly *al-mutawatir*. Reason also supports it.

Their traditions deal with the same subjects that are described in the Qur'an; and ambiguousness is the characteristic of those subjects inasmuch as they are clothed with the words; it is not a characteristic of the word, per se. In short, ambiguousness happens because the verses are like the parables of the sublime spiritual facts. And this factor is equally present in the traditions. Therefore, like the Qur'an, the traditions also are ambiguous and decisive. And it has been narrated that the Prophet said: "We, the group of the prophets, have been ordered to talk with the people according to the capacity of their understanding."

It is narrated in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from Ja'far Ibn Muhammad from his father (peace be on them both) that a man said to Amir al-Mu'minin ('a): "Will you describe to us our Lord, so that we may love and know Him more." Hearing it, he became angry and delivered a sermon, in which he said:

"You should stick, O servant of Allah: to what the Qur'an has shown you about His attributes, and the Apostle has guided you about His knowledge; and seek illumination from the light of his guidance, because it is a bounty and a wisdom that you have been given. Therefore, accept what you have been given and be of the grateful ones. And whatever task Satan imposes on you, which neither the Book has imposed upon you nor the traditions of the Apostle and the (truly) guiding Imams have ordered you (to know), then entrust its knowledge to Allah; and do not (try to) measure the greatness of Allah. And know, O servant of Allah! that those who are firmly rooted in knowledge are those whom Allah has kept above the need of crashing into the screens put before the unseen; so, they took it upon themselves to acknowledge all that they were unaware of its explanation, from the unseen that is screened off, and they said:

'We believe in it, it is all from our Lord.' (***3:7***)

And Allah has praised (them for) their acknowledging their inability to get that which their knowledge had not encompassed. And when they refrained from going into what Allah had not ordered them to search, Allah called this refraining as being firmly rooted in knowledge. Therefore, be content with this much, and do not measure the greatness of Allah with the measure of your understanding; otherwise, you would be of those who are doomed to perdition."

The author says: The sentence, "And know...that those who are firmly rooted in knowledge...", throws further light on the meaning of "and" in the word of Allah, "and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say...". This tradition shows that, according to the Imam, that "and" is not a conjunctive; it starts a new sentence, as we have explained in the Commentary. What this tradition, however, shows is that this verse does not prove that those who are firmly rooted in knowledge know the interpretation of the Qur'an; not that it proves that they do not know the said interpretation. It does not deny the existence of other proofs to show that they know this interpretation, as we have explained earlier; and some traditions

of the Imams of *Ahl Al-Bayt* also support it. The words, "are those whom Allah has kept above the need of...", are the predicate of the subject, "those who are firmly rooted..."

The sermon exhorts the enquirer to hold fast to the practice of those who are firmly rooted in knowledge; to confess his ignorance of what he does not know - in this way he would become one of them.

It means that, according to the Imam, those people are firmly rooted in knowledge who hold fast to what they know and do not cross the boundary to what they do not know. "The unseen that is hidden behind the screens" is the intended meaning of the ambiguous verse that is hidden from common minds. That is why the Imam mentioned soon after that they "acknowledge all that they were unaware of its explanation from the unseen..."; note that he did not say, "unaware of its interpretation...".

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "We are those who are firmly rooted in knowledge; and we know its interpretation."[7]

The author says: It may appear from this tradition that the Imam took the word "and", in the verse, "and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge", as a conjunctive and that, in addition to Allah, those also knew the Qur'anic interpretation who were firmly rooted in knowledge. But this apparent connotation is not in place, because of the explanation given earlier, and also because of the preceding tradition.

Also, it is possible that the Imam used the word "interpretation", as a synonymous for "exegesis"; such usage was common in the early centuries.

"... and we know its interpretation": A preceding tradition also had said: "And those who are firmly rooted in knowledge are the progeny of Muhammad". This statement is found in other traditions too. All this is a part of the flow of the Qur'an - applying the verses wherever they fit perfectly.

It is reported in *al-Kafi* from Hisham Ibn al-Hakam that he said: "Ab al-Hasan Musa Ibn Ja'far ('a) told me: '... O Hisham! Verily, Allah quoted a good people as saying: Our Lord! Make not our hearts to deviate after Thou hast guided us (aright); and grant us from Thee mercy; surely, Thou art the most liberal Giver. They were aware that the hearts could deviate and return to their blindness and perdition. Verily, he did not fear Allah who did not understand from Allah; and (as for him) who did not understand from Allah, his heart would not be resolute with a confirmed knowledge, which he could visualize and whose reality he could find in his heart. And only that one can be like this whose word confirms his deeds, and whose private (life) is in conformity with his manifest (one); because Allah (Honoured is His name!) did not prove (one's) esoteric (and) hidden wisdom except through its manifestation and declaration.'"

The author says: "Verily, he did not fear Allah who did not understand from Allah": It expresses the same idea as the words of Allah:

***Verily fear Allah only those of His servants who are possessed of knowledge* (*35:28*).**

The sentence, “and (as for him) who did not understand from Allah, his heart would not be resolute with a confirmed knowledge...”, is the best expression to explain the significance of being firmly rooted in knowledge. Unless a reality is thoroughly understood, the loopholes of doubts and confusion would not be closed, and the heart would remain perturbed and perplexed in believing it. But when the understanding is completed and the heart resolutely believes in it, it would not go against the dictates of that firm knowledge; and would not follow the temptations of desire. Then there would be no discrepancy between his secret and open lives; what would be in his heart: would manifest itself through his deeds; what he would say would conform with what he does.

The words, “and only that one can be like this whose word confirms...”, describe the characteristics of those who are firmly rooted in knowledge.

Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim and at-Tabarani have narrated from Anas, Abu Amamah, Wathilah Ibn Asqa’ and Abu ‘d-Darda’ that the Apostle of Allah (S) was asked about: those who are firmly rooted in knowledge. He said: “He whose oath is abode by, and his tongue is truthful, and his heart is steadfast, and whose stomach and genitals are chaste, then that is among those who are firmly rooted in knowledge.”8

The author says: This tradition may be explained in terms of the preceding one.

Imam al-Baqir (‘a) said: “Verily, those who are firmly rooted in knowledge are those in whose knowledge there is no discrepancy.”9

The author says: This explanation fits the verse perfectly. The verse shows that perversity and deviation of heart is opposite of firmly rooted knowledge. Therefore, there would be no deviation, confusion and discrepancy in the knowledge of those who are firmly rooted in knowledge.

Ibn Abi Shaybah, Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi, Ibn Jarir, at-Tabarani and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated from Umm Salamah: “Verily, the Apostle of Allah used to say very often in his invocations, ‘O Allah, O Turner of the hearts! Keep my heart firm on thy religion.’ I said: ‘O Apostle of Allah! and do the hearts turn?’ He said: ‘Yes. Allah has not created a single human being from the progeny of Adam but that his heart is between two of the fingers of Allah; then if He wills, He keeps it straight; and if He wills, He turns it away...’”10

The author says: This idea has been narrated through several chains from a number of companions, like Jabir, Nawwas Ibn Sam’an, ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Umar and Abu Hurayrah. The well-known are the words of the tradition of Nawwas: “The heart of the son of Adam is between two of the fingers of the Beneficent (Allah).” And the same words have been narrated, as I think, by ash-Sharif ar-Radi in his *al-Majazatu ‘n-nabawiyyah*.

It has been narrated from ‘Ali (‘a) that he was asked: “Is there with you anything of the revelation? (i.e., Do you receive any revelation from Allah?) He replied: “No, by Him Who split the grain and created the

soul! Except that Allah gives a servant understanding of His Book."

The author says: It is one of the most important traditions. The least that may be proved from it is that all that astonishing knowledge that spread from him and which even today stuns the minds, was all derived from the Qur'an.

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) narrated from his father through his forefathers (peace be on them all) that the Apostle of Allah (S) said: "O people! You are in an interim station, and you are riding on a journey, and the speed with which you are taken away is fast; and you have seen the night and the day and the sun and the moon (how) they wear out every new (thing), and bring near every distant (object), and bring out every promised (affair); therefore, prepare your outfit for the distant journey." The Imam said that at this point al-Miqdad Ibn al-Aswad stood up and asked: "And what is the interim station? O Apostle of Allah!"

He said: "The house of communication and cessation. Therefore, when mischiefs come to confuse you like the segments of a dark night, then hold fast to the Qur'an; as it is the intercessor whose intercession shall be granted; and a credible advocate; and whoever keeps it before him, it will lead him to the Garden; and whoever keeps it behind, it will drive him to the Fire; and it is the guide that guides to the best path; and it is a Book in which there is explanation, particularization and recapitulation; and it is a decisive (word), and not a joke; and there is for it a manifest (meaning) and an esoteric (one) ; thus its apparent (meaning) is firm, and its esoteric (one) is knowledge; its exterior is elegant and its interior deep; it has (many) boundaries, and its boundaries have (many) boundaries; its wonders shall not cease, and its (unexpected) marvels shall not be old. There are in it the lamps of guidance and the beacon of wisdom, and a guide to knowledge. for him who knows the attributes. Therefore, one should extend his sight; and should let his eyes reach the attribute; so that one who is in perdition may get deliverance, and one who is entangled may get free; because meditation is the life of the heart of the one who sees, as the one having a light (easily) walks in the darkness; therefore, you must seek good deliverance and (that) with little waiting."[11]

The author says: al-'Ayyashi has narrated it up to the words, "therefore, one should extend his sight".

It is narrated in *al-Kafi* and *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) that he said that the Apostle of Allah (S) said: "The Qur'an is a guide from wilderness, an eyesight for the blind, a pardon for the sinner, and a light against darkness; a brightness from the happenings, and safety from disaster, and guidance from going astray; a clarity in the chaos, and the means to reach (safely) from this world to the next; and there is in it the perfection of your religion; and no one deviated from the Qur'an except to the Fire."

The author says: There are countless such traditions narrated from the Prophet and the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* (peace be on them all).

It is narrated in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from al-Fudayl Ibn Yasar that he said: "I asked Abu Ja'far ('a) about this tradition: 'There is no verse in the Qur'an but it has an exterior and an interior, and there is no

word in it but it has a boundary, and every boundary has a watching place.' (I asked him) what was the meaning of exterior and interior. The Imam said: 'Its exterior is its revelation; and its interior is its interpretation; some of it has already passed (i.e. happened) and there is some of it that has not come about yet; it runs along as run the sun and the moon, when a thing of it comes (to its appointed place and time) it happens. Allah has said: and none knows its interpretation except Allah and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge; we know it.'"

The author says: "Some of it has already passed and there is some of it that has not come about yet": Apparently the pronoun "it" stands for the Qur'an – for its revelation and interpretation both. Therefore, the sentence "it runs along as run the sun and the moon", will apply to both the revelation and the interpretation. So far as the revelation (i.e., the revealed word) is concerned it is the same thing as applying the verse to all situations in which its import comes true; and which is termed as the flow of the Qur'an. For example, look at the verse:

***O you who believe! fear Allah and be with the true ones* (*9:119*).**

It was addressed, initially, to the believers who were present at the time of its revelation. Now it is applied to all the believers who came afterwards and will come up to the Day of Resurrection. It is the most obvious application that is practised not only by the Muslims but by all sensible persons in every language.

But there are some other ways of finer and still more finer applications. For example, when the verses of fighting are used to exhort, the believers to fight against their own selves, or when the verses condemning the hypocrites are applied to the sinful believers, it is a finer application.

When one proceeds further in one's spiritual journey then the above-mentioned verses of fighting and hypocrisy as well as the verses concerning the sinners are applied to those virtuous servants of Allah who for a fleeting moment turn towards unavoidable worldly affairs, thus disrupting their meditation, remembrance of, and presence before, Allah. Needless to say, that it is a much finer application than the previous ones.

And its finest application comes when those most perfect, most virtuous and most beloved servants of Allah apply those verses to themselves because they, in their love of Allah, think that they have failed in discharging their duty to Allah.

From the above discourse, it becomes clear that:

First: The Qur'an has connotations of varying degrees, that are applied to various groups according to their spiritual perfection. Those who have described the stages of faith in, and love of, Allah, have mentioned even more finer applications than those written above.

Second: "Exterior" and "interior" are relative attributes. Every exterior is interior when seen in relation to

a more exterior meaning; and every interior is exterior in comparison to a more interior one. The following tradition explicitly mentions this fact.

al-'Ayyashi has narrated, in his *at-Tafsir*, from Jabir that he said: "I asked Abu Ja'far ('a) the explanation of (a verse of) the Qur'an, and he explained it to me. Thereafter, I asked him (the same question) and he gave me a different reply. So I told him: 'May I be your ransom! You had given me, before this day, a different reply to this very question!' Thereupon he said: 'O Jabir! verily, the Qur'an has an interior, and for its interior there is an interior; and (it has) an exterior, and for its exterior there is an exterior. O Jabir! and there is nothing farther from the understanding of the men than the explanation of the Qur'an. Verily a verse, its first (part) is about (i.e., throws light on) one subject, and its middle is about another matter, and its end is about a third thing, and (still) it is a well-connected speech, (that) revolves in various ways.' "

The same book narrates a tradition from the same Imam in which he said: "If a verse is revealed about a people and those people die, that verse does not die. Otherwise, nothing would have survived of the Qur'an. But the Qur'an, its first is applied to its last, so long as the heavens and the earth will continue. And for every group there is a verse, which they recite, they are from it (i.e., it is applied to them) either from good or from evil."

Humran Ibn A'yan said: "I asked Abu Ja'far('a) about the exterior of the Qur'an and its interior; and he said: 'Its exterior are those people about whom the Qur'an was revealed; and its interior are those who do as those had done; that which was revealed about those flows about these (i.e., is applied to the followers also).'"[12]

It is narrated in the *Tafsir as-Safi* that 'Ali ('a) said: "There is no verse but it has four meanings: Manifest, and esoteric, and boundary and rising (or watching) place. So, the manifest is the recitation, and esoteric is the comprehension, and boundary is the commandments of lawful and unlawful, and rising (or watching) place is the Divine purpose, expected of the servant through this verse."

The author says: "Recitation" is counted as one of the meanings; it shows that this word refers to the apparent meaning of the verse. Then "comprehension", which is given as its opposite, would mean the inner (esoteric) meaning hidden behind the apparent one; "the commandments of lawful and unlawful" refers to that Qur'anic knowledge which one acquires in its first or intermediate stages; thus, it stands face to face with the "rising (or watching) place" which is the highest grade of the meaning. Probably, the boundary and the rising place are relative terms, as the manifest and the esoteric are - thus every higher grade may be called a rising place in comparison to a lower level.

"al-Matla'" (**اَلْمَطْلَعُ** = rising place, horizon) may also be read *al-muttala'* (**اَلْمُطَّلَعُ** = the watching place). As the Imam has said, it refers to that Divine purpose for which the verse was revealed and which the servant of Allah is expected to fulfil.

These four meanings have also been mentioned in a famous tradition of the Prophet which is as follows:

“Verily, the Qur’an has been revealed on seven letters: For every verse of it, there is an exterior and an interior, and for every boundary there is a rising place.”

In another version the last sentence is as follows: “and for each there is a boundary and a rising place”.

According to the first version (“for every boundary there is a rising place”), it means that for each exterior and interior – that is, the boundary – there is a rising place to which it ascends. This meaning is clear. And the second version (“for each there is a boundary and a rising place”) may also be interpreted in the same way: each exterior and interior has a boundary, that is, its own meaning, and each has a rising place to which it ascends – in other words, it would be referring to the “interpretation”. But this explanation is not in conformity with the tradition of ‘Ali (‘a) mentioned above (“There is no verse but it has four meanings...”).

In the light of the above given discourse, the four terms may be explained in the following way:

The exterior is the manifest meaning that is understood from the words of the verse.

The interior is the esoteric meaning which is hidden behind the manifest one. It may be one or more – one behind the other – nearer to the manifest one or distant, with or without any intermediate link.

The boundary is the meaning, whether the exterior or the interior.

The rising place is that meaning from which the boundary (as explained above) arises. In other words, it is the esoteric meaning that is immediately adjacent to the boundary.

There is a tradition, narrated through both the Shi’ah and the Sunni chains, from the Prophet that he said: “The Qur’an has been revealed on seven letters.”

The author says: Although there are some minor differences in the wordings of various versions of this tradition, it has been narrated by so many people as to make it nearly *al–mutawatir*; and the narrations are nearly similar in meaning, and have come both from the Shi’ahs and the Sunnis. There is a great controversy concerning the meaning of this tradition – some forty explanations have been given for it. But, in reality, there should not be any difficulty in understanding it, because its explanation is given in the traditions themselves; and that should be followed, instead of inventing new explanations.

Some of these traditions say: The Qur’an has come down on seven letters: order, restraint, exhortation, intimidation, argument, stories and parables.”

Another version counts them as follows: restraint, order, lawful, unlawful, decisive, ambiguous and parables.

‘Ali (‘a) is reported as saying: “Verily Allah revealed the Qur’an on seven categories, each of which is sufficient and satisfying; and they are: order, restraint, exhortation, intimidation, argument, parables and

stories."

Therefore, the seven letters must be explained as seven modes of address, seven kinds of expression. They are seven; yet they are one in their aim, because all invite to Allah, and call to His straight path.

It may be inferred from these traditions that all fundamental spiritual knowledge is confined within the parables; because other six categories cannot be applied to those realities, except by stretching the meanings of the words.

Traditions On Interpreting The Qur'an According To One's Opinion

The Prophet said: "Whoever interprets (i.e., explains) the Qur'an according to his opinion, should settle himself in his seat of Fire."[13]

The author says: This matter has been narrated by both the Sunnis and the Shi'ahs. And there are many other traditions of the same import, narrated from the Prophet and the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a).

It is narrated in *Munyat al-murid* that the Prophet said: "Whoever spoke about the Qur'an without knowledge, should settle himself in his seat of Fire."

The author says: Also, it has been narrated by Abu Dawud in his *as-Sunan*.

The Prophet said: "Whoever speaks about the Qur'an without knowledge, shall come on the Day of Resurrection reined with a rein of fire."[14]

The same book narrates that the Prophet said: "Whoever spoke about the Qur'an of his own opinion (even if) he was right, he committed wrong."

The author says: This tradition has also been narrated by Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi and an-Nasa'i.

The Prophet said: "What I am afraid of, most of all, concerning my ummah after me, is the man who will take the Qur'an putting it in wrong place (i.e., giving wrong interpretations)."[15]

Abu Basir said that Abu Abdillah ('a) said: "Whoever interprets the Qur'an according to his own opinion, if he gets to the right interpretation, he shall not be rewarded; and if he errs then he shall be farther away from the heaven.[16]

The same book quotes Ya'qub Ibn Yazid who narrated from Yasir that Imam Ar-Ridha'('a) said: "Opinion in the Book of Allah is infidelity."

The author says: This theme is found in other traditions written in *'Uyun al-akhbar, al-Khisal* and *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi among other books.

The words of the Prophet (S): "Whoever interprets (i.e., explains) the Qur'an according to his opinion": *ar-Ra'y* (اَلرَّأْيُ = opinion) means the belief reached at after diligent research. It is also used for the opinion based on desire and one's own inclination. The Prophet has used the phrase, "his opinion"; it shows that what is condemned is the interpretation of a verse independently without looking at other relevant verses. It does not forbid striving hard and doing one's utmost to understand the meaning of the Qur'an; nor does it say that one should confine oneself to what has been said in the traditions of the Prophet and *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) relating to the exegesis of the verses (as many traditionalists think). Otherwise, it would be diametrically opposed to the many verses which show that the Qur'an is plain Arabic and which exhort the people to meditate on it; also, it would be against many traditions that tell them to turn to the Qur'an and judge the traditions by it.

What the words, "according to his opinion", refer to is explaining the Qur'an according to one's personal views by being independent of other Qur'anic declarations. This happens when an exegete depends solely on the instruments of Arabic language and literature, which are used for understanding a human talk. When we hear a speech of a man, we at once look towards the rules of the language so that we may understand what the speaker means, and in this way, we decide its import; we use this method everywhere, even in legal matters like testimony and acknowledgement. We use this method because human speech is based on the rules of language and rhetoric.

But the Qur'an's diction is not based on this foundation, as we have explained earlier. The whole Qur'an is a speech whose sentences and verses are all related to one another; at the same time they are separate from each other; one part speaks with, and leads to the others, as Imam 'Ali ('a) has said: "Obviously, it is not enough to look at a single verse in the light of language and literature and decide what it means, unless one meditates on all the relevant verses and strives one's utmost to find out from all of them together what that particular verse means. The verse 4:82 points to this very fact, as we have explained in the topic of brevity:

Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy." (***4:82***)

Explaining the Qur'an according to one's opinion is, thus, prohibited. And this prohibition is directed to the way of exegesis, and not to the exegesis itself. In other words, the Prophet has forbidden the people to try to understand the Divine words by the same methods which are used to understand a human speech – it is irrelevant whether they succeed in comprehending its true meaning or not. That is why he (S) has said in another tradition: "Whoever spoke about the Qur'an of his own opinion, (even if) he was right, he committed wrong." This dictum clearly proves that the mistake lies in choosing the way; it does not matter whether that way takes one to the true destination or not. The same is the explanation of the words, narrated in the tradition of al-'Ayyashi: "if he gets to the right interpretation, he shall not be rewarded".

This view is supported also by the state of affairs in the days of the Prophet. The revelation of the Qur'an

was not yet completed; and what was revealed was not yet arranged; not all the Muslims had in their hands all the revealed verses – most of them had only a few chapters and verses with them. Had they been allowed to explain every piece or verse separately, without comparing that piece with other relevant verses, they would almost certainly have fallen into error.

It appears from the above discourse that what the exegete has been forbidden is to interpret a verse of the Qur'an independently, relying on his own knowledge and opinion, without reference to another authority. In other words, it is necessary, when one wants to explain a Qur'anic verse, to seek help from others by referring the matter to them. Who is that other authority? It could only be either other Qur'anic verses, or the traditions. The second alternative is out of question, because the Prophet has ordered the Muslims to refer the traditions to the Qur'an; it cannot be the other way round. The tradition's meanings and even their authenticity is tested by the Qur'an; how can tradition decide the meaning of the Qur'an? Thus, there remains only one valid and approved way of explaining the verses of the Qur'an, and that is with the help of other relevant verses.

This much is enough to show the irrelevance of numerous explanations written about the tradition of "interpretating the Qur'an by one's own opinion". The scholars have explained this tradition in not less than ten ways:

First: It means interpreting the Qur'an without expertise in those subjects which are essential for knowing its exegesis. And as-Suyuti has said in *al-Itqan* that they are fifteen in all: Language, syntax, conjugation, etymology, styles of literature, rhetoric, elocution, recitation of the Qur'an, roots of religion, fundamentals of jurisprudence, reasons and occasions of revelations (as well as the stories mentioned in the Qur'an), abrogating and abrogated verses, law of the *Shari'ah*, traditions that explain the general and unspecific verses, and the gifted knowledge. This last phrase refers to a tradition of the Prophet: "Whoever acts upon what he knows, Allah gives him knowledge of what he does not know."

Second: It refers to the attempts of finding the interpretations of the ambiguous verses, which no one knows except Allah.

Third: It is interpretation of the Qur'an to support a wrong belief or action. It happens when an exegete makes his own view or belief the foundation upon which he builds the exegesis of the Qur'an; he fits the verse on his own belief in any possible way – no matter how weak or far-fetched that might be.

Fourth: It is declaring, without any proof, that a certain explanation is the meaning really intended by Allah.

Fifth: It refers to explaining the Qur'an according to one's inclination and desire.

These five explanations of the said tradition have been narrated by Ibnu'n-Naqib, as as-Suyuti has quoted in *al-Itqan*. There are five other explanations which we enumerate here from other books:

Sixth: It is explaining the difficult passages of the Qur'an in a new way which was not narrated from the companions and their disciples – because such an interpretation would make the exegete liable to the displeasure of Allah.

Seventh: The tradition is about explaining the Qur'an in a certain way, while the speaker knows that it is not the true explanation.

These last two have been mentioned by Ibn al–Anbari.

Eighth: The tradition forbids talking about the Qur'an without knowledge and without making sure – it does not matter whether the speaker knows or not that another explanation is true.

Ninth: It forbids reliance on the apparent meaning of the Qur'an. It is the explanation of those who think that the apparent meaning of the Qur'an is not a valid authority; to understand a verse, one must look to a clear tradition narrated from a sinless authority (i.e., the Prophet, his daughter and the twelve Imams, peace be on them all). But in fact, it shall not be an exegesis of the Qur'an; rather it shall be following the tradition. Anyhow, according to this group, exegesis of the Qur'an depends on the explanation of a sinless authority.

Tenth: There were some people who believed that the Qur'an had valid apparent meanings but said that common people could not understand it. According to this view also, relying on the apparent meaning of the Qur'an was forbidden by this tradition. One must look for clear traditions of the sinless authorities to interpret the Qur'an.

These are ten explanations of the said tradition – although some may in effect be identical to some others. In any case, none of these is supported by any proof. Moreover, some are obviously wrong, or their inaccuracy may be understood from what we have earlier said about this tradition. There is no need to point it out again.

There are many verses that support the traditions mentioned earlier:

Do they not meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy (***4:82***).

Those who made the Qur'an into shreds (***15:91***).

Surely, they who distort Our signs are not hidden from Us. What! is he then who is cast into the fire better or he who comes safe on the Day of Resurrection? Do what you like, surely, He sees what you do (***41:40***).

…(***there are those who***) ***alter words from their places…*** (***4:46***).

And pursue not that of which you have not the knowledge (***17:36***).

Such verses in conjunction with the above-mentioned traditions make it clear that the prohibition contained in those traditions is about the method used for the exegesis; they show that when explaining the Divine Speech, one should not adopt the same means that are used for explaining human talks.

What is the difference between Divine and human speeches? It is not in the use of words, the construction of sentences or the style of elocution. The Qur'an is in plain Arabic, and all norms of eloquence have been mentioned in it. Allah Himself has said:

And We did not send any apostle but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them clearly (***14:4***).

…and this is clear Arabic language (***16:103***).

Surely, We have made it an Arabic Qur'an so that you may understand (***43:3***).

The difference between the two is about the meaning and its application. This statement needs some elaboration:

We are at home in this material word and surrounded with its natural phenomena. As a result, when we hear a word our mind, first of all, looks at its physical connotation and application. When a fellow human being describes a thing or affair, we apply his words to what we are accustomed to in this world; because we know that the speaker too is governed by the same forces as we are, and his comprehension and cognition is not different from ours. In this way the application of a word affects its meaning – it may particularize a general meaning or vice versa; the circumstances may manipulate a word's connotation in a lot of ways. It is what we call rational context, in contrast to the textual evidence.

For example, if we hear a powerful and wealthy man saying, "There is not a thing but with us are the treasures of it", first we shall look at the literal meaning of this sentence, then will come the stage of its application. At this stage, we shall say that he has many strong and well-protected buildings which have got a lot of containers of various types to store his treasures, that consist of a large quantity of gold, silver, currency notes, bonds, jewels, various commodities, ornamental items, arms and ammunitions etc. We get this picture in our mind because this is what we call treasure and that is how it is kept safe and secure. But we will never imagine that he has in his treasury the earth and the heavens, the continents and the oceans, the sun and the moon, the animals and the human beings.

These too are "things", but they are not possessed, gathered and put in a treasury. Because of this rational context we do restrict the generality of the word "thing" and apply it to a few selected items only; and in those items too only a small amount is presumed to be kept in his treasury. We know that a lot of things are not treasured, and what is treasured, only a small amount comes into possession of one man, and that small quantity is preserved in strong, impregnable buildings to protect it from theft and other damages. And this knowledge of ours has restricted the general meaning of the words, "thing" and "treasures".

But now we hear Allah revealing to His Apostle (S):

And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it (***15:21***).

If our mind is not developed, and is still on the lowest rung of comprehension, we shall interpret this verse in exactly the same manner. Of course, we shall not have any proof to say that the verse has been used in the same sense; yet we shall rush to that explanation, because our mind is accustomed to it. This is, then, explaining the Qur'an according to our own opinion without knowledge.

Now let us say that our understanding is a bit more developed, and we know that Allah does not gather things to put them in a treasury. We think over this verse and read the next sentence: and We do not send it down but in a known measure; and then we compare it with another verse:

…and (***in***) ***what Allah sends down sustenance from the cloud, then gives life thereby to the earth after its death…there are signs for a people who understand*** (***45:5***).

We shall at once say that the word "thing", in the verse under discussion, refers to the sustenance like bread and water; and that "sending it down", in the next sentence, refers to the coming down of rain. We shall give it this interpretation because we do not know of anything, except the rain, that comes down from heavens; therefore, we shall say that accumulation of everything near Allah and then its coming down in measured quantity refers to the accumulation of rain and its coming down to the earth to produce food grains. This too shall be interpreting the Qur'an according to one's own opinion "without knowledge". What is our argument? It is that we do not know of anything, except the rain, that descends from the heaven. But "not knowing" that a certain thing exists is quite different from "knowing" that it does not exist.

If our knowledge is more advanced and our mind more developed, we shall try not to say anything concerning the Qur'an without knowledge. We shall say that the words of the verse are general; they should not be restricted in any way. "Thing" includes everything, and the word, "treasures", covers every single item of everything. We shall arrive at the conclusion that the sentence describes the affairs of the creation and the creatures. Then will come the puzzling sentence,

and We do not send it down but in a known measure. (***15:21***)

Doubtlessly, human beings, animals and vegetables do not come down from the heavens; they grow from, and are born on, the earth. Faced with this difficulty, we shall say that the first sentence,

And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, (***15:21***)

Is a metaphorical way of saying that everything in its existence is subservient to the will of Allah; that the Divine will is like a treasure that holds every creature, and only as much issues forth from it as is willed by Allah. But this interpretation also, like the previous two, is based on "not knowing". We "do not know" that the things descend (in the meaning known to us) from Allah, and, therefore, we explain away the

sentence in an allegorical way.

If you look at the Divine names, attributes and actions as described in the Qur'an, or at the Qur'anic declarations about the angels, the Divine Books, the apostles and the Day of Resurrection and its details, or at the laws of the *Shari'ah* and their significance as given in the Qur'an, and then ponder on the way people want to interpret them in the light of rational context, you will see that all such exercises are but interpretations according to one's own liking without knowledge; that they should better be called misinterpretations.

We have shown under the fifth heading in the discourse of the decisive and the ambiguous verses that the Qur'anic expressions *vis-a-vis* the Divine realities are like a proverb in relation to its significance; and those realities have been explained in various expressions and diverse wordings, so that all taken together may lead the hearers to their real significance. That is why the verses are said to be witnesses of each other; and that is how they explain one another. Otherwise, the Divine realities could never be correctly explained; and people would have fallen in the pitfall of interpreting the Qur'an without knowledge.

The above discourse shows that interpreting the Qur'an according to one's own opinion is always accompanied by speaking about it without knowledge. The tradition of the Prophet points to this fact: Whoever spoke about the Qur'an without knowledge should settle himself in his seat of Fire.

It is such interpretations that make it look as though the verses of the Qur'an were contradictory to one another. Interpreting the verses by one's own opinion, without true knowledge, disturbs the semantic flow of the Qur'an. Thus, the verses are misinterpreted, the words shifted from their right places and used in wrong contexts. Then it becomes necessary for these exegetes to explain some or most of the verses in a way that is against their apparent meanings; Divine words and sentences are given such meanings which the linguists had never heard of. Thus, we find a group explaining away the verses of free will and choice, and their opponents misinterpreting the verses of Divine decree and measure. Most of the Muslim sects are guilty of this type of misinterpretation, especially in those verses whose apparent meanings go against their beliefs. They seek refuge in clothing such verses with meanings of their own choice, and their so-called arguments boil down to this sentence: The apparent meaning of this verse is against what has already been established by rational proofs; therefore, it must be given a new meaning, against the apparent one.

This practice creates confusion; the logical sequence of the verses is disrupted; their semantic flow is disturbed and they seem to contradict each other. Thus, both lose their validity.

It is known that there is no discrepancy in the Qur'an. If a certain explanation shows that two verses are contradictory to each other, the only defect would be in that explanation.

This has been termed, in many traditions, as hitting one part of the Qur'an with the other. See for example the following traditions:

It is narrated in *al-Kafi* and *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from Imam as-Sadiq from his father (peace be on them both) that he said: "A man does not hit a part of the Qur'an with the other (part) but that he becomes an infidel."

Ma'ani al-akhbar, *al-Mahasin* (through their chains) and *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi: Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "A man does not hit a part of the Qur'an with the other (part) but that he becomes an infidel."

as-Saduq says that he asked Ibn al-Walid what this tradition meant. He replied: "It is replying to a man concerning the exegesis of one verse, with the exegesis of another one."

The author says: This reply of Ibn al-Walid is somewhat vague. If by this expression he means the above-mentioned mix up - as the polemicists, argue by offering one verse "against" another, adhering to the one and explaining away the other - then he is correct. But if he wants to disallow explaining one verse with the help of the other and bringing the one as evidence for the other, then it is wrong, as may be seen from the following two traditions too:

It is narrated in *at-Tafsir* of al-Nu'mani, through his chains to Isma'il Ibn Jabir that he said: "I heard Abu 'Abdillah Ja'far Ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq (peace be upon them both) saying: 'Verily, Allah - Benevolent and High is He - sent Muhammad and ended with him (the chain of) the prophets thus there is no prophet after him; and He sent down to him a Book, and ended with it (the chain of) the Books; thus there is no (Divine) book after it. He allowed in it the lawful (things) and prohibited in it the unlawful; so its lawful is lawful up to the Day of Resurrection, and its unlawful is unlawful up to the Day of Resurrection; there is in it your *Shari'ah*, and the information of the people (who passed away) before you and (who are to come) after you; and the Prophet (may Allah have mercy on him and his progeny!) appointed it as a standard (that will remain) for ever in his successors. But the people left them (those successors) although they were the witnesses over the people of all times; and they (i.e., the people) deviated from them, then they killed them, and followed others and gave those others their unalloyed obedience. (This continued) till they extended their enmity to him who showed his love of those invested with authority (from Allah) and who sought their knowledge. Allah has said:

...and (they) have forgotten a part of what they were admonished with, and you will not cease to be informed of deceit from among them (5:14).

And it is because they hit a part of the Qur'an with the other; and they argued with the abrogated (verse) thinking that it was the abrogating one, and debated with the help of the ambiguous thinking that it was the decisive; and offered a particularized verse for their argument assuming that it was a general one; and stuck at the beginning of a verse leaving aside the reason of its interpretation; and they did not see what was the beginning of the speech and what was its end; and they did not know its arrival or its departure, because they did not take it from its people; thus, they went astray and misled others.

" 'And know, may Allah have mercy on you! that he who does not distinguish in the Book of Allah the abrogating verse from the abrogated one, and a specific from a general one, and a decisive from an

ambiguous; and does not differentiate between a permission and an obligation, and does not recognize a verse of Meccan period from a Medinite one, and does not know the reasons of revelation; and does not understand the difficult words of the Qur'an (whether simple or compound); and does not comprehend (what has been hidden in it of) the knowledge of (Divine) decree and measure; and is ignorant of advancing and delaying (in its verses); and does not distinguish the clear from the deep, nor the manifest from the esoteric, nor the beginning from the termination; and is unaware of the question and the answer, the disjoining and the joining, and the exceptions and the all-inclusive, and is ignorant of an adjective of a preceding (noun) that explains the subsequent one; and is unaware of the emphasized subject and the detailed one, the obligatory laws and the permissions, the places of the duties and rules, and the meaning of its lawful and unlawful (in which the unbelievers have perished); and does not know the joined words, and the words that are related to those coming before them, or after them - then such a man does not know the Qur'an; nor is he among the people of the Qur'an; And if someone claims knowledge of these variations, without a proof, then he is a liar, a doubting (person), and a fabricator of lies against Allah and His Apostle, and his resting place is the hell, and what an evil destination it is!'"

It is written in *Nahj al-Balaghah* and *al-Ihtijaj* that Imam 'Ali ('a) said in a sermon: "When a legal problem is put before one of them, he passes judgment on it according to his opinion. Then exactly the same problem comes before another of them and he gives an opposite verdict. Then these judges bring this matter to their leader who had appointed them and he confirms all their (contradictory) verdicts, although their Allah is one and their Prophet is one and their Book is one. Is it because Allah had ordered them to differ and they obeyed Him? Or He had prohibited them from it but they disobeyed Him? Or is it that Allah had sent an incomplete religion and sought their help to complete it? Or, they are His partners, so that it is their right to say and it is His duty to agree? Or is it that Allah sent a complete religion, but the Prophet (S) fell short of conveying it and handing it over (to the *ummah*)? And Allah, the Glorified, says:

***We have not neglected anything in the Book* (*6:38*).**

And that in it is the clarification of everything; and He has said that one part of the Book confirms the other and that there is no discrepancy in it:

***And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy* (*4:82*).**

And verily, the exterior of the Qur'an is elegant and its esoteric (meaning) is deep. Its wonders cannot be enumerated, and its marvels will not cease; and the darknesses cannot be removed except by it."

The author says: This narration clearly shows that every religious opinion and view must be based on the Qur'an. The sentence, "in it is the clarification of everything", paraphrases a Qur'anic verse:

***...and We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything* (*16:89*).**

Ibn Sa'd, Ibnu 'd-Durays (in his *al-Fada'il*) and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated from 'Amr Ibn Shu'ayb

from his father from his grandfather: "The Apostle of Allah (S) appeared before a group who were bandying arguments about the Qur'an, and he was very angry and said: 'This is how the nations before you went astray – they disputed with their prophets and hit one part of the book with the other.' Then he said: 'And verily the Qur'an has not been revealed so that its parts would contradict each other; rather, it has been revealed so that its part would confirm each other. Therefore, follow what you know (of it) and believe in what is ambiguous to you (from it)'".[17]

Ahmad has narrated in another way from 'Amr Ibn Shu'ayb from his father from his grandfather that the Messenger of Allah (S) heard some people disputing with one another. So, he said: "That is how those who were before you had perished; they hit one part of the Book of Allah over the other. And the Book of Allah has been revealed (and) its one part confirms the other; therefore, do not (try to) refute its one part with the other part. What you know of it, you should believe in it, and what you do not know of it, you should leave it to him who knows it."[18]

The author says: As you see, these traditions count "hitting one part of the Qur'an with the other" as opposite to "confirming some of its parts with the others". In other words, this "hitting" refers to confusing the meanings of the verses, disturbing their aims and objects, mistaking, for example, the decisive verses for the ambiguous ones and vice versa. It means that speaking in the Qur'an according to one's own opinion, and explaining the verses without knowledge (described in earlier quoted traditions) and hitting some parts of the Qur'an with the others (mentioned in the above traditions) refer to one and the same thing, that is, explaining the Qur'an with the help of other than the Qur'an.

Question: No doubt, the Qur'an was revealed so, that the people may comprehend and understand it. See, for example, these two verses:

Surely, We have revealed to you the Book with the truth for the sake of men… (***39:41***).

This is a clear statement for men (***3:138***).

Also, there is no doubt that it was the Prophet who had the authority to explain it. As Allah says:

…and We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them… (***16:44***).

And surely, he explained it to his companions, who transmitted it to their disciples. What has come to us from the companions and their disciples is doubtlessly the explanation given by the Prophet, and we cannot disregard it, as the Qur'an tells us to follow what is given to us by the Prophet. As for those explanations which the companions gave us without ascribing them to the Prophet, it is true that they cannot have the same authority as the Prophet's declarations; yet we feel more at ease with them (instead of looking for them on our own). Why? Because either they had heard it from the Prophet, or they were led to it by their expertise in religion – the expertise they had acquired from the Prophet's instruction and exposition. The same applies to their disciples and the disciples' disciples. Surely, the

meaning of the Qur'an could not be hidden from them – they had deep rooted knowledge of Arabic language; they were keen on learning the Qur'anic interpretation from the Prophet himself; and they strived their utmost to acquire the knowledge of religion. All this may be seen in biographical details of the early scholars of religion.

Looking at the above-mentioned details, we come to the conclusion that deviating from their method and tradition, going out of their company or explaining any verse in a way that is not found in their opinions and sayings, is an innovation; and that one must remain silent where they have not given any opinion.

What the companions and their direct and indirect disciples have said is enough for the purpose of understanding the Qur'an. There are thousands of traditions on exegesis, and as-Suyuti has counted some seventeen thousand traditions on this subject, narrated from the Prophet and his companions and their disciples.

Reply: Its reply may be inferred from what we have written earlier. There are numerous verses which invite the public in general, the believers as well as the unbelievers, those who were present at the time of revelation as well as those who came later or shall come in future, to understand the Qur'an and meditate and ponder on it. For example, see the verse which has been quoted repeatedly:

Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy (***4:82***).

It clearly shows that the Qur'anic knowledge may be acquired through meditation and contemplation; and that by this process the apparent discrepancy between the verses disappears completely. Remember that this verse puts a challenge to unbelievers that they would not find any discrepancy in the Qur'an if they pondered on it. And in this context, they could not be advised to go to the companions and their disciples if they wanted to understand its meaning; nay, even the advice to refer to the Prophet would have been irrelevant: If the Prophet's explanation were in conformity with the apparent meaning of the verse, then people would understand that meaning from the verse itself on meditation and contemplation – and there would be no need to refer to the Prophet. And if his explanation were against the apparent meaning of the Qur'an – a meaning that an average man would not understand from the words – then the challenge would be futile and the argument of the verse 4:82 would not stand.

Of course, so far as the details of various Qur'anic laws are concerned, they cannot be known without the Prophet's explanation, as the Qur'an itself says:

…and whatever the Apostle gives you, take it, and from whatever he forbids you, keep back… (***59:7***).

Also, the details of the Qur'anic stories and of the Day of Judgment depend on his exposition.

It shows that the Prophet's responsibility, in this respect, was of teaching only. A teacher guides and

helps his student in understanding what would be difficult to comprehend without his help. The teaching brings the meaning nearer to the mind; it does not create a meaning. The teacher arranges the subject matter to make it easier to comprehend, so that the student is not obliged to waste his time and energy in self–education – a proposition that carries with it a risk of wrong deductions. This aspect of the Prophet's responsibilities is mentioned in many verses. For example:

…and We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them, and that haply they may reflect (***16:44***).

…. And teaches them the Book and the Wisdom… (***62:2***).

The Prophet, therefore, teaches the people what the Qur'an itself says and the Divine Speech itself shows, and which the people themselves may understand even if it requires some meditation. It is not the Prophet's function to bestow on the verses such meanings as cannot be normally understood from those words. Such an explanation would not conform with the following Qur'anic declarations:

A Book of which the verses are made plain, an Arabic Qur'an for a people who know (***41:3***).

… and this is clear Arabic language (***16:103***).

Then there are the traditions of the Prophet exhorting the Muslims to hold fast to the Qur'an and to verify with its help the traditions attributed to him. It necessarily follows that all what the Prophet has said may be known from the Qur'an. Otherwise, he could not tell us to check with it all the sayings attributed to him.

Now, if we say that understanding of the Qur'an depends on the Prophet's explanation, it would be a vicious circle. The Qur'an would be understood only if explained by the traditions, but the authenticity of the tradition could be established only if one understands the Qur'an.

Now we come to the traditions narrated from the companions. First, we are faced with the problems concerning the chains of the narrators, because not all of them are free from one or the other defect. Second, the companions have differed a great deal with one another in their expositions of the Qur'an. Third, in many cases, divergent views have been ascribed to a single companion, as anyone may find out by looking in the books of traditions and exegesis. What is one supposed to do when faced with such discrepancies? We are told by these people that we should choose one of those diverse opinions and stick to it; that we should not destroy the "composite unanimity" of the companions, nor should we go outside their circle. But the trouble is that the companions themselves were not averse to differ from each other; then why should we not differ from them? They themselves never claimed that their opinions were vested with an authority which others were duty bound to accept; nor did they ever say that, although they differed from one another, others should not differ from them.

If we were stuck up with the Qur'anic exegesis narrated from the companions and their disciples, the

forward march of knowledge would be arrested and academic research negated. Look at the explanations transmitted to us from the early scholars, and study the books of exegesis written in early centuries. You will find that they contain only simple word meanings, and are devoid of deep thoughts and fine ideas. If we stop at those explanations, where we can find the vast and deep knowledge mentioned in the verse:

…and We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything… (***16:89***).

Then it is said that it is unthinkable that the companions did not know the meaning of the Qur'an, in spite of their keen interest in religious knowledge and their understanding and serious efforts in this way. But the very discrepancy in their various explanations belies this argument. Discrepancy and difference could not occur unless the truth was hidden from their eyes, and unless they were confused.

The truth is that the highway to the understanding of the Qur'an is wide open; and the Divine Speech itself leads one to its own understanding; it does not depend, for this purpose, on any other guide. It is a Book introduced by Allah as the guidance, the light and the clear explanation of everything. It cannot be said to need another guide, to seek illumination from another light or to depend on an outside factor for its own explanation.

Question: The correct traditions say that the Prophet said in his last sermon: "Certainly I am leaving among you two weighty things: The bigger one and the smaller one. As for the bigger one, it is the Book of Allah; and as for the smaller one, it is my progeny, the people of my house. Therefore, keep me in mind about these two things; because you shall never go astray so long as you hold fast to them." This tradition has been narrated by both sects from a great many companions of the Apostle of Allah (S); it has come to us through so many chains that one can entertain no doubt about its authenticity. The traditionalists have counted that it has been narrated by thirty-five companions. Some narrations contain the sentence: "They shall not separate from one another till they come to me on the reservoir (i.e., *Kawthar*)." This tradition proves that the words of *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) on the Qur'an are a binding authority and that one must adhere to what has come down to us from them concerning the exegesis. Otherwise, one would be guilty of separating the Qur'an from the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a).

Reply: What was said earlier regarding the explanation of the Prophet applies here too. The tradition quoted in the question is not intended to negate the authority of the apparent meaning of the Qur'an, nor does it say that the exegesis given by the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) is the only authoritative explanation. The Prophet has used the words, "they shall not separate from one another". It means that authority belongs to the Qur'an and the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) together; the Qur'an explains its meaning and makes manifest the Divine realities, and the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) guide to the true path and direct the people to the Qur'anic aims and goals.

Moreover, like the Prophet, the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) too have directed the Muslims to hold fast to the Qur'an, to meditate on it and to verify from it the traditions attributed to them.

Furthermore, a considerable number of the exegetical traditions of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) themselves have used the method of explaining a verse with the help of the other. This method can be meaningful only if the Qur'anic verses may be understandable to an average man - provided the correct direction is followed.

Apart from these rational arguments, some traditions of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) explicitly mention this fact. al-Barqi has narrated through his chains from Abu Labid that Abu Ja'far ('a) said in a tradition: "Whoever thought that the Book of Allah was vague, fell in perdition and destroyed others." Another tradition has been narrated in the same book as well as in *al-Ihtijaj* that Abu Ja'far ('a) said: "When I narrate to you anything, you should ask me where it was in the Book of Allah..."

The above discourse makes it clear that there is no conflict between those traditions which say that the Qur'anic knowledge is not unintelligible and that it may be understood with the help of the Qur'anic verses themselves, and those which are apparently against it. For example, it is narrated in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from Jabir that he said: "Abu 'Abdillah ('a) said: 'Verily, the Qur'an has an interior, and for its interior there is an exterior.' Then he said: 'O Jabir! and there is nothing farther from the understanding of the men than it (i.e., the Qur'an). Verily, a verse, its first (part) is revealed about one subject and its middle (part) about another thing, and its end about something else; and yet it is a well-connected speech, (that) revolves in various ways.'" This theme has been given in various other traditions. In some of them, the sentence, "and there is nothing farther from the understanding of the men...", has been ascribed to the Prophet. Also, 'Ali ('a) is reported as saying: "Verily, the Qur'an may be explained in many ways; it has many faces..."

It is clear that what has been allowed, nay, encouraged, is explaining it through its own path, and what has been forbidden is explaining it through another path. The prescribed way is exegesis of the Qur'an with the help of the Qur'an itself, explaining a verse with another verse. A man can do so only when he is well-versed in the traditions of the Prophet and his *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a); it gives him correct perspective and creates in him a discriminating taste. It is after acquiring this taste that one may explain the Qur'an with confidence. And Allah is the best Guide.

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1. Volume 4 of the English translation, p.320.

2. The Verses are the following:

And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve (any) but Him, and goodness to your parents. If either or both of them reach old age with you, say not to them (so much as) "Ugh" nor chide them, and speak to them a generous word (17:23).

And make yourself submissively gentle to them with compassion, and say: O my Lord! have compassion on them, as they brought me up (when I was) little (17:24).

Your Lord knows best what is in your minds; if you are good, then He is surely, Forgiving to those who turn (to Him) frequently (17:25).

3. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

4. al-Marfu': is a tradition in which a narrator mentions the name/s of person/s from whom he narrates, but a later narrator

omits his/their name/s. (tr.).

5. al-Kafi.
6. ‘Uyun al-akhbar.
7. al-Kafi.
8. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
9. al-Kafi.
10. ad-Durr al-Manthur .
11. al-Kafi.
12. Ma’ani al-akhbar.
13. as-Safi.
14. Munyat al-murid.
15. al-Munyat al-murid.
16. at-Tafsir, al-‘Ayyashi.
17. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
18. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah ‘Aal-‘Imran: Verses 10 - 18

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ وَقُودُ النَّارِ

(**As for**) ***those who disbelieve, surely, neither their wealth nor their children shall avail them in the least against Allah, and those it is who are the fuel of the fire*** (***3:10***).

كَدَأْبِ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

Like the wont of the people of Pharaoh and those before them; they rejected Our signs, so Allah caught them for their sins; and Allah is severe in requiting (**evil**) (***3:11***).

قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَتُغْلَبُونَ وَتُحْشَرُونَ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ

Say to those who disbelieve: “You shall be vanquished, and gathered to hell; and wretched is (**it as**) ***the resting place”*** (***3:12***).

قَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فِي فِئَتَيْنِ الْتَقَتَا فِئَةٌ تُقَاتِلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَأُخْرَىٰ كَافِرَةٌ يَرَوْنَهُمْ مِثْلَيْهِمْ رَأْيَ الْعَيْنِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤَيِّدُ بِنَصْرِهِ مَنْ

يَشَاءُ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ

Indeed, there was a sign in the two hosts **(which)** ***met together in encounter; one party fighting in the way of Allah and the other unbelieving; they saw them twice their number with the sight of the eye; and Allah aids with His aid whom He pleases; most surely, there is a lesson in this for those who have sight*** **(*3:13*).**

زُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ذَٰلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَآبِ

It has been made to seem fair to men, the love of desires of women and sons and hoarded treasures of gold and silver and well-bred horses and cattle and tilth; this is the provision of the life of this world; and Allah is He with Whom is the best destination **(*3:14*).**

قُلْ أَؤُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْ ذَٰلِكُمْ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَأَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ

Say: "Shall I tell you of what is better than these?" For those who guard **(against evil)** ***are gardens with their Lord, beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them, and pure mates and Allah's pleasure; and Allah sees the servants*** **(*3:15*).**

الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

Those who say: "Our Lord! surely, we believe, therefore forgive us our sins and save us from the chastisement of the fire" **(*3:16*).**

الصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْمُنْفِقِينَ وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ بِالْأَسْحَارِ

The patient, and the truthful, and the devout **(ones)** ***and those who spend*** **(benevolently)** ***and those who ask for forgiveness before dawn*** **(*3:17*).**

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

Allah bears witness that there is no god but He, and **(so do)** ***the angels and those possessed of knowledge, maintaining*** **(His creation)** ***with justice; there is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise*** **(*3:18*).**

General Comment

It was described earlier that when this chapter was revealed, the Muslims were hard-pressed by internal sabotage and external hostilities. There were inside Medina the hypocrites and their informants, who listened to, and spread the evil whisperings of, the enemies of Islam to upset the Muslims' programmes and make their efforts ineffective. And almost the whole Arabia and the two most powerful neighbouring empires were bent upon their annihilation. The polytheists, the Jews and the Christians, all were united in their determination to kill Islam in its infancy with all possible means - by words or by swords. This chapter was revealed to exhort the Muslims to remain united, firm and patient. These qualities would keep their society healthy, eradicate the internal troubles and confound the external enemies.

The preceding verses had mentioned the hypocrites' perversity, and exhorted the Muslims to faithfully follow what they had learned of the realities of religion, and to surrender themselves to, and believe in, what they do not understand of the Qur'an. The verses warned the Muslims not to follow the ambiguous parts of the Qur'an, seeking to give them their own interpretation; otherwise, their well-balanced religion would be distorted and they themselves would fall into perdition. In this way, they would be deprived of their felicity; their religious guidance would give way to misguidance, and their unity would turn into disunity.

Now, these verses turn to the unbelievers and polytheists. These infidels will soon be vanquished; they cannot defeat the purpose of the Almighty Allah, nor can they triumph in their rebellion. What has misled them into straying is their entanglement with inordinate pleasures of this world. They think that their riches and their children can make them independent of Allah; but they are mistaken in their thinking; because Allah is predominant in His affairs. If wealth and man-power could make anyone independent of Allah, they would have saved the people of Pharaoh and other unjust nations in the past, who had acquired much more power and strength. But Allah caught them for their sins and they could do nothing. Likewise, these enemies of Divine religion would soon be vanquished. Therefore, the Muslims should remain on guard; they should not fall victim of these desires and pleasures. If they followed this guidance, they would get felicity in this world and eternal reward in the next - and, of course, the pleasure of their Lord is the greatest reward.

In short, these verses are mainly concerned with the affairs of the unbelievers. (With verses coming after these begin the comment on the People of the Book).

Commentary

Verse 10

Qur'an: (As for) ***those who disbelieve, surely, neither their wealth nor their children shall avail them in the least against Allah*** **(*3: 10*).**

That is, their wealth and children shall not make them independent of Allah.

Man's first instinctive awareness is of his dependence on others. This instinct guides him to his Maker and Sustainer. Looking at intermediate causes he, first of all, realizes that for the development and perfection of his body, he depends on food and children. Then his attention is drawn to other animal perfections like fancy attire, comfortable abode, attractive spouse and things like that. At this stage, the desire of food changes into that of wealth and property, because he thinks that wealth is the panacea of all difficulties of life. Now he believes that the felicity of his life comes from wealth and children; in other words, wealth replaces food. At this stage his short-sightedness prevents him from seeing beyond these intermediate causes; he thinks that they are independent causes and forgets his Lord. His heart becomes inseparably attached to wealth and children; and this ignorance leads him to perdition. He fails to see the signs of his Lord and disbelieves in them. He does not realize that his lord is Allah besides Whom there is no god, the Ever-living, the Self subsisting; nothing can ever be independent of Him; nothing can ever avail against Him.

The above explanation also makes it clear why the verse has given precedence to wealth over children - man's dependence on wealth (or food, a kind of wealth) precedes his dependence on children - although at times his love for children overpowers his lust for wealth.

The verse seems to have abridged a long sentence. Its full import is as follows: Those who disbelieve have rejected Our signs and they think that their wealth and their children will avail them against Allah; but they are mistaken, because nothing can ever avail anyone against Allah.

Qur'an: ***and those it is who are the fuel of the fire*** **(*3:10*).**

"al-Waqud" (**اَلْوَقُوْدُ**) is fuel; that which feeds a fire and enflames it. The verse runs on the line of the following two:

...then be on guard against the fire of which men and stones are the fuel... **(*2:24*).**

Surely, you and what you worship besides Allah are the firewood of hell... **(*21:98*).**

This subject has been explained to some extent in the Chapter of the Cow (2).

This sentence has many devices that are used for restriction: It is an *al-jumlat al-ismiyyah* (**اَلْجُمْلَةُ الْاِسْمِيَّةُ =** nominal sentence; a sentence that begins with noun or pronoun) ; it begins with a demonstrative pronoun and uses a pronoun that points to a distant object; has inserted a second disjunctive personal pronoun between the subject and the predicate; and has added the words "of fire" after the word, "fuel" - all these things clearly show that only the unbelievers are the fuel of the fire; they are the basic source of the chastisement; they are the fuel that keeps the hell burning; others will burn in the flames that will be fuelled with the unbelievers: The following verse points to this fact:

That Allah may separate the impure from the pure, and put the impure, some of it upon the other,

and pile it up together, then cast it into hell… (***8:37***).

Verse 11

Qur'an: ***Like the wont of the people of Pharaoh and those before them; they rejected Our signs, so Allah caught them for their sins; and Allah is severe in requiting*** (**evil**) (***3:11***).

"ad-Da'b" (اَلدَّأْبُ) is continuing movement. Allah has said:

And He has made subservient to you the sun and the moon pursuing their courses… (***14:33***).

Thereupon the word was used for habit, custom or wont, because that also is a perpetual movement. In this verse, it has been used in this latter meaning.

"Like the wont..." is related to a deleted sentence which may be understood from the phrase, "shall not avail them"; "the wont" is explained by the words, "they rejected Our signs". Thus, the complete sentence would be as follows: Those who disbelieve have rejected Our signs and continued on this habit unfailingly; they think that their wealth and their children will avail them against Allah; it is like the wont of the people of Pharaoh and those before them, who also had rejected Our signs. "So Allah caught them *'bi-dhunubihim'* (بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ) for their sins." *"bi"* (بِ = translated here as "for") apparently shows the reason; in other words, Allah caught them because of their sins. But the two verses stand face to face comparing the condition of these unbelievers with that of the people of Pharaoh and those who lived before them.

It strongly suggests that *"bi"* here points to the instrument of this catching. The unbelievers are the fuel of the fire, which shall burn them and they shall get the punishment by their own fire. Likewise, the people of Pharaoh and those who were before them were caught by their own sins; the chastisement meted out to them was another form of their own misdeeds; it was their own evil plan which surrounded them, their own injustice and oppression that destroyed them. Allah says:

…and the evil plan does not beset any save the authors of it (***35:43***).

…and they did not do Us any harm, but they did harm their own selves (***2:57***).

The above explanation makes the meaning of the next sentence clearer:

and Allah is severe in requiting (***evil***) (***3:11***)

The chastisement meted out by Allah is not confined to one direction, one place or one state. When a man punishes another man, his punishment comes from only a certain direction, for example, from above or below etc., and at one place, not at the others. The man so punished may run away from that particular place, or may shield himself against that particular direction. But the Divine chastisement is all-encompassing. He catches a man by the misdeeds and sins committed by that man himself; his action is always with him, in his exterior as well as in his interior; it does never separate from him. That

sin turns its doer into a fuel of the fire, a fire that surrounds not only all sides of his exterior but permeates even his inner self; he cannot save himself by running away; nor can he benefit from standing still; there is neither any shelter nor any refuge against it. That is why Allah is called "severe in requiting evil".

First, the verse mentioned the Divine name in the third person (Allah), then it was changed into the first person (Our signs), again it was reverted to the original third person (Allah caught). This change in the middle of the sentence serves two purposes: It freshens the mind and puts more emphasis on the truth of the proposition. Suppose someone says: "That man is foul-mouthed and uses obscene language; and I myself have experienced his indecent manner; therefore, you should avoid his company." The sentence, "I myself have experienced his indecent manner", confirms the preceding information of his obscenity, by turning the news into experience and into a sort of testimony.

The import of the verse then would be - and Allah knows better - something like this: The people of Pharaoh had the same traits as these unbelievers have. They disbelieved and rejected Our signs. There is no doubt at all about it, as We were present there and yet they rejected Our own signs, so We caught them.

When this purpose was served, the pronouns were again changed to the third person. This reversion also served two purposes: It puts the sentence on the original track and brought into focus the great and all-encompassing Divine authority and power. The name, Allah, brings to mind the fact that He has all the world's affairs in His Own hands and looks after every big and small thing. It was not difficult for Him to catch the disbelievers for their sins.

And that is why the name has been repeated in the next sentence. It says, "and Allah is severe in requiting", instead of saying, "and He is severe..." The name draws attention to the fact that their disbelief and their rejection of the signs was nothing but a rebellion against Almighty Allah; and it is easy for Him to catch the offenders and give them severe punishment, because He is Allah.

Verse 12

Qur'an: ***Say to those who disbelieve: "You shall be vanquished, and gathered to hell; and wretched is*** **(it as)** ***the resting place*** **(*3:12*).**

"al-Hashr" (اَلْحَشْرُ) is to force a group out from their abode. It is never used with a singular object. Allah says:

...and We will gather them and leave not any one of them behind **(*18:47*).**

"al-Mihad" (اَلْمِهَادُ) literally means bed.

The context proves that "those who disbelieve" refers to the polytheists, because in the first verse also

this phrase has been used for the same group, and not for the People of the Book. Both verses are inter-related - the previous one mentioned that they put their confidence in wealth and children and sought strength from them; and this one says that they shall surely, be vanquished and shall all be driven together to the hell.

Verse 13

Qur'an: ***Indeed, there was a sign in the two hosts*** **(which)** ***met together in encounter*** **(*3:13*).**

The context shows that this verse also is addressed to "those who disbelieve"; that it is the continuation of the preceding verse which told the Prophet to tell the unbelievers that they would be vanquished. There is also another possibility: It may have been addressed to the believers, inviting them to ponder on the grace of Allah bestowed on them on the day of Badr. He helped them with His wonderful aid by affecting the sights of the eyes in a previously unheard-of way. If this explanation is accepted then this verse enlarges the circle of audience - the preceding ones were addressed to the Prophet only, but this one includes the believers too. But the first explanation is more appropriate.

The verse does not name the event to which it refers; but the description fits on the battle of Badr. This chapter was revealed after the battle of Badr, or even Uhud. The style shows that the event referred to was well-known to the audience who knew it with all its particulars. It was only in the battle of Badr that Allah affected the visions of the participants. In Chapter 8, this phenomenon has been described in the following words:

And when He showed them to you, when you met, as few in your eyes, and He reduced you to appear as few in their eyes, in order that Allah might bring about a matter which was to be done; and to Allah are returned all affairs **(*8:44*).**

But this verse mentions reducing them to appear as few; while the verse under discussion talks about showing them as twice their number. Probably, Allah made the believers appear as few in the eyes of the polytheists, so that the enemies of Islam would feel bold to attack the believers and would not abandon the thought of fighting; then after the start of the encounter, He made them appear as twice their number, so that the enemies would flee away and be vanquished.

In any case, if the verse is addressed, through the Prophet to the polytheists, it does not fit except the battle of Badr. (Some reciters have recited, "you saw them", instead of "they saw them"; this recitation also supports the above-given explanation.)

What the verse says is this: O polytheists! if you have any wisdom, then what you saw on the day of Badr should be enough to convince you that victory belongs to the truth, that Allah helps by His aid whom He wishes, and that He cannot be overpowered by wealth or children. The believers, on that day, were fighting in the way of Allah: they were a small and weak band, not even one-third of the army of the unbelievers; and their strength was not even worthy of comparison with that of the unbelievers; the

Muslims were only three hundred and thirteen souls, their armament and provision amounting to a grand total of six coats of mail, eight swords and two horses. And the army of the polytheists consisted of nearly one thousand warriors, their provisions, strength, horses, camels and other preparations were beyond estimate. But Allah helped the believers, in spite of their small number and weaknesses, over His enemies; He made the Muslims appear twice their actual number, in the eyes of the polytheists; and the angels were sent to help the believers. The polytheists, who thought that their wealth and children would make them strong and victorious, were destroyed; and their great multitude and overwhelming material strength proved totally ineffective against Allah.

The wont of the people of Pharaoh and those who were before them – their rejecting the Divine signs and being caught by Allah for their sins – has been repeated twice in Chapter 8.

The polytheists have been admonished and reminded of the events of Badr. It is a hint that the victory of the Muslims mentioned in the preceding verse is the victory by killing and destroying the enemies. These verses, therefore, threaten the polytheists of fighting.

Qur'an: ***One party fighting in the way of Allah and the other unbelieving*** (***3:13***).

Allah did not say, "and the other in the way of Satan", or, "in the way of false deities" etc. The talk is not concerned with comparison between the two ways; its main purport is to show that nothing can be independent of Allah; that nothing can avail against Him; and that the victory belongs to Him. The comparison is, thus, between the belief in Allah and fighting in His way on one hand and disbelieving in Allah on the other.

It appears from the context that the pronouns, "them" and "their", in the phrase, "they saw them twice their number" stand for the phrase, "one party fighting in the way of Allah". In other words, it says that the unbelieving party saw the believers twice the actual number of the believers, that is, the believers appeared in their eyes as six hundred and twenty-six (instead of the three hundred and thirteen). The words do not support the idea that the two pronouns stood for the two groups separately. In other words, the verse does not say that the unbelievers saw the believers twice the number of the unbelievers themselves.

Someone has mentioned another possibility: That both pronouns stood for the unbelieving party, and that the unbelievers saw themselves twice their own actual number, and instead of one thousand they saw themselves as two thousand. In this way, they saw the believers even smaller in proportion than they actually were; three hundred and thirteen is less than one-sixth of two thousand, while the believers were in fact about one-third of the enemies. It would also explain the verse mentioned earlier:

And when He showed them to you, when you met, as few in your eyes, and He reduced you to appear as few in their eyes… (***8:44***).

Without this explanation the two verses would appear contradictory to each other.

Reply: If Allah wanted to say what has been suggested above, it was necessary to say clearly, "they saw themselves twice their own number". To express this idea in the present form (they saw them twice their number) creates confusion, which is unworthy of an eloquent talk. Also, it is wrong to think that this verse appears contradictory to the verse 8:44. To show contradiction, one would have to prove that both verses refer to the same time and the same situation. But it cannot be done. Probably, Allah made each group appear, as fewer than their actual number, in the eyes of the opposite party; it made them bold to attack and start fighting. Then, after the battle waxed hot and the opposing forces raged into each other, Allah made the unbelievers see the believers twice their actual number, and they lost their heart, were demoralized and fled away. So, where is the supposed discrepancy?

This case is similar to the two verses describing the affairs of the Day of Resurrection:

***So on that day neither man nor jinn shall be asked about his sin* (*55:39*).**

***And stop them, for they shall be questioned* (*37:24*).**

There is no conflict here because each verse is about a different time and stage.

Some other exegetes have written some other views about the two pronouns; but as all of them are against the apparent meaning of the word, there is no use of quoting them here.

Qur'an: ***And Allah aids with His aid whom He pleases; most surely, there is a lesson in this for those who have sight* (*3:13*).**

"at-Ta'yid" (**اَلتَّأْيِيدُ** = to strengthen) is derived from *al-ayd* (**اَلْأَيْدُ** = strength). *"al-Absar"* (**اَلْأَبْصَارُ**) is sight. Some people say that here it refers to the eyes, because the verse describes how Allah influenced their eye-sight. Others say that it means wisdom and knowledge, because it is through them that one may take lesson from some event. But this controversy is misplaced, because Allah counts him who does not take lesson from events and parables as blind; and says that eyes must see and differentiate the truth from falsehood. It is a sort of claim that the truth, to which Allah invites all His creatures, is a manifest, embodied substance which is within the perception of these physical eyes. In short, the body's eye and the mind's eye are treated as one (metaphorically, of course) so far as comprehension of spiritual knowledge is concerned, because this knowledge is open for all to see. This theme is found in many verses, some of which are as follows:

***For surely, it is not the eyes that become blind, but blind become the hearts which are in the breasts* (*22:46*).**

In other words, the eyes are in the breasts, not in the heads:

***…and they have eyes which they do not see with…* (*7:179*).**

This verse shows astonishment at their being blind to the truth:

***…and put a covering upon his eyes* (*45:23*).**

All of it shows that "sight" in this verse refers to the manifest eyes; this expression is based on an implied claim that it is these eyes that see the truth and take lesson from the past experience. It is a fine example of *al–isti'aratu bi 'l–kinayah* (**اَلْاِسْتِعَارَةُ بِالْكِنَايَةِ =** a simile which contains neither the first or second side nor its particle – instead it mentions only a concomitant of the second side in order to hint at the allegory). Its import is to show that truth is such a manifest substance that it may be seen by these eyes. What has enhanced further the beauty of this expression is the context – the verse describes the effect the Divine decree had had on their eyesight.

Obviously, the sentence, "most surely, there is a lesson in this for those who have sight", is not a part of the talk which the Prophet was to address to the unbelievers (Say to those who disbelieve…). It is addressed to the Prophet himself. Its proof is the singular second person pronoun *"ka"* (**كَ** = thou) added as suffix in *"dhalika"* (**ذٰلِكَ** = this). It is an indication that the unbelievers are so blind of hearts that they cannot take lesson from past events; therefore, they are not worthy of any advice.

Verse 14

Qur'an: *It has been made to seem fair…* (*3:14*).

This and the following verses elaborate the preceding ones (As for those who disbelieve surely, neither their wealth nor their children shall avail them in the least against Allah…). The unbelievers erroneously thought that these things would make them independent of Allah. Now, this verse explains the reason of their mistaken idea: They have submerged their souls under the love of these worldly materials and are so overwhelmed with them that they have forgotten the life hereafter. But they are mistaken, because these things are just the provisions of this transient life, their only purpose is to pave the way for the next destination that is with Allah.

These people are oblivious of the reality of this worldly provision: Allah has ingrained in human nature the love of these fair and beautiful items, so that this worldly life may attain its completion and perfection. Without this inclination, continuity of human race would be endangered. It is through this love and desire that the decree of Allah is enforced:

***…and there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time* (*2:36*).**

Allah created in man this inclination, so that he may use it as a means to reach his final destination; so that he may take from it what would benefit him in the next life. People were not expected to treat these worldly trinkets as permanent things, or to forget what lies ahead. They are on journey, going forward to their Lord; they should not take the path as the destination. Allah says:

***Surely, We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them* (as to) *which of them is best in deed* (*18:7*).**

And most surely, We will make what is on it bare ground without herbage (***18:8***).

But these simpletons thought that these apparent causes of worldly pleasure were independent of Allah, (while actually they were created by Allah to be a means to obtain the pleasure of Allah). Instead, the unbelievers thought that these things would avail them against Allah. By their behaviour, they turned the bliss into misery, and changed the reward into punishment. Allah says:

The likeness of this world's life is only as water which We sent down from the sky; by its mingling the herbage of the earth of which men and cattle eat grows; until when the earth puts on its golden raiment and it becomes garnished, and its people think that they have power over it, Our command comes to it, by night or by day, so We render it as reaped, as though it had not been in existence yesterday… (***10:24***).

…And on the day when We will gather them all together, then We will say to those who associated others (***with Allah***)***; Keep where you are, you and your associates; then We shall separate them widely one from another…*** (***10:28***).

And they shall be brought back to Allah, their true Master, and what they did fabricate shall escape from them (***10:30***).

These verses show that the life and its adornments are in the hands of Allah; none but He controls them. Man, in his foolishness, is deceived by its appearance and thinks that he is in control of his own affair, and that it is he who manages it and keeps it in order. He ascribes some associates in it, like idols and things like idols (wealth and children etc.). But Allah will make him aware of his follies; the embellishments will go away, the relationship between him and his associates will be cut off, and all that man had fabricated against Allah will be lost to him. Then he will understand that what he was admonished with in this world was true. Alas! understanding at that time when he will be returned to his Lord, will not benefit him at all.

Allah says:

It has been made to seem fair to men the love of desires… (***3:14***).

The question is: Who has made it to look fair to man? The world appears before man's eyes as a beautiful and adorable thing – it shows the elegance of independence and beauty of purpose. Does Allah make it appear in this light? Reason says, No. The All-knowing Wise Lord is too great to manage a thing in such a way that it would defeat His Own purpose. He says:

…surely, Allah attains His purpose (***65:3***).

And Allah is predominant over His affair (***12:21***).

If this phenomenon is to be attributed at all, it should be attributed to Satan. Allah says:

…and Satan made what they did fair-seeming to them (***6:43***)***.***

And when Satan made their deeds fair-seeming to them… (***8:48***)***.***

Of course, it is all according to the system decreed by Allah. He has given the man freedom of will to choose his own path, and Allah does not interfere in the man's choice. This system is called "permission", it is so that the test may be conducted, and so that the spiritual training may progress in a just manner. Allah says:

Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, "We believe", and not be tried? (***29:2***)***.***

And certainly, We tried those before them, so Allah will certainly know those who are true and He will certainly know the liars (***29:3***)***.***

Or do they who work evil think that they will escape Us? Evil is it that they judge (***29:4***)***.***

There is a verse in which this "making fair-seeming" has been attributed to Allah:

Thus have We made fair-seeming to every people their deeds (***6:108***)***.***

This verse may be explained by the above-mentioned system of "permission". It may also be explained in the light of the previously explained verse:

Surely, We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them (**as to**) ***which of them is best in deed*** (***18:7***)***.***

This "making fair-seeming" is of two kinds. First, world and worldly embellishments are made fair-seeming to man so that he may use it wisely - to get happiness in the next world, and to seek the pleasure of Allah in all his actions through this wealth, honour, children and self. It is a good and divinely inspired characteristic and Allah has attributed it to Himself in the verse:

Surely, We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them (**as to**) ***which of them is best in deed*** (***18:7***)***.***

And in other verses mentioned earlier. Also, the following verse refers to this reality:

Say: 'Who has prohibited the embellishment of Allah which He has brought forth for His servants and the good provisions?' (***7:32***)***.***

Second, world is made to appear lovely in the eyes of man, to ensnare his heart, so that he may forget his Creator. It is an evil plan which Allah has attributed to Satan and admonished His servants to remain on guard against it. For example:

…and Satan made what they did fair-seeming to them… (***6:43***)***.***

***He* (*Satan*) *said: 'My Lord! because Thou hast left me to stray, I will certainly make* (*evil*) *fair-seeming to them on earth, and I will certainly cause them all to go astray…'* (*15:39*).**

***…the evil of their doings is made fair-seeming to them…* (*9:37*).**

Sometimes even this type of "making fair-seeming" is attributed to Allah, inasmuch as Satan and all other causes of good and evil do whatever they do only because Allah has given them the "permission" (as explained above). This system was necessary to attain the Divine purpose of test, in order that the doers of good may succeed because of their good intention and choice; and the sinners may be separated from them.

The above explanation makes it clear that it is not Allah who has made it seem fair to men the love of various desires mentioned in the verse under discussion. No doubt, every "making fair-seeming" may be attributed to Allah, either directly, (if it is a good adornment leading man to His worship) or indirectly, that is, by permission (if it makes one to forget one's Creator). But this verse contains some factors which cannot be attributed to Allah directly. Therefore, it was in keeping with the good manners of the Qur'an not to attribute this adornment to Allah; instead, it attributes it to some unspecified agent - it could be either Satan or the man himself.

An exegete has rightly said that the implied doer of the verb, "It has been made to seem fair", is Satan, because the love of desires is not a likeable trait, nor is the love of excessive wealth; and therefore, it cannot be attributed to Allah. Allah has attributed to Himself the good things mentioned at the end of this verse and in the next one.

But another commentator has said that it cannot be attributed to Satan. He says: The matters related to the human nature and its love and inclinations can never be ascribed to Satan; what may be attributed to him is evil whispering that makes evil thoughts and deeds look attractive to man. He continues his argument as follows: The Qur'an has never attributed to Satan anything except making evil deed fair-seeming. Allah says:

***And when Satan made their deeds fair-seeming to them* (*8:48*).**

***…and Satan made what they did fair-seeming to them* (*6:43*).**

But the Book does not attribute the realities and natures of the things except to the Wise Creator Who has no partner. Allah says:

***Surely, We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them* (as to) *which of them is best in deed* (*18:7*).**

***Thus, have We made fair-seeming to every people their deeds* (*6:108*).**

The verse talks about the "people", which is another way of talking about the nature of society.

Comment: He is right when he says that the realities and natures of things cannot be attributed to other than Allah. But he is mistaken in thinking that the verse speaks about the nature of man, or about his natural traits. This statement of ours may be understood if wo look at the central theme of this chapter.

The main purpose of this chapter is to describe the following realities:

Allah is Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist: He manages all affairs of all His creatures; He creates them and looks after them. He guides them to their eternal bliss. Those who indulge in hypocrisy, reject His signs or revolt against Him by differing in His Book - the hypocrites, the unbelievers, the polytheists and the People of the Book - in short, all those who obey Satan and follow their desires, cannot weaken the authority of Allah, nor can they overpower Him, nor is His all-encompassing management affected by their misbehaviour. Everything, including the creatures' belief and disbelief, obedience and disobedience, is based on the system decreed by Allah. He has created in this world the systems of the cause and effect, and of the test and trial. He has created the nature, its properties and traits, its inclinations and actions. It has been done so that man may proceed forward to his Lord, may attain nearness to Allah and may get eternal honour in the Divine presence.

It was because of this system of test that He permitted Satan and did not prevent him from whispering into men's hearts and putting evil ideas into their minds. Nor did He prevent man from obeying Satan or following his own base desires. By this "permission" the tests and trials remain free and fair; those who believe are distinguished from the disbelievers and the hypocrites; and the pure hearted servants of Allah are raised in status to become witnesses of Allah.

These things have been described in this chapter to give comfort to the believers. At that time, they were overwhelmed by hardships and difficulties. Within their society, they had to endure the double-dealings of the hypocrites and ignorance of those with disease in their hearts. These two groups disturbed their plans and disrupted their affairs; as a result, the commands given by Allah and His Apostle were not fully obeyed. On the outside, they were in constant danger from various groups. There were, within Arabia, the polytheists and the People of the Book (especially, the Jews); and the neighbouring Romans and Persians were threatening them with all their might and forces. All those disbelievers were mistaken and confused in their ideas and ideals. They were entangled in this transient world and its embellishments; they thought that it was their goal and final destination. They had forgotten that this world was only a path, and the destination was the next world.

It is obvious that the chapter discusses the nature of the people, but in a wider framework that includes the purpose of their creation, and all that it entails, like the character and behaviour, the good and evil deeds, the obedience and disobedience. It declares that all this is under the management of Allah, Who can never be defeated or overpowered - neither in this world nor in the next. In this world, all things happen by His "permission", which makes the test meaningful. In the next world, all will be based on the principle of recompense - good for good and evil for evil.

The verses under discussion also were revealed with the same theme. The disbelievers were given those bounties in order that they might obtain with their help the pleasure of Allah and enter into His paradise. Instead, they rejected the signs of their Lord and changed those bounties into a source of eternal misfortune; they relied on those worldly embellishments; and thought that those things would avail them against Allah; in short, they were so enchanted by created things that they forgot the Creator. But these people cannot weaken the hold of Allah over them; they cannot overpower Him, nor can they escape from Him. Allah shall catch them for their sins, and shall help His believing servants against them. He shall gather all the disbelievers together unto hell and it is an evil abode. It is their greatest mistake to rely on that which is only a provision of this worldly life, and to forget that the best destination is with Allah.

These verses too speak about the nature of the disbelievers, but in a wider context that includes their good and bad deeds.

Therefore, it is wrong on the part of that exegete to think that, because the verse speaks about human nature, the verb, "It has been made to seem fair", cannot be attributed to other than Allah. Further, He has offered the verse:

Thus have We made fair-seeming to every people their deeds" (***6:108***)

As a proof that realities can only be attributed to Allah, and it is only the deeds that may be attributed to Satan. But this verse clearly proves the opposite, because it attributes the deeds to Allah. Its context further strengthens this proposition. The complete verse is as follows:

And do not abuse those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest exceeding the limits they should abuse Allah out of ignorance. Thus, have We made fair-seeming to every people their deeds; then to their Lord shall be their return, so He will inform them of what they did (***6:108***).

It makes clear what we have said.

Another exegete has said: This "Making fair-seeming" is of two types: Commendable and condemnable. Likewise, human actions are of two kinds: good and evil. Only that which is commendable, good and praiseworthy can be attributed to Allah; and the other type is escribed to Satan.

Comment: The above statement is correct to a certain extent – in so far as the direct attribution is concerned. In other word, it is valid about the direct actions of Allah. Allah does not do except good and He does not enjoin indecency and evil. But there is no reason why actions, other than the good and praiseworthy, should not be attributed to Him indirectly. In other words, Allah may "permit" His creatures to do good or evil as they like. They do whatever they do by the power given to them by Allah, and according to the system of test decreed by Him. And in this sense, all actions may be ascribed to Allah – indirectly, of course. If one says that some actions cannot be ascribed to Allah even indirectly, it would be difficult for him to believe that Allah is the Lord of everything, Creator of everything and Owner of

everything, or that He has no partner or colleague in any affair at all. Moreover, the Qur'an contains many verses in which "unpraiseworthy" actions have been ascribed to Allah:

Allah makes whosoever He wills go astray (***13:27***).

…Allah made their hearts turn aside (***61:5***).

Allah mocks them and leaves them alone in their inordinacy (***2:15***).

…We order the people of it who lead easy life, so they transgress therein (***17:16***).

There are many verses of this kind in the Qur'an.

What is the source of these erroneous ideas of people like that exegete? They looked at things and meditated on their mutual relationship, on their actions and their effects. They thought that every single thing has an independent existence, is separate from all surrounding things, and has no connection with things that have passed nor with those that are yet to appear.

Allah has decreed that every event should be a result of interaction of numerous causes. But these people put every thing and every event in a separate pigeonhole, unconnected with any other thing or event. According to their thinking, each event is related only to its immediate cause, and each action belongs only to its doer; other, distant causes have nothing to do with that event or action. Planets revolve, rivers flow, ships run, earth supports its inhabitants, vegetables grow, animals walk and man lives and strives: All these phenomena are separate from each other; there is no bond that binds them to one another; neither any metaphysical reality joins them together nor any physical force keeps them united.

Going a step further, they ascribed the same separateness to human actions and affairs. Virtue and evil, felicity and infelicity, guidance and misguidance, obedience and disobedience, benevolence and malevolence, justice and injustice, nothing is related to any other thing, nothing has any connection with anything else in its existence.

These people have overlooked the most obvious reality – that the universe, with all sorts of creatures and all kinds of components, is a single entity, whose parts are finely aligned together. Not only that – its components are often interchanged: Today it is a human being, tomorrow it will change into dust and the day after tomorrow will grow as a grass; one's life is the other's death; the "new" arises from the ashes of the "old".

The events happening herein are likewise all related to each other; they are the links that are connected together to form the chain that is called the universe. An apparently insignificant alteration in the position of a small link affects the positions of all other links on both sides. A minute change in an atom causes changes in the whole system of the world, although we may not notice it. (If we do not know that a thing exists, it does not mean that it does not exist.)

This universal inter-relation was known to, and described by, the ancient philosophers; and it has been fully manifested by modern sciences. And the Qur'an had explained to the Muslims this phenomenon long before they learned it from philosophers, scientists and mathematicians of other nations, and then started to do their own researches on these lines. The Divine Book tells us how the system of the heavens and the earth are interlocked, how one affects the other, how all are joined together in attaining to the purpose of creation, how the Divine decree permeates every thing, how all are proceeding towards their Lord, and how the final destination is with Allah.

Likewise, the characteristics and attributes of our actions are linked together. Even the opposite actions stand face to face with each other, and if one of them goes away, the other would not be recognized. It resembles the physical world where making of one thing depends on unmaking of the other, and the one's progress causes the other's retrogress. If one of the opposites is missing, the other's desired effects on the society would also disappear. The same is the case of virtue and evil as shown by the Divine religion.

Obedience is a virtue because disobedience is an evil; good deeds deserve good recompense because bad deeds attract severe requital; reward is pleasant because punishment is unpleasant; and pleasure is desired because displeasure is undesirable. Man by nature gravitates towards felicity and happiness; and runs away from infelicity and unhappiness. If this natural movement stops, the existence itself would dissolve into nothingness.

Obedience, then good deeds, then reward, then pleasure, then happiness - it is a chain that runs parallel to disobedience, then evil deeds, then punishment, then displeasure, then unhappiness. Each side manifests itself by hiding the other; each one gets life in the death of its opposite. How can one call to good deeds without warning against its opposite misdeeds?

We can see in this light that in the Divine wisdom it was necessary for the universe to contain the opposites - virtue and evil, obedience and disobedience. At this stage, there appears an important difference: Creation and destruction, making and unmaking in all things, except human actions, are attributed to Allah, because the creation and all its affairs are in His hands, He has no partner or colleague. So far as the actions are concerned, if they are good and virtuous, they too are directly attributed to Allah, because He has guided the man to them. But evil deeds and affairs, like whispering of Satan, overpowering of man by desires or rule of a tyrant over a nation, may be indirectly attributed to Allah, inasmuch as He withdraws His help from the doers of such deeds and leaves them free to go astray.

It is this factor that is called "permission". It is correct to say that Allah has permitted Satan to misguide human beings with his whisperings and deceptions; that He does not prevent man from following his base desires; and that He does not hinder, an unjust person from his oppression. He has decreed this system because felicity and infelicity are based on freedom of choice; if a man succeeds, it shall be by his own free choice; and if he fails, it too shall be by his own free choice. Otherwise, the proof of Allah

could not be, completed against His servants, and the intended test would be irrelevant.

What prevented the said exegete and others like him from letting the Qur'anic arguments and expressions progress to their logical result, was their reluctance to accept what seemed to them a wrong conclusion. Those who believed that everything is done by Allah and that there is no cause other than Allah were disinclined to accept that things were linked together in a chain of cause and effect, because, according to their thinking, it implied a reduction in the all-pervasive power of Allah. Others thought that if deeds of all types could be attributed to Allah - directly or indirectly - it would absolve the man from responsibility of his action, as it would mean that he was not free in his action; rather he was a helpless tool in the hands of Allah. Once it was accepted, the system of test, reward and punishment would be negated; and there would be no justification for ordaining the Divine law and religion.

But they should have meditated on the words of Allah revealed in the Qur'an:

...and Allah is predominant over His affairs (***12:21***).

...surely, His is the creation and the command (***7:54***).

Now surely, of Allah is what is in the heavens and the earth... (***10:55***).

There are many similar verses that prove what we have explained above; and a short description of this topic was given under the verse:

Surely, Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable – (**that of**) ***a gnat or any thing above that*** (***2:26***).

Now we return to our original topic: Apparently the doer of the verb, "It has been made to seem fair", is something other than Allah - it is either Satan or the man's soul itself. There are four reasons to support this view of ours:

First: The verse condemns the disbelievers because they are inclined to these embellishments of the world - wealth and children - and think that these things may avail them against Allah. It is an adornment that turns one away from remembrance of Allah, and it is not proper to ascribe such a "making fair-seeming" to Allah.

Second: If this "making fair-seeming" is attributed to Allah, it would point to the natural inclination, ingrained in human creation. In that case, it was more appropriate to use the word, *"al-insan"* (**اَلْإِنْسَانُ =** human being, man) or "children of Adam"; because Allah uses such words on such occasions:

Certainly, We created man (**al-insan**) ***in the best make*** (***95:4***).

Then We rendered him the lowest of the low (***95:5***).

And surely, We have honoured the children of Adam, and We carry them in the land and the sea,

and We have given them of the good things, and We have made them to excel by an appropriate excellence over most of those whom We have created (***17:70***).

But in the verse under discussion Allah has used the word, *"an-nas"* (**اَلنَّاسُ** = men, people) which more often than not has been used in the Qur'an to show worthlessness of the people referred to, to show their immaturity and narrow-mindedness. For example:

…but most men do not consent to aught but denying (***17:89***).

O you people! Surely, We have created you of a male and a female… (***49:13***).

Third: The items of desires enumerated in this verse do not fit properly the inclinations ingrained in human nature. If the Qur'an wanted to refer to the natural desires, then it would have been more appropriate to change the words, "women and sons and hoarded treasures of gold and silver" with the words, "spouses, and children and wealth". After all the natural inclination towards the opposite sex is found in women as much as in men; and the parents love their daughters as much as their sons; and man loves wealth in general and not only the hoarded treasures of gold and silver.

Those who say that the doer of the verb, "It has been made to seem fair" is Allah, have had to say that the word, "women", refers to matrimony in general; the "sons" means children of both sexes; and the phrase, "hoarded treasures of gold and silver" stands for wealth in general. They say that the words used in the verse have been given just as the most popular examples of every item. But it is stretching the meanings too far.

Fourth: To say that it is Allah Who has made these items fair-seeming to men is not in conformity with the end of the verse: "this is the provision of the life of this world; and Allah is He with Whom is the best destination. Say: 'Shall I tell you of what is better than these?". Obviously, these words have been used to divert their attention from these worldly desires and create in them love of the things that are with Allah - paradise, pure mates and pleasure of Allah. The natural desire of worldly embellishments has been created by Allah, in order that man may use them to reach his spiritual destination - the same paradise and pleasure of Allah. That natural desire is the means to obtain that result. If Allah admonished men to forget these worldly desires and yet told them to reach the intended goal it would be self-contradictory. Who would want to satiate his hunger and yet abstain from food?

Question: This verse in its theme is not different from the verse:

Say: 'Who has prohibited the embellishment of Allah which He has brought forth for His servants and the good provisions?' Say: 'These are for the believers in the life of this world, purely (***theirs***) ***on the Resurrection Day'…*** (***7:32***).

In this verse the embellishment is ascribed to Allah; likewise, the doer of this "making fair-seeming" in the verse under discussion should be Allah.

Reply: There is a clear difference in the import of the two verses. The verse under discussion condemns these desires; because they divert the attention of men from Allah and from what is with Allah. It exhorts them to turn aside from these worldly entanglements and to look forward to what is with Allah. The theme of the verse of Chapter 7 is quite different. It says that these embellishments have been created for the benefit of human beings; the believers enjoy them in this world together with the others; and it will be reserved for the believers only in the next world. It should be noted that this verse uses the word "His servants", instead of the "men" and it counts the embellishment as "the good provisions".

Question: What has been made fair-seeming is "the love of desires", not the desires themselves. The fact that love seems fair to man and attracts him is a natural reality. The expression, that love has been made fair-seeming to men, means that it has been made effective in their hearts; in other words, love has been created in their hearts; and creation cannot be attributed to other than Allah. Therefore, He is the doer of this verb.

Reply: The context (to which we have referred) shows that adornment of love means that love has been given a power that attracts people to itself and prevents them from looking at other things. Adornment is an attractive thing that is used or worn by another thing; it attracts the people primarily to itself and then transfers that attraction to the wearer or user. A woman uses cosmetics and ornaments, in order to attract her man to herself - by way of those embellishments. Primarily the man is attracted by those embellishments, but the real objective of the woman is to attract him to herself. In this background, the semantic flow of the word, "It has been made fair-seeming...the love of desires..." is that primarily the love attracts the men to itself but the real objective is to enchant the people and let them sink in inordinate desire of the named trinkets of the world. In short, the effect of love is not the true objective; and therefore, the argument mentioned in the question is out of place. The real goal (which has been condemned) is the desire, as may be seen in the verse:

***But there followed after them an evil generation, who neglected prayer and followed the sensual desires, so they shall soon meet* (the result of their) *sin* (*19:59*).**

This meaning is supported by the given list of the desired things. Moreover, the word "desire", although used here for desired things, has a shade of inordinate passion in its meaning.

Qur'an: ***of women and sons and hoarded treasures of gold and silver and well-bred horses and cattle and tilth* (*3:14*).**

"an-Nisa'" (**اَلنِّسَاءُ** = women) is plural, it has no singular from this root; *"al-banin"* (**اَلْبَنِيْنَ** = sons) is plural of *al-Ibn* (**اَلْإِبْنُ** = male offspring, direct or indirect); *"al-qanatir"* (**اَلْقَنَاطِيْرُ**) is plural of *al-qintar* (**اَلْقِنْطَارُ** = a waterskin full of gold, a filled waterskin); *"al-muqantarah"* (**اَلْمُقَنْطَرَةُ**) is passive participle (object-noun) of *al-qintar* although the latter is an inflexible noun. In Arabic language, they often ascribe to an inflexible noun a shade of meaning that makes it resemble an infinitive verb, and then make various words from it, for example, *al-baqil* (اَلْبَاقِلُ), *at-tamir* (**اَلتَّامِرُ**) and *al-'attar* (اَلْعَطَّارُ) for seller of *al-baql* (اَلْبَقْلُ =

vegetable), *at-tamr* (اَلتَّمْر = date) and *al-'itr* (اَلْعِطْرُ = perfume) respectively. It qualifies the word *al-qanatir* (اَلْقَنَاطِيْرُ = treasures) with an adjective *al-muqantarah* (اَلْمُقَنْطَرَةُ = treasured, hoarded) which is derived from the same word. This device doubly confirms the meaning of the qualified words, for example, *dananir mudannarah* (دَنَانِيْرُ مُدَنَّرَةٌ = coined dinars), *dawawin mudawwanah* (دَوَاوِيْنُ مُدَوَّنَةٌ = recorded register), *hijab mahjub* (حِجَابٌ مَحْجُوبٌ= veiled curtain) and *sitr mastur* (سِتْرٌ مَسْتُورٌ = concealed screen). *"al-Khayl"* (اَلْخَيْلُ = horses) ; *"al-musawwamah"* (اَلْمُسَوَّمَةٌ) has two meanings: left free to pasture or branded. *"al-An'am"* (اَلْاَنْعَامُ) is plural of *an-na'am* (اَلنَّعَمُ) which means camel, cow, buffalo, goat and sheep; *al-bahimah* (اَلْبَهِيْمَةُ) is more general than that and is used for all quadrupeds and excludes carnivora, birds and insects. *"al-Harth"* (اَلْحَرْثُ = tilth) has a meaning of earning in it; it means farming (or cultivated plant) for a livelihood.

The list of desired things given here does not mean that every man has so many loves of desires, as some exegetes have thought; they took the verse to refer to the natural love of spouse, children and wealth. But then they had to explain why human being has been referred to as "men" or people, why "children" has been changed to "sons" and why "wealth" has been described as "hoarded treasures".

The fact, however, is that the verse only says that people, in their inordinate love of worldly desires, are of various types: There are some lecherous persons whose only aim in life is lusting after women; it brings in its train numerous sins and social ills, like using musical instruments, singing, drinking liquor and many other evils. Such debauchery is found mostly in men; women as a rule are free from it (except, in rare cases). Then there are those who ardently love their sons and want their number to increase in order to become a strong and powerful clan; this tendency is more prominent in nomadic tribes, and it especially concerns the sons, not the daughters. A third category is of those greedy avaricious persons who live only for the purpose of hoarding treasures and riches; this madness manifests itself especially in filling their coffers with gold and silver, or similar things like currency notes and bonds, other items are not valued very much by such people. This covetousness is predominant in inhabitants of villages and towns, and is seldom seen in nomads. Finally, come those who want to own a string of pedigreed horses. (It is those who are fond of horsemanship or horse-race); some others love to have cattle; yet others eagerly desire for agricultural farm. The last named three types of desire are sometimes found together.

People usually are overwhelmed by one of the above-mentioned desires primarily, and the rest is given a secondary place. One seldom (or, never) finds a man whose love of all these items is of equal degree.

Other desired "things", like power, position, prestige, presidency, ministry etc., are only imaginary things, that have no existence outside imagination. Man desires them not for their own sake, but only because they give him a chance to acquire wealth. And, in any case, it is not the purport of the verse to enumerate all the desires.

It proves what we mentioned earlier that the "love of desires" means inordinate attachment to these things (and it is ascribed to Satan); it does not refer to the natural love that has been ingrained in human

psyche (and which is attributed to Allah).

Qur'an: ***this is the provision of the life of this world; and Allah is He with Whom is the best destination*** **(*3:14*).**

These desires are such as may be useful to manage the affairs of this life; but this life itself, like its provisions, is a transient thing; it will soon cease to exist. The good life and the best destination are only with Allah.

Verse 15

Qur'an: ***Say: "Shall I tell you of what is better than these?" For those who guard*** **(against evil)** ***are gardens with their Lord, beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them, and pure mates and Allah's pleasure*** **(*3:15*).**

It elaborates the preceding sentence, "and Allah is He with Whom is the best destination". It puts, in place of the above-mentioned transient and misleading desires, other things that are best for the man, because they shall remain for ever and are really good, without any shade of imperfection. Although these good enjoyments are similar to those evil desires, but they are free from all evil and bad effects, and they do not divert the man's attention from sublime Divine realities. The three good enjoyments are the paradise, the pure mates and the pleasure of Allah.

Among the blessings of the paradise are the pure mates. The verse has already mentioned the paradise. Then what was the need of mentioning the "pure mates" separately. It is because sexual intercourse is the greatest physical pleasure of a human being. It was for the same reason that the preceding verse mentioned "women" before "sons" and "hoarded treasures".

"ar-Ridwan" (اَلرِّضْوَانُ) is also read as *ar-rudwan* (اَلرُّضْوَانُ); it means pleasure, when a reality is agreeable to one's heart; *as-sukht* (اَلسُّخْطُ = displeasure) is its opposite.

The Qur'an repeatedly mentions the pleasure of Allah. Allah is pleased with a servant if he obeys His command; also, He is pleased if the servant acquires such attributes and qualities which are good and praiseworthy. But in most - nay, all - places where it has been mentioned in the Qur'an, it is related to the obedience. That is why sometimes it is described side by side with the pleasure of the servant. Allah is pleased with His servant because of his obedience; the servant is pleased with his Master because of the good reward given to him. Allah says:

Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him **(*98:8*).**

O tranquilled soul **(that art at rest)! (*89:27*).**

Return to thy Lord, well pleased **(with Him)*, well pleasing*** **(to Him) (*89:28*).**

And **(as for)** ***the foremost, the first of the Emigrants and the Helpers, and those who followed them in goodness, Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him"*** **(*9:100*).**

Pleasure of Allah has been counted here as one of those things that are better for men than the desires of this world's life. It shows that this pleasure itself is one of the things that man should desire – or, it accompanies such things that should be desired by him. That is why it has been joined in this verse with the gardens and the pure wives. In other verses, it has been jointly mentioned with grace, forgiveness and mercy of Allah:

…seeking the grace from their Lord and **(His)** ***pleasure…*** **(*5:2*).**

and forgiveness from Allah and **(His)** ***pleasure…*** **(*57:20*).**

…mercy from Himself and **(His)** ***pleasure…*** **(*9:21*).**

The verse under discussion implies a sublime reality that one may comprehend on meditating on the verses mentioned above, for example:

Allah is well pleased with them… **(*98:8*).**

and:

Well pleased with Him, well pleasing **(to Him)** **(*89:28*).**

The verses say that Allah is well pleased with them; it is different from saying that He is well pleased with their deeds. It proves that Allah shall never reject any of their prayers; He shall never disappoint them in whatever they ask Him for. It leads to us to the verse:

They have therein what they wish and with Us is more yet **(*50:35*).**

In short, when Allah is pleased with a man, that man shall be granted all his wishes without any reservation.

Now we may realize the true significance of the verses. Man thinks that if he acquires the worldly objects mentioned in the preceding verse – and especially the hoarded treasures – it will give him freedom of action; he will be able to do whatever he wishes and he will get unlimited power; but he is grossly mistaken in it. Such unlimited power comes only from the pleasure of Allah, Who has every affair in His own hands.

Qur'an: ***and Allah sees the servants*** **(*3:15*).**

The two verses showed that Allah has created for man in both worlds many bounties and pleasant things which he is wont to enjoy, for example, sexual pleasure, food, drink, property and things like that. These items are found in both worlds, with one difference – the pleasures of this world are available to both the

believers and the non-believers; but the bounties of the next world are reserved for the believers only; non-believers will have no share in it.

A question could be asked: Why this difference? Why only the believers will be given the pleasant things of the next world? The sentence, "Allah sees the servants", answers this unasked question. This difference between the believer and non-believer is based on a basic difference between their conditions, and Allah sees them and knows the difference between them. The dividing factor is piety and fear of Allah, which is found in the believer only. That attribute of piety and fear of Allah has been elaborated in the next two verses:

Those who say: 'Our Lord! surely, we believe, therefore forgive us our sins and save us from the chastisement of the fire' (***3: 16***).

The patient, and the truthful, and the devout (**ones**) ***and those who spend*** (**benevolently**) ***and those who ask for forgiveness before dawn*** (***3: 17***).

The pious believers declare that they depend on their Lord in all their affairs; and they confirm that declaration with good deeds. The unbeliever, on the other hand, thinks that he is independent of Allah; he remains entangled in worldly desires, forgets the next world and his ultimate destination. Therefore, he shall be denied the pleasures of that world. Now read again the verses:

This is the provision of the life of this world; and Allah is He with Whom is the best destination (***3: 14***).

Say: "Shall I tell you of what is better than these?" For those who guard (**against evil**) ***are gardens with their Lord, beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them, and pure mates and Allah's pleasure*** (***3: 15***).

Also, look at other verses of the same theme, for example,

Say: 'Who has prohibited the embellishment of Allah which He has brought forth for His servants and the good provisions?' Say: "These are for the believers in the life of this world, purely (***theirs***) ***on the Resurrection Day, thus do We make the signs clear fora people who know"*** (***7:32***).

If you ponder on such verses, you will easily grasp the reality of the bounties of the paradise; also, you will know how baseless is the following objection directed against them by many writers:

Objection: Look at any worldly thing; all its actions and reactions emanate from various organs and faculties which are found in its system. Allah has equipped it with those organs and faculties to protect and preserve its existence. After all, existence is not a matter of chance, nor does it happen at random or without a purpose. Here is the man; his whole body is equipped with the most efficient and most mind-boggling systems; all geared to one aim - to ingest and digest the food he takes. The digested food replaces the burnt-up cells, tissues and other parts of the body; through this ever-continuing

process, man remains alive, his body recoups its losses and even grows. Likewise, he has been given the most intricate reproductive systems – male and female complementing each other in the most awe-inspiring manner. And the purpose behind it is to preserve and propagate the human species.

What has been said about the man, is equally true for the animal and the vegetables.

The nature very cunningly put delicious taste and irresistible pleasure in these actions, compelling the creatures, and especially the man and the animal, to do it again and again in pursuit of pleasure. Immersed in the pleasure of food and sexual intercourse, man is seldom aware that the nature is using him for its own goal, that is, preservation of human race. If the food and sexual intercourse were devoid of pleasure, no man would have indulged in them – even if he was told that the survival of his race depended on it. But in the present set-up man gladly endures whatever hardships come in his way and obtains those pleasures. When he gets his desire, he feels happy and even proud of his achievement. But it is the nature that should really be proud of its planning: It wanted to keep the individual alive – and it was done through eating; and it wanted the species to survive – and this goal was attained through copulation. And what was left for the self-satisfied man? Nothing except the memory of a transient pleasure.

These worldly pleasures are ingrained in our system but for a limited and transitory purpose. There is no reason why they should be transplanted from this world to the next where that purpose cannot be attained. The pleasure of food, drink and other such things is meant to protect the body from weakness, sickness and death. The pleasure of sexual intercourse and other related things is meant for the continuity and survival of the human race. If a man is taken out of this world and given an everlasting existence which is immune from death and annihilation; a life that is free from every hardship and difficulty, and every sorrow and grief, then there is no reason why he should be encumbered with these worldly organs and faculties. Why should he be burdened with various systems of the body and a myriad of organs like stomach, kidneys, bladder, spleen, liver, etc.? After all, they were needed only in the worldly life which was transitory; what purpose would they serve in the eternal life?

Reply: Allah has created these pleasures as well as the bounties from which they spring forth, as an embellishment of this world's life. The aim is to attract the man initially to them – and through them to the life itself. Allah has said:

Surely, We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it… (***18:7***).

Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of this world… (***18:46***).

… coveting the (**transitory**) ***goods of this world's life…*** (***4:94***).

And do not stretch your eyes after that with which We have provided different classes of them, (**of**) ***the splendour of this world's life, that We may thereby try them; and the sustenance*** (***given***) ***by your Lord is better and more abiding*** (***20:131***).

Note: This verse covers all aspects of the subject under discussion.

And whatever things you have been given are only a provision of this world's life and its adornment, and whatever is with Allah is better and more lasting; do you not then understand? (***28:60***).

There are many verses of the same import. They make it clear that all the bounties of this world have been created to make this life pleasant – this life which is so short and finite. If there were no life, these bounties and their pleasures would not have been created. This is a fact and up to this point we totally agree with our adversaries.

Now comes the important reality which has been overlooked by the said objector. When he says that the man is given an everlasting existence in the next world, what meaning does he assign to the word "man"? Man has no other identity except this existence which he perfects in various stages. He is a combination of a spirit and a body – the body which is made of various organs, faculties, powers and senses. Remove these organs and faculties etc., and there will remain neither any person nor his existence – nothing will survive. Negation of body and its various systems and organs is not just a negation of man's continued existence, it is negation of the man himself.

Man, in fact, is a being who procreates, eats, drinks and copulates; he manages the things given them to, and receiving them from, others; he feels, thinks and understands; he feels happiness and is overcome by sorrow. All these actions and reactions, form his personality – we may say that he is the sum total of these faculties and systems. Then Allah transfers him from this transitory world to the everlasting abode and makes him an eternal being – either enjoying everlasting reward or undergoing abiding punishment. But Allah does not do so by nullifying man's entity and giving him another one; He only bestows on his present entity the quality of eternity, removing from it the defects of changes and death. Whatever bounties he is awarded, they must be similar to those he had enjoyed in this world; otherwise, he would not enjoy it at all. And what are the pleasures he is familiar with? There is nothing except sexual intercourse, food, drink, clothes, house, friends, and other such enjoyments. Of course, there will be one difference: While the pleasure of this world is transitory, that of the next will be eternal. Likewise, the punishments given to him should be similar to the hardships and afflictions of this world, with the same difference – while the calamities of this world are transitory, those of the next will be everlasting.

In short, man in the next world will remain the same man; there too he will need and require the same things which he needed and required here. The difference between the pleasures and displeasures of this world and those of the next is that the latter will be eternal and everlasting.

This reality manifests itself in the words of Allah, where He describes the creation of man:

And certainly, We created man of an extract of clay (***23:12***).

Then We made him a small life-germ in a firm resting-place (***23:13***).

Then We made the life-germ a clot, then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made (**in**) ***the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh; then We caused it to grow into another creation; so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators*** (***23:14***).

Then after that you will most surely, die (***23:15***).

Then surely, on the Day of Resurrection you shall be raised (***23:16***).

Note the verbs in the beginning, "We created", and "We made"; the Arabic verbs are derived from *al-khalq* (**اَلْخَلْقُ**) which implies collection, combination and re-arrangement. Then comes the verb *"ansha'nahu"* (**اَنْشَأْنَاهُ** = We caused it to grow into); it implies a change in the mode of creation. (Obviously, it refers to the relation of the soul with the body.) Lastly, comes the declaration:

Then surely, on the Day of Resurrection you shall be raised (***23:16***).

The sentence addresses the same person who was given a body and then was caused to grow into another creation. It is that combination of body and soul that will be raised on the Day of Resurrection. Likewise, He says:

He (**also**) ***said: 'Therein shall you live, and therein shall you die, and from it shall you be raised'*** (***7:25***).

In other words, the man's life is the earthly one, made of its joys and its sorrows. We have explained it to a certain extent under the verse:

Mankind was but one people; so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with the truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed. And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves; whereupon Allah guided, by His will, those who believed to the truth about which they differed. And Allah guides whom He pleases to the straight path (***2:213***)

Allah says about the bounties of this world:

This is the provision of the life of this world (***3:14***).

And then He says:

And this world's life is nothing in the hereafter but (**only some**) ***provision*** (***13:26***).

The very life of this world is a provision in the hereafter; it is a means of enjoyment in the next life. It is a very unique expression; and it opens a thousand doors of knowledge for those who may ponder on it.

The verse confirms the tradition of the Apostle of Allah (S): "As you live, so you shall die; and as you die, so you shall be raised." To sum it up, the life of man is made up of the worldly existence together with the good or evil he may have earned. It is this very life which shall be his provision in the hereafter, where he shall reap the reward or punishment according to what he thinks to be his success and prosperity, or failure and loss. He will be awarded his pleasures and enjoyments and will thus get eternal happiness; on the other hand, if he were deprived of those pleasures and enjoyments, he would remain in eternal sorrow. And this what is meant by the bounties of the Garden and the torment of the Fire.

Let us explain it further. Man has a felicity according to his nature, and an infelicity according to the same. The felicity and infelicity are related to his survival as an individual and as a species. This survival depends on his various physical actions, like eating, drinking, copulation etc. Allah has made these actions attractive to him by investing them with pleasure and satisfaction. Thus, the man proceeds on the path of perfection and begins working consciously according to his senses and will. At this stage, his perfection becomes inextricably interlocked with his senses and will. He does not recognize any perfection unless he desires it and feels it, even if it is a perfection in the eyes of the nature. For example, we do not draw any pleasure from that which we do not actively feel, even if it is a natural source of pleasure, like the health, wealth and child. On the other hand, we get pleasure from what we actively feel to be pleasant, even if it is not so in reality, like a patient who believes himself to be in good health.

At this stage, these preliminary pleasures become real perfection for the man, although according to the nature they were but preliminary ones. When Allah bestows eternity on such a man, his happiness will depend on only those pleasures which he would himself wish for and desire. And his unhappiness will emanate from that which he would not desire. Felicity of a man having perception and will emanates from that which he knows and desires; and his infelicity from that which he knows but does not desire.

The man would be happy in the hereafter only if he got the pleasures which he used to desire in the life of this world, like the food, the drink and the spouses – and even more; and this is the paradise. And he would be unhappy if he did not get that; and this is the hell. Allah says:

They shall have in them what they please (***16: 13***).

Verse 16

Qur'an: ***Those who say: "Our Lord! Surely, we believe, therefore forgive us our sins and save us from the chastisement of the fire"*** (***3: 16***).

The pronoun, "those", refers to "those who guard (against evil)", mentioned in the preceding verse. They call upon Allah and say, "Our Lord!" By declaring His lordship, they confess their own servitude and seek His Mercy to grant them what they are asking for. "Surely, we believe": The sentence is not an attempt to lay God under their obligation, because it is Allah Who lays the believers under His obligation

by helping them to believe. Allah says:

…rather Allah lays you under an obligation by guiding you to the faith… (***49:17***).

Rather it is a plea to Allah to fulfil for them the promise of forgiveness made with the believers:

…and believe in Him, He will forgive you of your faults… (***46:31***).

That is why the next clause begins with "therefore", (therefore forgive us our sins), showing that this prayer is based on the preceding clause. The assertive particle *"inna"* (**إِنَّ** = surely) emphasizes their truth, showing that they are firm in their belief.

The forgiveness of sins, per se, does not necessarily mean release from punishment. Saving a sinner from punishment is a grace which Allah bestows on him who believes in Him and worships Him. It is not a right of the servant that Allah should save him from the chastisement of the Fire, or that He should admit him into the Garden. Even the servant's belief and obedience are from the grace of Allah; obviously they cannot give the servant any right upon Allah. Of course, sometimes Allah in His mercy establishes some rights for the servants on Himself; and one of those rights is the promise given to them that He would forgive their sins and save them from the chastisement of the Fire – provided they believed in Him:

…and believe in Him, He will forgive you of your faults and protect you from a painful punishment (***46:31***).

Nevertheless, it may be inferred from some Qur'anic verses that the protection from the punishment of the Fire is one and same with the forgiveness and the Garden. Allah says:

O you who believe! shall I lead you to a merchandise which may deliver you from a painful chastisement? (***61:10***)

You shall believe in Allah and His Apostle, and struggle hard in Allah's way with your properties and your lives, that is better for you, did you but know! (***61:11***).

He will forgive you your faults and cause you to enter into gardens beneath which rivers flow, and goodly dwellings in gardens of perpetuity; that is the mighty achievement (***61:12***).

The last sentences (saying that the believers' faults shall be forgiven and they shall enter into gardens) explain in detail what the first sentence had said in a general way: "shall I lead you to a merchandise which may deliver you from a painful chastisement?" Thus, deliverance from chastisement means forgiveness of sins and entry into the garden. It is a very subtle idea, and we shall explain it in a more appropriate place, God willing.

Verse 17

Qur'an: ***The patient, and the truthful, and the devout*** **(ones)** ***and those who spend*** **(benevolently)** ***and those who ask for forgiveness before dawn*** **(*3:17*).**

The five attributes refer to "those who guard (against evil)"; these are the virtues which are essential for piety, for guarding against evil.

Patience: This virtue has been mentioned first and without any condition. It, therefore, covers all three kinds of patience: Patience (i.e., steadfastness) in obedience of Allah; patience (i.e., abstaining) from the disobedience; and patience (i.e., forbearance) in face of a calamity.

Truth: The final analysis of truth means conformity of a man's exterior – his word and deed – with his inner-self. In this sense, it covers all the other virtues mentioned here, like patience and devoutness etc. Obviously, such a meaning would not fit the context. We have, therefore, to interpret it as the truth in words only. And Allah knows better.

Devoutness: It means humility before Allah; and covers all the acts of worship and obedience.

Spending (benevolently): It is giving money to him who deserves it.

As for asking for forgiveness before dawn, it makes it necessary for the servant to pray in the last hours of night in order that he may ask for forgiveness in that prayer. Traditions say that it refers to the non-obligatory prayer after midnight, and to the asking for forgiveness in *al-qunut* (اَلْقُنُوْتُ = the special invocation before bowing down in the salat) of *al-watr* (اَلْوَتْرُ = the last, that is, eleventh *rak'ah* of the prayer after midnight; it is performed as an independent unit, with a *qunut* before bowing down). Allah has pointed to it as a way that leads man to his Lord. Vide Chapters 73 and 74, where mentioning the prayer after midnight[1]. Allah says:

Surely, this is a Reminder, so whoever pleases takes to his Lord a way **(*73:19; 76:29*).**

Verse 18

Qur'an: ***Allah bears witness that there is no god but He, and*** **(so do)** ***the angels and those possessed of knowledge, maintaining*** **(His creation)** ***with justice*** **(*3:18*).**

The verbal noun, *"ash-shahadah"* (اَلشَّهَادَةُ) originally meant "to look at", "to see"; one got knowledge of a thing or an event by being present at the time and place of occurrence and looking at it. Then it was used for describing it to others and bearing witness to the knowledge thus gained. Thereafter, the word was concurrently used for both meanings, both being treated as its real meanings. After all, there was not much distance from acquiring a knowledge to describing it to others.

Mostly one acquires knowledge of an event with one aim in view: to preserve the reality and truth – lest it

be invalidated or falsified as a result of a dispute or because of someone's attempt to conceal the truth and usurp the right, or because one really forgets it. A witness protects the truth and reality. Acquiring the knowledge and bearing the testimony accordingly is called witnessing – protecting the truth. *"al-Qist"* (اَلْقِسْطُ) is justice.

The preceding eight verses, beginning with, "(As for) those who disbelieve" and ending at, "those who ask for forgiveness before dawn", have shown that there is no god other than Allah, and that nothing can avail one against Him; whatever the man relies on in this life, whatever he thinks may avail him against his Lord, it is but an embellishment and a provision – the Lord has given him that provision in order that he may use it for a better purpose – for his success in the hereafter. But that success cannot be attained except with piety and fear of Allah. The bounties of this world are commonly enjoyed by both the believer and the unbeliever; but the bounties of the hereafter are reserved for the believers only. Those verses have described the fundamental truth; now in this verse Allah reconfirms it bearing witness that what has been told above is pure truth without a shadow of doubt.

Allah bears witness that there is no god but He. As there is no god besides Allah, nothing whatsoever can avail a man against Allah – be it his wealth or his children or any other embellishment of this life. If any of these could avail a man against Allah, it would have become a god itself; or at least it would be relying on some other god. But there is no god except Allah.

He bears this witness while He stands with justice in His actions, looks after His creation with equity. He manages the affairs of the universe through a system of cause and effect. This system has been created by Him; and ultimately every thing – the cause, the effect and their mutual relationship – returns to Him. He has placed in this highway of progress countless bounties in order that the man may enjoy and use them in this world, and then get their benefit in the hereafter. It is a provision for the road; man should make its use as a temporary measure. He should not settle permanently on the roadside.

Allah bears witness to these facts, and He is a Just Witness. Here we should point to a very fine point:

The justice of Allah is a witness for itself as well as for His Oneness. In other words, His justice is a self-sustaining reality and also proves that Allah is One. When we hear a testimony, we insist that the witness must be a just one, of approved probity; he must be proceeding on the straight path of nature, and should not deviate from it – neither to the right nor to the left. In short, he should put every thing in its right place, and should do every work at its proper time and place in a proper way. Such a man is called just and his testimony shall be accepted because it should be free from lie and falsehood. The man becomes just by adhering to the path of nature. When conformity with that path and system bestows justice on a man, how can there be any doubt about the justice of that system itself. It is a pure justice – and it is the work of Allah.

When we feel waxed on account of an event occurring in the nature, or when we find it taking place against our inclination and desire, we, in our annoyance, dispute about it and object against it.

(Interestingly we depend, in that disputation too, on the same natural system.) Then on further investigation we come to understand the reason of that event, and find that our objection had no leg to stand upon. Or may be we failed in our search and could not find any reason for it; so what have we got in our hand? Only the ignorance of the reason. But the absence of the knowledge of reason is not the same as the knowledge of the absence of reason. To make a long story short, the system found in the universe (and it is the handiwork of Allah) is pure justice. And if there were any other god besides Allah, the whole system could not be called all-encompassing justice; the work of each god would have been "just" only within the sphere of his own activity, only in his own jurisdiction. Thus, the justice of the system of creation proves the Oneness of the Creator.

Allah bears witness – and He is the Just Witness – that there is no god but He. He testifies in clear words and says: "Allah bears witness that there is no god but He". The verse contains the testimony of Allah for His Oneness; in this respect, it resembles the verse which says:

***But Allah bears witness by what He has revealed to you that He has revealed it with His knowledge* (*also*)*; and Allah is sufficient as a witness* (*4:166*).**

The angels bear witness that there is no god but He. Allah informs us in the verses of Meccan period, revealed long before this one, that the angels are His honoured servants, who act according to His commandment and declare His glory in His praise:

***Nay! they are honoured servants* (*21:26*).**

***They do not precede Him in speech and* (only) *according to His commandment do they act* (*21:27*).**

***…and the angels declare His glory in the praise of their Lord…* (*42:5*).**

And their declaration of His glory includes the testimony that there is no god besides Him.

Those possessed of knowledge bear witness that there is no god but He. They look at and ponder on His signs in the universe and in their own selves; and those signs have overwhelmed their perception and taken deep root in their minds.

The foregoing discourse makes it clear that:

First: The witness, mentioned here, is the testimony in words, as the verse manifestly shows. It does not refer to bearing witness by actions – although the Divine actions too are evidence of His Oneness. There is an intricate system permeating the creation right from the smallest particle to the whole universe; and this oneness of system bears witness to the Oneness of the Creator. Nevertheless, this verse refers to the verbal testimony only.

Second: The clause, "maintaining (His creation) with justice", is a circumstantial one, referring to the

subject, “Allah” and governed by the verb, “bear witness”. In other words, His “maintaining (His creation) with justice” is not witnessed for, neither by Allah nor by the angels or those possessed of knowledge; rather it means that Allah, maintaining (His creation) with justice, bears witness that there is no god but He; and the angels and those possessed of knowledge bear witness to His Oneness.

This meaning is obvious from the position of this clause. “there is no god but He”, is the reality that has been witnessed for; and the clause, “maintaining (His creation) with justice” has been separated from it by the words, “and (so do) the angels and those possessed of knowledge”. If this clause were a part of the testimony, it should have been joined to the former clause and written thus: ‘that there is no god but He, maintaining (His creation) with justice, and (so do) the angels...’

Some exegetes have written that the clause may be explained in both ways; but the above explanation shows that it is not so.

Someone has offered a very absurd explanation. He thinks that the testimony mentioned in this verse is not verbal, is not given in words. According to him, if the testimony were a verbal one, the belief in Oneness of God would depend on someone’s words, and not on rational reasoning. But acceptance of that word and testimony depends on the belief in God. A vicious circle!

He goes on to say: That is why some exegetes have said that the verb, “bears witness”, has been used here in a metaphorical sense. The creation, with all its interwoven, interdependent and intricate systems, proves that the whole universe has been created by One Creator. It is as though Allah Himself, through this practical demonstration, is speaking and testifying for His Oneness. Likewise, the angels worship Him and act according to His commandment, and the knowledgeable people look at the signs pointing to His Oneness – and their attitude and behaviour are tantamount to the witness that there is no god but Allah.

Reply: This explanation is based on a fallacious presumption. It is true that where we can acquire a knowledge ourselves through external senses or intellectual reasoning, we do not rely on other’s reporting or testimony. The reason being that such a reporting or testimony does not create the firm knowledge which may be gained through intellectual reasoning or external senses. But if there is a report that create as firm a knowledge as the intellectual reasoning (or even firmer than that), then it will be as much reliable as that reasoning (if not more than that). For example, a *mutawatir* report is far more effective and creates a much surer knowledge than an intellectual reasoning based on logic or analogy, although the latter too creates certainty.

Now, suppose there is a witness who, we know, cannot tell lies – because his truth and veracity has been proved by clear proofs – then his testimony would create as much certainty as a rational argument. And we know that Allah can never utter a falsehood, because nothing can be further from His sublime presence than a defect or a falsehood. His witness about His Oneness is, therefore, a true witness. Likewise, His report, that the angels and those possessed of knowledge bear witness for His Oneness,

firmly proves that they really bear this witness.[2]

Moreover, the polytheists, who ascribe to Allah some partners like idols and other deities, only believe those idols or deities to be intercessors, the links between Allah and His creation; Allah quotes them as saying:

***We do not worship them save that they may make us nearer to Allah* (*39:3*).**

Likewise, those who are guilty of the hidden polytheism, that is, those who while believing in Allah do good deeds for the sake of worldly things (e.g., to satisfy their own desire, to please some other persons, or to gain some wealth or prestige, and so on), they too believe that these things are created and given their power by Allah. In other words, whoever ascribes a partner to Allah, does so with a belief that Allah has taken that partner to Himself; no one says that the putative partner got that partnership on its own. In this background, when Allah bears witness that He has not taken any partner to Himself, it is enough to refute the claim of those who ascribe any partner to Him. Accordingly, the verse will have the same connotation as the verse:

***And they worship beside Allah what can neither harm them nor profit them, and they say: 'These are our intercessors with Allah'. Say: 'Do you* (presume to) *inform Allah of what He knows not in the heavens and the earth?' Glory be to Him and supremely exalted is He above what they set up* (with Him) (*11:18*).**

It is a rebuttal of the claim that He has got any partner. How can it be when He Himself does not know of any such partner, neither in the heaven nor in the earth? And He knows every thing; nothing is hidden from Him. The fact is that the verse under discussion is a proposition like other pieces of information that have come to us from His sublime presence, for example, the final clause in the verse mentioned just above:

***Glory be to Him and supremely exalted is He above what they set up* (with Him) (*11:18*).**

But as this proposition is in fact a claim and as the speaker is not only just but also the source of every justice, it was put before the audience in the form of a testimony, for the sake of variety in style. According to this interpretation, the meaning of the verse would be as follows: Had there been any deities other than Allah, having some say in the creation and management of the universe, in their capacity as partners with, or intercessors before Allah, undoubtedly Allah would have known them and testified for them; but He says that He does not know of any partner for Himself; it surely, means that He has no partner at all. Also, the angels are the intermediaries who carry out His commandment in respect of creation and management. Had there been any such partner, they would have known of him and admitted his presence. But they too bear witness that there is no god except Allah. Finally, the knowledgeable persons would have known of such a partner and noticed the hallmarks of his creation or management. But the only signs they see are those pointing to the One and only God, and therefore they too bear witness that He has no partner or colleague.

This argument is similar to the following one: If there were in a certain country a king, other than the king who is known to us, this king would certainly have known of him; it would have been impossible for him not to know of someone supposed to be his partner. Likewise, the officials of the government would have known of him; how could they be oblivious of his existence when they were supposed to take orders from him and enforce his dicta among the subjects? And in the same way, the knowledgeable persons among the populace would have known of his presence; after all, they are supposed to live in his kingdom and obey his laws. But the king rebuts the existence of any such partner in his kingdom, and the government officials do not know of any such person, and the knowledgeable class of the subjects have not seen anything to prove his existence. All this together makes us absolutely sure that no such man exists.

Verse 18

Qur'an: ***There is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise*** (***3:18***).

It is a sort of a parenthetical sentence, having no connection to the main argument, yet complying with the demands of the Divine sublimity. It is a set practice of the Qur'an to declare the glory of Allah and pay respect to Him, whenever something unworthy of His sublime name is mentioned. For example:

They say: 'Allah has taken a son (**to Himself**)***!' Glory be to Him*** (***11:68***).

The phrase, "Glory be to Him", pays respect to Allah because the preceding sentence had quoted a saying that was unworthy of Allah's attributes. Another verse:

And the Jews say: 'The hand of Allah is tied up!' Their hands shall be shackled and they shall be cursed for what they say (***5:64***).

Now, in the verse under discussion, the first part mentioned the testimony of Allah, the angels and those possessed of knowledge that Allah had no partner or colleague. Therefore, it was a right of Allah on the reporter of that testimony (who, incidentally, is Allah Himself) as well as on the hearers to declare that He is really One, and has no partner; everyone, on hearing that testimony, should reiterate, "there is no god but He".

There is another verse which gives a similar lesson; it admonishes the believers who heard a lie spoken against a wife of the Prophet:

And why did you not, when you heard it, say: 'It does not beseem us that we should talk of it; glory be to Thee! this is a great calumny' (***24:16***).

It is a right of Allah, when we hear a calumny and want to declare the innocence of the person slandered, to glorify Allah before that.

This sentence, "there is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise", is a sort of a praise for Allah, to give Him

His due respect; that is why it ends with the adjectives, “the Mighty, the Wise”. In other words, it is not an offshoot of the preceding witness; otherwise, it would have ended with the adjectives showing His Oneness and Justice.

Allah has a right that His oneness should be declared whenever the said witness is mentioned; He alone is the Mighty One, His might and power is absolute, there is no partner in His godhead to dilute His might; He alone is the Wise One, His wisdom does not allow anyone to interfere in the creation or the management of the affairs.

The above paragraphs show why the phrase, “there is no god but He”, has been repeated, and why it has been ended with the adjectives, “the Mighty, the Wise”. And Allah knows better.

Traditions

Muhammad Ibn Ishaq has narrated through his chain of narrators: “When the Apostle of Allah (S) defeated the Quraysh at Badr and returned to Medina, he gathered the Jews at the market of Qinaqa’ and said: ‘O Jewish people! Be on your guard against Allah, lest comes to you similar to that which has afflicted the Quraysh at Badr; and accept Islam before descends upon you that which has descended upon them. And you know that I am a prophet, sent (by Allah), you find it (written) in your books.’ They said: ‘O Muhammad! Don’t be deluded if you fought against an inexperienced people who knew nothing of the (tactics of) war and thus you got a chance to afflict them. As for us, by Allah, if we fought against you, you will know that we are indeed the (real) people.’ Then Allah revealed the verse: Say to those who disbelieve:

***‘You shall be vanquished…’* (*3: 12*)**[3]

The author says: The above tradition has also been narrated in *ad-Durr al-Manthur*, quoting Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jarir and al-Bayhaqi (in his *ad-Dala’il*), from Ibn ‘Abbas. The Shi’ah exegete, al-Qummi, too has a nearly similar tradition in his at-Tafsir. But as would have been clear from the foregoing commentary, this tradition is not in perfect harmony with the context of the verses. It seems more likely that these verses were revealed after the battle of Uhud. And Allah knows better.

Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said: “People do not enjoy, in this world or in the hereafter, any pleasure greater than the pleasure of women; and that is the word of Allah:

***It has been made to seem fair to men, the love of desires of women and sons* (*3: 14*)**

Then he said: “And certainly the people of the garden shall not savour of anything of the garden more delicious to them than the sexual intercourse - neither food nor drink.”[4]

The author says: It has been inferred from the sequence of the desired things in the verse, as the women have been placed before everything else. Then it has been said that it is only a provision of the

life of this world, and the pleasures of the paradise are better than that.

When the Imam said that sexual intercourse was the most delicious of all the pleasures, he was comparing it with the pleasures related to the body.5 He was not speaking about spiritual pleasure, for example, the delight a man gets from his own existence, or the joy a friend of Allah feels from being nearer to Him, seeing His great signs and receiving His pleasure and blessings. Rational arguments prove that the pleasure a man gets from his existence is the greatest; other proofs show that the pleasure he feels from the existence of his Lord is even greater than that; and there are numerous traditions saying that the bliss a servant enjoys from being nearer to Allah is the greatest of all pleasures. It has been narrated in *al-Kafi* from Imam al-Baqir (‘a) that he said: “‘Ali Ibn a1-Husayn (‘a) used to say: ‘It makes my Soul agreeable to early death and murder which beset us that Allah has said:

Do they not see that We come into the land, curtailing it of its sides? (***13:41***)

and it refers to the departure of the learned people (from this world).’” Other such traditions will be given in other relevant places.

Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said about the word of Allah, and hoarded treasures: *“al-Qintar* (اَلْقِنْطَارُ) is gold that could fill the hide of an ox.”6

The Imam said: *“al-Khayl al-musawwamah* (اَلْخَيْلُ مُسَوَّمَةٌ = translated here as well-bred horses) means the horses which are put on pasture.”7

Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said: “Whoever recites seventy times while he is in standing pasture, in his prayer of *al-watr* (اَلْوَتْرُ), ‘I seek forgiveness from Allah and return to Him’, and continues to do so regularly for (at least) a year, Allah writes him among those who ask for forgiveness before dawn, and he is bound to get forgiveness from Allah, the High.”8

The author says: This meaning is given also in other traditions narrated from the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a); and it is one of the sunnah of the Prophet. A similar tradition has been reported in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* through Ibn Jarir from Ja’far Ibn Muhammad (Imam as-Sadiq - (‘a)) that he said: “Whoever prays a part of the night, then asks for forgiveness at the end of the night, he will be written among those who ask for forgiveness.”

The statement of the Imam: “and he is bound to get forgiveness from Allah”, is based on their prayer mentioned in the preceding verse:

“Our Lord! surely, we believe, therefore, forgive us our sins…” (***3:16***).

Allah has quoted their prayer without any comment; it implies that He has granted the prayer.

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1. Refer to the following Verses:

O you who have wrapped up in your garments! (73:1)
Rise to pray in the night except a little (73:2)
Half of it or lessen it a little (73:3).
Or add to it and recite the Quran as it ought to be recited (73:4).
Surely, your Lord knows that you pass in prayer nearly two-thirds of the night, and (sometimes) half of it, and (sometimes) a third of it, and (also) a party of those with you; and Allah measures the night and the day. He knows that you are not able to do it, so He has turned to you (mercifully), therefore read what is easy of the Quran (73:20).
And:
They used to sleep but little in the night (51:17).
And in the morning, they asked forgiveness (51:18).
2. This reply does not meet the objection, which said: "Acceptance of (cont. page 172) that testimony depends on the belief that this verse is a true revelation from God, which in its turn depends on the belief in God. And it is a vicious circle." The author too has based his reply on the assumption that "there is a God Who is free from all defects and falsehoods and Who cannot, therefore, tell a lie". So, the objection remains in its place, and the vicious circle is not broken. If the acceptance of this witness depends on believing - through rational arguments - that Allah cannot tell a lie, then it is better to take this witness as a supporting argument of the Oneness of Allah, and not as the main proof. And then it may be accepted as a verbal testimony. (tr.).
3. Majma' al-Bayan.
4. al-Kafi; al-'Ayyashi.
5. It is obvious from the last clause of the tradition where the Imam ('a) compares it with the food and drink. (tr).
6. Majma' al-Bayan.
7. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
8. Man la yahdur al-faqih; al-Khisal.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah 'Aal-'Imran: Verses 19 - 25

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

***Surely, the religion with Allah is Islam; and those to whom the Book had been given did not differ but after knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves; and whoever disbelieves in the signs of Allah then surely, Allah is quick of reckoning* (*3:19*).**

فَإِنْ حَاجُّوكَ فَقُلْ أَسْلَمْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّهِ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِ وَقُلْ لِلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ وَالْأُمِّيِّينَ أَأَسْلَمْتُمْ فَإِنْ أَسْلَمُوا فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ

But if they dispute with you, say: "I have submitted myself* (entirely) *to Allah and* (so has) *every

one who follows me." And say to those who have been given the Book and the unlearned people: "Do you submit yourselves?" So if they submit then indeed they follow the right way; and if they turn back, then upon you is only the delivery of the message; and Allah sees the servants (***3:20***).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّينَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَيَقْتُلُونَ الَّذِينَ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْقِسْطِ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ

Surely, (**as for**) ***those who disbelieve in the signs of Allah and slay the prophets unjustly and slay those among men who enjoin justice, announce to them a painful chastisement*** (***3:21***).

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ

Those are they whose works shall become null in this world as well as the hereafter, and they shall have no helpers (***3:22***).

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِنَ الْكِتَابِ يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَىٰ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّىٰ فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ وَهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ

Have you not considered those who are given a portion of the Book? They are invited to the Book of Allah that it might decide between them, then a part of them turn back and they withdraw (***3:23***).

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَاتٍ وَغَرَّهُمْ فِي دِينِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ

This is because they say: "The fire shall not touch us but for a counted number of days", and what they have forged deceives them in the matter of their religion (***3:24***).

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جَمَعْنَاهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

Then how (**will it be**) ***when We shall gather them together on a day about which there is no doubt, and every soul shall be fully paid what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly?*** (***3:25***).

Commentary

The verses refer to the People of the Book. They are the last – and most important – of the three groups commented upon in this chapter. It was about the. People of the Book – the Jews and the Christians – that a major part of this chapter was revealed.

Verse 19

Qur'an: ***Surely, the religion with Allah is Islam*** **(*3:19*).**

We have already described the literal meaning of *"al-Islam"* (**اَلْإِسْلَامُ =** to submit, to surrender oneself to Allah). Apparently, this is the meaning intended here, because it is followed by description of the difference of the People of the Book – the difference which they created after knowing the truth, because of envy among themselves.

The explanation of the verse, therefore, would be as follows: The religion with Allah is only one; there is no difference or discrepancy in it; He has commanded His servants to follow only this religion; it was this religion which was described in the Books revealed to His prophets, and to which the Divine signs pointed. It is the Islam, that is, surrender to the truth, with correct belief and sincere deeds; Islam is to accept willingly all the knowledge and commandments sent down by Allah. Admittedly, the commandments varied in quality and quantity in various laws brought by various prophets – and Allah Himself mentions this fact in His Book – but in reality, there was only one religion. The difference between various laws was in the degree of perfection, it was not because of any discrepancy or contradiction. All were one in as much as all called the people to surrender and submit themselves to the will of Allah, to His commandments sent through His prophets.

It is this religion which Allah expects His servants to follow, which He has sent down for them. It necessarily follows that man should accept all the knowledge which has been clearly explained to him, and should stop at doubtful matters – submitting himself to the will of Allah, without trying to interpret it according to his desire and thinking.

As for the difference of the People of the Book, (the Jews and the Christians) in the matter of religion, it was not because they did not know the truth; they certainly knew it; they were aware that the religion was only one, because Allah had revealed the Book which clearly explained that religion to them. Nevertheless, they differed among themselves because they were envious and unjust. Although they continued to believe in Allah, their envy and injustice made them disbelieve in the signs of Allah, in the Book of Allah, which had clearly explained to them the reality of religion. And whoever disbelieves in the signs of Allah then surely, Allah is quick of reckoning; He will quickly call them to account in this world as well as in the hereafter. They shall be recompensed in this life with disgrace and ignominy, and in the hereafter with painful chastisement of the Fire. Why do we say that the reckoning spans both lives? It is because Allah says after two verses:

Those are they whose works shall become null in this world as well as the hereafter… **(*3:22*).**

The above explanation makes two things clear:

First: The clause, "the religion with Allah", refers to religion in the meaning of *Shari'ah*; the verse says: There is only one religion ordained by Allah, the difference between various prophets' *Shari'ah* being in

the quality only; and the quality differed because of the capabilities of the various nations for which those rules were made.

In this verse, religion does not refer to the system of creation. In other words, it does not say that all people were created with a natural instinct to believe in God.

Second: The word *"al-ayat"* (**اَلْاٰيَاتُ =** signs) refers to the verses of the Divine Books, sent to the prophets; it does not refer to the signs in the creation which lead one to the belief in one God.

The verse contains a threat to the People of the Book: They shall surely, be punished for their envy and rebellion. It is similar to the threat addressed earlier to the polytheists and disbelievers:

Say to those who disbelieve: 'You shall be vanquished and gathered together to hell…' (***3:11***).

Probably, that is the reason why the next verse joins the People of the Book and the polytheists together and says:

And say to those who have been given the Book and the unlearned people: 'Do you submit yourselves?' (***3:20***).

There is a threat implied by the tone of this question too.

Verse 20

Qur'an: ***But if they dispute with you, say: "I have submitted myself*** (**entirely**) ***to Allah and*** (**so has**) ***every one who follows me"*** (***3:20***).

Obviously, the pronoun "they" refers to the People of the Book. The disputation points to their arguments about the difference. They would say: "Our difference does not emanate from any envy or injustice; we have tried our best to acquire the knowledge of the realities of religion; nevertheless, in this endeavour each one's thinking process and wisdom has led him to a different conclusion. It does not mean that we have become arrogant or rebellious, nor that we are not submissive to Allah. Even what you call us to, O Muhammad! similarly emanates from a different process of thinking. You too have differed from us in the same way."

Allah demolishes such disputations in the next two sentences:

…say: 'I have submitted myself (***entirely***) ***to Allah…'*** (***3:20***)

and

…say to those who have been given the Book and the unlearned people: 'Do you submit yourselves?' (***3:20***)

These sentences are not an attempt to avoid the issue; they contain the clear rebuttal of the disputations of the People of the Book.

The connotation of the verse, read in conjunction with the preceding one, is as follows:

The religion with Allah is submission to Allah; the Books sent by Allah are unanimous on this point, and the untainted wisdom accepts it. Nobody can, therefore, blame you, O Muhammad! for submitting to the will and command of Allah. You are a Muslim. If the People of the Book dispute with you about the religion, then you should tell them clearly that you have submitted yourself entirely to Allah and so have done all your followers. This is the real religion and no argument can be brought against this reality. Then you should ask them whether they too would submit themselves to Allah.

If they did so, then they would indeed proceed on the right path, they would accept what had been revealed to you and to those prophets who came before you; there would be no argument against them and your mutual difference would come to an end. On the other hand, if they turned back, then do not enter into any disputation or argument with them. It is a self-evident truth that religion is total surrender to Allah, and there is no point in labouring to prove a self-evident reality. You should just convey the Divine message to them and that is all.

Allah has joined the People of the Book and the unlearned polytheists together in this verse:

And say to those who have been given the Book and the unlearned people: 'Do you submit yourselves?' (***3:20***)

It is because both believed in religion and in Allah, although they differed because of their respective beliefs of monotheism and polytheism.

The phrase, translated here as "I have submitted myself (entirely) to Allah", literally means, I have submitted my face to Allah. *"al-Wajh"* (**اَلْوَجْهُ =** face, front). Most of the senses and organs of perception are concentrated in the face; therefore, submitting one's face to Allah signifies total submission to Allah's will, willing obedience to His commandments.

The clause,

and (**so has**) ***every one who follows me,*** (***3:20***)

shows the excellence of the Prophet, and also enhances the rank of the followers by joining them to him (S).

Qur'an: ***And say to those who have been given the Book and the unlearned people: 'Do you submit yourselves?' So, if they submit then indeed, they follow the right way; and if they turn back, then upon you is only the delivery of the message*** (***3:20***)***.***

“The unlearned people” refers to the polytheists; it shows the contrast between them and the People of the Book; also the People of the Book used to call them unlearned, as Allah quotes them as saying:

There is not upon us in the matter of the unlearned people any way **(to reproach)** (***3:75***).

“al-Ummiyy” (**اَلْأُمِّيُّ =** one who does not read or write).

The clauses “and if they turn back, then upon you is only the delivery of the message; and Allah sees the servants” signify three things:

First: Undesirability of unnecessary disputations; entering into arguments with someone who denies a self-evident truth would inevitably lead to obstinacy and obtrusiveness.

Second: The total authority concerning the people and their affairs is of Allah; the Prophet is an Apostle and a conveyer of the Divine message; he is not a guard to watch over men. Allah says:

You have no concern in the affair (***3:128***).

You are not a watcher over them (***88:22***).

Third: The clauses contain a threat to the People of the Book and the polytheists; the connotation cannot be lost to one who reads the clauses. The verses, in their theme and the threat, are similar to the verses:

Say: ‘We believe in Allah and **(in)** ***that which has been revealed to us, and*** **(in)** ***that which was revealed to Ibrahim and Isma’il and Ishaq and Ya’qub and the tribes, and*** **(in)** ***that which was given to Musa and Isa, and*** **(in)** ***that which was given to the prophets from their Lord, we do not make any distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit’*** (***2:136***).

If then they believe in like of what you believe in, they are indeed on the right course, and if they turn back, then they are only in great dissension; so Allah will suffice you against them, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing (***2:137***).

According to this verse if the People of the Book turn back, then it means that they are obstinate in their opposition and heedless to the truth; then it comforts the Prophet in a way that contains a threat to his adversaries. Likewise, the verse under discussion tells the Prophet, “and if they turn back, then upon you is only the delivery of the message”; it is a hint that the Prophet should leave them to their Lord Who sees His servants and Who would deal with them in a suitable way, and punish them as they deserve.

Some exegetes have written that the verse gives the people freedom of religious belief and that there is no compulsion in religion. But the explanation given above manifestly shows that it implies the opposite of freedom; it threatens the disbelievers with chastisements if they did not submit themselves to Allah.

Qur’an: ***Allah sees the servants*** (***3:20***).

It could have been phrased as “Allah sees the men” or “Allah sees them”; instead, Allah chose the epithet, “the servants”, to remind them that they are His servants and slaves; His order against them will certainly be carried out in its entirety, because they are totally dependent on Him, whether they consciously submitted to Him or not; they can never escape His judgment.

Verses 21 – 22

Qur’an: ***Surely,*** **(as for)** ***those who disbelieve in the signs of Allah and slay the prophets unjustly and slay those among men who enjoin justice, announce to them a painful chastisement*** **(*3:21*).**

Qur’an: ***Those are they whose works shall become null in this world as well as the hereafter, and they shall have no helpers*** **(*3:22*).**

The verse deals with another aspect of the subject; nevertheless, it has a threatening overtone, not unlike the last parts of the preceding verse. This verse too speaks about the People of the Book, especially the Jews.

Those who disbelieve in the signs of Allah and slay the prophets unjustly and slay those among men who enjoin justice **(*3:21*).**

The verbal form used in these sentences implies persistence and continuity. It conveys the idea that it was their ingrained habit, a characteristic trait, to disbelieve in divinely sent communications, to reject the revealed truth out of envy and arrogance, to murder the prophets – and such a slaying was undoubtedly against justice and to kill those of their compatriots who called them to justice and tried to keep them away from injustice and rebellion. And the history of the Jews confirms that these things were a part of their national character; they had murdered a multitude of their prophets and good believers who enjoined the good and forbade the evil. The Christians too followed in their footsteps and killed countless good Christians.

Announce to them a painful chastisement **(*3:21*).**

It announces that the wrath of Allah had descended upon them. The chastisement was not confined to the hereafter only; they were to be punished in this life too. Read for the proof the next

Those are they whose works shall become null in this world as well as the hereafter **(*3:22*).**

In the hereafter they shall have to endure the painful chastisement of the Fire; in this world, they were punished with mass murders, dispersion, loss of lives and properties, and Allah has inflicted them with enmity and hatred among themselves which is to continue up to the Day of Resurrection, as the Qur’anic verses have said (e.g., 5:14).

This verse (3:22), moreover, proves two things:

First: If a man killed someone just because the latter used to enjoin the good and forbid the evil, the killer's good deeds would become null and void, would be forfeited.

Second: On the Day of Resurrection, intercession shall not avail such a killer, because Allah says: "and they shall have no helpers".

Verse 23

Qur'an: ***Have you not considered those who are given a portion of the Book? They are invited to the Book of Allah that it might decide between them, then a part of them turn back and they withdraw*** (***3:23***).

It further shows how steeped the People of the Book are in their envy and rebellion. They rebel against Allah by creating disputes and frictions in religion. When they are invited to the Book of Allah in order that it might decide between them, they do not agree to it, they turn away and withdraw from it. This tendency of theirs emanates from their self-delusion that the Fire shall not touch them but for a few days; they are deceived by their own forgery!

The words, *"those who are given a portion of the Book"* refer to the People of the Book. This changed phrasing points to a well-known historical fact: The Jews and the Christians do not have in their hands the complete Books; what they have got is only some portions of the revealed Scriptures. They have altered, changed and edited the Books so extensively that the major part of the original has been lost for ever. The last sentence too alludes to this fact: "and what they have forged deceives them in the matter of their religion".

The verse, in short, says - and Allah knows better - that the Jews and the Christians turn back from the judgment of the Book of Allah, being deceived by their own claim, and misled by what they have themselves forged; they demonstrate, by their behaviour, that they do not need the Book of Allah.

Verse 24

Qur'an: ***This is because they say: "The fire shall not touch us but for a counted number of days", and what they have forged deceives them in the matter of their religion*** (***3:24***).

Its meaning is quite clear. Usually, a man is not deceived by his own deception; then how did those people fall prey to their own forgery? It was because the deceived people had not forged it themselves; it was forged by a past generation. Then why did the Qur'an ascribe that deception and forgery to those Jews and Christians who were contemporaries of the Prophet? It was because they were one nation - the later generations were (and are) pleased with what their ancestors had done.

Moreover, it was not improbable for the People of the Book, and especially the Jews, to be carried away by their own delusion - knowing well that it was a delusion - or to boast of their exploits in this field.

Allah has described their involvement in an even more astonishing deception:

And when they meet those who believe they say: 'We believe'; and when they are alone one with another they say: 'Do you talk to them of what Allah has disclosed to you that they may argue with you by this before your Lord? Do you not then understand?' (***2:76***).

What! Do they not know that Allah knows what they conceal and what they proclaim? (***2:77***).

Also, man's actions emanate for the most part from the traits ingrained in his psyche; he always returns to the things which his psychological build up has made attractive to him. When he is attracted by that pull, knowledge is left behind and becomes ineffective. For example, the drug addicts, the chain-smokers and the people like them use those things although they know that they are extremely harmful and ruinous to their health, and they are fully aware that such things must be avoided. But the ingrained habit becomes the second nature, and the addict is irresistibly pulled to those "pleasures", without giving his knowledge or thinking power any chance to influence his decision.

Likewise, the People of the Book, as a result of their perennial indiscipline, had acquired the traits of arrogance, envy and rebellion, and were overcome by the irresistible urge to base desires. This had become a second nature to them. And under its influence they forged many things – the forgeries that were disastrous to their religion. And they repeated those forgeries – knowing fully well that they were lies – so often and so long that they themselves began believing in them, and the repeated falsehood replaced the truth in their mind; they fell prey to their own devices. Psychologists know that such phenomenon does occur from time to time. The continuously repeated and diligently taught forgeries got hold of the whole nations to such an extent that they became deceived in the matters of their religion, and refused to submit themselves to Allah and accept the truth revealed in His Book.

Verse 25

Qur'an: ***Then how*** (**will it be**) ***when We shall gather them together on a day about which there is no doubt, and every soul shall be fully paid what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly?*** (***3:25***).

The phrase governed by the interrogative "how" was omitted because it could be understood from the context; it could be something like, how will it be, or, how will they fare.

The verse continues the threatening mode of the preceding verses. It shows that those, who turn back and withdraw when called to the Book of Allah, cannot defeat the Divine judgment. The Day of Reckoning is approaching fast; how will they behave on that Day about which there is no doubt? Then they will be quite submissive, in clear contrast with their arrogance and haughtiness of this world! It was to show this contrast that Allah used the word,

We shall gather them together (***3:25***)

and did not say, We shall raise them, or, We shall make them alive.

The meaning of the verses is as follows – and Allah knows better: When the People of the Book are invited to the Book of Allah in order that it might decide between them, then a part of them turn back and withdraw; it is because they are deceived by what they have forged in the matter of their religion, and also because they arrogantly refuse to submit to the truth. Well, what will they do when We shall gather them together on the day about which there is no doubt, the day when the judgment will be decisively, truthfully and justly pronounced, and every soul shall be fully paid what it had earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly, because the judgments will be based on justice? As they know this fact, it is necessary for them not to turn away from the Book of Allah, not to withdraw from it, as though they could defeat the purpose of Allah or could overrule His decrees! Do not they know that every power belongs to Allah, and that this life is but a trial?

Traditions

Muhammad Ibn Muslim said: "I asked the Imam about the word of Allah, Surely, the religion with Allah is Islam. And he said: 'that (Islam) which contains (true) belief'".[1]

Ibn Shahrashub narrates from Imam al-Baqir ('a) about the word of Allah: Surely, the religion with Allah is Islam, that he said: "Submitting to 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib in (his) mastership."

The author says: The explanation is based on the principle of the "flow" of the Qur'an. And probably the preceding tradition too has the same connotation.

The same narrator reports that 'Ali ('a) said: "I shall define Islam as no one has defined before me, and no one shall do after me. Islam is submission, and submission is conviction, and conviction is affirmation, and affirmation is acknowledgement, and acknowledgement is discharge (of obligation), and discharge (of obligation) is action. The believer has taken his religion from his Lord. Certainly. The belief of a believer is recognized in his deed, and the disbelief of an unbeliever is recognized in his denial. O people! (look after) your religion, (look after) your religion, because a sin in it is better than a good (deed) in other (religions); the sin (committed while believing) in this (religion) will be forgiven, and the good (deed) in other (religions) will not be accepted."

The author says: The words of the Imam, "I shall define Islam": *"an-Nisbah"* (**اَلنِّسْبَةُ** = literally, relation, to relate) here means to define; Chapter 112 (the Unity) has been named in some traditions as the chapter of *an-nisbah* of Allah.

The Imam has defined all the terms with the help of their concomitants, except the first word, *"al-Islam"* (**اَلْإِسْلَامُ** = submission) which has been explained with its more clearly under-stood synonym *"at-taslim"* (**اَلتَّسْلِيْمُ** = submission). We may also possibly take the word, Islam, to signify the religion brought by Muhammad (S); in that case the first phrase too (Islam is submission) would be a definition with a

concomitant.

However, the Imam means to say: This religion known as Islam entails submission of man, in his person and his action, to Allah; he surrenders his soul and all his activities to Allah's command and will; it is called *at-taslim* (submission); *at-taslim* in its turn entails firm conviction and certainty about Allah, in a way as not to allow any doubt whatsoever about Him; conviction entails affirmation of the religion's truth; and affirmation entails acknowledgement of its firmness, that is, the fact that religion is firmly rooted and unshakable; and this acknowledgement leads the believer to discharge all his obligations accordingly, and the discharge of obligations necessitates acting according to the dictates of religion.

"And the good (deed) in other (religions) will not be accepted", that is, the doer will not be given its reward in the hereafter. Or it may mean: It will not create any good impression with Allah either in this world or in the hereafter. As we have explained the sentence, it is not in conflict with other traditions which say that the unbelievers are rewarded for their good deeds with the good provisions of this world. Allah has said:

***So he who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it* (*99:7*).**

Abu 'Ubaydah al-Jarrah said: "I said: 'O Apostle of Allah! which people shall suffer the severest punishment on the Day of Resurrection?' He said: 'A man who killed a prophet or (murdered) a man who enjoined good and forbade evil.' Then he recited: '(those who) slay the prophets unjustly and slay those among men who enjoin justice...' Then he said: 'O Abu 'Ubaydah! the Israelites killed forty-three prophets in one hour. Then stood up one hundred and twelve persons from among the devout Israelites and enjoined those killers to do good and forbade them (to do any) evil. Thereupon, they killed all those (devout persons) by the end of the same day. And it is this (massacre) which Allah has mentioned (in this verse).'"[2]

The author says: The same explanation has been narrated in *ad-Durr al-Manthur*, through Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim, from Abu 'Ubaydah.

It is reported in *ad-Durr al-Manthur*: Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abi Hatim have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "The Apostle of Allah (S) went to a group of the Jews in (their) house of *midrash*, and invited them to Allah. al-Nu'man Ibn 'Amr and Harth Ibn Zayd asked him: 'On which religion are you? O Muhammad!' He said: "On the faith and religion of Ibrahim.' They said: 'But Ibrahim was a Jew!' Thereupon the Apostle of Allah (S) told them: 'Then bring to me the Torah; it is (the judge) between you and us.' They rejected his (proposal). Then Allah revealed:

***Have you not considered those who are given a portion of the Book?...* (*3:23*).**

***...deceives them in the matter of their religion* (*3:24*).**

The author says: Some people have narrated that the verse, "Have you not considered...", was

revealed in connection with the episode of stoning. We shall give its detail under the verse:

O People of the Book! indeed has come to you Our Apostle making clear to you much of what you concealed of the Book… (***5:15***).

However, these two traditions are from *ahad*,3 and are not so strong.

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1. al-'Ayyashi.
2. Majma' al-Bayan.
3. Ahad, the plural of al-wahid (اَلْوَاحِد = one). In Islamic terminology it is used for a tradition which is not narrated by a great enough number of narrators as to create a certainty of its truth. (tr).

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah 'Aal-'Imran: Verses 26 - 27

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Say: "O Allah, Master of the Kingdom! Thou givest the Kingdom to whomsoever Thou pleasest and takest away the Kingdom from whomsoever Thou pleasest, and Thou exaltest whom Thou pleasest and abasest whom Thou pleasest; in Thine hand is the good; surely, Thou hast power over all things (***3:26***).

تُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

Thou makest the night to enter into the day and Thou makest the day to enter into the night, and Thou bringest forth the living from the dead and Thou bringest forth the dead from the living, and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest, without measure (***3:27***).

Commentary

The two verses do have a sort of connection with the preceding talk about the People of the Book, and especially the Jews. They were earlier threatened with the chastisements of this world and the hereafter.

It was a part of that chastisement that Allah deprived them of their kingdom, and they were inflicted by abasement and humiliation up to the Day of Resurrection; also, they lost so many lives and their rule was shorn of sovereignty.

Apart from that, the main theme of the chapter, as was mentioned in the beginning, is to show that the creation and all its affairs are totally in the hands of Allah; He is the Master of the Kingdom, He gives Kingdom, honour and good to whomsoever He pleases; and takes away the Kingdom, honour and good from whomsoever He pleases.

The verses are, thus, in total conformity with the theme of the chapter.

Verse 26

Qur'an: ***Say: 'O Allah, Master of the Kingdom!*** (***3:26***).

The verse advises the believer to seek refuge with Allah – in Whose hand is all the good and all the power – in order that he may remain unaffected by baseless ideas of the hypocrites, the polytheists and the People of the Book, the groups who were under the illusion that they had the kingdom and honours in their hands and that in this way they were independent of Allah! Such thoughts were their undoing; they were totally lost and ruined because of this illusion. The believer should steer clear of such ideas and should present himself with humility before Allah Who bestows good and gives sustenance without measure to whomsoever He pleases. The meaning of *"al-milk"* (**اَلْمِلْكُ =** property, possession) is known to, and understood by, all; and we recognize it as a lawful concept and reality.

"Possession" is of two kinds:

1. **Real Possession:** It is the ability inherent in a creature, for example, man, to dispose, manage and manipulate another thing in any way he likes. For example, a man may use or not use his eyesight, depending on his choice; he may use his hand in getting hold of a thing or letting it go; and so on. There exists between such a possessor and such a property a real, unchangeable and untransferable relationship; a relationship that makes the property dependent on the possessor for its very existence – it cannot be separated from the possessor without being destroyed. In the above example, the eye or the hand cannot be removed from the man without losing its usefulness and even its existence in the process.

In this category comes the possession and ownership, which belongs to Allah, of this universe with all its big and small components, as well as of all its affairs. He has the right, authority and power to do with it, and in it, as He pleases.

2. **Conventional Possession:** It is the possession based on man-made convention; the ability of, let us say, a man to dispose and manage a thing, as he likes – the authority based on the convention laid down by wise men to achieve the society's aims. They looked at the plane of creation and found it

replete with real possession and its effects; so they invented a similar institution for the plane of civilization and laid down the system of the conventional possession for the society. Their goal was to obtain benefits from the world's provisions similar to those a real owner gets from his real possession. This relationship between a conventional owner and his property is not a real thing; it is just an abstract idea based on society's convention; and that is why such an ownership, unlike the real one, may be transferred to another person through trade, gift, inheritance etc.

"al-Mulk" (**اَلْمُلْكُ** = kingdom) too is a sort of *"al-milk"* (possession) inasmuch as the king or ruler owns what the people of a country do own; he manages and disposes what the people have in their possession, without there occurring any clash between their management and his, between their will and his. It is in fact an ownership over ownership – the king's ownership being vertically above the public's; in the same way as, for example, a master owns his slave and also all that is owned by the slave.

The kingdom too, being a sort of possession, is divided into two categories: the real and the conventional.

Allah is the absolute Owner of every thing; His is the absolute Lordship and absolute management; He is the Creator of every thing and God of every thing. He says:

That is Allah, your Lord, the Creator of every thing; there is no god but He (***40:62***).

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His (***2:255***).

There are numerous verses showing that whatever is called a "thing" exists because of Allah, is dependent in its quiddity and existence on Him; it cannot stand without Him. Nothing can prevent Allah from disposing and managing a thing in any way He pleases; and as we explained earlier, it is the real possession.

And He is also the absolute King of the creation, because He is its absolute Owner. There is a system of ownership pervading the universe – the causes own their effects; every thing owns its active faculties and powers; those faculties and powers own their activities. For example, man owns all his limbs, organs and faculties like the eyes and ears; and the eyes and ears own their faculties of sight and hearing. As mentioned above, Allah owns every thing; therefore, He owns every owner as well as all his (or its) possessions; and this is what is called the Kingship. He is therefore the absolute King of all the creation. He has said:

To Him belongs the Kingdom, and to Him is due (***all***) ***praise*** (***64:1***).

…with a most Powerful King (***54:55***).

There are numerous such verses. Needless to say, it is the real possession and kingships.

As for the conventional possession and kingship, this too actually belongs to Allah. Allah is the

conventional Owner too, because it is He Who bestows the ownership to every thing which owns any thing. He could not do so unless He Himself did own that thing; otherwise, it would have looked as if He was bestowing a thing, He did not own to someone who could not own! Allah says:

And give them of the wealth of Allah which He has given to you… (***24:33***).

Also, He is the conventional King, because He is the Law-giver and the Ruler, Who regulates, by His order, all the things which the people own, just as the kings regulate the financial affairs of their subjects. Allah says:

Say: 'I seek refuge in the Lord of men' (***114:1***).

The King, of men (***114:2***).

And He gives you all that you ask Him; and if you count Allah's bounties, you will not be able to compute them" (***14:34***).

And spend out of what He has made you to be successors of (***57:7***).

And what reason have you that you should not spend in Allah's way? And Allah's is the inheritance of the heavens and the earth (***57:10***).

To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To Allah, the One, the Subduer (**of all**) (***40:16***).

The verses show that Allah owned all that is in our hands before it came in our possession, and He continues to own it even when it belongs to us, and He will remain its owner (or let us say, Inheritor) when we are gone. His Kingship and ownership remain unaffected throughout.

It appears from the above that the words, "O Allah, Master of the Kingdom", point to the following three themes:

First: To Allah belongs every kingdom; He is the Owner of the Kingdom. In other words, He is the King of the kings; He gives every king his kingdom, every ruler his rule; He says:

…because Allah had given him the Kingdom (***2:258***).

And We have given them a grand kingdom (***4:54***).

Second: The Divine name "Allah", precedes the epithet, "Master of the Kingdom"; this arrangement explains the basis of His Kingship; He is the Master of the Kingdom because He is Allah, Great is His Majesty!

Third: "The Kingdom" here refers to its both kinds - the real and the conventional. (And Allah knows better!) The matters mentioned in the first verse:

Thou givest the Kingdom to whomsoever Thou pleasest and takest away the Kingdom from whomsoever Thou pleasest, and Thou exaltest whom Thou pleasest and abasest whom Thou pleases (***3:26***).

refer to various aspects of the conventional kinship; while the next verse refers to the affairs of the real kingship. Allah is, therefore, the absolute Master of the Kingdom.

Qur'an: ***Thou givest the Kingdom to whomsoever Thou pleasest and takest away the Kingdom from whomsoever Thou pleasest*** (***3:26***).

The statement is unrestricted and thus covers every kingdom, no matter whether it is obtained legally or illegally, nor whether it is based on justice or injustice.

(We have explained this subject under the following verse:

...because Allah has given him the kingdom (***2:258***)).

The kingdom, *per se*, is one of the bounties of Allah; it has the potential of doing good in, and improving, the human society. Man, by his very nature, loves to rule and dominate over others. A kingship, which falls into the hands of an undeserving person, is disliked and condemned, not because it is a kingship, but because it has been captured by one who has no right to it, (e.g., when someone usurps it through coup d'etat), or because of his bad character, injustice and oppression. This second reason is, in a way, another facet of the first.

To sum it up, if the king or the ruler is good, able and just, then the kingdom is a bounty of Allah for him. On the other hand, if he is undeserving and undesirable, then for him it is an affliction and trial. In either case, it is attributed to Allah, and is a means of trial, by which Allah tests His servants – the ruler and the ruled.

We have described earlier somewhere that when the Qur'an attaches the proviso of "Allah's pleasure", as in this verse, it does not mean that Allah's actions are done without a reason or without an aim. This proviso is a reiteration that Allah's power and His will are supreme; that Allah is not under any compulsion to do or not to do any particular work; nobody can oblige Him in any way; whatever He does, it is done according to His absolute will and power, and not because someone compels Him to do so. Nevertheless, all His actions are done and all His decrees issued for one purpose: the good and well-being of His servants.

Qur'an: ***And Thou exaltest whom Thou pleasest and abasest whom Thou pleases*** (***3:26***).

"al-'lzz" (**اَلْعِزُّ =** to be hard to get; to be difficult to obtain). We say for a rare book or thing that it is *'aziz al-wujud* (**عَزِيْزُالْوُجُوْدِ**); a man having a high prestige in his tribe, country or nation is called *'aziz al-qawm*, because it is difficult to subdue or overpower him. Then it was used for all types of difficulties; it is said *"ya'izzu 'alayya kadha"* (**يَعِزُّعَلَيَّ كَذَا =** it is hard for me to; it grieves me to). Allah says:

…grievous to him is your falling into distress… (***9:128***).

Also, it is used for overpowering. There is a proverb: *man 'azza bazza* (**مَنْ عَزَّ بَزَّ** = he who vanquishes, takes the booty). Allah says:

…and he has prevailed against me in discourse (***38:23***).

But the basic meaning in all these usages is the same.

Opposite to it is *"al-dhull"* (**اَلذُّلُّ** = to be easy to get or subdue – by real or supposed overpowering). Allah says:

And abasement and humiliation were brought down over them (***2:61***).

And lower unto them the wing of humility out of compassion (***17:24***).

…humble before the believers… (***5:54***).

The words translated as "abasement", "humility" and "humble" are various derivatives of *"al-dhull".*

al-'Izzah (**اَلْعِزَّةُ** = exaltation; might; honour) is an inseparable attribute of the absolute Kingship of Allah. Whoever, other than Allah, possesses any thing he gets it is because Allah has given him its ownership; whoever gets kingship, it is because Allah gives him that kingdom. Therefore, real honour and exaltation belong only to Allah; whatever honour is enjoyed by others, it is but a gift bestowed by Allah. He says:

Do they seek honour from them? Then surely, all honour is for Allah (***4:139***).

…and to Allah belongs the might and to His Apostle and to the believers… (***63:8***).

This is the true honour, real might. What others have got is only abasement in the guise of might, humiliation behind the mask of honour. Allah says:

Nay! those who disbelieve are in (**self-**) ***exaltation and opposition*** (***38:2***).

Then to show that that self-exaltation is just an allusion, Allah immediately reminds them:

How many did We destroy before them of the generations, then they cried while the time of escaping had passed away (***38:3***).

Abasement and dishonour, being the opposite of might and honour, are governed by the opposite factors. Everything, other than Allah, by itself is abase and without any honour – except him who is exalted by Allah:

And Thou exaltest whom Thou pleasest and abasest whom Thou pleases (***3:26***).

Qur'an: ***in Thine hand is the good; surely, Thou hast power over all things*** **(*3:26*).**

"a1-Kahyr" (**اَلْخَيْرُ =** the good) basically connotes 'selection'. We call a thing *'khayr'* (good) when we compare it with another thing and choose it – thus it is *'khayr'* (good) because it is the chosen one, the selected on. And why did we select it? Because it was more suitable for the purpose we had in mind. In other words, this thing is good because it is a means to obtain the ultimate good, that is, the purpose aimed at. The real "good" is that which is desired for itself. It is called good because it is chosen when compared with other things.

The word "good" carries a connotation of favourable comparison with other things. This. has given rise to a misunderstanding that it is an adjective of comparative degrees, and that originally it was *akhyar* (**اَخْيَرُ**). But it is not so; it is not in comparative degree, although its root meaning carries a comparative value, and therefore it is often used as a substitute for "better", "more exalted" etc. We say: Zayd is *afdal* (**اَفْضَلُ =** more exalted) than 'Amr; the same meaning is conveyed when we say: Zayd is *khayrun* (**خَيْرٌ**) than 'Amr. We may say: *Zayd afdaluhuma* (**زَيْدٌ اَفْضَلُهُمَا**), or we may change it to *Zayd khayruhuma* (**زَيْدٌ خَيْرُهُمَا**) both sentences will convey the same meaning: Zayd is the better of the two. But this interchangeabilitity of the two words does not make *al-khayr* an adjective of comparative degree; otherwise, it would have been conjugated on the paradigm of comparative degree, i.e., on the paradigm of *"aftdal, afadil, fudla, fudlayat"* (**اَفْضَلُ،اَفَاضِلُ،فُضْلي،فُضْلَيَاتُ**). But *"khayr"* is not conjugated like that. Instead we say: *khayr, akhyar, khayrah, khayrat* (**خَيْرٌ،اَخْيَارٌ،خَيْرَةٌ،خَيْرَاتٌ**) like *shaykh, ashyakh, shaykhah, shaykhat* (**شَيْخٌ،اَشْيَاخٌ،شَيْخَةٌ،شَيْخَاتٌ** = old man, old men, old woman, old women). Therefore, it is a *as-sifat al-mushabbahah* (**اَلصِّفَةُ الْمُشَبَّهَةٌ =** adjective denoting an inseparable attribute).

Moreover, *khayr* is also used in places where the context does not allow any comparison. For example:

Say: "What is with Allah is better (*khayrun* = **خَيْرٌ**) ***than sport..."*** **(*62:11*).**

Now there is no good in the sport so that it could be said, "better than sport". What it actually means is: What is with Allah is good, and the sport is not good. (Those who think that the word *al-khayr*, is in comparative degree, say that in the sentences like the above, the word loses its comparative value. Such explanations need no comment!) The fact is that *al-khayr* gives a connotation of selection and choosing, and generally, but not necessarily, the thing which is not selected also has some good in it.

The above discourse shows that Allah is "good" absolutely and without any reservation or condition, because He it is Who is the ultimate goal and destination of every thing. Yet, the Qur'an has never used this word as a Divine name, although it has been used as an adjective referring to Allah:

And Allah is better and more abiding **(*20:73*).**

Are sundry lords better or Allah the One, the Supreme? **(*12:39*).**

Of course, the word, *khayrun* (**خَيْرٌ =** better, best) has been used as the first construct of those Divine

names which are in genitive case; for example:

***And Allah is the best* (*khayr*) *of sustainers* (*62:11*).**

***And He is the best of the judges* (*7:87*).**

***And He is the best of deciders* (*6:57*).**

***And He is the best of the helpers* (*3:150*).**

***And Allah is the best of planners* (*3:54*).**

***And Thou art the best of deciders* (*7:89*).**

***And Thou art the best of the forgivers* (*7:155*).**

***And Thou art the best of inheritors* (*21:89*).**

***And Thou art the best to cause to alight* (*23:29*).**

***And Thou art the best of the merciful ones* (*23:109*).**

The reason for this fine distinction in usage is not difficult to understand. As the word, *al-khayr*, has a connotation of selection and option, it was not used as a name of God – it would not have been proper to compare Him in a general way with others, because all are subservient to Him. But there was no such difficulty in using the word as an adjective or as a relative description in a genitive case.

The sentence, "in Thine hand is the good", has a semantic value of restriction: the definite article in "the good" makes it cover all and every good; and the adverbial clause of place, "in Thine hand", coming at the beginning of the sentence, puts all the good exclusively into the hand of Allah. The meaning therefore is: Every good, which anyone may ever desire, is only under Thy management and control; it is Thou Who gives it to whomsoever Thou pleasest.

The sentence gives the reason of the preceding ones, which mention His giving the kingdom and honour to whomsoever He pleases and taking them away from whomsoever He pleases. It explains the particular, that is, bestowing kingdom and honour, with the help of a general attribute, "good": "good" is an all-encompassing term, which covers other bounties too. Allah controls every "good", and kingdom and honour are two of those good things; therefore, it is Allah who bestows them to whomsoever He pleases.

The taking away of the kingdom. and abasing are 'good' in the same way as giving the kingdom and exalting are. It is true that they are "evil"; but what is evil? It is absence of good. Taking away the kingdom is the same as not giving the kingdom; abasing is the same as not exalting. To say, Allah has the power to give it, is the same as saying, He has the power to withhold it.

When every good emanates from Him, then every withholding of the good must necessarily emanate from Him. What we have to be careful about is that we should never attribute to Him any thing which is beneath His sublime sanctity; for example, we cannot say that the sins, errors and improprieties of the servants emanate from Him. Nevertheless, we may say that Allah leaves the sinners to do as they wish, and that He does not help such servants. (We have explained this matter before.)

Let us look at this matter from another angle: There are good and evil in the sphere of creation, like giving the kingdom and taking it away, exalting someone and abasing him and so on. The good, at this level, is a positive reality, and there is no difficulty in attributing it to Allah. And the evil, at this level, is just not giving the good to someone, and even here, there is no difficulty in attributing it to Allah; He is the only Master of every "good"; if He gives to someone from that good, then He should be thanked; if, on the other hand, He withholds it from someone, then nobody has any right to ask Him why, or to compel Him to give it. Whatever He does, is done for the general well-being of His creatures, for the good of the system which pervades every single component of the universe.

Likewise, there are good and evil in the sphere of legislation - various kinds of obedience and disobedience. Man is responsible for these actions, inasmuch as they are done by his own choice and will. Certainly, such actions can never be attributed to other than the man himself. It is this relationship between man and his actions which makes it possible to say, this is good, or, that is bad. If man had no freedom of will and choice, none of his deeds could be termed as good or evil. And these deeds cannot be attributed to Allah, except in the sense that He helps (in good deeds) or withholds His help (from evil ones), according to the reasons demanding such help or its withdrawal.

It shows that the good, all of it, is in the hand of Allah, and all the affairs of the universe - gain and loss; good and evil - emanate from that good.

An exegete has written: There is a deleted by implied word in the sentence, "in Thine hand is the good"; according to him, it actually says, in Thine hand is the good and evil. He gives the example of another verse:

And He has given you garments to preserve you from the heat (***16:81***).

In which 'and cold', is implied.

We understand the motive of the above assertion. He wanted to keep his distance from the Mu'tazilities. The Mu'tazilites do not attribute an evil to Allah, not even indirectly. Of course, their stand was wrong and we have already dealt with this topic in a previous volume. But it does not justify such strange implied additions to the speech of God; it is astonishing to see someone having the audacity to hazard such explanations in respect of the Qur'anic verses.

Qur'an: ***Thou hast power over all things*** (***3:26***).

It shows why all good is in Allah's hand. He has absolute and exclusive power over every thing; it follows that anyone who has got any power, gets it by the authority of Allah. If not so, then that person's power would be outside the purview of Allah's power; in that case, Allah would not have power over all things. But we know that He has absolute and all-encompassing power; and therefore, every imaginable good is in His power. Consequently, all the good, that emanates from others' hands, is, in fact, bestowed by Allah. In short, the good, per se, is in His hands only. It was this exclusiveness to which the preceding sentence had referred: "in Thine hand is the good".

Verse 27

Qur'an: ***Thou makest the night to enter into the day and Thou makest the day to enter into the night*** (***3:27***).

al-Wuluj (اَلْوُلُوْجُ) is to enter; its transitive is *"al-ilaj"* (اَلْإِيْلَاجُ = to make enter, to insert).

Apparently, the above sentences refer to the continuously changing lengths of days and nights, throughout the year, depending on the latitude of a region and the position of the earth vis-a-vis the sun. In the northern hemisphere, from mid-winter to mid-summer, days become longer and longer and nights shorter and shorter - it is the entering of the day into the night. And from mid-summer to mid-winter, nights become longer and longer and days shorter and shorter - and it is the entering of the night into the day. The position in the southern hemisphere is just opposite. When the nights are longer in one hemisphere, they are shorter in the other; the same happens with the days. In this way, Allah is always making the day to enter into the night, and the night to enter into the day.

As for the two imaginary points of the north and the south poles, and the imaginary latitude of the equator, it seems that the days and the nights remain equal throughout the year. But in reality, changes occur at those points too.[1]

Qur'an: ***And Thou bringest forth the living from the dead and Thou bringest forth the dead from the living*** (***3:27***).

That is, Allah brings forth a believer from the loin of an unbeliever, and an unbeliever from the loin of a believer. Allah has named belief as life and light, and He calls disbelief as death and darkness. For example, He says:

Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth (***6:122***).

The sentences may also be explained in a general way: Allah creates living organism, like vegetable and animal, from the earth which has no sense or feeling; and then gives death to the living things returning them to the earth. The Qur'anic verses almost clearly say that He changes the living into dead and the

dead into living. He says:

…then We caused it to grow into another creation; so blessed be Allah, the best of creators (23: 14).

Then after that you will most surely, die (23: 15).

There are other verses having the same connotation.

Some scientists say: The life emanated from some germs, evolving from one germ into another, and from that into a third and so on; that it did not spring up from senseless matter. The reason for this hypothesis lay in their belief that the universe came into being by itself, it was not created.[2] But experiments show that the living germs too are overcome by death. Thus, the life changes into death, establishing a correlation between the two. (We shall further explain this subject somewhere else.)

However, this verse,

Thou makest the night…bringest forth the dead from the living (3:27),

describes Allah's management of His real possession; as the preceding verse,

Thou givest the Kingdom…abasest whom Thou pleasest (3:26),

shows His management of His conventional possession.

The two verses run parallel to each other: One describing four aspects of His management which stand face to face with the other four described by the other. The former mentions giving the kingdom and taking it away; the latter subtends it with the description of making the night to enter into the day and making the day to enter into the night. Then the former talks about exalting and abasing; and the latter speaks of bringing forth the living from the dead and vice versa. This juxtaposition provides a refreshing insight into the Qur'anic eloquence.

To give a kingdom to someone is to let him impose his authority over his compatriots; thus, to a certain extent, the freedom of the people is lost into the authority of the ruler. It is not dissimilar to making the night dominate over the day; the night (comparable to subjugation) takes away certain portions of the day (comparable to the freedom of the people).

The opposite is true for taking away the kingdom vis-a-vis making the day to enter into the night.

To exalt someone is similar to giving him a new life; he would have remained unknown and unrecognized, if Allah had not bestowed honour upon him. That is why it has been put parallel to bringing forth the living from the dead.

Likewise, abasing and bringing forth the dead from the living stand face to face. Honour is life; and

dishonour, death.

Also, Allah, in His Book, describes the day as having a manifest sign, and the night as having one blotted away; He says:

…then We have made the sign of the night blotted away and We have made the sign of the day manifest… (***17:12***).

Looking at human society from this point of view, establishment of a kingdom and its downfall are mirrors of the manifestation of the day and the effacement of the night respectively.

In the same way, He counts life as the fountainhead of knowledge and power; and death deprives man of these faculties; He says:

Dead (***are they***)***, not living, and they know not when they shall be raised*** (***16:21***).

And he has exclusively reserved the honour and might to Himself, and to His Apostle and the believers:

And to Allah belongs the might and to His Apostle and to the believers (***63:8***).

And it is these who, according to the Qur'an, are alive. Consequently, might and respect is the mirror of life, and humiliation and abasement represent death. It is now clear how giving of kingdom and taking it away as well as exalting and abasing (of the former verse) run parallel to making the night to enter into the day, and making the day to enter into the night as well as bringing forth the living from the dead, and the dead from the living (in the latter) respectively.

The concluding sentence of the latter verse,

and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest, without measure (***3:27***)

likewise stands face to face with the concluding sentence of the former

in Thine hand is good… (***3:26***)

as the following paragraph makes it clear.

Qur'an: ***and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest, without measure*** (***3:27***).

Apparently, it gives the reason for the foregoing factors; the conjunctive, "and", is, therefore, for explanation; and it explains the afore-mentioned particular actions in term of a general faculty. The meaning: Allah manages His creatures in the foregoing way because He is the Sustainer, Who gives sustenance to whom He pleases, without measure.

That is why we said earlier that it stands face to face with the concluding sentence of the former verse; because, "in Thine hand is the good; surely, Thou has power over all things" also explains the reason of

the actions mentioned therein.

Sustenance In The Qur'an

ar–Rizq (اَلرِّزْقُ), usually translated as sustenance, maintenance, or means of livelihood, is a well–known concept. A glance at its various usages shows that the word has a connotation of bestowal by someone to someone else, for example, the sustenance given by the king to the soldiers. Originally, it was used for only the foodstuff. For example, Allah says:

And their maintenance and their clothing must be borne by the father according to usage (***2:233***).

Mark that the clothing has not been counted as a part of the maintenance. Thereafter, the meaning was extended to include every foodstuff, even if the giver was not known – in any case, it was a bestowal of good luck. The process of generalization continued, and now it is used for every useful thing – food or something else – which comes to someone; it includes all the paraphernalia of life, like: wealth, prestige, family, supporters, beauty, knowledge and so on. Allah says:

Or is it that you ask them a recompense? But the recompense of your Lord is best, and He is the best of those who provide sustenance (***23:72***).

Also, He quotes Shu'ayb ('a) as saying:

O my people! have you considered if I have a clear proof from my Lord and He has given me a goodly sustenance from Himself… (***11:88***).

Here the sustenance refers to the prophethood and the Divine knowledge etc.

Allah says:

Surely, Allah, He is the Bestower of sustenance, the Lord of Power, the Strong (***51:58***).

The context confines the bestowal of sustenance to Allah only. The verse leads us to the following concepts:

First: Bestowal of sustenance, in reality, cannot be ascribed to any one other than Allah. Of course, there are some verses that attribute it to others also; for example:

And Allah is the Best of sustainers (***62:11***).

(There are many sustainers, but Allah is the Best.) Also, He gives the order:

…and maintain them out of it, and clothe them (***4:5***).

But such usages do not give them any independent status; the only Sustainer is Allah, others are just a means of conveying Allah's gift to His servants. It is not different from the Kingdom and the Might which

actually belong to Allah, although others too get them by Allah's bestowal and permission.

Second: Whatever good the people get and which they make use of, and derive benefit from, in their existence, is their sustenance; and it is Allah Who bestows it to them. There is a large number of the verses of sustenance to prove this fact. In addition, there are numerous verses on the theme of creation, management, decree, possession, will, and good, which prove that all these things belong exclusively to Allah – and giving sustenance is interwoven with these factors.

Third: Suppose a man takes advantage of a certain thing to obtain an unlawful benefit. Inasmuch as it was the cause or means of a sin, it would not be attributed to Allah. Allah has clearly said that on the level of legislation, He does not sanction any sin or evil. He says:

And when they commit an indecency, they say: 'We found our fathers doing this, and Allah has enjoined it on us.' Say: 'Surely, Allah does not enjoin indecency; do you say against Allah what you do not know?' (***7:28***).

Also, He says:

Surely, Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good (**to others**) ***and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion…*** (***16:90***).

It is just unimaginable that He would forbid a thing and then, at the same time, would allow it; or that He would declare something unlawful and then confine a servant's sustenance to it! And unlawful benefit is not "sustenance" on the level of legislation. Nevertheless, it is "sustenance" on the level of creation. The religious responsibility does not reach up to the level of creation – and there is nothing bad on that level. When the Qur'an says that Allah gives sustenance to every body, it looks at this subject from the level of creation.

A Divine talk cannot be reduced to the level of the simpletons' understanding; in other words, it cannot overlook the deep Divine realities just because they are beyond the mental capacity of common man. The Holy Book contains what is a healing for the believers' hearts; nobody may fall into perdition by it except the unjust:

And We reveal of the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers, and it adds only to the perdition of the unjust (***17:82***).

Moreover, there are verses showing that it was Allah Who gave kingdom to Namrud (Nimrod), Pharaoh and others like them, and bestowed wealth and treasures to Qarun and his like. They got all these things not without the permission of Allah; He gave them the kingdom and wealth as a means of trial, to test their spiritual condition, and to complete His proof against them; it was as though Allah left them to go astray if they so wished, and gave them enough rope to hang themselves.

It should be noted here that, in the above examples, we took those cases to the level of legislation and

yet found good explanations for them that would satisfy the reason and were not against the sublime Divine Justice. If such things are unobjectionable at the level of legislation, certainly there can be no objection in providing sustenance, at the level of creation – even if it be "unlawful" for legislation's point of view.

Allah has said that every thing has been created by Him, is sent down by Him from His treasures of mercy:

And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure (***15:21***).

Further, He has said:

And whatever is with Allah is better… (***28:60***).

These two (and other similar) verses read together prove that whatever a man gets in this life, it comes from Allah and is good and beneficial for him. This theme may also be inferred from the verse:

Who made good every thing that He has created… (***32:7***),

Read in conjunction with the verse:

That is Allah, your Lord, the Creator of every thing; there is no god but He (***40:62***).

Yet, there is no denying that some Divine gifts appear to be evil and harmful to the recipient. But its evil and harm is just relative; it may be so for this particular person, while it brings good and benefit to a great many people; in other words, that personal hardship may be good, in the wider context of the world–system. Or it could have been misused by the man himself. Allah points to this factor when He says:

And whatever misfortune befalls you, it is from yourself (***4:79***).

However, we have already dealt with this subject in a previous volume.

In short, whatever good Allah bestows on His creatures (and all that He bestows is good and beneficial), it is called sustenance, in its literal sense: it is a gift that benefits the recipient. Probably, it is this theme that the following verse points at:

And the sustenance (**given**) ***by your Lord is better…*** (***20:131***).

The above discourse shows that, for almost all practical purposes, the three concepts – sustenance, good and creation – are one and the same. Every sustenance is good and created; and every creation is a sustenance and good. Nevertheless, there is a fine difference between sustenance and good on one side and creation on the other.

Sustenance presupposes the existence of something to be sustained, to whom the sustenance would be given. Food is sustenance for the digestive system because it needs that food; the digestive system is sustenance for the man as he needs it; that man is sustenance for his parents because they benefit from him; likewise, the existence is a sustenance for the man, per se. Allah says:

…Who gave to everything its creation… (***20:50***).

Likewise, good presupposes a selector who would choose what he wants from among a lot of things. Food is good for the digestive system because it needs it, and opts for it when given a choice; the digestive system is, in the same way, good for the man, and similarly the existence is good for him.

But as for creation, it does not require any actual or imaginary pre-existing thing. Food, digestive system, man, every thing is created in its own right; it by itself is the object of creation; it does not need any other object.

Every sustenance belongs to Allah; every good belongs to Allah. Whatever sustenance comes from Him, whatever good is given by Him, it is given gratis, not in exchange of or return for anything. Suppose you wanted to give to Allah something as price of the sustenance; well, what could you give Him? Whatever you may think of, it already belongs to Allah; you have no right whatsoever on any thing. It is just a mercy of Allah that He has undertaken to give sustenance to every one, and has made it obligatory for Himself to sustain all the creatures; He says:

And there is no animal in the earth but on Allah is the sustenance of it (***11:6***).

And in the heaven is your sustenance and what you are threatened with (***51:22***).

And by the Lord of the heavens and the earth! it is most surely, the truth, just as you do speak (***51:23***).

It shows that although sustenance is a right on Allah – because He Himself has undertaken to give sustenance to everyone – yet it is in fact a free gift from Him, because no creature is in his own right entitled to get it.

The above talk makes one thing clear: Even if a man obtains his sustenance unlawfully, originally, he was allotted a lawful sustenance. It is unimaginable that Allah would undertake to give sustenance to a man, then compel him to get it through unlawful means; and then would tell him not to use it, and punish him if he disobeyed.

Let us explain it in another way: Sustenance is a Divine gift containing good; as such it is a Divine mercy for all the creatures. We have already mentioned that there are two kinds of mercy: There is a general mercy which covers all the servants, believers and unbelievers, pious ones and sinners alike; and it is not confined to the human beings, it encompasses other creatures too. And there is a special mercy, the one that is reserved for the walkers on the path of felicity and righteousness, for example, true belief,

piety and ultimately the paradise. Likewise, there are two kinds of sustenance: A general sustenance which is provided to every thing for its protection and survival; and a special sustenance which remains within the limits of legality.

The general mercy as well as the general sustenance is foreordained and measured; Allah says:

And Who created every thing, then ordained for it a measure (***25:2***).

Likewise, the special mercy and the special sustenance are foreordained and measured. For example, guidance is a special mercy; and on the level of legislation, it is foreordained and decreed for every man, be he a believer or an unbeliever. That is why Allah raised the prophets and sent down the books. He says:

And I did not create the jinn and the human beings except that they should worship Me (***51:56***).

I do not desire from them any sustenance and I do not desire that they should feed Me (***51:57***).

Surely, Allah, He is the Bestower of sustenance, the Lord of power, the Strong (***51:58***).

Also, He says:

And your Lord has commanded (***decreed***) ***that you shall not worship*** (***any***) ***but Him…*** (***17:23***).

It means that worship (which depends on guidance and is one of its concomitants) is a decreed measure – on the level of legislation. And so is the special sustenance (which is obtained lawfully), on the same level. Allah says:

They are lost indeed who kill their children foolishly without knowledge, and forbid what Allah has given to them, forging a lie against Allah; they have indeed gone astray, and they are not the followers of the right course (***6:140***).

Also, He says:

And Allah has made some of you excel others in the means of subsistence, so those who are made to excel do not give away their sustenance to those whom their right hands possess, so that they should be equal therein… (***16:71***).

These two verses are unconditional and general; they cover the believers as well as the unbelievers, and include the one who obtains his sustenance in lawful way as well as the one who does so unlawfully.

One more thing: As was explained in the beginning, sustenance is the gift or bestowal which the sustained benefits from. It follows that only that much of it can be truly called sustenance which is used up by the sustained. A man has been given a lot of wealth, but he eats only a small portion of it;

therefore, his sustenance, strictly speaking, is the portion he ate up; the remainder cannot be called his sustenance except in the sense that he was given it. In other words, when we say, Zayd has got ample (or little) sustenance, it does not necessarily mean that he has got a lot of (or little) wealth.

There are some other aspects of this topic, which we shall write about under the verse:

And there is no animal in the earth but on Allah is the sustenance of it, and He knows its resting place and its depository; all (things) are in a manifest book (11:6).

Now we come back to the clause under discussion, that is,

and Thou givest sustenance to whom thou pleasest, without measure (3:27)

The sustenance is "without measure" because Allah gives it to the creatures gratis, and they by themselves have got no right to it. Whatever they could offer in exchange, even their requests, invocations and thanks, in reality belongs to Allah, they have got nothing of their own to offer in consideration of the sustenance. Therefore, there is no measure for the sustenance given by Allah. Clearly, the clause does not imply that the given sustenance is unlimited and unmeasured. How can it be when the verses of "measure" clearly refute it? For example, Allah says:

Surely, We created every thing according to a measure (54:49).

And whoever fears Allah, He will make for him an outlet (65:2).

And give him sustenance from whence he thinks not; and whoever trusts in Allah, He is sufficient for him; surely, Allah attains His purpose; Allah indeed has made a measure for every thing (65:3).

Sustenance, therefore, is a free gift from Allah, yet it is measured according to the pleasure of Allah.

The two verses together make the following concepts clear:

First: The possession as well as the Kingdom exclusively belongs to Allah.

Second: Every good is in His hand, and comes from Him.

Third: Sustenance is a gift from Allah, without any recompense or exchange.

Fourth: Kingdom, might, honour, and every single conventional good, occurring in the social framework, (like: wealth, prestige, power, etc.) are various aspects of the sustenance, given by Allah to His servants.

Traditions

'Abdu 'l-A'la (mawla, client of the Al [tribe of] Sam) has narrated from Abu 'Abdillah ('a). He says: "I told

him:

***Say: O Allah, Master of the Kingdom! Thou givest the Kingdom to whomsoever Thou pleasest and takest away the Kingdom from whomsoever Thou pleases* (*3:26*).**

Is it not that Allah gave the kingdom to the Umayyads?' He said: 'It is not as you think. Surely, Allah Mighty and Great is He! gave the kingdom to us, and the Umayyads usurped it; it is as though a cloth belongs to a man, and another person takes it away; yet the cloth does not belong to the man who took it away.'"[3]

The author says: al-'Ayyashi has narrated a similar tradition through Dawud Ibn Farqad from Abu 'Abdillah ('a).

We have already explained that giving the kingdom is of two kinds: (1) Giving it at the level of creation: Such a kingdom means that the king enjoys an over-riding authority over the people and they are subdued by his power - it makes no difference whether his rule is based on justice or not. For example, Allah says referring to Nimrod:

***...because Allah had given him the kingdom* (*2:258*).**

The effect of such a kingdom is that the king's words are obeyed, his command carried out and his will be enforced. (We shall later explain what a kingdom on the level of creation really entails.) (2) Giving it at the level of legislation, that is, decreeing that he is a king whose obedience is obligatory. For example, Allah says:

***Surely, Allah has raised Talut to be a king over you* (*2:247*).**

The effect of this type of kingdom is obligation of the people to obey the king's command and confirmation of his mastership of the people. Such a kingdom is always based on justice; and is liked and praised by Allah.

Now the kingdom the Umayyads had got was of the former type, that is, the one decreed at the level of creation, with its accompanying effect of overall authority on the people. But the questioner was confused; and erroneously thought that it had the effect of the other type of kingdom - he assumed that the Umayyads were entitled to the obedience of the people, that they were the rightful masters of the *ummah*, and had got a lawful and praiseworthy status in the eyes of Allah. The Imam told him that such a kingdom (on the level of legislation) did not belong to the Umayyads - it belonged to the rightful successors of the Prophet, that is, the Imams, and only they were entitled to the unquestioning obedience of the *ummah*.

In other words, the same kingdom which in the Umayyad's hands was devoid of every virtue, would have been praiseworthy if it were in the Imams' hands. In the Umayyds' hands it was totally condemnable, because they had usurped it from its rightful owners. Nevertheless, its bestowal would be

attributed to Allah as a plan to give them enough rope to hang themselves, as He did in the case of Nimrod and Pharaoh.

The Umayyads themselves had misunderstood the connotations of this verse, and thought that their kingdom was the sign of Divine approval of their rule, as may be seen in *Kitab al-Irshad* (of al-Mufid) where it mentions the events after the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a) and his companions: al-Mufid says: "When the heads (of the martyrs) were put before Yazid and among them was the head of al-Husayn ('a), Yazid recited:

We will split even the skull of a man we held in great respect;

But they were disobedient and oppressive."

Again al-Mufid says: "Then (Yazid) looked towards the people of his court and said: 'Verily, this (al-Husayn) used to boast against me and say: "My father is better than the father of Yazid, and my mother is better than his mother, and my grandfather is better than his grandfather, and I am better than him." As for his claim that his father was better than the father of Yazid, indeed my father disputed with his father and Allah decreed in favour of my father against his father. And as for his saying that his mother was better than Yazid's mother, by my life he was right; certainly Fatimah, daughter of the Apostle of Allah was better than my mother. And as regards his saying that his grandfather was better than my grandfather, no one believing in Allah and the Last Day can say that he is better than Muhammad. And as for his saying that he was better than me, perhaps he had not read this verse:

***Say: O Allah, Master of the Kingdom! Thou givest the Kingdom to whomsoever Thou pleasest and takest away the Kingdom from whomsoever Thou pleases* (*3:26*).**

And Zaynab, daughter of 'Ali (peace be on him and her) rebutted his claims using the same explanation as Imam as-Sadiq ('a) did in this tradition. as-Sayyid Ibn Tawus and others have reported her reply, in which she, *inter alia*, said: "Do you think, O Yazid! that - just because you cut us off from the regions of the earth and the horizons of the sky, so that we are being held like the captives - we are abased before Allah? Or that you are exalted before Him? Or that it has happened because of your great importance with Him? So (now) you behave arrogantly and look around hilariously and cheerfully, when you find the world in your bondage and (your) affairs well in order, and when our kingdom and our authority is totally usurped by you! Take it easy! Don't be hasty!! Have you forgotten the words of Allah:

***And let not those who disbelieve think that Our granting them respite is better for their souls; We grant them respite only that they may add to their sins; and they shall have a disgraceful chastisement* (*3:178*).**"

It is reported in *Majma' Al-Bayan* about the words of Allah,

***...and Thou bringest forth the living from the dead...* (*3:27*)**

“It is said that it means: Thou bringest forth the believer from the unbeliever and Thou bringest forth the unbeliever from the believer.” Further, it is written: “And this meaning has been narrated from Abu Ja’far (Imam al-Baqir) and Abu ‘Abdillah (Imam as-Sadiq), peace be on them.”

The author says: A nearly similar tradition has been narrated by as-Saduq from Imam al-’Askari (‘a).

Ibn Marduwayh has narrated through the chain of Abu ‘Uthman an-Nahdi from Ibn Mas’ud or Salman from the Prophet about the words, He brings forth the living from the dead and He brings forth the dead from the living, that he said: “The believer from the unbeliever and the unbeliever from the believer.”[4]

It is reported through the foregoing chain from Salman al-Farisi that he said: “The Apostle of Allah (S) said: ‘When Allah created Adam (‘a), He took out his offspring, then He took a handful in His right hand and said: “These are the people of the garden; and I don’t care.” And He took a handful in the other (hand) and came into it every bad (person); and He said: “These are the people of the Fire; and I don’t care.” Then He mixed one (group) with the other. Thus comes out an unbeliever from a believer, and a believer from an unbeliever; and that is (the meaning of) His words,

Thou bringest forth the living from the dead and Thou bringest forth the dead from the living, (3:27)’”[5]

The author says: Several exegetes have narrated this meaning from Salman, with the chain of narrators disconnected. The tradition is one of those related to the “tiny particles” and the covenant; and, Allah willing, we shall explain them in a more suitable place.

Muhammad Ibn Yahya narrated from Ahmad Ibn Muhammad and several of our companions, from Sahl Ibn Ziyad, from Ibn Mahbub, from Abu Hamzah ath-Thumali that Abu Ja’far (‘a) said: “The Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him and his progeny, said in (his) last pilgrimage: ‘Verily, the Trustworthy Spirit (i.e., Gabriel) has revealed to my heart that no soul was to die until it had completed its sustenance. Therefore, be on guard against (the wrath of) Allah, and act decently in seeking (the sustenance). Even if you feel that a sustenance is late in coming to you, it should not induce you to seek it through some thing that is a sin against Allah; for surely, Allah has distributed the sustenance among His creation, with lawful means, and He has not distributed it with unlawful means. Therefore, whoever fears Allah and remains patient, his sustenance comes to him from lawful means; and whoever tears apart the curtain (put by) Allah and takes it (i.e., the sustenance) through unlawful means, his lawful sustenance is reduced (proportionately) and (also) he will be answerable for that.’”[6]

‘Ali (‘a) said: “O son of Adam! Livelihood is of two kinds: the livelihood which you seek and the livelihood which seeks you; if you do not reach it, it will come to you. Therefore, do not impose a year’s worry on your one day’s worry. Whatever you get every day should be enough for you for the day. If you have a whole year of your life even then Allah, the Sublime, will give you every next day what He has destined as your share. If you do not have a year in your life then why should you worry for what is not for you. No seeker will reach your livelihood before you nor will anyone overpower you in the matter of that

livelihood. Similarly, what has been destined as your share will not be delayed for you?”[7]

Ibn Tarif narrated from Ibn ‘Ulwan, from Ja’far (‘a), that his father (Imam al-Baqir (‘a))said: “The Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him and his progeny, said: ‘Verily, the sustenance comes down from the heaven to the earth (abundantly) like the number of the rain-drops, to every soul according to what has been allotted to it. Yet, Allah is very Munificent; so you should beseech Allah for His munificence.’”[8]

The author says: Numerous traditions have been narrated of the same connotation. We shall discuss, Allah willing, in the Chapter of Hud (Ch. 11), the traditions of sustenance in detail.

An Essay On Kingdom And Its Place In Society

It has already been explained that possession and property are among those conventional but essential concepts which man cannot do without - it makes no difference whether he lives alone or in a society. Possession basically is a recognized relationship between the owner and the property.

Likewise, kingdom is a conventional, nevertheless essential, concept; a subjective institution which man cannot do without. But it is as a member of society, not as an individual, that man needs this institution. No sooner do the people establish a society than they start disputing with one another; everyone wants what is in the other’s hands even if it means trespassing the limits and crushing other’s rights under his heels. This tendency leads to chaos and conflict. The society which was established to ensure happy and peaceful life, becomes a source of misery and disorder; the medicine turns into a poison.

This anomaly cannot be removed except by creating an overall authority which could compel each member to remain within the limits - thus curbing the reckless ambitions of the oppressor and giving new hope and vigour to the oppressed. That authority, which is called kingdom or rulership, lets everyone enjoy his due rights and keeps every member in his proper place.

Exploitation of weaker sections has been a constant feature of human history. In ancient times some strong persons imposed their will on the society and subdued their compatriots to accept them as their overlord or king. Although such kings and their officers themselves were mostly epitome of oppression and injustice, still their presence was of some benefit to the society. They, in their own interest, did not allow any section to oppress the others - because they did not want anyone to become strong enough to rise one day against their own authority. In this way peace reigned in the society; everyone was afraid of the autocratic king and no one had any opportunity or inclination to think about the general welfare of the society. If an individual ruler was less oppressive, the subjects sang his praise; if he was unjust beyond their tolerance, they complained and cried.

Sometime a king or ruler was killed or overpowered; and the subjects experienced chaos and disorder, to prevent which they made some strong and able man to take the rein of power in his hands, and he ascended the throne; and thus began the same story of oppression and injustice.

This continued for a long time. Ultimately, society was fed up with the autocratic and dictatorial monarchy. In order to restrain the king's hands, people devised constitutions, delineating the mutual rights and duties of the ruler and the ruled, and somehow or other forced the king to agree. The autocratic monarchy thus became a constitutional one. Yet, it was a hereditary institution.

Then the public became aware of another big defect: Once a king ascended the throne, there was no way to remove him, no matter how unjust or unfit he might prove. Another defect was its hereditary nature; the first-born child of a king got the kingdom, irrespective of his physical, moral and intellectual abilities. They found the answer in republic. Now they had an elected president for a fixed period instead of a hereditary king who ruled for life.

Various nations invented various other system to restrain their rulers; and future might be holding various hitherto unimagined systems in store for us.

All these attempts throughout the world, to regulate the functions of the ruler, prove one thing, if nothing else. Humanity really needs the institution of rulership, no matter by what name it is called in a certain country at a certain time. One overriding authority must subdue all other people's individual ambitions and aims; otherwise, society will suffer from discord, conflict and disorder. That is why we said at the outset that kingdom is an essential concept of the society. And like all other such concepts, society is constantly trying to perfect it by removing from it the harmful elements.

The institution of prophethood has played the most important part in this process. When an idea spreads in the public - especially if it is in accord with the nature, and satisfied the human expectations - it becomes the strongest bond to unite the differing groups, to unify the divergent views and to turn the individuals into a well-disciplined society, which no power can defy.

Prophethood since its earliest days calls the people to do justice and to abstain from injustice; it teaches them to worship Allah and to submit only to Him; and it forbids them to follow the arrogant pharaohs and exploiting Nimrods. This cry has constantly been raised generation after generation, in one nation after another, exhorting the big bosses to submit to the rule of justice, and encouraging the weaker sections to stand up for their rights. It is impossible for such a powerful factor to remain active in the society for so many centuries and not to affect the human psychology, not to mould mankind's way of thinking.

The Qur'an often quotes revelations to this effect sent to the previous prophets, Nuh ('a) is quoted complaining before his Lord:

My Lord! surely, they have disobeyed me and followed him whose wealth and children have added to him nothing but loss (***71:21***).

And they have planned a very great plan (***71:22***).

And they say: 'By no means leave your gods...' (***71:23***).

The same thing appears in his disputation with the big bosses of his people:

They said: 'Shall we believe in you while the meanest follow you?' (***26:111***).

He said: 'And what knowledge have I of what they do?' (***26:112***).

Their account is only with my Lord, if you could perceive (***26:113***).

Likewise, Hud ('a) admonished his people:

Do you build on every height a monument? Vain is it that you do (***26:128***).

And you make strong fortresses that perhaps you may abide (***26:129***).

And when you lay hands (**on men**) ***you lay hands*** (**like**) ***tyrants*** (***26:130***).

And Salih ('a) advised his people:

Therefore, guard against (***the punishment of***) ***Allah and obey me*** (***26:150***).

And do not obey the bidding of the extravagant (***26:151***).

Who make mischief in the land and do not act right (***26:152***).

In the same way Musa ('a) stood up against Pharaoh to oppose his tyranny and to defend and liberate the Israelites; the same stance was taken by Ibrahim ('a) against Nimrod; and by 'Isa ('a) and other Israelite prophets vis-a-vis the oppressors of their times. All of them condemned and attacked the arrogance and injustice of their kings and rulers and called their people to throw away the yokes of tyranny and stand boldly against the exploiters and transgressors.

So far as the Qur'an is concerned, it is no secret how it exhorts the people not to yield to the transgressors, not to surrender to the oppressors; it encourages the oppressed to stand up boldly against the oppressor to safeguard his self-respect and human dignity; and it warns the arrogant of the bitter fruits of haughtiness, of the chastisement that awaits the oppression and injustice. For example:

Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with 'Ad (***89:6***).

(**the people of**) ***Iram, possessors of many columned buildings*** (***89:7***).

The like of which were not created in the cities (***89:8***).

And (**with**) ***Thamud, who hewed out the rocks in the valley*** (***89:9***).

And (**with**) ***Pharaoh, the lord of stakes*** (***89:10***).

Who transgressed in the cities (***89:11***).

So they made great mischief therein? (***89: 12***).

Therefore, your Lord let fall upon them the whip of chastisement (***89: 13***).

Most surely, your Lord is on watch (***89: 14***).

The Qur'anic comment, at the end of the story of Talut, is in itself enough to prove that the kingdom (or rulership) is essential for the mankind:

And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder; but Allah is Gracious to the creatures (***2:251***).

We have shown in its commentary how it confirms this institution in a general way.

Many verses in the Qur'an talk about kingdom, guardianship and obligation of obedience etc. Some of them count the kingdom as a bounty and gift from Allah:

…and We have given them a grand Kingdom (***4:54***).

…and made you kings and gave you what He had not given to any other among the nations (***5:20***).

…and Allah grants His Kingdom to whom He pleases… (***2:247***).

Nevertheless, it is an honour only when it is accompanied by piety. Piety is the only basis of honour, to the exclusion of all other illusory sources of respect. Allah says:

O you people! surely, We have created you of a male and a female and made you nations and tribes that you may recognize each other; surely, the most honourable of you with Allah is the most pious of you… (***49: 13***).

But it is only Allah Who decides the worth of a servant's piety. Consequently, no one should use his piety as a lever to hoist himself over his compatriots. Nobody should boast about anything whatsoever: If the cause of boasting is some worldly thing, then it is obviously worthless; if it concerns the next world, then it is in the hands of Allah. In any case, a Muslim, who is given this grace of Allah which we call Kingdom, has nothing to boast about, nor any reason to think himself as superior to the others. All he has got for himself is an unenviable burden of responsibilities of the state. What brightens this gloomy picture is the hope that his Lord will give him great reward in the next life if he manages the affairs of the state with justice and piety.

This is the spirit which animated the whole lives of the true friends of Allah. We shall write later on, Allah willing, on this topic, looking at the lives of the Prophet and his purified progeny; we shall describe, with the help of the correct traditions, what they gained for themselves from their kingdoms: "nothing"; their only interest in the kingdom and authority was to use it to crush the tyrants, to cut the root of mischief in

the earth, to bring the arrogants and transgressors back within the limits of religion. And that is the only worth of the kingdom.

The Qur'an treats the kingdom as a tool which is necessary for running the affairs of society – just as education and martial power is necessary for its intellectual and defence needs. Kingdom is an instrument of society; it is not the foundation upon which the society stands. The Qur'an does not invite the Muslims to unite to establish an empire to shame the Byzantine and Iranian empires; it calls them to unite in Islam, and admonishes them not to differ in religion. This unity in religion is the foundation which the Islamic society is built upon. Allah says:

And **(know)** ***that this is My path, the straight one, therefore follow it; and follow not*** **(other)** ***ways, for they will scatter you away from His way"*** **(*6:153*).**

Say: 'O People of the Book! come to a word, common between us and you, that we shall not worship any but Allah and **(that)** ***we shall not associate anything with Him and*** **(*that*)** ***some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah'; but if they turn back, then say: 'Bear witness that we are Muslims'*** **(*3:64*).**

Clearly, the Qur'an calls the people to surrender to no one except Allah; the society which it recognizes is the one that is based on religion. It demolishes all other loyalties; a Muslim is not to submit to anyone besides Allah; he is not to bow down before any magnificent palace or grandiose castle; he is not to humiliate himself before any Ceasar or Khusraw. Consequently, the Qur'an does not recognize the artificial boundaries which have cut the earth of Allah into small pieces which they call countries, nor the resulting "nationhood" that divides the humanity into territorial segments, putting one group against the others.

A Philosophical Discourse On Attribution Of Kingdom And Other Abstracts Concepts To Allah

The Creator, as the Essential Being, is the ultimate Cause of all that is there in the universe; the relationship between Him and the universe (the whole as well as its components) is that of the cause and effect. It is a proved axiom of philosophy that causality governs the existence only – the real existence of the effect emanates from the existence of its cause; other things, for example, quiddity, are outside the domain of the cause. Consequently, that which has no real existence, does not come within the system of the cause and effect; and as it is not the effect of any cause, it has no chain of causality reaching up to the ultimate Cause.

Problem arises about the abstract ideas and imaginary concepts, which have no real existence outside the imagination. Being devoid of real existence, they cannot be said to be caused by the ultimate Cause, that is, Allah. But one of those imaginary concepts, is the *Shari'ah* with its commandments and prohibitions, its rules, principles and conventions. So are the kingdom, the honour, the sustenance etc.

Should not these things be attributed to Allah? If the answer is yes, then how?

Reply: These concepts, although devoid of real existence, leave in their track some effects which are inseparable from them; and these effects have real existence. As these effects can be, and are, attributed to Allah, the concepts from which they emanate can as easily be attributed to Him. Kingdom, for example, is an imaginary concept, which has no real existence outside our imagination; we have established this institution to achieve a real benefit. It is through this abstract idea of kingdom that we try to curb the unscrupulous offenders of the society, to rein the unrestrained designs of the transgressors, and to avenge the oppressed from the oppressor. These are real facts and they can, and are, attributed to Allah. As these effects of kingdom are ascribed to Allah, so can be the kingdom itself, by association.

The same applies to the honour, the rules of the *Shari'ah* and its principles etc.

In short, all such abstract ideas and concepts may be attributed to Allah, by attributing their effects to Him, in a way that is in keeping with the sanctity of His name.

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1. This explanation is correct, as far as it goes. But another explanation, given by Maurice Bucaille, seems more comprehensive. "[The astronauts have seen] how the Sun permanently lights up (except in the case of an eclipse) the half of the Earth's surface that is facing it, while the other half of the globe is in darkness. The Earth turns on its own axis and the lighting remains the same, so that an area in the form of a half-sphere makes one revolution around the Earth in twenty four hours while the other half-sphere, that has remained in darkness, makes the same revolution in the same time. This perpetual rotation of night and day is quite clearly described in the Qur'an. It is easy for the human understanding to grasp this notion nowadays because we have the idea of the Sun's (relative) immobility and the Earth's rotation. This process of perpetual coiling, including the interpenetration of one sector by another is expressed in the Qur'an..." (The Bible, the Qur'an and Science; North American Publications, Indianapolis; 1979; p. 164.) (tr.).
2. That is, they wanted to avoid answering the question: How did a living cell evolve from a lifeless matter? How could the matter be the source of life when it had no life itself? (tr.).
3. al-Kafi.
4. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
5. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
6. al-Kafi.
7. Nahj al-balaghah.
8. Qurb al-asnad.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah 'Aal-'Imran: Verses 28 - 32

لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَٰلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللَّهِ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا أَنْ تَتَّقُوا مِنْهُمْ تُقَاةً وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ

Let not the believers take the unbelievers for friends rather than the believers; and whoever does this, he shall have nothing **(to do)** ***with Allah, except*** **(when)** ***you guard yourselves against*** **(them)** ***for fear from them; and Allah cautions you of Himself; and to Allah is the eventual coming*** **(*3:28*).**

قُلْ إِنْ تُخْفُوا مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ أَوْ تُبْدُوهُ يَعْلَمْهُ اللَّهُ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Say: "Whether you hide what is in your hearts or manifest it, Allah knows it; and He knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth; and Allah has power over all things" **(*3:29*).**

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ

On the day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil; **(it)** ***shall wish that between it and that*** **(evil)** ***there were a long duration of time; and Allah cautions you of Himself; and Allah is Compassionate to the servants*** **(*3:30*).**

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Say: "If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your sins; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful" **(*3:31*).**

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ

Say: "Obey Allah and the Apostle"; but if they turn back, then surely, Allah does not love the unbelievers **(*3:32*).**

Commentary

The verses are not disconnected with the preceding ones, which admonished the People of the Book and the polytheists. If the word "unbelievers", coming at the beginning of these verses, covers the People of the Book too, then these verses forbid the believers to befriend, and fraternize with, the polytheists and the People of the Book all together; if it refers to the polytheists only, then the verses admonish the believers not to be friendly with them; instead, they should join the party of Allah, loving

Him and His Apostle.

Verse 28

Qur'an: ***Let not the believers take the unbelievers for friends rather than the believers*** (***3:28***).

"al-Awliya'" (**اَلْاَوْلِيَآءُ** = friends), the plural of *al-waliy* (**اَلْوَلِي**), is derived from *al-wilayah* (**اَلْوِلَايَةُ**). The root word denotes authority to manage something, that is, guardianship. Guardian of a minor, insane or idiot is called his *al-waliy*, because he has the authority to manage their affairs and property, although the property belongs to the said ward.

Then the word was used – with increasing frequency – in the context of love; if two people love each other, each feels free to look after the other's affairs. Love empowers the beloved to manage the affairs, and influence the life, of the lover.

In this verse, taking the unbelievers for friends means establishing a psychological rapport with them. Such a friendship would taint the believer's vision, and would adversely affect his thoughts and character, encouraging him to follow his unbeliever friends in his life and manners. The clause, "rather than the believers", points to this fact. It refers to a stage when the believer prefers the unbelievers rather than the believers as the object of his love and as the model for his life; the more he moves nearer to his unbeliever friends, the more he distances himself from the believers.

Many verses strictly forbid the believers to take the unbelievers, and the Jews and the Christians for friends; but in every instance, there are clauses which delineate which type of friendship is forbidden. For example, this verse contains the abovementioned clause, "rather than the believers"; the verse:

O you who believe! do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends (***5:51***).

Goes on to say:

they are friends of each other; (***5:51***)

and the prohibition:

O you who believe! do not take My enemy and your enemy for friends… (***60:1***).

Is further on explained by the words:

Allah does not forbid you respecting those who have not made war against you on account of your religion and have not driven you forth from your homes… (***60:8***).

The adjectives used in the verse under discussion point to the reason of the prohibition. The believers should not take the unbelievers for friends rather than the believers. Belief and disbelief are diametrically opposed to each other; they can never reconcile. The same mutual repulsion would permeate the whole

lives of the believers *vis-à-vis* the unbelievers. Their thoughts and deeds, their spiritual journey towards Allah, and in short, their whole being would be totally different from the opposite party. Such a position is not in harmony with that of friendship; because friendship demands unity and rapport.

And when such a friendship begins and grows with complete disregard to the friendship with the believers, it first spoils the fruits of the faith, then damages its branches and finally destructs its very roots. That is why Allah warned them in the next sentence,

***...and whoever does this, he shall have nothing* (to do) *with Allah.* (*3:28*)**

Then comes the exception of *taqiyyah*, because *taqiyyah* is only a show of love, not its reality.

***...rather than the believers;* (*3:28*)**

dun (دُوْن) is a proposition of place, meaning: below, under (in rank, value); this side of, short of; without, with the exclusion of; leaving aside. *"min dun"* (مِنْ دُوْن) signifies, 'beginning from a place below that of the believers', because the believers are far above them in rank. Originally this preposition denoted nearness combined with lowness, for example, *dunaka Zayd* (دُوْنَكَ زَيْدُ = Zayd is near you but below; he does not measure up to you). Then it was used for 'other than', 'besides', for example:

***...two gods besides Allah...* (*5:116*).**

***...and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases...* (*4:48*).**

Also, it is used as a *nomen verbi*; in this sense, *dunaka Zayd* would mean: adhere to Zayd. These later usages are based on some association with the original meaning, not that the word was made for them.

Qur'an: *And whoever does this, he shall have nothing* (to do) *with Allah* (*3:28*).

"Does this", that is, takes the unbelievers for friends in preference to the believers. This misconduct is hated so much by the Speaker that He does not like to mention it in words and just alludes to it; people often use pronouns to refer to indecent things. Also, Allah did not say, whoever of the believer does this; it was far beneath the dignity of the believers to attribute such a misconduct to them.

The clause,

***...he shall have nothing* (to do) *with Allah...* (*3:28*)**

literally means, he is not from Allah in anything. Idiomatically, this expression shows that he is not of the group or party of Allah. Allah says:

***And whoever takes Allah and His Apostle and those who believe for a guardian, then surely, the party of Allah are they that shall be triumphant* (*5:56*).**

Also, Ibrahim (‘a) is quoted as saying:

…then whoever follows me, he is surely, of me… (***14:36***).

Anyhow, the sentence means: Whoever does this, he shall in no way remain with the party of Allah; his thoughts and deeds will be those of the enemies of Islam.

Qur’an: ***Except*** (**when**) ***you guard yourselves against*** (**them**) ***for fear from them*** (***3:28***).

“al-Ittiqa’” (اَلْاِتِّقَاءُ = to seek protection because of fear); the word is sometimes used for fear, by association; probably *taqiyyah* has the same connotations.

The exception in this sentence is disjoined: To show attachment to someone because of his fear without loving him in reality is quite different from befriending him and having a rapport with him; love and fear are two opposite feelings and have opposite effects on the heart; how can they be found in one place?

The verse clearly allows *taqiyyah*, as is shown by the traditions of the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt*. Also, it is clearly proved by the verse revealed about ‘Ammar, and his parents, Yasir and Sumayyah:

He who disbelieves in Allah after his having believed - not he who is compelled while his heart is at rest on account of faith, but he who opens (**his**) ***breast for disbelief - on these is the wrath of Allah, and they shall have a grievous chastisement*** (***16:106***).

The Qur’an and the *sunnah* both agree that *taqiyyah* is permissible in places. Also, reason supports it. The main purpose of the religion and the Apostle is to keep the truth alive; and sometimes this purpose can be achieved by practising *taqiyyah*, by keeping good relations with the enemies of the religion, while discarding *taqiyyah* would serve no purpose at all. It is a reality which no reasonable man can deny. We shall further write about it under ‘Traditions’, and also under the verse mentioned just now:

…not he who is compelled while his heart is at rest on account of faith… (***16:106***).

Qur’an: ***And Allah cautions you of Himself; and to Allah is the eventual coming*** (***3:28***).

“at-Tahdhir” (اَلتَّحْذِيْرُ) is the transitive of *al-hadhar* (اَلْحَذَرُ = to beware of a frightful thing). Allah has warned His servants of His chastisement, as He says:

…surely, the chastisement of your Lord is to be dreaded of (***17:57***).

And He has warned them of the hypocrites and the mischief of the unbelievers, as He says:

…they are the enemy, therefore beware of them (***63:4***).

…and be cautious of them, lest they seduce you… (***5:49***).

But in this verse as well as in a following one, He cautions them of His Own Self. The crime of

befriending the unbelievers to the exclusion of the believers is so serious that no curtain or protection remains between Allah and the criminal, there is nothing to save him from Allah, there is no helper or intercessor to intercede on his behalf; he is left without any shield, to face directly the chastisement of Allah. This style puts utmost emphasis to the threat, and its repetition in a following verse further intensifies it; then it has been further highlighted by the concluding clauses,

and to Allah is the eventual coming (***3:28***)

(in this verse) and

Allah is Compassionate to the servants (***3:30***)

(in the other), as we shall explain later on.

Look at this verse and the others obliging the Muslims not to take the unbelievers for friends. You will see that this sin is tantamount to rejecting the guardianship of Allah, going out from the band of His servants, and joining the party of His enemies – to damage the affairs of the religion. This transgression is a dry–rot that destroys the fibre of religion; it is more damaging and harmful to Islam than the open disbelief and polytheism of the unbelievers and pagans. One can easily prepare for an open enemy and can repulse his attacks on one's fortress; but it is not so easy if the enemy is inside and poses as a friend. If a Muslim establishes fraternal bonds with the enemies of Islam, his character is gradually influenced by their manners, deeds and thoughts. A time comes when disbelief replaces the belief; the Muslims slowly discard the tenets and symbols of Islam one after the other, and before they realize it, Islam loses its hold on the society. It is death without any hope of revival, perdition without any chance of resurrection.

It is "the transgression"; and his case is directly in the hands of Allah:

Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with 'Ad (***89:6***)***.***

(**the people of**) ***Iram, possessors of many columned buildings*** (***89:7***)***.***

The like of which were not created in the cities (***89:8***)***.***

And (**with**) ***Thamud, who hewed out the rocks in the valley*** (***89:9***)***.***

And (**with**) ***Pharaoh, the lord of stakes*** (***89:10***)***.***

Who transgressed in the cities (***89:11***)***.***

So they made great mischief therein? (***89:12***)***.***

Therefore, your Lord let fall upon them the whip of chastisement (***89:13***)***.***

Most surely, your Lord is on watch (***89:14***).

The transgression leads the transgressor to a place where Allah is on watch – and where there is no one but Allah; and He smites the guilty with the whip of His chastisement – and there is no one to protect the transgressor from Him.

It is for the same reason that those who take the unbelievers for friends have been warned of Allah Himself: Such a friendship is open transgression, a transgression that damages and destroys the religion of Allah.

The same theme has been explained in the verses:

Stand fast then (**in the right path**) ***as you are commanded, as also he who has turned*** (**to Allah**) ***with you, and do not transgress*** (**O men!**). ***Surely, He sees what you do*** (***11:112***).

And do not incline to those who are unjust, lest the Fire touch you, and you have no guardians besides Allah, then you shall not be helped (***11:113***).

These verses, according to the traditions, are the ones which, the Prophet said, had aged him. However, these verses and the one under discussion, clearly show that inclination towards the unjust and the unbelievers is a transgression which throws one into the Fire where he will not find any helper; it is the chastisement given by Allah Himself, and no one can save from it.

The sentence, "and Allah cautions you of Himself", shows that the threatened punishment is a firmly-decreed affair which cannot be cancelled. What the offender has been warned of is Allah Himself; there is nothing between Allah and the culprit; and there is no protector from Allah; He has threatened to punish this offender, and what He has said is surely, to happen. The same thing appears from the verse quoted above:

…lest the Fire touch you, and you have no guardians besides Allah, then you shall not be helped (***11:113***).

And to Allah is the eventual coming (***3:28***)

You cannot escape from Him; nobody can stop you from this eventual return to Allah. As mentioned earlier, it re-emphasizes the threat.

These verses,

Let not the believers take the unbelievers for friends… (***3:28***)

are among those which, in the form of admonition, contain a prediction of what was to happen in this *ummah* in the coming days; we shall explain it in detail, Allah willing, in Chapter 5 (The Table).

Verse 29

Qur'an: ***Say: 'Whether you hide what is in your hearts or manifest it, Allah knows it'*** (***3:29***).

The theme is the same as in the verse:

…and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allah will call you to account for it (***2:284***).

Nevertheless, a fine difference in style attracts our attention, the verse 2:284 talks about calling to account, and accounting is more often than not a manifest affair; therefore, in this verse manifesting comes before hiding. But the verse under discussion talks about the knowledge of Allah, and knowledge is more germane to what is hidden in the hearts; therefore, this verse has reversed the order, mentioning first what is hidden in the hearts, then coming to what is manifest.

Allah ordered His Apostle to convey this message to the offending servants; it is because He did not like to address directly those who, He knew, would surely, disobey His order and would befriend the unbelievers. It shows His displeasure in the same way as the words in the preceding verse: "and whoever does this…"

Qur'an: ***"And He knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth; and Allah has power over all things"*** (***3:29***).

It has the same connotation as the verse 2:284, mentioned above.

Verse 30

Qur'an: ***On the day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil*** (***3:30***).

Apparently, it is a part of the message which the Prophet was to convey. "On the day" may refer to a deleted but understood verb, "remember" or "describe" – Remember (or Describe) the day that every soul…Alternatively this adverb of time may qualify the preceding verb, "Allah knows it" or "He knows", that is, Allah shall know on that day what is in your hearts; or He will know on that day what is in the heavens and the earth. There is no difficulty in this interpretation; it is not that He would not know these things before the Day of Judgment; what the expression means is this: We, the servants of Allah, will manifestly see the effects of His all–encompassing knowledge on that day. According to this explanation, this verse describes the manifestation of His knowledge on that day in the same way as the following verses describe manifestation of His power on that very day:

(**of**) ***the day when they shall come forth; nothing concerning them shall remain hidden to Allah. To whom belongs the Kingdom this day? To Allah, the Subduer*** (**of all**) (***40:16***).

…there is no protector today[1] from Allah… (***11:43***).

…and O that those who are unjust could see, when they see the chastisement, that the power is wholly Allah's… (***2:165***).

…and the command on that day shall be entirely Allah's (***82:19***).

Obviously, to Allah belongs all the Kingdom, power and command, always – before and after the Day of Judgment as well as on that day. But these verses especially refer to that day in this connection, because it will be on that day that we, the servants of Allah, will clearly see His Kingdom and rule, without any doubt about His exclusive authority and power.

Likewise, if the verb, "He knows", is qualified by the adverb, "that day...", it would not mean that Allah would not know the hidden secrets of His servants or their good and evil deeds before the Day of Judgment.

On the day that every soul shall find present what it has done… (***3:30***)

The word translated here as "present" is *muhdaran* (مُحْضَراً) which literally means, presented, brought in. The choice of this word, rather than *hadiran* (حَاضِراً = present), points to the fact that the good and bad deeds are existent and safe from extinction, because only such a thing may be brought in and presented which already exists (even if out of sight); Allah will bring the deeds in on the Day of Judgment. But who would be preserving them all these days, if not Allah? This too shows that His power, authority and Kingdom are not confined to the Day of Judgment. He says:

And your Lord is the Preserver of all things (***34:21***).

And with Us is a writing that preserve (***50:4***).

"Tajid" (تَجِدُ = shall find) is derived from *al-wijdan* (اَلْوِجْدَانُ = to find); its opposite is to lose. "of good" and "of evil": "of" describes the thing that will be presented. "good" and "evil" have been used as common noun, to show its generality – he will find there every good however trivial and every evil however insignificant. It appears from the context that the second clause, "what it has done of evil" is in conjunction with the preceding one, "what it has done of good".

It is one of those verses which prove embodiment of deeds, as we have described in detail in a previous volume.

Qur'an: (it) ***shall wish that between it and that*** **(evil)** ***there were a long duration of time"*** (***3:30***).

The subject of this sentence is a deleted pronoun referring to the soul. *"Law"* (لَوْ = if) is a conjunctive, as a rule introducing hypothetical conditional clauses; *"law"* followed by *"anna"* (لَوْ اَنَّ = if) introduces nominal clauses; this combination has frequently been used in the Qur'an; therefore, no attention should

be paid to the claim of a writer that this combination was not correct.

"al-Amad" (اَلْاَمَدُ) denotes distance of time. *ar-Raghibr* has said in his *Mufradat al-Qur'an*: *al-Amad and al-abad* (اَلْاَبَدُ) have nearly the same meaning; but *al-abad* denotes the eternal duration, without an end; that is why it is never restricted by a limit, it cannot be said, to this or that *al-abad*. On the other hand, *al-amad* generally signifies a limited duration but with unknown limit; sometimes the limit is specified, for example, *amada kadha* (اَمَدَ كَذَا = such and such period), as they say this or that time. The difference between *al-amad* (span of time) and *az-zaman* (اَلزَّمَانُ = time) is that *al-amad* looks at the terminus of time while *az-zaman* looks at the whole period from beginning to end. That is why some have said that *al-amad* and *al-madd* (اَلْمَدي = space of time, distance) are nearly similar in meaning."

The wish of the evil-doer, that there should be between him and his deed a long duration of time, shows that the presence of that evil would cause him sorrow; it follows that the presence of good deed would make the good-doer happy.

He will only wish for a long duration of time between himself and his deed, and not for its complete disappearance. Why? He will see how Allah has preserved it from the day it was done to the Day of Judgment; he will realize that it was of no avail to wish that a thing under such Divine protection should disappear; therefore, he will only wish for the next "best" thing: Would that it had not appeared at the most awkward time, in that most difficult situation. He will wish the same for the evil companion:

***And whoever turns himself away from the remembrance of the Beneficent God, We appoint for him a Satan, so he becomes his associate* (*43:36*).**

***And most surely, they turn them away from the path, and they think that they are guided aright* (*43:37*).**

***Until when he comes to Us, he says: 'O would that between me and thee there were the distance of the East and the West', so evil is the associate!* (*43:38*).**

Qur'an: ***And Allah cautions you of Himself; and Allah is Compassionate to the servants* (*3:30*).**

The repeated warning emphasizes the threat beyond any doubt. Also, it may be that this warning refers to the punishment of the Day of Judgment (as that is the subject of this verse), while the first warning related to the result of that offence in this life or in both lives.

***And Allah is Compassionate to the servants* (*3:30*)**

It reminds the servants of their relation to Allah – they are His servants and slaves, and He is their Compassionate Master. Nevertheless, this clause makes the preceding threat doubly emphatic. Such expressions are used for warning someone in the severest term. The import of such clause will be like this: Do not do such a thing, because I have firmly decided not to forgive such offence; I warn you beforehand because I have compassion for you.

The meaning then will be as follows: Allah is Compassionate to the servants; that is why He has warned them beforehand not to go near this evil; because if they did so, they would have to undergo the punishment; and they would find no intercessor or protector to intercede on their behalf or to save them.

Verse 31

Qur'an: ***Say: 'If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you'*** (***3:31***).

When writing about the verse:

...and those who believe are stronger in love of Allah... (***2:165***).

We had explained the meaning of love, and said that in reality it relates to Allah, and after that it may relate to others.

No doubt, Allah in His Book invites His servants to believe in Him, to worship Him with sincere devotion, and to steer clear of polytheism. He says:

Now, surely, sincere religion is for Allah (**alone**) (***39:3***).

And they were not enjoined anything except that they should worship Allah, being sincere to Him in religion... (***97:5***).

Therefore, call upon Allah, being sincere to Him in religion, though averse be the unbelievers (***40:14***).

This theme is found in many other verses.

Sincerity in religion can truly be achieved only when man's heart is not attached to anything other than Allah – be it another deity or some desired object; be it a worldly ambition or even some other worldly goal like entering the garden or protection from the Fire. When the heart cuts all links with such things and attaches itself exclusively to Allah, then the man attains the sincerity of religion, and the love of Allah.

Love is the only link that connects a lover to his beloved; it attracts and pulls the lover to the beloved. The lover wants to make up through the beloved the defects and imperfections that he finds in his own life. The biggest news for him is that his beloved requites his love. At this stage, both love each other; both become lovers, both become beloved.

Man loves food and gets it to make up the deficiency which shows itself in hunger; he loves the opposite sex, to satisfy a biological need; he loves his friend for genial companionship. A servant loves his master for his kind patronage. Look at the instances of love, read the stories of well-known lovers – you will find everywhere the truth of what we have mentioned.

When a sincere servant loves Allah, his only ambition is to attract the love of Allah to himself; would that Allah should love him as he loves Allah; would that Allah should become his, as he has become of Allah. This is the reality of Allah's love.

Love, as mentioned above, is a link that joins one thing to the other. But Allah does not count every love as true love. True love demands that the lover – in this case, the believer – should love all that is related to Allah; he should devoutly accept all that comes from Him. On Allah depends everything in its existence and in all its affairs; everything seeks a medium to Him; and every big and small thing ultimately returns to Him. In this background, true love of Allah, sincerity in that love, can be achieved only through believing in the religion of monotheism, that it, Islam, and surely, the religion with Allah is Islam. It is the religion which His representatives brought and which His apostles and prophets taught. It is especially true about the religion brought by Muhammad (S); it teaches a sublime devotion, an unsurpassed sincerity; it is the natural religion which contains the last law, brought by a Law–giver with whom the chain of the prophets came to its end. All these facts may easily be inferred from the Qur'an, if one ponders on it.

The Prophet introduced his path as the path of monotheism, the path of sincerity; as he was ordered by Allah to say:

***Say: 'This is my way: I invite* (you) *to Allah; with clear sight* (are) *I and he who follows me; and glory be to Allah; and I am not of the polytheists'* (*12:108*).**

Accordingly, his way was to invite people to Allah, with clear sight, with sincerity, without ascribing any partner to Allah. His way was the way of invitation to Allah and of sincerity about Allah. Anyone who wants to follow him, should proceed on the same highway.

Then Allah said that the way of invitation and sincerity can be found only in the *Shari'ah* brought by Muhammad (S):

***Then We have made you follow a Shari'ah in the affair, therefore follow it…* (*45:18*).**

Also, He said that it means total submission to Him:

***But if they dispute with you, say: 'I have submitted myself* (entirely) *to Allah and* (so has) *everyone who follows me'…* (*3:20*).**

Then, He attributed this way to Himself and declared that it was His straight path:

***And* (know) *that this is My path, the straight one, therefore follow it* (*6:153*).**

If we read all these verses together, it will be clear that Islam (i.e., the *Shari'ah* brought by the Prophet, containing fundamental beliefs, moral teachings, practical laws, and having his own sacred life as its model) is the path of sincerity, that is based on love. It is the religion of sincerity, the religion of love.

The above discourse makes clear the meaning of the verse under discussion:

Say: 'If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you' (***3:31***).

It gives the following import – and Allah knows better: If you want to be sincere to Allah in your servitude, truly basing it on His love, then follow this *Shari'ah*; it is based on love, and is the embodiment of sincerity and submission; it is the straight path of Allah, whoever proceeds on it is sure to reach nearer to Allah. If you follow me in this path, then Allah will love you; reaching this stage you will get what you want. Your love will be requited.

This is the general import of the verse if looked in isolation. But the context gives it some particular implications too. It comes soon after the verses forbidding the believers to befriend the unbelievers. Friendship is love between the friends. Therefore, the verse exhorts the believers to follow the Prophet if they are sincere in the claim that they love Allah and belong to His party. Love of Allah cannot be reconciled with following the unbelievers in their vain desires and unhealthy views; remember that friendship certainly makes a friend follow the other friend in thoughts and deeds. One who loves Allah should not run after the worldly trinkets found with the unbelievers, and should not set his eyes on their worldly honour and wealth. If you love Allah, you should follow His Prophet in his religion, as He declares:

Then We have made you follow a Shari'ah in the affair, therefore follow it, and do not follow the low desires of those who do not know (***45:18***).

Surely, they shall not avail you in the least against Allah; and surely, the unjust are friends of each other, and Allah is the guardian of those who guard (**against evil**) (***45:19***).

It should be noted how smoothly the verse goes from the theme of following to that of friendship, showing that both are, in fact, one and the same.

In short, anyone claiming to love Allah, to belong to Allah, must follow the Prophet, in order that it may take him to the stage where Allah requites his love and loves him.

The verse mentions only love of Allah, and not His guardianship because guardianship is founded on love. Also, it mentions only Allah's love, because the love of the Prophet and the believers is in reality a part of Allah's love; it has no independent existence.

Qur'an: ***And forgive you your sins; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful*** (***3:31***).

Allah's mercy is all-encompassing; His grace is without limit, and His munificence without restriction; it is not confined to any individual or group. The river of His mercy is flowing; everybody is free to take from it as much as he can. Whatever restriction there is, it is not in the river, it is in the receptacle one brings with him. The servants' ability, or disability, imposes its own limitations; Allah has not put any limit to His mercy:

And the bounty of your Lord is not confined (***17:20***).

Sin is the impediment, holding one back from reaching nearer to Allah, from partaking of the bounties resulting from it, like the paradise etc. If the rust of sin is removed from a man's heart, the door of Divine bliss will automatically open for him, and he will join the chosen people in the abode of Divine honour and eternal happiness. That is why Allah added forgiveness of sins to the good news of His love. As described earlier; love attracts the lover to the beloved. When the servant loves Allah, it moves him to come nearer with sincere monotheism and unalloyed devotion and worship. When Allah loves a servant, He comes nearer to him and removes the curtains which hide the sublime reality. As mentioned above, there is no curtain except sin, and removing it means forgiving the sins. Once that hindrance is removed, there is no obstacle in the way; and Divine munificence will take over from there; and he can partake of the ever–lasting honour and never–ending bounties as much as he likes.

To understand this reality even more clearly, ponder on the verses:

Nay! Rather, what they used to do has become like rust upon their hearts (***83:14***).

Nay! Most surely, they shall on that day be debarred from their Lord (***83:15***).

In conjunction with the verse,

Allah will love you and forgive you your sins (***3:31***).

Verse 32

Qur'an: ***Say: 'Obey Allah and the Apostle'*** (***3:32***).

The preceding verse invited the servants to "follow" the Apostle. To follow means to process behind in someone's track. The believer follows the Apostle in the way taken by the Apostle. The way the Apostle has taken is the straight path which belongs to Allah. It is the *Shari'ah* ordained for the Apostle and conveyed through him to the mankind; and the servants are to obey the Apostle and adhere to his *Shari'ah*. That is why the order to follow the Apostle was changed to his obedience. The Apostle's path of sincerity is the sum total of his *Shari'ah* – his orders and prohibitions, his mission and his guidance. When one follows the Apostle in his tracks, He in fact obeys Allah and the Apostle in the *Shari'ah*. Allah's name has been added with the Apostle's, to show that the obedience of Allah is one and the same with the obedience of the Apostle. The Apostle's name was necessary to mention with that of Allah because the talk is about following his tracks.

Someone has written that the sentence means: Obey Allah in His Book and obey the Apostle in his sunnah. But what we have written above clearly shows the unsoundness of this explanation. It is obvious that the words,

...Obey Allah and the Apostle; (***3:32***)

have been revealed as explanation of the preceding words,

***Say: 'If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you'* (*3:31*).**

Further, this verse shows that the obedience of Allah and obedience of the Apostle are one; that is why the word "obey", has not been repeated. Had there been two different things to be followed (the Book, for Allah; the *sunnah* for the Apostle), it would have been appropriate to say, 'Obey Allah and obey the Apostle', as has been said in another verse:

***O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and the masters of the affair from among you…* (*4:59*).**

Anyhow, the verse has the same general and particular aspects as the previous one.

Qur'an: *But if they turn back, then surely, Allah does not love the unbelievers* (*3:32*).

The ending clause shows that those who disregard this order are unbelievers; the same is the import of other verses obliging the believers not to take the unbelievers as friends.

This clause too shows this verse to be an explanation of the previous one. That verse described that Allah loves those believers who accept and obey the order to follow the Apostle. This one says that Allah does not love those "unbelievers" who neglect this order to obey the Apostle.

These verses make the following things clear:

First: *Taqiyyah* is allowed in certain circumstances.

Second: The punishment for befriending the unbelievers will not be waived; the sin of disobeying this order will not be forgiven; it is a firmly decreed order.

Third: The Divinely ordained *Shari'ah* exemplifies the sincerity towards Allah; and that sincerity exemplifies the love of Allah. In other words, if we analyse the religion – the sum total of Divine knowledge and faith, the ethical teachings and practical laws, with all their details – it will resolve into sincerity (a sincere servant of Allah believes that his person, his character and his actions, all belong to Allah); and on further analysis this sincerity resolves into the love of Allah.

If we reverse the process and start from the other end, then the love of Allah constitutes the main ingredient of the sincerity, and the sincerity leads to the Shari'ah.

Looking from another angle, religion resolves into submission, and submission into monotheism.

Fourth: It is disbelief to take the unbelievers for friends. It is a disbelief related to the branches of religion, not to its roots. Other examples are the disbelief of the one who does not pay *zakat*, and of the one who does not pray.

It may possibly be explained in another way. The one who befriends an unbeliever, has himself been called unbeliever, because that is the ultimate destination where such a friendship leads to. We have described this theme earlier, and shall further explain it in Chapter 5 (The Table).

Traditions

It is written in *ad-Durr al-Manthur*, about the words of Allah:

Let not the believers take the unbelievers for friends… (***3:28***):

"Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: 'al-Hajjaj Ibn 'Amr was an ally of Ka'b Ibn al-Ashraf and Ibn Abi 'l-Haqiq and Qays Ibn Zayd; and they were secretly meeting with some Helpers with a view to seduce them from their religion. (Seeing this) Rifa'ah Ibn al-Mundhir, 'Abdullah Ibn Jubayr and Sa'd Ibn Khuthaymah told those Helpers to keep away from those Jews and to be wary of their secret talks, "lest they lead you away from your religion". But they refused (to listen). Then Allah revealed:

Let not the believers take the unbelievers for friends rather than the believers; and whoever does this, he shall have nothing (**to do**) ***with Allah, except*** (**when**) ***you guard yourselves against*** (**them**) ***for fear from them; and Allah cautions you of Himself; and to Allah is the eventual coming*** (***3:28***).

Say: 'Whether you hide what is in your hearts or manifest it, Allah knows it; and He knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth; and Allah has power over all things' (***3:29***).

The author says: Apparently this tradition has applied the verse to that story. Otherwise, the Qur'an uses the word "unbelievers", for a wider circle than the People of the Book. If any verse were revealed about that story, it would have been the one forbidding friendship with the Jews and the Christians, not these verses.

The *tafsir, as-Safi* quotes under the words: except (when) you guard yourselves against (them)..., from *al-Ihtijaj*, that the Commander of the faithful ('a) said, *inter alia*, in a tradition: "and He ordered you to practise *taqiyyah* in your religion; because Allah says: Be careful, and be careful again, not to expose yourself to perdition, and not to neglect *taqiyyah* which I have ordered you (to practise); otherwise, you will cause shedding of your blood and the blood of your brethren (as well); will expose your bounties as well as theirs to ruin; and will cause their humiliation at the hands of the enemies of the religion of Allah, while Allah has ordered you to exalt them."

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "The Apostle of Allah used to say: 'He has no religion who does not have *taqiyyah*;' then he used to say: 'Allah says:

Except (***when***) ***you guard yourselves against them for fear from them*** (***3:28***)."[2]

Imam al-Baqir (‘a) said: “*taqiyyah* is (allowed) in every matter about which a man falls in predicament; and Allah has made it lawful to him.”[3] ()

The author says: There are very many traditions from the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) – probably reaching the limit of *mutawatir* – containing the permission of *taqiyyah*; and you have already seen how the Qur’anic verses incontestably prove it.

Sa’id Ibn Yasar said: “Abu ‘Abdillah (‘a) told me: ‘Is religion anything other than love? Verily Allah, the Mighty, the Great, says:

***Say: ‘If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you’* (*3:31*).**[4]

The author says: This tradition has been narrated in *al-Kafi* from Imam al-Baqir (‘a); also al-Qummi and al-‘Ayyashi have narrated it in their *tafsirs* from the same Imam through al-Hadhdha’; again al-‘Ayyashi has narrated it in his *at-Tafsir* from the same Imam through Burayd and from Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) through Rib’i.

These traditions support our explanation given in the Commentary.

Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said: “He who disobeys Allah, does not love Him.” Then he quoted (the following poem):

You disobey Allah and (at the same time) you manifest His love;

By my life! this is a strange behaviour.

If your love were true, you would have obeyed Him; Verily, the lover obeys his beloved.[5]

Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said, *inter alia*, in a tradition: “And whoever likes to know that Allah loves him, his action should be in obedience to Allah and he should follow us. Has he not heard the talk of Allah, the Mighty, the Great, with His Prophet: Say ‘If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...’”[6]

The author says: We shall explain how the Imams’ obedience is one and the same with the obedience of the Prophet when writing about the verse:

***O you who believe! obey Allah and obey the Apostle and the masters of the affairs from among you...* (*4:59*)**

‘Abd Ibn Hamid has narrated from al-Hasan that he said: “The Apostle of Allah (S) said: ‘Whoever feels an aversion to my *sunnah*, he is not from me.’ Then he recited this verse:

***Say: ‘If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you’* (*3:31*).**”[7]

It has been narrated by Ibn Abi Hatim, Abu Na'im (in his *Hilyat al-awliya'*) and al-Hakim, from 'A'ishah that she said: "The Apostle of Allah (S) said: 'Polytheism is more undetectable than the crawling of an ant on a (smooth) rock in a dark night; and its least (grade) is that one should love something because of (its) injustice and should hate something because of (its) justice; and what is religion except loving and hating in the cause of Allah? Allah has said:

***Say: 'If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you'* (*3:31*).**"[8]

Ahmad, Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, Ibn Habban and al-Hakim have narrated through Abu Rafi' from the Prophet that he said: "I should not find one of you, reclining on his couch, saying - when there comes to him one of my commands, in which I have ordered or prohibited something - 'We do not understand (it); we shall follow (only) what we find in the Book of Allah.'"[9]

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1. "Today" in this verse refers to the day of the Deluge of Nuh ('a), not to the Day of Resurrection. (tr.).
2. al-'Ayyashi.
3. al-Kafi.
4. Ma'ani al-akhbar.
5. Ma'ani al-akhbar.
6. al-Kafi.
7. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
8. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
9. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah 'Aal-'Imran: Verses 33 - 34

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

***Surely, Allah chose Adam and Nuh and the descendants of Ibrahim and the descendants of 'Imran above all the worlds* (*3:33*).**

ذُرِّيَّةً بَعْضُهَا مِنْ بَعْضٍ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

***Offspring, one of the other; and Allah is Hearing, Knowing* (*3:34*).**

Commentary

Now begins the story of ‘Isa, son of Maryam, with all the related topics, sifting the truth from the falsehoods that cover his life and personality; the chapter further offers clear arguments against the People of the Book. The two verses serve as the joining link between the coming discourse about ‘Isa (‘a) and the preceding verses regarding the People of the Book.

Verse 33

Qur’an: ***Surely, Allah chose Adam and Nuh and the descendants of Ibrahim and the descendants of ‘Imran above all the worlds*** **(*3:33*).**

It was explained under the verse:

And most certainly We chose him in this world **(*2:130*).**

That *“al-istifa’”.* (**اَلْاِصْطِفَآءُ**) means to take the choicest part of a thing; to purify a thing from all impurities. It may be translated, for all practical purposes, as selection or choosing. Comparing it with various stages of *“al-wilayah”* (**اَلْوِلَايَةُ =** friendship of Allah), we find that it fits perfectly the stage of “Islam”, that is, total surrender of the servant to the will of his Lord, being truly happy with what the Lord decrees for him.

But that “selection” is not what this verse implies. It does not say, Allah chose them from among the worlds. It says, He chose them “above all the worlds”. “From among the worlds” would have implied that only they were the Muslims; that the total surrender to the will of Allah was exclusively reserved for them. Obviously, such a connotation would be wrong. The clause used in the verse, “above all the worlds”, has given a new connotation to the selection, and shows that they were chosen and given excellence and precedence over other people in some things exclusively given to them. To appreciate the difference between the two selections, look at the verse which says:

And when the angels said: ‘O Maryam! surely, Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds’ **(*3:42*).**

Clearly the first choosing is related to her own virtues without looking at anyone else, and the second implies a sense of comparison, exalting her over all other women.

First of the chosen ones was Adam (‘a). He was the first human vicegerent of Allah appointed for this earth, as Allah says:

And when your Lord said to the angels, ‘Verily I am going to make in the earth a vicegerent’… **(*2:30*).**

Was the first to open the door of repentance and Divine forgiveness, as Allah says:

Then his Lord chose him, so He turned to him (i.e., with forgiveness) ***and guided him*** (***20:122***).

And was the first of those for whom Allah ordained the religion, as He says:

So if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy (***20:123***).

These virtues exclusively belong to him, and enough are they for one's excellence!

Then the verse mentions Nuh ('a). He was the first of the five *ul al-'azm* apostles who were given a Divine Book and a new *Shari'ah*, as we explained under the verse:

Mankind was but one people, so Allah sent the prophets… (***2:213***).

Also, he was the second father of the human race; and Allah sent peace on him in the worlds, saying:

And We made his offspring the survivors (***37:77***)**-**

And We perpetuated to him (**praise**) ***among the later generations*** (***37:78***).

Peace be on Nuh in all the worlds (***37:79***).

Then Allah mentions the descendants of Ibrahim and the descendants of 'Imran among the chosen ones. *"al-Al"* (اَلْآلُ) of a man is someone closely related to him. ar-Raghib says in his *Mufradat al-Qur'an: "al-Al*: It is said that it is an altered form of *al-ahl*; yet its diminutive, *al-uhayl* (اَلْأُهَيْلُ) has got the *"h"* (ه) restored; but it has the peculiarity that, unlike *al-ahl*, it is always annexed (in genitive construction) to the proper names of rational beings, and not to common nouns, places or eras. It is said: *Al* of Zayd; but not *al* of man, nor *al* of this place or that period.

Also, they do not, for example, say, *al* of the tailor; rather it is always annexed to a great and noble personality, for example, *al* of the Sultan, *al* of Allah. As for *al-ahl*, it is annexed to all types of words; for example, they say, *ahl* of Allah, *ahl* of the tailor; likewise, they say, *ahl* of this era, *ahl* of that town etc. (On the other hand) some people say that *al-al* actually means the name of a person; and that its diminutive is *uwayl* (أُوَيْلُ); and it is used for someone who is very closely and personally related to a person, either by close kinship or by love and attachment."

Accordingly, *al* of Ibrahim and *al* of 'Imran mean their closely related family members and those who were exclusively attached to them. (That is why we have translated the word as 'descendants.)

Obviously, *al* of Ibrahim should refer to all the purified ones among his descendants, for example, Ishaq, Israel and other prophets from the house of Israel as well as Isma'il and his purified descendants, chief of whom was Muhammad (may Allah bless him and his progeny); and those who followed them to various stages of the friendship of Allah. But the verse then mentions *al* of 'Imran, and it shows that *al* of Ibrahim does not have such a wide connotation. The said 'Imran is either the father of Maryam or the

father of Musa (‘a), and in any case he was himself a descendant of Ibrahim (‘a) and so were his descendants; by mentioning them separately, it has been made clear that the phrase *al* Ibrahim (اٰلُ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ = the descendants of Ibrahim) refers to some, and not all, of his purified descendants.

Allah has said in another place in the Qur’an:

Or do they envy the people for what Allah has given them of His grace? So, indeed, We have given to Ibrahim’s children **(descendants)** ***the Book and the wisdom, and We have given them a grand kingdom*** **(*4:54*).**

The context shows that this verse describes and condemns the envy of the Israelites which they felt against Muhammad (S). Other verses too support this interpretation. And it makes it clear that the phrase, “descendants of Ibrahim”, does not include here the Israelites; in other words it has been used for Ibrahim’s descendants other than Ishaq, Ya’qub and the progeny of Ya’qub (who are generally called the Israelites). After excluding that branch, the only descendants to whom this phrase is applicable are Isma’il and his purified descendants, including the Prophet and his progeny. (Allah willing, we shall later prove that the word, “the people”, used in the verse 4:54, refers to the Prophet, and that undoubtedly, he is one of the “descendants of Ibrahim” mentioned therein.)

Some other verses also support this connotation. For example:

Most surely, the nearest of people to Ibrahim are those who followed him and this Prophet and those who believe; and Allah is the guardian of the believers **(*3:68*).**

And when Ibrahim and Isma’il were raising the foundations of the House: Our Lord! accept from us; surely, Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing **(*2:127*).**

Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and **(raise)** ***from our offspring a group submitting to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion and turn to us*** **(mercifully)**. ***Surely, Thou art the Oft-returning*** **(with mercy)**, ***the Merciful”*** **(*2:128*).**

Our Lord! and raise up in them an Apostle from among themselves who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them; surely, Thou art the Mighty, the Wise **(*2:129*).**

The phrase, the descendants of Ibrahim, therefore, refers to his offspring from the branch of Isma’il.

It should be pointed out here that the verse in no way implies any exclusiveness; it simply says that certain named prophets and families were chosen and given excellence over the nations; it does not say that others were not chosen or exalted. It follows that:

1. There is no discrepancy between this verse (which is silent about the excellence of Ibrahim (‘a) himself, and of Musa (‘a) and other Israelite prophets) and numerous other verses which eulogize their

virtues and excellence. (The Qur'an, contains very many such verses and there is no need to quote them here.) However, as we said, to affirm one thing does not mean to negate or reject the others.

2. Likewise, there is no conflict between this verse and those which bestow similar excellence to the Children of Israel; for example:

And certainly We gave the Book and the wisdom and the prophecy to the Children of Israel, and We gave them of the goodly things, and We made them excel the nations (***45:16***).

3. The fact that two prophets and two families were exalted and given excellence over the nations, does not mean that others could not similarly be given excellence over the nations; nor that some others could not be exalted and given excellence over those already exalted. Giving excellence to one or various groups and nations only implies that they were given precedence, in some worldly or other worldly virtue, over those below them. It does not say anything on whether some others could be given excellence over them or whether some others too could be exalted over the worlds.

4. They were chosen over all the worlds. This is not in conflict with the concept that some among them were made to excel the others. We know that Allah chose the prophets over all other people, but at the same time He gave some of them more prestige than the others. He says:

And every one (***i.e., of the prophets***) ***We made to excel the world*** (***6:87***).

And again He says: and certainly We have made some of the prophets to excel others… (***17:55***).

Now we come to the "descendants of 'Imran": Apparently the name, 'Imran, refers to the father of Maryam. These two verses are immediately followed by the stories of the wife of 'Imran and their daughter, Maryam; moreover, 'Imran, father of Maryam, has been repeatedly mentioned by his name in the Qur'an, while 'Imran, father of Musa, has not been mentioned even once in a way as to make it clear that it was he who was intended. All this supports the view that here too 'Imran refers to the father of Maryam; and *"al 'Imran"* (**اٰلُ عِمْرَانُ** = translated here as descendants of 'Imran) refers to Maryam and 'Isa (peace be on both of them), alone or together with the wife of 'Imran.

Reportedly the Christians do not agree that Maryam's father was called 'Imran: but the Qur'an is not bound to cater to their views.

Verse 34

Qur'an: ***Offspring, one of the other*** (***3:34***).

It is said that *"adh-dhurriyyah"* (**اَلذُّرِّيَّةُ**) originally meant small children: later the meaning was extended to cover all the offspring. It is the latter meaning that is implied in this verse. The word is in the accusative because it has the force of an explanatory conjunction.

The clause, “one from the other”, shows that if you look at any one of the group, it begins from, and returns to, the others. In other words, the whole is made of similar parts, one part does not differ from the other in its attributes and qualifications. The clause, in the framework of its theme and context, implies that these descendants do not differ from one another in the attributes of excellence, and that it is for this reason that Allah made them to excel over the worlds; actions of Allah are not done haphazardly or at random – surely, such a selection cannot be done recklessly, because it is the spring-head of such good thing in this world.

Qur’an: ***And Allah is Hearing, Knowing*** **(*3:34*).**

Allah hears their speech which shows their inner thoughts; He knows what is in their minds and hearts. This concluding sentence gives the reason why they were chosen. And the preceding clause, “Offspring, one from the other”, explains why the whole group was considered worthy of this Divine selection. The verse implies the following connotation: Allah made them to excel the worlds; that excellence and selection covered them all, because they were a group, each of them being similar to the others, in their spiritual sublimity, surrender of hearts and established truth of the words; Allah, bestowed this excellence on them because He is the Hearing and Knowing, He hears what they say, and knows what is in their minds.

Traditions

Imam Ar-Ridha’(‘a) had a talk with al-Ma’mun; during which al-Ma’mun said: “Has Allah given the offspring (of the Prophet – (S)) excellence over all other people?” Ab al-Hasan (Ar-Ridha’– (‘a)) said: “Indeed Allah has clearly described, in His decisive Book, the excellence of the (said) offspring over all the people.” al-Ma’mun asked: “Where is it in the Book of Allah?” Imam Ar-Ridha’(‘a) said: “In His words:

Surely, Allah chose Adam and Nuh the descendants of Ibrahim and the descendants of ‘Imran above all the worlds; **(*3:33*)**

Offspring, one of the other **(*3:34*)*”’***[1]

Ahmad Ibn Muhammad narrates from Imam Ar-Ridha’(‘a) (who narrates) from Abu Ja’far (‘a) that he said: “Liar is he who thinks that He (Allah) is finished with the (management of the) affairs, because the pleasure is of Allah regarding His creation; He wills what He pleases and does what He pleases. Allah has said: offspring, one from the other, and Allah is the Hearing, the Knowing. Its (i.e., the offspring’s) last is from its first, and its first is from its last. Therefore, if you were told that a certain thing would happen in respect of a particular offspring, and it happened about another (person) from the same (offspring), then the thing happened exactly as you were told.”[2]

The author says: This tradition proves the explanation written earlier, of the verse,

***Offspring, one of the other* (*3:34*).**

Imam al-Baqir (‘a) recited this verse and said: “We are from them, and we are the remnant of that *al-’itrah* (**اَلْعِتْرَةُ** = family).”[3]

The author says: *al-’itrah* actually means the foundation, the root, the basis which a thing relies upon. That is why it is used for the children and near relatives of preceding generations. In other words, it refers to the vertical genealogy of a person.

It is because of this semantic value of the word that the Imam has taken the clause (*offspring, one from the other*) to refer to a vertical genealogical line beginning with Adam and passing through Nuh to the *al* of Ibrahim and *al* of ‘Imran.

It also explains why Allah has mentioned Adam (‘a) and Nuh (‘a) with the two families; it was done to establish an unbroken chain of selection right from the beginning of the human race to Muhammad (S) and his purified and sinless progeny.

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1. ‘Uyun al-akhbar.
2. al-‘Ayyashi.
3. al-‘Ayyashi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Surah ‘Aal-‘Imran: Verses 35 - 41

إِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ عِمْرَانَ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

***When the woman of ‘Imran said: “My Lord! Surely, I vow to Thee what is in my womb, to be devoted* (to Thy service)*; accept therefore from me; surely, Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing”* (*3:35*).**

فَلَمَّا وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَضَعْتُهَا أُنْثَىٰ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعَتْ وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالْأُنْثَىٰ وَإِنِّي سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَإِنِّي أُعِيذُهَا بِكَ وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

So when she brought her forth, she said: “My Lord! Surely, I have brought it forth a female” – and

Allah knew best what she brought forth, and the male is not like the female – "and I have named her Maryam, and I commend her and her offspring into Thy protection from the accursed Satan" (***3:36***).

فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنْبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا وَكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّا كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا قَالَ يَا مَرْيَمُ أَنَّىٰ لَكِ هَٰذَا قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

So her Lord accepted her with a good acceptance and made her grow up a good growing, and gave her into the charge of Zakariyya; whenever Zakariyya entered the sanctuary to (see) ***her, he found with her food. He said: "O Maryam! Whence comes this to you?" She said: "It is from Allah." Surely, Allah gives sustenance to whom He pleases, without measure*** (***3:37***).

هُنَالِكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ

There did Zakariyya pray to his Lord; he said: "My Lord! Grant me from Thee good offspring; surely, Thou art the Hearer of prayer" (***3:38***).

فَنَادَتْهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَهُوَ قَائِمٌ يُصَلِّي فِي الْمِحْرَابِ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِيَحْيَىٰ مُصَدِّقًا بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَسَيِّدًا وَحَصُورًا وَنَبِيًّا مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

Then the angels called to him as he stood praying in the sanctuary: "That Allah gives you the good news of Yahya verifying a word from Allah, and honourable and chaste and a prophet, from among the good ones" (***3:39***).

قَالَ رَبِّ أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَقَدْ بَلَغَنِيَ الْكِبَرُ وَامْرَأَتِي عَاقِرٌ قَالَ كَذَٰلِكَ اللَّهُ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ

He said: "My Lord! How shall there be a son (born) ***to me, and old age has already come upon me, and my wife is barren?" He said: "Even thus does Allah what He pleases"*** (***3:40***).

قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي آيَةً قَالَ آيَتُكَ أَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ إِلَّا رَمْزًا وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ كَثِيرًا وَسَبِّحْ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِبْكَارِ

He said: "My Lord! appoint a sign for me." Said He: "Your sign is that you would not speak to men for three days except by signs; and remember your Lord much and glorify Him in the evening and the morning" (***3:41***).

Commentary

Verse 35

Qur'an: ***When the woman of 'Imran said: "My Lord! Surely, I vow to Thee what is in my womb, to be devoted*** **(to Thy service)*****; accept therefore from me; surely, Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing"*** **(*3:35*).**

When a man makes a *"an-nadhr"* (**اَلنَّذْرُ** = vow), he in effect binds himself to do something which hitherto was not compulsory for him. *"at-Tahrir"* (**اَلتَّحْرِيْرُ**) is to release from a bond; that is why emancipation of slave is called *"at-tahrir"*; the same word is used for writing, probably because writing releases the ideas from the repository of mind and memory. *"at-Taqabbul"* (**اَلتَّقَبُّلُ**) is to accept willingly and gladly, for example, accepting a gift, accepting a prayer and so on.

The words,

When the woman of 'Imran said: 'My Lord! surely, I vow to Thee what is in my womb, to be devoted **(*to Thy service*)*'*** **(*3:35*)**

clearly show that she made this vow during her pregnancy, and that she was pregnant from 'Imran. It also implies that 'Imran was not alive at that time; otherwise, she could not make the vow so independently to release her child for Divine worship. The same idea is implied in the verse:

…and you were not with them when they cast their pens **(to decide)** ***which of them should have Maryam in his charge…*** **(*3:44*).**

Obviously, when the parents release the child, it does not mean that they emancipate it from any slavery. What the said release amounts to is that the child is freed from the bonds of parental guardianship; the parents undertake not to train or use the child for their own benefit, nor to demand from it their various rights like obedience etc. Such a release liberates the child from the authority of the parents. If the child has been released for the service of Allah, it is taken under Divine protection and guardianship, and devotes its time to the service of Allah, that is, serving in synagogues, churches and other places reserved for Divine worship. This would continue up to the period the child would otherwise have remained under parental guardianship. Reportedly they used to release the child for the service of Allah; the parents did not use the child in their work, or for their benefit. He was put in the synagogue, to clean it and serve in it. This continued till he reached the age of puberty; then he was free to remain therein or to go away; if he decided to continue, he stayed therein; and if he liked to go away, he did so.

The verse shows that she firmly believed the child in her womb to be a male, not a female. It is remarkable how confidently she made the vow with her Lord, in full certainty, without attaching any proviso; she said:

My Lord! surely, I vow to Thee what is in my womb, to be devoted **(to Thy service); (*3:35*)**

without saying, for example, 'if he is a male child'. And she used the masculine form *"muharraran"* (**مُحَرَّراً = released; translated here as, devoted**) referring to what was in her womb. Of course, according to its syntactical position it may be construed as showing the state of the relative pronoun *"ma"* (**مَا = what [is in my womb]**), which may be used for either gender. But undoubtedly her choice of word was based on her belief that she carried a male child in her womb. Otherwise, if she had taken a vow to release whatever. was in her womb, be it a boy or a girl, she would not have shown such a disappointment when she delivered a girl:

"My Lord! surely, I have brought it forth a female" **(*3:36*)**

nor was there any reason for the Divine comment, "and the male is not like the female".

One more thing. Allah quotes (without any adverse comment) her words showing her firm belief. It implies that her conviction was not without a reason; nor was it based on her keen observations which give some such indications to experienced women. After all, such things are mere conjectures:

And surely, conjecture does not avail against the truth at all **(*53:28*).**

And it is a habit of the Qur'an that whenever it quotes a false idea, it invariably always points to its falsehood. Allah says:

Allah knows what every female bears, and that of which the wombs fall short of completion and that in which they increase **(*13:8*).**

Surely, Allah is He with Whom is the knowledge of the hour, and He sends down the rain and He knows what is in the wombs **(*31:34*).**

The verses clearly say that the knowledge of "what is in the wombs" is one of the unseen, exclusively reserved for Allah. And Allah says:

The Knower of the unseen! so He does not reveal His secrets to any **(*72:26*).**

Except to whom He chooses of an apostle… **(*72:27*).**

It means that others may know the unseen only through Divine revelation. In this background, when Allah quotes her as saying something confidently about a subject exclusively reserved for Allah, it means that her belief, (that she was pregnant with a male child) was somehow based on a Divine revelation. That is why she did not lose hope of a male child even when she found her own child a female; instead, she again said with full conviction and certainty:

And I commend her and her offspring into Thy protection from the accursed Satan **(*3:36*).**

Look at her belief that Maryam would have an offspring – obviously such a commendation was beyond her knowledge, if not based on revelation.

…accept therefore from me; (***3:35***)

She did not mention object of the verb "accept". Possibly it could be the afore–mentioned vow, as it was a good deed; but more probably, she was beseeching Allah to accept her released child. The wording of the next verse, "So her Lord accepted her with a good acceptance", clearly supports the latter meaning.

Verse 36

Qur'an: ***So when she brought her forth, she said: 'My Lord! Surely I have brought it forth a female'*** (***3:36***)***.***

By putting a feminine pronoun in "brought her forth", the Qur'an did away with the necessity of a longer description. What this concise sentence actually stands for is this: When she brought forth that which was in her womb and came to know that it was a female, she said: "My Lord! I have brought it a female." This last sentence, although an informative, was in fact an exclamation to show her disappointment.

Qur'an: ***And Allah knew best what she brought forth, and the male is not like the female*** (***3:36***)***.***

These are parenthetic sentences, and the speaker of both is Allah, not the woman of 'Imran; even the second sentence is not spoken by her.

There is no doubt that the first sentence is a saying of Allah, commenting on her sorrowful cry. The words, "and Allah knew best what she brought forth", in effect convey the following idea: Allah knew that she had delivered a female child; but He intended to fulfil through this daughter of hers all her hopes and expectations, in a far better way. Had the wife of 'Imran know what Allah's plans were in making her child a female, she would not have shown any sorrow and disappointment. As the later events showed, the male child she hoped for could not accomplish what Allah intended this female child to achieve. Suppose, she were given a son, instead of the daughter she got; what could that son achieve? He, like 'Isa, could be made a prophet; he could give eyes to the blind and heal the lepers; he could raise a few men from the dead. And this was the utmost he could do. But this female child, which Allah has given to the wife of 'Imran, will be a means to complete the word of Allah; she will bring forth a son without a father; Allah will make her and her son together a sign for the people; that son will talk with people in his cradle; he will be a spirit and a word of Allah; his likeness before Allah will be like Adam; and there will be many manifest signs in giving this daughter, Maryam, to the wife of 'Imran and giving to Maryam a son, 'Isa, rather than giving a son directly to Imran's wife.

Now it should be clear that the words, "and the male is not like the female", are spoken by Allah. Had they been uttered by the wife of 'Imran, she would have said, 'and the female is not like the male'; she would not have reversed the syntactic arrangement as the Qur'anic sentence has done. If a man hopes

to get a very good thing or to be awarded a very high status, and then he gets an inferior thing or a lower rank, he regretfully says; The thing I got is not what I expected and hoped for. He would never say: The thing I hoped for is not like that which I got.

In view of the above explanation, the definite articles in “the male” and “the female”, (or at least in “the female”) refer to the particular son and daughter spoken about; and the meaning would be as follows: The male she hoped for is not like the female she was given.

Many exegetes have taken the sentence, “and the male is not like the female”, to be a part of the speech of the woman of ‘Imran. Then they were faced with the difficulty of explaining its apparently reversed syntactic arrangement. They have tried without success to bring about some worthwhile explanation. Any interested reader should consult their books.

Qur’an: ***And I have named her Maryam, and I commend her and her offspring into Thy protection from the accursed Satan*** (***3:36***).

It is said that Maryam in their language means the worshipper and the servant[1]. In that case, it is easy to see why she hastened to name the child soon after delivery and mentioned the name to Allah. Apparently, when she found out that the child was not a male (who could easily be released for worship of Allah and service of the synagogue), she hastened to give the child the name, Maryam – thus dedicating her for the said worship and service. The words,

“And I have named her Maryam…” (***3:36***)

implied that she had dedicated that female child to the worship of Allah and released her for the synagogue’s service. The words were in effect a sort of renewed vow, and that is why Allah accepted her offering in these words:

So her Lord accepted her with a good acceptance and made her grow up a good growing (***3:37***)

Thereafter, she commended Maryam and her offspring to the protection of Allah from the accursed Satan, in order that she might dedicate herself for Divine worship and remain devoted to the service of the synagogue, in a way that the name might truly represent the named.

She confidently talks with Allah about the offspring of Maryam, without any condition or proviso. Such words cannot be spoken in presence of Allah by someone who knows nothing of the future. What the future holds for a man is a part of the unseen and its knowledge is reserved for Allah. However, she talks here in the same assured way as she did when she made the vow first:

My Lord! surely, I vow to Thee what is in my womb, to be devoted… (***3:35***).

This confidence shows that she had the knowledge that she would get from ‘Imran a son of good faith and deed; when she became pregnant and ‘Imran died, she became absolutely sure that what she

carried in her womb was the same promised son; when she delivered a daughter and became aware of her mistaken guess, she at once understood that that promise would be fulfilled through that daughter, that she would get that son from the offspring of that daughter. As soon as she realized this fact, she transferred her vow from the son she hoped for to the daughter she was given, named it Maryam (i.e., one who worships and serves), and entrusted her and her offspring to the protection of Allah against the accursed Satan.

All these aspects of the story may be understood from meditation on the words of Allah.

Verse 37

Qur'an: ***So her Lord accepted her with a good acceptance and made her grow up a good growing (3:37).***

"al-Qubul" (**اَلْقُبُوْل**= acceptance), conjoined by the adjective *"hasan"* (**حَسَن** = good), gives exactly the same meaning as *"at-taqabbul"* (**اَلتَّقَبُّلُ** = to accept willingly and gladly). Then why did Allah choose three words, "with good acceptance", in place of one, "gladly" or "gracefully"? It was to show that goodness of acceptance was the main theme of the talk; and also, because clear mention of "good acceptance" was more ennobling and more edifying.

Maryam's mother had used two sentences in her invocation:

"And I have named her Maryam, and I commend her and her offspring to Thy protection..." (3:36).

The two sentences (in answer to her call) run parallel to them. It is then reasonable to believe that the first sentence, "So her Lord accepted her with a good acceptance" is a response to her words, "and I have named her Maryam"; and the second sentence, "and made her grow up a good growing", is the fulfilment of her second plea:

"And I commend her and her offspring to Thy protection from the accursed Satan" (3:36).

Obviously, accepting a good acceptance does not refer to accepting the vow of 'Imran's wife and to giving her the reward in the next life for that good deed of hers; in other words, it was Maryam who was accepted, not the vow. Maryam was accepted, as she grew up to be a sincere worshipper of Allah and was freed to serve the sanctuary. In this light, the acceptance implies that she was chosen for this purpose by Allah. (We have already explained that this selection implies the chosen one's total surrender to Allah.)

The words, "and made her grow up a good growing", mean that Allah bestowed on her and her offspring guidance and sanctity, and gave them a purified life free from the whisperings of Satan, untouched by his misleading suggestions. That is what is called "cleanliness", in the language of Islam.

These two aspects, that is, good acceptance and good growing – which ultimately mean her being

chosen and purified, respectively – have been referred to in a forthcoming verse: And when the angels said:

***O Maryam! surely, Allah has chosen you above the women of the worlds* (*3:42*).**

We shall further explain this topic under that verse, Allah willing.

The above discourse makes it clear that it was in answer to her mother's call that Maryam was chosen and purified. Likewise, the fact that she together with her son was made a sign for the nations, was a verification of the Divine words,

***…and the male is not like the female* (*3:36*)**

Qur'an: ***And gave her into the charge of Zakariyya* (*3:37*).**

Zakariyya got her charge because his name came out in the lot that was drawn. They had disputed among themselves to get the privilege of her custody; then they agreed to decide it by a lot in which Zakariyya's name was drawn. Allah refers to this episode when He says:

***…and you were not with them when they cast their pens* (to decide) *which of them should have Maryam in his charge, and you were not with them when they contended one with another"* (*3:44*).**

Qur'an: ***Whenever Zakariyya entered the sanctuary to* (see) *her, he found with her food. He said: 'O Maryam! Whence comes this to you?' She said: 'It is from Allah'. Surely Allah gives sustenance to whom He pleases, without measure* (*3:37*).**

"al-Mihrab" (اَلْمِحْرَابُ) means a place in mosque or house, reserved for worship. ar-Raghib has said: *"Mihrab* (i.e., niche) of the mosque: It is said that it was given this name because it is the place where one fights against Satan and his desires. Others say that it is because once a man enters it, it is his duty to be *al-harib* (اَلْحَرِيْبُ = wrested away) from worldly deeds and wandering thoughts. Some others have said that originally the foremost portion of the sitting place was called *mihrab* of the house; when the mosques were built, their foremost part was given the same name, *mihrab*. Yet others say that the word *mihrab* was originally used for the niche of the mosque, as it is its most important portion; then the foremost part of a house was also given this name, inasmuch as it resembles the mosque's niche; and probably this (explanation) is more correct. Allah has said:

***They made for him what he pleased of fortresses and images…* (*34:13*).**

Some scholars have said that the word *"mihrab"* here refers to what the People of the Book call altar; and it is a closest in front of the synagogue, it has a door, to reach which one has to ascend a few steps; anyone inside remains hidden from others present in the synagogue.

The author says: In Islamic world the recess (reserved for the leader of prayers) in a mosque owes its

origin to that.

"Rizqan" (رِزْقًا = food) in the clause, "he found with her food", has been used as a common noun, implying that it was an unexpected and unusual food. It has been said that he used to find with her the fruits of the winter in the summer and those of the summer in the winter.

The common noun may be interpreted differently if we look at the clause in isolation. It may be said that the food was not of unusual kind, yet the word "food", is used as a common noun to show that Maryam's sanctuary was never without some kind of food; whenever Zakariyya went to see her, he always found some food with her. But such an interpretation does not agree with the context. Had the food been of the usual kind, Zakariyya could not be satisfied by the reply that it was from Allah and Allah gives sustenance to whom He pleases without measure. Such a reply in that context would not remove the possibility that someone from the people of the synagogue visited her, either with good intention or bad.

Moreover, the words

There did Zakariyya pray to his Lord… (***3:38***)

show that Zakariyya thought the presence of that sustenance to be a miraculous event which could only be attributed to Allah. That is why he felt irresistible urge to call on Allah to grant him a good offspring from Himself. It means that the sustenance was of such unusual type as to show the honour of Maryam before Allah.

The sentence,

He said: 'O Maryam! whence comes this to you?' (***3:37***)

also proves it. This sentence comes after the words "he found with her food"; yet the two sentences are not joined by any conjunctive. It means that he did not ask the question more than once. When she gave the reply and he was convinced of her prestige in the eyes of Allah, he felt it was the time to pray to Allah to grant him too an unusual prayer and give him a good offspring in his old age.

Verse 38

Qur'an: ***There did Zakariyya pray to his Lord; he said: "My Lord! Grant me from Thee good offspring; surely Thou art the Hearer of prayer"*** (***3:38***).

A thing is good *at-tayyib* (اَلطَّيِّبُ), if it is suitable for the purpose it is required for. A good land is suitable for its inhabitants in its water, atmosphere, climate and other necessities of life. Allah says:

And as for the good land, its vegetation springs forth (**abundantly**) ***by the permission of its Lord*** (***7:58***).

A good life is the one whose various aspects are in harmony with each other and give satisfaction to the man concerned. By the same reason, a good perfume is called *at–tib* (اَلطِّيْبُ). Accordingly, a good offspring would mean a child who, in his attributes, qualities and activities, would fulfil the hopes, and satisfy the ambitions of his father. Zakariyya (‘a) prayed to Allah:

My Lord! grant me from Thee good offspring. **(*3:38*).**

It happened when he saw the grace of Allah on Maryam and found out how great her prestige was before the Lord. He was so overwhelmed by that experience that he could not refrain from praying to Allah to bestow on him too a similar bounty. Implied in the adjective “good” was a plea that the said offspring should possess a personality much like that of Maryam, and should be granted a similar prestige and honour before Allah.

He was then and there granted all that he had asked for. Allah gave him a son, Yahya – the prophet most similar to ‘Isa (peace be on both); he was given all the qualities of perfection and excellence which ‘Isa and his Truthful mother, Maryam, were granted. It was for this reason that Allah named him Yahya, and sent him to verify a Word from Allah, and made him honourable and chaste as well as a prophet, from among the good ones. As will be explained later, it was the nearest that any man could resemble Maryam and her son ‘Isa, peace be on them all.

Verse 39

Qur’an: ***Then the angels called to him as he stood praying in the sanctuary: “That Allah gives you the good news of Yahya verifying a word from Allah, and honourable and chaste and a prophet, from among the good ones”*** **(*3:39*)**

The third and second person pronouns refer to Zakariyya. *al–Bushra* (اَلْبُشْرِي), *al–ibshar* (اَلْاِبْشَارُ) and *at–tabshir* (اَلتَّبْشِيْرُ), all have the same meaning: To give good news, to bring good tidings of what would make the recipient happy.

Allah gives you good news of Yahya **(*3:39*)**

It shows that it was Allah who gave him the name, Yahya; some verses in Chapter 19 also indicate the same:

O Zakariyya! surely, We give you good news of a boy whose name shall be Yahya **(*19:7*).**

The name, Yahya, and its bestowal from Allah at the very beginning of the good tidings (before his birth and even conception), support what we have said above, that Zakariyya had asked his Lord to give him a child with a prestige in Divine presence similar to that enjoyed by Maryam. She and her son, ‘Isa (peace be on them), were jointly a sign of Allah, as He says:

And We made her and her son a sign for the nations **(*21:91*).**

Allah therefore gave Yahya, to the utmost possible extent, all the qualities and attributes given to Maryam and ‘Isa. The attributes of Maryam had fully blossomed in ‘Isa; and Yahya was made to resemble ‘Isa as completely and perfectly as was possible. Yet ‘Isa had precedence of Yahya, because his creation and birth was firmly decreed long before the prayer of Zakariyya for Yahya was accepted. That is why ‘Isa was given superiority over Yahya, and made an *ul al–’azm* apostle, bringing a new *Shari‘ah* and a new Book. Apart from such necessary dissimilarities, Yahya and ‘Isa resembled each other to the maximum possible extent.

For a glimpse of this similarity, look at the stories of Yahya and ‘Isa as narrated in Chapter 19 (Maryam).

About Yahya (‘a):

O Zakariyya! surely, We give you good news of a boy whose name shall be Yahya: We have not made before anyone his namesake (***19:7***).

O Yahya! take hold of the Book with strength; and We granted him wisdom while yet a child (***19:12***).

And tenderness from Us and purity, and he was one who guarded (**against evil**) (***19:13***).

And dutiful to his parents, and he was not insolent, disobedient (***19:14***).

And peace on him on the day he was born, and on the day he dies, and on the day he is raised to life (***19:15***).

Now, compare it with what has immediately been said about ‘Isa (‘a):

So she took a veil (**to screen herself**) ***from them; then We sent to her Our spirit, and there appeared to her a well–made man*** (***19:17***).

He said: ‘I am only a messenger of your Lord: That I give you a pure boy’ (***19:19***).

He said: ‘Even so; your Lord says: ‘It is easy to Me and that We may make him a sign to men and a mercy from Us’ (***19:21***).

But she pointed to him. They said: “How should we speak to one who is a child in the cradle?” (***19:29***).

He said: “Surely, I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a prophet (***19:30***).

And He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined on me prayer and zakat as long as I live (***19:31***).

And dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me insolent, unblessed" (***19:32***).

And peace on me on the day I was born, and on the day I die, and on the day I am raised to life (***19:33***).

The verses of this chapter too point to this similarity of the two prophets.

Allah named him Yahya2; and the son of Maryam was called 'Isa which reportedly means *ya'ish* (**يَعِيْشُ =** he lives)3; Yahya was sent to verify a Word from Allah, that is, 'Isa, as Allah says:

…a Word from Him whose name is the Messiah, 'Isa son of Maryam (***3:45***).

Yahya too, just like 'Isa, was given wisdom and taught the Book while yet a child; he too is praised, like 'Isa, to be a tenderness from Allah and purity, and to be dutiful to his parents, not insolent or disobedient; also, much like 'Isa peace was sent to him on three junctures of his existence. Also, Allah made Yahya honourable as 'Isa was made worthy of regard; and he was made chaste and a prophet, from among the good ones, as 'Isa was. All this was in answer to the prayer of Zakariyya, when he asked for a good offspring, to be his heir, and with whom Allah would be well pleased. As explained earlier, he had prayed to Allah to this effect when he was overwhelmed by what he saw of the distinction and excellence of Maryam before Allah.

Verifying a Word from Allah (***3:39***)

It shows that he was a harbinger of 'Isa; "Word" in this context refers to 'Isa, as the verse 3:45 (quoted above) says that Maryam was given good news of a Word from Allah.

"***honourable***": *"as-Sayyid"* (**اَلسَّيِّدُ =** chief, head of community); the one who manages the people's affairs related to their lives and livelihood or concerning a socially accepted virtue; subsequently, it was used with increasing frequency, for honourable and noble, inasmuch as the above-mentioned management of affairs entails honour and excellence - emanating from his authority, wealth or other such virtues.

"***chaste***": *"al-Husur"* (**اَلْحُصُوْرُ =** one who abstains from women). In the present context it signifies a man who totally abstains from women because he forsakes all the worldly desires, and leads a life of asceticism and self-denial.

Verse 40

Qur'an: ***He said: 'My Lord! How shall there be a son*** **(born)** ***to me, and old age has already come upon me, and my wife is barren?'*** (***3:40***)

The question is a mirror of the awe and the wonder which overwhelmed Zakariyya when he heard the good news; he wanted to ascertain how and when this promise would be fulfilled. In no way does this

question imply that he thought it unlikely to happen, or too great a boon to come his way. How could he harbour any doubt about it when he was clearly told that Allah would give him the son he had asked for? Moreover, he had already mentioned these two factors (which are the basis of this question) in his invocation, as Allah quotes him as saying:

My Lord! surely, my bones are weakened and my head flares with hoariness, and, my Lord! never have I been unsuccessful in my prayer to Thee (***19:4***).

And surely, I fear my relatives after me; and my wife is barren; therefore, grant me from Thyself an heir… (***19:5***).

Furthermore, the question reflects on an interesting psychological – nay, spiritual – ecstasy experienced by Zakariyya. No sooner did he look at Maryam and the grace of Allah she enjoyed than he was transported to the plane of ecstasy and felt himself overwhelmed by Divine Mercy and love; while in that state, he asked from his Lord for a good child, and mentioned in that prayer the basic factors – his own old age and his wife's barrenness – which had contributed to that sorrowful and pitiable condition. When his prayer was granted and he was given the good news of a son, it was as though he woke up from that trance; then he began expressing his joyful astonishment on such a marvellous phenomenon – Oh! Would I beget a son, in spite of my old age, even though my wife is barren! The same factors which in the past had caused him sorrow and distress, now enhanced his happiness and joy.

We may also look at this episode in the following light. Zakariyya was assured that his prayer had been accepted; thereupon he started mentioning one snag after the other. Actually, he wanted to ascertain as to how each hindrance would be overcome, how each snag would be removed. He liked to know all the particulars concerning that Divine Grace, in order that his enjoyment would be complete and his happiness perfect. We find the same emotions shown by Ibrahim when he was given similar good tidings:

And inform them of the guests of Ibrahim" (***15:51***).

When they entered upon him, they said, 'Peace'. He said: 'Surely, we are afraid of you' (***15:52***).

They said: 'Be not afraid, surely, we give you the good news of a boy possessing knowledge' (***15:53***).

He said: 'Do you give me good news (***of a son***) ***when old age has come upon me? – Of what then do you give me good news!'*** (***15:54***).

They said: 'We give you good news with truth; therefore, be not of the despairing' (***15:55***).

He said: 'And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord but the erring ones?' (***15:56***).

When the angels told him not to despair, he made it clear that his question had not emanated from any

despair; how could it be so, when despairing from the mercy of Allah was an error, a straying, and he was not an erring or straying servant? The angels must surely, know that when a master turns with mercy to a slave in a way as to bring the slave nearer to himself, to raise him in rank, and exalt him in prestige, the slave feels so exhilarated, so overjoyed, that he yearns to hear those words over and over again, repeatedly going into all its details, joyously looking at all its aspects!

One may easily see the good manners of the purified servants of Allah, if one reflects on the words, "and old age has already come upon me". What Zakariyya alluded to was the fact that he had become too old to have ability, or even desire, to perform sexual act; as for his wife, she suffered from double impediment: Old age and barrenness. The clause, "my wife is barren", is expressed, in 19:8, in a way as to mean, my wife had been barren. It signifies that she had not become unable to bear children because of the advanced age; that she was barren from the very beginning.

Qur'an: ***He said: "Even thus does Allah what He pleases"*** (***3:40***)

The actual replier is Allah – either directly or through the agency of the angels who had called to Zakariyya. But apparently the pronoun in "He said" refers to the angel; he was the sayer, although the saying is attributable to Allah as it was conveyed to Zakariyya by His command. This interpretation is supported by the verse: He (i.e., the Spirit) said: "So shall it be; your Lord says: 'It is easy to Me, and indeed I created you before, when you were nothing.'" (19:9)

The above discourse shows that:

First: Zakariyya heard that voice from the same place whence he used to hear the angel's voice before.

Second: "Even so" is predicate of a deleted subject; the completed subject would be something like this: The matter is even so. It emphasizes that the Divine Grace, of which he was given the good news, was certain to appear; it was a firmly decreed matter which would surely, take place. This reply is similar to the one given by the spirit to Maryam:

He said. 'Even so; your Lord says: 'It is easy to Me;…and it is a matter which has been decreed.' (***19:21***).

Third: "Allah does what He pleases": It is a separate sentence, explaining the reason of the preceding "Even so".

Verse 41

Qur'an: ***He said: 'My Lord! appoint a sign for me'. Said He: 'Your sign is that you would not speak to men for three days except by signs; and remember your Lord much and glorify Him in the evening and the morning'*** (***3:41***).

It is written in *Majma' al-Bayan*: *"ar-Ramz"* (اَلرَّمْزُ) is to make signs with the lips; sometimes it is used for

gesturing with eyebrows, eyes and/or hands; but mostly it is used in the first meaning."

al-'Ashiyy (اَلْعَشِيُّ = evening) indicates the end portion of the day; probably it is derived from *al-'ashwah* (اَلْعَشْوَةُ = dim sightedness); the evening time was given this name because it merges into the darkness of the night and thus affects the eyesight. *"al-Ibkar"* (اَلْإِبْكَارُ = early morning); originally it meant to make haste, to come early.

The verse throws light on yet another similarity between Yahya and 'Isa. Compare it with the advice which 'Isa gave to his mother soon after his birth:

Then if you see any man, say: 'Surely, I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent Allah, so I shall not speak to any man today' (***19:26***).

Zakariyya asked his Lord to appoint a sign for him. Sign is a symbol that points to another thing or idea. There is a difference of opinion regarding the purpose behind this prayer: Did he want to ascertain, with the help of the sign, that the good news was really from Allah; that it was an angelic (or a Divine) speech, and not a satanic voice? Or, was it to know the time when his wife would be pregnant, so that he might be sure of the conception?

The context and the framework of the story do not agree very much with the second view. Yet the exegetes are reluctant to accept the first interpretation. They are not inclined to say that Zakariyya wanted to be sure of the Divine Origin of that message. The prophets were sinless and protected from errors and mistakes; as such they knew perfectly well the difference between the angelic inspiration and the satanic whispering; the Satan could not interfere in their affairs, nor could he confuse them in a way as to cast doubt about the Divine revelation sent to them.

This observation is correct as far as it goes. But it should be remembered that they knew that difference not by themselves, but because Allah had given them that knowledge. If so, then what objection can be raised if Zakariyya prayed to Allah to appoint for him a sign to help him ascertain the Divine Origin of that news? Of course, this objection could be entertained had his prayer been rejected – had Allah refused to appoint for him a sign as he had asked for.

The appointed sign itself – not being able to talk to the people for three days – supports (nay, proves) the first view. Utmost that the Satan can do against the prophets is to touch them with some ailments in their bodies; to put hindrance in their mission; to sabotage their efforts; to mislead the people away from the prophetic path; and to encourage and strengthen their enemies. Allah says:

And remember Our servant Ayyub, when he called upon his Lord: 'The Satan has afflicted me with toil and torment' (***38:41***)***;***

And We did not send before you any apostle or prophet, but when he desired, the Satan made a suggestion respecting his desire; but Allah annuls that which the Satan casts, then does Allah

establish His communications… (***22:52***).

… then I forgot the fish, and nothing made me forget to speak of it but the Satan… (***18:63***).

But such touches and afflictions do not go beyond annoying or discomforting the prophet concerned. But the Satan can never get any power over the person of the prophets themselves; they are protected from it. (In previous discussions we have proved the 'ismah of the prophets.) Now we come to the present subject matter. It was the sign appointed by Allah for Zakariyya that he would not speak to the people for three days; he would remain tongue-tied for all kinds of speeches except for the remembrance of Allah and His glorification. "Said He: 'Your sign is that you would not speak to men for three days except by signs; and remember your Lord much and glorify Him in the evening and the morning.'" It was a sign that affected Zakariyya's person itself and made him tongue-tied. It was such an effect as was absolutely beyond the power of the Satan, because Zakariyya was protected by Divine 'ismah. This was, therefore, a sure sign that it was affected by Allah, and not by the Satan. And such a sign is more in accord with the first view than the second.

Question: It will be difficult, if we take the first view, to explain the verse, "He said: 'My Lord! how shall there be a son (born) to me, and old age has already come upon me, and my wife is barren?' He said: 'Even so; Allah does what He pleases.'" This verse clearly says that he spoke to his Lord and asked Him what he wanted to ask and got an answer to his enquiry. Now, if he harboured any doubt concerning the genuineness of the voice, then why all this dialogue? And if he had no doubt, then why this demand to be given a sign?

Reply: Certainty and belief have many grades, varying in the degrees of intensity. Possibly, Zakariyya was sure from the very beginning that it was an angelic voice by the command of the Beneficent Allah; then he asked his Lord concerning the details of the birth of his promised son, because it was a truly awe-inspiring phenomenon, and again he heard the angel's voice answering his question and was again sure of its genuineness; then he prayed to his Lord to appoint for him a sign in order that his certainty – that it was a Divine communication – should reach the degree of tranquillity.

The clause, "Then the angels called to him", supports this interpretation. *an-Nida'* (**اَلنِّدَآءُ**) means to call from a distance. That is why it is generally used for a shout, a loud utterance – we cannot speak from a distance except in a loud voice – although loudness is not a part of its meaning. For example, Allah refers to the prayer of Zakariyya in these words:

When called he (*nada* = **نَادي**) ***unto his Lord in a low voice*** (*nida'an khafiyyan* = ***19:3***) (**نِدَآءً خَفِيًّا**).

His prayer was termed as a call from a distance – the distance being the spiritual one between Zakariyya's humility and modesty and the Divine sublimity, might and grandeur; otherwise, it could not be described as "a low voice". Anyhow, "the angels called to him" may be taken to mean that Zakariyya had only heard the voices of the angels without setting his eyes on them. (And therefore, he decided to ask for a sign).

An exegete has written: “That Allah gave him a sign of not speaking, means that Allah forbade him to speak to the people for three days; he was to remain silent and spend the stipulated time in remembrance and glorification of Allah; it does not mean that he became tongue-tied and could not speak to the people at all...The fact is that Zakariyya, being a human being, wanted to know the exact time when the conception would take place, in order that he himself might feel tranquillity and could also inform his wife of the great event. That is why he asked what he asked. When his question was answered, he called upon Allah to prescribe for him a special prayer (in order that he might hasten to show his gratitude to Allah), which would terminate in fulfilment of his hope. In other words, the end of that period of thanks-giving would indicate that the time of conception had arrived. Thereupon, Allah told him not to speak to the people for three days, devoting all that time in remembrance and glorification of Allah; if there arose a need to talk with someone, he was to communicate with him in signs only. When the appointed three days passed, it would be the time to convey the good news to his wife.”

Comment: Clearly, no trace of this imaginary narrative can be found in the verses. The Qur’an has nowhere mentioned - either directly or indirectly - any such story. The said writer has given free rein to his fancy when he says that Zakariyya asked for a special regimen of worship in order to offer his thanks to Allah, that the end of that worship period was to lead to the conception, that the termination of that time was a sign for the beginning of the pregnancy, that the words, “you would not speak to men”, were an order to him not to speak, and that he wanted to convey, at the end of the stipulated time the good news to his wife.

Angelic Inspiration And Satanic Whispering: The Speech Of Allah

We have repeatedly mentioned that when a word is made for a meaning, it actually looks at the main purpose behind that meaning. The words, “talk” and “speech”, refer to voice, because voice conveys the idea of the speaker to the hearer. Therefore, whatever conveys that idea may be called a talk or speech. It may be a voice or a combination of several voices; in fact, it may not have any sound at all, as for example, is the case with sign language and symbols. If a siren conveys a complete idea, it may be called a speech, even though it is not uttered by mouth. Likewise, people use the word, “speech”, for signs and symbols although no sound is involved in them.

It is for this reason that the Qur’an uses the words, “speech” and “talk”, for the ideas created in man’s mind by the Satan. Allah narrates the claim of the Satan:

And most certainly I will...bid them so that they shall slit the ears of the cattle, and most certainly I will bid them so that they shall alter Allah’s creation... (***4:119***).

Also, He says:

Like the Satan when he says to man: ‘Disbelieve’, but when he disbelieves, he says: ‘I am surely,

clear of you…' (***59:16***).

…the slinking (**Satan**) ***who whispers into the hearts of men…*** (***114:5***).

…the Satans from among men and jinn, some of them suggesting to others varnished falsehood to deceive (**them**)***…*** (***6:112***).

And the Satan shall say…: 'surely, Allah promised you the promise of truth, and I gave you promises then failed to keep them to you'… (***14:22***).

Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins you to abomination, and Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance; and Allah is Ample-giving, All-knowing (***2:268***).

He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good (***2:269***).

Clearly, these misleading ideas, coming into a man's mind, have been ascribed to the Satan, and have been called his bid, order, talk, whispering, suggestion, promise and threat; all these are various modes of speech and talk, although the Satan does not utter them by mouth, nor does the man hear them by his ears.

The last quoted verse mentions the promise of Allah – for forgiveness and abundance – face to face with the satanic threat. It implies that this promise stands for an angelic inspiration in contrast to the satanic whispering. And that inspiration has been termed as "wisdom". Also, there are other verses pointing to this reality in various terms. For example:

… and (**He will**) ***make for you a light with which you will walk…*** (***57:28***).

He it is Who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they might have more of faith added to their faith – and Allah's are the hosts of the heaven and the earth… (***48:4***).

(We have explained this verse while writing about *as-sakinah* (**اَلسَّكِيْنَةُ** = tranquillity) under the verse:

…in which there is tranquillity from your lord… (***2:248***).)

Therefore (**for**) ***whomsoever Allah intends that He would guide him aright, He expands his breast for Islam; and*** (**for**) ***whomsoever He intends that He should leave him to err, He makes his breast strait and narrow as though he were ascending into the sky; thus does Allah lay uncleanliness on those who do not believe"*** (***6:125***).

It should be noted here that the satanic whispering has been called "the uncleanliness of the Satan" in the verse 8:11.

The above discourse makes it clear that the Satan and the angels "speak" to man by putting ideas into

his mind.

Then there is a speaking reserved for Allah, as He says:

***And there is not for any man that Allah should speak to him except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger so that he reveals by His permission what He pleases* (*42:51*).**

Apart from sending a messenger, that is, an angel (with which we are not concerned here), Allah speaks to man in two ways: (i) Revelation, in which there is no veil between Allah and the person spoken to; (ii) Speaking from behind a veil or curtain.

These are, in short, various kinds of angelic inspiration and satanic whispering; and various modes of Allah's speech.

As for the Divine Speech which is called revelation, it needs no extraneous factor for its recognition, no other distinguishing element to ascertain its authenticity. It is a direct speech, without any curtain between Allah and the recipient of the revelation; and it is just impossible for any doubt to creep up into such a talk. But other kinds of Divine Speech need some supporting evidence, which in its turn relies on the direct revelation.

As for a distinction between the angelic and the satanic talks, the signs mentioned in the above quoted verses are sufficient to separate one from the other. The angelic inspiration accompanies expanding of breast, calls to Divine forgiveness and abundance, and encourages man to follow the religion of Allah as expounded in the Divine Book and the prophetic sunnah. The satanic whispering, on the other hand, causes the breast to be strait and narrow, tempts one to follow one's desire, threatens with poverty, enjoins abomination, and finally pushes one to act in a manner opposed to the Book of Allah and the sunnah, and contrary to the demands of the healthy nature.

The prophets and their close followers sometimes saw and recognized the angels and the Satan, as Allah describes in the stories of Adam, Ibrahim, and Lut (peace be on them). Obviously, in such cases, there was no need for any extraneous identifying factor. But in other cases when they did not see the angel (or the Satan), they, like other believers, needed some identification to ascertain that the speaker was in fact from Allah – and that identification ultimately depended on the direct revelation from Allah.

Traditions

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said about the words of Allah, When the woman of 'Imran said...: "Verily Allah revealed to 'Imran: 'I am going to give you a male (child), of sound health and blessed, who shall heal the blind and the leper and raise the dead (to life) by the permission of Allah; and I'll appoint him an apostle to the children of Israel.' 'Imran informed his wife, Hannah, of it – and she is the mother of Maryam. When Hannah conceived, she thought that she was carrying the same male child. But when she brought it forth, she said: 'My Lord! surely, I have brought it forth a female, and the male is not like

the female.' (She said it because) a female cannot be an apostle. Allah says: And Allah knew what she brought forth. Thereafter, when Allah gave 'Isa to Maryam, (it was understood that) the good news and promise (which Allah had given to 'Imran) were in fact about that (grandson). Therefore, you should not think it strange if we say something about one of us (*Ahl al-Bayt*) and it appears (not in him, but) in his child or grandchild."[4]

The author says: A nearly similar tradition has been narrated from the same Imam in *al-Kafi*, and from Imam al-Baqir ('a) in al-'Ayyashi.

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said about the same verse: "A released child lived in the synagogue (and) did not go out. So, when (the wife of 'Imran) delivered her, she said: 'My Lord! surely, I have brought it forth a female, and the male is not like the female.' The female has her menstruation, and (therefore she) will (have to) go out of the place of worship, while a released child does not go out of the place of worship."[5]

Imam al-Baqir or Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "She had vowed what was in her womb to the synagogue for serving the worshippers; and the male is not like the female in service." Then the Imam said: "Then she grew up; and she served them and looked after them, until she attained maturity. Then Zakariyya told her to hide herself behind a screen (away) from the (other) worshippers."[6]

The author says: As you see, the traditions support what we said in the Commentary. But evidently, they take the clause, "and the male is not like the female", to be a part of the speech of 'Imran's wife, not a comment from Allah. In that case, it will be necessary to explain why "the male" was mentioned before "the female", against the norms of grammar and eloquence; also, it will be essential to find out a reason as to why she gave her daughter the name she gave, that is, Maryam (Released; devoted) - unless it can be shown that there was no correlation between releasing her and making her an attendant of the synagogue.

The first tradition shows that 'Imran was a prophet who received revelations from Allah. It is also proved by another tradition narrated by Abu Basir in which he says: "I asked Abu Ja'far ('a) whether 'Imran was a prophet. He said: 'Yes, he was a prophet sent (to his people)...'"[7]

That tradition also shows that the wife of 'Imran was called Hannah, as is generally believed. Some other traditions say that her name was Marthar (Martha?). However, it is not an important subject for us to labour on.

The same tradition (quoted from al-Qummi) goes on to say: "When Maryam reached the age of puberty, she entered the sanctuary and put a curtain (on the entrance) to hide herself; and no one entered therein. And Zakariyya used to enter the sanctuary; and he used to find with her the fruits of summer in the winter and the fruits of winter in the summer; he used to say: 'Whence comes this to you?' And she used to reply: 'It is from Allah. Surely, Allah gives sustenance to whom He pleases without measure.'"

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "When Zakariyya prayed to his Lord to give him a child and the angels called

to him as they did, he desired to ascertain that the said voice was (really) from Allah. Thereupon Allah revealed to him that it was the sign (of its Divine Origin) that he would remain tongue-tied for three days. When he became tongue-tied and could not speak, he understood that no one, other than Allah, could do that. And it is the (meaning of the) word of Allah: He said: 'My Lord! Appoint a sign for me.'"[8]

The author says: A nearly similar tradition has been narrated by al-Qummi in his *at-Tafsir*. It has been made clear in the Commentary that this theme does not go against the context of the verse.

An exegete has very strongly objected to many of the themes expounded in these traditions; for example, sending the revelation to 'Imran, presence of the off-season fruits in Maryam's sanctuary, request of Zakariyya for a sign in order that he could ascertain the authenticity of the voice etc. He has said: These are the things which cannot be proved. Neither Allah has mentioned them nor the Prophet has described them; nor can they be proved by reason or any reliable history. There are only some Israelite (and some non-Israelite) legends. Why should the Muslims go out of their way to explain the Qur'an in terms of those unverified legends, which are anyhow too far-fetched to be acceptable?

Comment: The said exegete has made claims without offering any argument in his support. Of course, these traditions are *ahad*, and some are even weak in their chains; also, it is not incumbent, for a scholar to accept them or to use them as an argument. Yet, when we ponder on the verses of the Qur'an, we find ourselves ready to accept those traditions (because they are consistent with the Qur'an). It is all the more correct for the traditions narrated from the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt*, as they do not contain any theme unacceptable to the reason.

Of course, one has to be on guard against some untenable things attributed to some early exegetes. For example, Qatadah and 'Ikrimah are reported to have said: "The Satan came to Zakariyya and created a doubt (in his mind) whether the good news was really from Allah. He said (to Zakariyya): 'Had it been from Allah, He would have talked to you in a low voice as you had called unto Him in a low voice.'" There are many such baseless things which cannot be accepted at all. Another such example may be seen in the Gospel according to Luke, where it says:

And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel,... And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. (Luke,1/19 – 20).

Other Traditions About "The One Spoken To"

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "There is no heart but it has two ears, on one of them is a guiding angel, and on the other a tempting Satan; this orders him and that restrains him the Satan enjoins him to (commit) sins, and the angel holds him back from it. And this is the word of Allah, the Mighty, the Great:

***...Sitting on the right and on the left* (*50: 17*).**

***He utters not a word but there is by him a watcher at hand"* (*50:18*).** 9

The author says: There are many traditions of the same meaning, some of which will be quoted later on. In this tradition, Imam ('a) has applied the verse to an angel and a Satan, while other traditions apply it to the two angels who write down the good and evil deeds of a man. But the two sets of traditions are not mutually exclusive. The verse only says that there are "watchers" with every man who receive (i.e., note down) all his utterances, and that there are two of them, one on his right side and the other on his left. But the verse does not say whether those watchers are from only the angels or from the angels and the satans. As it is silent on this point, it may be applied to either explanation.

Zurarah said: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah ('a) about the apostle, the prophet and *al-muhaddath* (**اَلْمُحَدَّثُ** = the one spoken to). He said: 'The apostle is the one who sees the angel (who) brings the message of his Lord to him and tells him: "(Allah) orders you so-and-so." And the apostle is a prophet with (the added rank of) apostleship. And the prophet does not see the angel; something comes down to him - the news (comes) to his heart; and he becomes as though he be in a trance, and he sees (the vision) in his dream.' I said: 'Then how does he know that what was (shown to him) in his dream was truth?' He said: 'Allah makes it clear to him, so that he knows that it is truth; and he does not see the angel...'"10

The author says: "The apostle is a prophet..." It shows that the two ranks may be combined together in one person. We have explained in detail the meaning of apostleship and prophethood in the Commentary of the verse

***Mankind was but one people...* (*2:213*).**

"He becomes as though he be in a trance": It explains the next sentence, "and he sees (the vision) in his dream". It clarifies that what is meant by "dream" is not the dream as known to us; it only refers to a condition in which the prophet becomes oblivious of his surroundings.

"Allah makes it clear to him": Allah makes the truth known to the prophet, enabling him to differentiate between an angelic inspiration and a satanic whispering.

Burayd enquired from Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq (peace be on both of them), *inter alia*, in a tradition: "Then what are the apostle, the prophet and the one spoken to?" (The Imam) said: "The apostle is the one that the angel appears before him and talks to him; and the prophet sees (the vision) in the dream; and sometimes apostleship and prophethood are combined in one (person); and *al-muhaddath* (**اَلْمُحَدَّثُ** = the one spoken to) is the one who hears the voice but does not see the form."

Burayd said: "I said: 'May Allah make your affairs good! How can the prophet know that what he saw in (his) dream was truth and that it was from the angel?' (The Imam) said: 'He is helped (by Allah) in it until he knows it. Certainly, Allah ended (the series of divine) books with your Book, and the prophets with your Prophet...'"11

The author says: It has the same connotation as the preceding tradition. The Imam has sufficiently explained the meaning of “the one spoken to” – it is the one who hears the voice of an unseen speaker who speaks by order of Allah. The words, “Certainly Allah ended the (series of divine) books...”, point to this reality.

When writing on the following verses, we shall discuss in detail about “the one spoken to”.

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1. Arabic Maryam is Miryam in Hebrew. According to the Westminster Dictionary of the Bible (by John D. Davis, revised and rewritten by Henry Snyder Gehman; ed. 1944) the root-word of Miryam signifies “obstinacy, rebellion”, that is, opposite of the “reported meaning” of worship and service. (tr.).
2. Yahya = He lives.
3. Isa: In Hebrew it is Yèshua’; it is a later form, by vowel dissimilation, of Yòshua’ (Yusha’ يُوْشَعْ in Arabic, and Joshua in Latin), which in its turn was a contracted form of Yehòshua’. Its meaning: Yahwah, that is God, is salvation, or Yahwah saves. See Dictionary of Proper Names and Places in the Bible, published by Robert Hale, London, 1982; Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible, published by McGraw-Hill Book Co. Inc., 1963. (tr.).
4. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
5. al-‘Ayyashi.
6. al-‘Ayyashi.
7. Bihar al-Anwar.
8. al-‘Ayyashi.
9. al-Kafi.
10. al-Kafi.
11. Basa’ir ad-darajat.

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Appendix A: A Chronological List Of The Fourteen Infallibles (‘A)

SL. No.	Designation	Agnomen (*Kunya*)	Name	Father’s name	Title (Laqab)	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Martyred by means of	Place of burial
1.	The Last Prophet of Allah	Abu ‘l Qasim	Muhammad (Ahmad) (Al-Mustafa)	‘Abdullah	Rasulu’llah, Nabiyyu’llah, An-Nabiyy, Khatamu’n- Nabiyyin	17th Rabi’ I, in the year of the Elephant. (25.8.570 AD)	28th Safar, 11 AH (25.5.632 AD)	Natural	Holy Medina, al-Munawwa-rah, Saudi Arabia

SL. No.	Designation	Agnomen (*Kunya*)	Name	Father's name	Title (Laqab)	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Martyred by means of	Place of burial
2.	One of the Fourteen Infallibles	Umm Abiha	Fatimah	Muhammad	az-Zahra', as-Siddiqah, al-Batul, Sayyidatu'n- Nisa'.	20th Jumada II, in the fifth Year after the declaration of the Prophet-hood. (2.1.615 AD)	3rd Jumada II, 11 AH (26.8.632)	Injured	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
3.	1st Imam	Abu 'l-Hasan, Abu 'l-Hasanayn, Abu Turab.	'Ali	Abu Talib	Amir al-Mu'minin, al-Wasiyy, al-Murtada, (Haydar).	13th Rajab, 10 Years before the declaration of the Prophethood. (25.5.600 AD)	Struck on 19th Ramadan (25th January); Died on 21st Ramadan 40AH (27.1.661 AD)	Sword – while he was engaged in prayers.	Holy an-Najaf al-Ashraf, Iraq. (al-Ghariyy)
4.	2nd Imam	Abu Muhammad	al-Hasan	'Ali	Al-Mujtaba, as-Sibt (al-Akbar).	15th Ramadan, 3AH (1.3.625 AD)	7th Safar, 50 AH (6.3.670 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
5.	3rd Imam	Abu 'Abdillah	al-Husayn	'Ali	Sayyidu'sh-Shuhada, as-Sibt (al-Asghar).	3rd Sha'ban, 4 AH (8.1.626 AD)	10th Muharram, 61 AH (10.10.680 AD)	Sword – in the Battle of 'Ashura	Holy Karbala' (at-Taff), Iraq.
6.	4th Imam	Abu Muhammad	'Ali	al-Husayn	Zaynu'l-Abidin, Sayyidu's-Sajidin, as-Sajjad.	5th Sha'ban, 38 AH (6.1.659 AD)	25th Muharram, 94/95 AH (31.10.712 / 20.10.713 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
7.	5th Imam	Abu Ja'far	Muhammad	'Ali	al-Baqir.	3rd Safar, 57 AH (16.12.676 AD)	7th Dhi'l-hijjah, 114 AH (28.1.733 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
8.	6th Imam	Abu 'Abdillah, Abu Musa.	Ja'far	Muhammad	as-Sadiq.	17th Rabi' I, 83 AH (20.4.702 AD)	25th Shawwal, 148 AH (14.12.765 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
9.	7th Imam	Abu 'l-Hasan (al-Awwal – The First), Abu Ibrahim	Musa	Ja'far	al-Kazim, al-'Abd as-Salih, al-'Alim.	7th Safar, 129 AH (28.10.746 AD)	25th Rajab, 183 AH (1.9.799 AD)	Poison	Holy al-Kazimiyyah, Iraq.

SL. No.	Designation	Agnomen (*Kunya*)	Name	Father's name	Title (Laqab)	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Martyred by means of	Place of burial
10.	8th Imam	Abu 'l-Hasan (al-Thani - The Second),	'Ali	Musa	Ar-Rida.	11th Dhi 'l-qi'dah, 148 AH (29.12.765 AD)	17th Safar, 203 AH (24.8.818 AD)	Poison	Holy Mashhad, (Tus – Kurasan), Iran.
11.	9th Imam	Abu Ja'far (ath-Thani – The Second)	Muhammad	'Ali	at-Taqi, al-Jawad.	10th Rajab, 195 AH (8.4.811 AD)	30th Dhi 'l-qi'dah, 220 AH (25.11.835 AD)	Poison	Holy al-Kazimiyyah, Iraq.
12.	10th Imam	Abu 'l-Hasan (ath-Thalith – The Third)	'Ali	Muhammad	an-Naqi, al-Hadi.	2nd Rajab, 212 AH (27.9.827 AD)	3rd Rajab, 254 AH (28.6.868 AD)	Poison	Holy Samarra' (Surra-man-ra'a), Iraq.
13.	11th Imam	Abu Muhammad	al-Hasan	'Ali	al-'Askari.	8th Rabi 'II, 232 AH (3.12.846 AD)	8th Rabi 'II, 260 AH (1.1.874 AD)	Poison	Holy Samarra' Iraq.
14.	12th Imam	Abu 'l Qasim	Muhammad	al-Hasan	al-Mahdi, al-Qa'im, al-Hujjah, al-Gha'ib, Sahibu 'z-Zaman, Sahibu 'l-Amr, al-Muntazar.	15th Sha'ban, 255 AH (29.7.869)	Still alive, but in occultation.	----	----

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Appendix B: List Of Names And Numbers Of The Surahs Of The Holy Qur'an

In this book the references of the Qur'anic verses have been given by writing serial number of the relevant chapter, followed by a colon (:) that is followed by the number/s of the Verse/s. The names of the chapters have been omitted for the sake of brevity.

The names of the chapters with their serial numbers are given here for the guidance of the readers.

To find, for instance, the verse 5:67 in the Qur'an, the reader should open the fifth chapter, that is, *al-Ma'idah* (اَلمَآئِدة = The Table) and then find the 67th verse.

SL. No.	Arabic Names of the Chapters	Transliteration	Meaning
1.	فاتِحَةُ الكِتاب	*Fatihatu 'l-kitab*	The Opening of The Book
2.	البَقَرة	*al-Baqarah*	The Cow
3.	آل عِمران	*Al 'Imran*	The House of Imran
4.	النِّساء	*an-Nisa'*	Women
5.	المَائِدة	*al-Ma'idah*	The Table
6.	الأنْعام	*al-An'am*	Cattle
7.	الأعراف	*al-A'raf*	The Battlements
8.	الأنْفال	*al-Anfal*	The Spoils
9.	التَّوْبَة	*at-Tawbah*	Repentance
10.	يُونُس	*Yunus*	Jonah
11.	هُود	*Hud*	Hood
12.	يُوسُف	*Yusuf*	Joseph
13.	الرَّعد	*ar-Ra'd*	Thunder
14.	اِبراهيم	*Ibrahim*	Abraham
15.	الحِجْر	*al-Hijr*	El-Hijr
16.	النَّحل	*an-Nahl*	The Bee
17.	الاِسْرآء	*al-Isra'*	The Night Journey
18.	الكَهْف	*al-Kahf*	The Cave
19.	مَريَم	*Maryam*	Mary

20.	طه	*Ta Ha*	Ta Ha
21.	الأَنْبِيآء	*al-Anbiya'*	Prophets
22.	الحَجّ	*al-Hajj*	The Pilgrimage
23.	المؤمِنون	*al-Mu'minun*	The Believers
24.	النّور	*an-Nur*	Light
25.	الفُرقان	*al-Furqan*	Discrimination (Salvation)
26.	الشُّعَراء	*ash-Shu'ara'*	The Poets
27.	النَّمْل	*an-Naml*	The Ant
28.	القَصَص	*al-Qasas*	The Stories
29.	العَنْكَبُوت	*al-'Ankabut*	The Spider
30.	الرُّوم	*Ar-Rum*	The Greeks
31.	لُقْمان	*Luqman*	Lokman
32.	السَّجْدة	*as-Sajdah*	Prostration
33.	الأحزاب	*al-Ahzab*	The Confederates
34.	سَبَأ	*Saba'*	Sheba
35.	فاطِر (المَلائِكة)	*Fatir* (*or, al-Mala'ikah*)	The Originator (or The Angels)
36.	يس	*Ya Sin*	Ya Sin
37.	الصّافّات	*as-Saffat*	The Rangers
38.	ص	*Sad*	Sad
39.	الزُّمَر	*az-Zumar*	The Companies

40.	المُؤْمِن	*al-Mu'min*	The Believer
41.	فُصِّلَت	*Fussilat*	Distinguished
42.	الشُّورى	*ash-Shura*	Counsel
43.	الزُّخْرُف	*az-Zukhruf*	Ornaments
44.	الدُّخان	*ad-Dukhan*	Smoke
45.	الجاثِية	*al-Jathiyah*	Hobbling
46.	الأحقاف	*al-Ahqaf*	The Sand-Dunes
47.	مُحَمّد (ص)	*Muhammad*	Muhammad
48.	الفَتْح	*al-Fath*	Victory
49.	الحُجُرات	*al Hujurat*	Apartments
50.	ق	*Qaf*	Qaf
51.	الذّارِيات	*adh-Dhariyat*	The Scatterers
52.	الطُّور	*at-Tur*	The Mount
53.	النَّجْم	*an-Najm*	The Star
54.	القَمَر	*al-Qamar*	The Moon
55.	الرَّحمن	*ar-Rahman*	The All-merciful
56.	الواقِعَة	*al-Waqi'ah*	The Terror
57.	الحَديد	*al-Hadid*	Iron
58.	المُجادَلة	*Al-Mujadalah*	The Disputer
59.	الحَشْر	*al-Hashr*	The Mustering

60.	المُمتَحَنة	*al-Mumtahanah*	The Woman Tested
61.	الصَّف	*as-Saff*	The Ranks
62.	الجُمُعة	*al-Jumu'ah*	Congregation
63.	المُنافِقُون	*al-Munafiqun*	The Hypocrites
64.	التَّغابُن	*at-Taghabun*	Mutual Fraud
65.	الطَّلاق	*at-Talaq*	Divorce
66,	التَّحْريم	*at-tahrim*	The Forbidding
67.	المُلْك	*al-Mulk*	The Kingdom
68.	القَلَم	*al-Qalam*	The Pen
69.	الحَاقّة	*al-Haqqah*	The Indubitable
70.	المَعارِج	*al-Ma'arij*	The Stairways
71.	نُوح	*Nuh*	Noah
72.	الجِنّ	*Al-Jinn*	The Jinn
73.	المُزَّمِّل	*al-Muzzammil*	Enwrapped
74.	المُدَّثِّر	*al-Muddaththir*	Shrouded
75.	القِيامَة	*al-Qiyamah*	The Resurrection
76.	الدَّهر (الإنسان)	*ad-Dahr* (or, *al-Insan*)	The Time (or, Man)
77.	المُرسَلات	*al-Mursalat*	The Loosed Ones
78.	النَّبأ	*an-Naba'*	The Tiding
79.	النّازِعات	*an-Nazi'at*	The Pluckers

80.	عَبَس	*'Abas*	He Frowned
81.	التَّكْوير	*at-Takwir*	The Darkening
82.	الإنفِطار	*al-Infitar*	The Splitting
83.	المُطَفِّفين	*al-Mutaffifin*	The Stinters
84.	الإنشِقاق	*al-Inshiqaq*	The Rending
85.	البُروج	*al-Buruj*	The Constellations
86.	الطّارق	*at-Tariq*	The Night-star
87.	الأعلى	*al-A'la*	The Most High
88.	الغاشِيَة	*al-Ghashiyah*	The Enveloper
89.	الفَجْر	*al-Fajr*	The Dawn
90.	البَلَد	*al-Balad*	The Land
91.	الشَّمْس	*ash-Shams*	The Sun
92.	اللَّيل	*al-Layl*	The Night
93.	الضُّحى	*ad-Duha*	The Forenoon
94.	الإنشِراح	*al-Inshirah*	The Expanding
95.	التِّين	*at-Tin*	The Fig
96.	العَلَق	*al-'laq*	The Blood-clot
97.	القَدر	*al -Qadr*	Power
98.	البَيِّنَة	*al-Bayyinah*	The Clear Sign
99.	الزِّلزال	*Az-Zilzal*	The Earthquake

100.	العَاديات	***al-'Adiyat***	**The Chargers**
101.	القارِعَة	***al-Qari'ah***	**The Clatterer**
102.	التَكاثُر	***at-Takathur***	**Rivalry**
103.	العَصْر	***al-'Asr***	**Afternoon**
104.	الهُمَزَة	***al-Humazah***	**The Backbiter**
109.	الفيل	***al-Fil***	**The Elephant**
106.	قُرَيْش	***Quraysh***	**Quraish**
107.	الماعُون	***al-Ma'un***	**Charity**
108.	الكَوْثَر	***al-Kawthar***	**Abundance**
109.	الكافِرون	***al-Kafirun***	**The Unbelievers**
110.	النَّصر	***An-Nasr***	**Help**
111.	تَبَّت	***Tabbat*** **(or,** ***Lahab*****)**	**Perish (or, The Flame)**
112.	الإخْلاص) التَّوحيد)	***al Ikhlas*** **(or,** ***at-Tawhid*****)**	**Sincere Religion (or, Divine Unity)**
113.	الفَلَق	***al-Falaq***	**Daybreak**
114.	النَّاس	***an-Nas***	**Men**

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Al-Mizan - An Exegesis Of The Qur'an - Volume 6

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This is the sixth volume of this renowned commentary on the Holy Qur'an written by Allamah Tabataba'i, one of its greatest modern commentators, and translated by Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi.

This volume contains the exegesis of the third chapter Surah 'Aal–'Imran, from verse 42 to verse 120.

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Important notice:

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During the editing and digitisation process, the DILP team identified various typographical, spelling, transliteration, and referencing inconsistencies. To improve clarity, readability, and accuracy, grammatical and orthographic corrections have been made, and the transliteration of Arabic names and terms has been standardised where appropriate.

In addition, sections and subheadings have been introduced to improve navigation and make the content more searchable in an online environment. As a result, the digital version diverges from the printed volume.

Users wishing to see the translation as it was published should refer to printed copies available in bookshops. Those who understand are advised to refer directly to the original text.

Foreword

Al-'Allamah as-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i (1321/1904 - 1402/1981) - may Allah have mercy upon him - was a famous scholar, thinker and the most celebrated contemporary Islamic philosopher. We have introduced him briefly in the first volume of the English translation of *al-Mizan,* which will be published, by the help of Allah, in near future.

Al-'Allamah at-Tabataba'i is well-known for a number of his works of which the most important is his great exegesis **al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Qur'an** which is rightly counted as the fundamental pillar of scholarly work which the 'Allamah has achieved in the Islamic world.

We felt the necessity of publishing an exegesis of the Holy Qur'an in English. After a thorough consultation, we came to choose *al-Mizan* because we found that it incorporated, to a considerable extent, the points that should necessarily be expounded in a perfect exegesis of the Holy Qur'an and the points which appeal to the mind of the contemporary Muslim reader.

Therefore, we proposed to al-Ustadh al-'Allamah as-Sayyid Sa'id Akhtar ar-Radawi to undertake this task because we were familiar with his intellectual ability to understand the Arabic text of *al-Mizan* and his literary capability in expression and translation. So we relied on him for this work and consider him responsible for the English translation, as al-'Allamah at-Tabataba'i was responsible for the Arabic text of *al-Mizan* and its discussions.

We have proceeded to publish the translation of the second volume of the Arabic *al-Mizan* earlier, as it was ready for printing, whereas the first volume is not yet ready for reasons that we do not wish to mention here. So, we saw no reason in delaying its printing. We have included two appendices: one for the author cited in each volume of *al-Mizan*, and the other for the respective volumes cited therein. These two appendices have been attached to the first volume of the English translation. Apart from this, the reader will find two appendices in all the volumes of the translation of *al-Mizan*.

* * * * *

We implore Allah to make us work purely for His pleasure, and to help us to complete this work that we have started. May Allah guide us in proceeding in this step that we have taken, and in future steps, for He is the best Master and the best Helper.

World Organization for Islamic Services

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Sura Aali–’Imran: Verses 42 – 60

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَىٰ نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ

And when the angels said: “O Maryam! surely Allah has chosen and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds (3:42).

يَا مَرْيَمُ اقْنُتِي لِرَبِّكِ وَاسْجُدِي وَارْكَعِي مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ

O Maryam! keep to obedience to your Lord and prostrate and bow down with those who bow” (3:43).

ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يُلْقُونَ أَقْلَامَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ يَكْفُلُ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ

This is of the tidings of the unseen which we reveal to you; and you were not with them when they cast their pens (to decide) which of them should have Maryam in his charge, and you were not with them when they contented one with another (3:44).

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ

When the angels said: “O Maryam! surely Allah gives you good news of a Word from Him whose name is the Messiah, ‘Isa son of Maryam, worthy of regard in this world and the hereafter and of those who are made near (to Allah) (3:45).

وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

And he shall speak to the people when in the cradle and when of mature age, and (he shall be) one of the good ones" (3:46).

قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لِي وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِي بَشَرٌ قَالَ كَذَٰلِكِ اللَّهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

She said: "My Lord! how shall there be a son (born) to me and man has not touched me?" He said: "Even so; Allah creates what He pleases; when He has decreed a matter, He only says to it: 'Be,' and it is (3:47).

وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَاةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ

And He will teach him the Book and the Wisdom and the Torah and the Injil (3:48).

وَرَسُولًا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنِّي قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ أَنِّي أَخْلُقُ لَكُمْ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَأَنْفُخُ فِيهِ فَيَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُبْرِئُ الْأَكْمَهَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ وَأُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَمَا تَدَّخِرُونَ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

And (make him) a messenger to the Children of Israel: 'That I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, that I create for you out of dust like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird with Allah's permission, and I heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead ones to life with Allah's permission, and I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your houses; most surely there is a sign in this for you, if you are believers (3:49).

وَمُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَاةِ وَلِأُحِلَّ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي حُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَجِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ

And a verifier of that which is before me of the Torah, and that I may allow you part of that which has been forbidden to you, and I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, therefore fear Allah and obey me (3:50).

إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

Surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord, therefore worship Him; this is the straight path'" (3:51).

فَلَمَّا أَحَسَّ عِيسَىٰ مِنْهُمُ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَاشْهَدْ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

But when 'Isa perceived unbelief on their part, he said: "Who are my helpers to Allah?" The disciples said: "We are helpers of Allah: We believe in Allah and be (our) witness that we are submitting ones (3:52).

رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا بِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ وَاتَّبَعْنَا الرَّسُولَ فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

"Our Lord! we believe in what Thou halt revealed and we follow the messenger; so write us down with those who bear witness" (3:53).

وَمَكَرُوا وَمَكَرَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ

"And they planned and Allah (also) planned, and Allah is the best of planners." (3:54).

إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَىٰ إِنِّي مُتَوَفِّيكَ وَرَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

"And when Allah said: "O 'Isa! I am going to take you away completely and cause you to ascend unto Me and purify you of those who disbelieve, and make those who follow you above those who disbelieve to the Day of Resurrection; then to Me shall be your return, so I will decide between you concerning that in which you differed." (3:55).

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَأُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ

"Then as to those who disbelieve, I will chastise them with severe chastisement in this world and the hereafter, and they shall have no helpers." (3:56).

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ

"And as to those who believe and do good deeds, He will pay them fully their rewards; and Allah does not love the unjust." (3:57).

ذَٰلِكَ نَتْلُوهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ

"This we recite to you of the signs and the wise reminder." (3:58).

إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

"Surely the likeness of 'Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: "Be," and he was." (***3:59***).

الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ

"The truth is from your Lord, so be not of the doubters." (***3:60***).

Commentary

Verse 42

Qur'an: ***And When The Angels Said: "O Maryam! surely Allah has chosen you and purified you..."*** (***3:42***).

The conjunctive, "and" joins it to the verse 35: ***"When the woman of 'Imran said..."*** (***3:35***). Both verses therefore describe the selection of the descendants of 'Imran mentioned in the verse 34: ***"Surely Allah chose Adam..."*** (***3:34***). This verse proves that Maryam was one of "the spoken to"; the angels talked to her, and she heard their speech. It is proved also by the words of Allah in the Chapter of Maryam (Verses 17–21):

"... then We sent to her Our Spirit, and there appeared to her a well-made man..." (***19:17***).

"She said: Surely I fly for refuge from you to the Beneficent Allah, if you are one guarding (against evil)." (***19:18***).

"He said: "I am only a messenger of your Lord..." (***19:19***).

"She said: When shall I have a boy and no mortal has yet touched me, nor have I been unchaste?" (***19:20***).

"He said: Even so; your Lord says: It is easy to Me: and that We may make him a sign to men and a mercy from Us, and it is a matter which has been decreed." (***19:21***).

We shall write, at the end of this Commentary, about the persons describe as "the spoken to".

We have earlier written explaining the Divine Words: ***"So her Lord accepted her with a good acceptance and made her grow up a good growing..."*** (***3:37***), that these sentences answer the pleas of Maryam's mother: ***"...and I have named her Maryam, and I commend her and her offspring into Thy protection from the accursed Satan"*** (***3:36***); also it was mentioned that the angels' words in the

verse under discussion, ***"O Maryam! surely Allah has chosen you…"*** (***3:42***), show the status that Maryam had before Allah. You may refer to that explanation for further details.

Thus, her choosing means that she was accepted a good acceptance for the worship of Allah; and her purification implies that she held fast to the protection of Allah. She was therefore a chosen one who was protected from sin. It has also been said that her purification means that she was a virgin who did not menstruate – thus she was not obliged to go out of the synagogue at any time. There is nothing wrong in this explanation although the meaning given by us is more in conformity with the context.

Qur'an: ***"…and chosen you above the women of the worlds."*** (***3:42***).

We have already described in the Commentary of the verse: ***"Surely Allah chose Adam… above all the worlds"*** (***3:33***), the connotation of choosing "above" the worlds; "above" shows that the chosen one was given excellence and precedence over other people in something exclusively given to him; and that it is more than mere selection which implies total surrender to the will of Allah. The announcement that Maryam was chosen "above the women of the worlds" thus, means that she was given precedence over them.

Was she given precedence over them in all things? Or only in some matters? Look at the following verses:

"When the angels said: "O Maryam! surely Allah gives you good news of a Word from Him whose name is the Messiah…" (***3:45***).

"And she who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into her of Our Spirit and made her and her son a sign for the worlds." (***21:91***).

"And Maryam, the daughter of 'Imran, who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into it of Our Spirit, and she accepted the truth of the words of her Lord, and she was of the obedient ones." (***66:12***).

These verses describe the only distinction which she was granted to the exclusion of all women of the worlds, and that is her miraculously conceiving and giving birth to 'Isa ('a). It shows that it was this aspect of her life in which she was given precedence over all the women. The other qualities attributed to her in these verses (her purification, her acceptance of the words of Allah and His Books, her obedience to God and her being spoken to) were not her exclusive virtues – they are found in others too.

It is said that she was chosen above the women of her time. But the verse is unconditional and general, and as such it cannot accept any limitation applied to it.

Verse 43

Qur'an: ***O Maryam! Keep to obedience to your Lord and prostrate and bow down with those who***

***bow* (*3:43*).**

"al-Qunut" (اَلْقُنُوْتُ) means keeping to obedience with submission and humility; *as-sajdah* (اَلسَّجْدَةُ = translated here as prostration) is well-known ritual of worship; *ar-ruku'* (اَلرُّكُوْعُ = to bow down; to be humble).

When someone calls another person, the one called looks towards the caller and listens to him. In this verse, Maryam is again called by name. It is as though the angels wanted to tell her: We have brought to you good news and again some more; you should listen to both good tidings. The first concerns the rank and status you have been given by Allah. The second is what you are obliged to do alongside that Divine Favour; in other words, what you are obliged to offer to Allah in terms of duties of servitude; it will show your gratitude for that rank and meet the demands of servitude.

In this light, this verse, ***"O Maryam! keep to obedience…"* (*3:43*)**, seems to branch out from the preceding one, ***"O Maryam! surely Allah has chosen you…"* (*3:42*);** that is, because Allah has chosen you, purified you and chosen you over the women of the worlds, you should keep to obedience to Him and prostrate and bow down with those who bow down. Each of the three orders given in this verse may possibly have emanated from one of the three excellences mentioned in the preceding one – although their respective relationship is not clear.

Verse 44

Qur'an: *"This is of the tidings of the unseen which we reveal to you…"* (*3:44*).

Allah has counted it as a tiding of the unseen as He has done after relating the story of Yusuf ('a):

***"This is of the tidings of the unseen* (*which*) *we reveal to you, and you were not with them when they resolved upon their affair, and they were devising plans."* (*12:102*).**

Of course, the scriptures of the People of the Book contain stories about them. But no credence can be attached to those scriptures because they have not remained safe from alterations, deletions and interpolations. For example, a lot of details and particulars given by the Qur'an concerning the story of Zakariyya are nowhere to be found in the Bible.

It is probably for this reason that Allah goes on to say:

***"..and you were not with them when they cast their pens…"* (*3:44*).**

Moreover, the Prophet and his people were unlettered; they had not known these stories, nor had they read them in books, as Allah says after mentioning the story of Nuh:

***"These are of the tidings of the unseen which We reveal to you; you did not know them –* (*neither*) *you nor your people – before this."* (*11:49*).**

But the first interpretation is more in keeping with the context of the verse.

Qur'an: ***"And you were not with them when they cast their pens*** (***to decide***) ***which of them should have Maryam in his charge"*** (***3:44***).

"al-Qalam" (اَلْقَلَمُ = pen; plural: *al-aqlam* = اَلْاَقْلَامُ), also means arrow shaft or arrow which was used for casting lot; in this meaning it is synonymous to *as-sahm* (اَلسَّهْمُ). Therefore ***"when they cast their pens"*** means, when they cast their arrows to decide as to who among them should have Maryam in his custody. This sentence shows that the contention mentioned in the next phrase, ***"and you were not with them when they contended one with another"*** (***3:44***), refers to this same conflict that they had had about the guardianship of Maryam, and that they did not stop arguing with each other until they agreed to decide the matter by lot. They cast the lot and it came out in favour of Zakariyya, and he took her charge, as Allah says:

"…***and gave her into the charge of Zakariyya…"*** (***3:37***).

According to some people, this contention and decision by casting lot probably occurred when Maryam was grown up and Zakariyya had become too weak to look after her. Why did this idea occur to them? Probably it was because this contention and its settlement through casting lot has been mentioned after the story of Maryam's birth and her being chosen by Allah, and because the guardianship of Zakariyya has already been mentioned before. Thus, according to them, this verse refers to another guardianship.

But it is not unusual, while describing an event, to repeat, or to allude to, some of its previously mentioned aspects in order to prove a claim. A similar style has been used in the story of Yusuf, where Allah says at the end:

"This is of the tidings of the unseen (***which***) ***We reveal to you, and you were not with them when they resolved upon their affair, and they were devising plans*** (***12:102***).

This points to their conspiracy which is mentioned at the beginning of the story:

"When they said: 'Certainly Yusuf and his brother are dearer to our father than we…" (***12:8***).

"Slay Yusuf or cast him (***forth***) ***into some land…"*** (***12:9***).

"A speaker from among them said: 'Do not slay Yusuf and cast him down into the bottom of the pit if you must do (***it***), (***so that***) ***some of the travellers may pick him up'"*** (***12:10***).

Verse 45

Qur'an: ***"When the angels said: "O Maryam! surely Allah gives you good news of a Word"*** (***3:45***).

Evidently it refers to the same event that is mentioned in the Chapter of Maryam in these words:

"Then We sent to her Our Spirit and there appeared to her a well-made man" (***19:17***).

"She said: 'Surely I fly for refuge from you to the Beneficent God, if you are pious'" (***19:18***).

"He said: 'I am only a messenger of your Lord: That I should give you a pure boy'" (***19:19***).

The good tiding ascribed to the angels in the verse under discussion is thus attributed here to the Spirit.

It is said that the word "angels" refers to Gabriel. He has been described with a plural, "angels", to show his great honour and high rank. People say: He went on a journey riding horses and sailing in ships while actually he rode one horse and sailed in one ship only. Also, we say: People told him so, while in fact it was only one person who gave him the news. A similar style is seen in the story of Zakariyya, mentioned earlier:

"Then the angels called to him as he stood praying in the sanctuary: That Allah gives you the good news of Yahya verifying a Word from Allah, and honourable and chaste and a prophet from among the good ones" (***3:39***).

"He said: 'My Lord! when shall there be a son (***born***) ***to me, and old age has already come upon me, and my wife is barren?' He said: 'Even thus does Allah what He pleases'"*** (***3:40***).

Others have said that there were other angels with Gabriel and they jointly gave her the good news.

However, if you ponder on the verses that describe the angels, you will see that the angels are of various ranks; some have precedence over others, some are nearer to Allah than others. Those who are behind are mere followers of the orders of those who are in the forefront. The actions and words of the follower are counted as the actions and the words of the leader himself.

It is not different from the activities of our own powers and limbs which are counted as our own activities without there being any duality of doers. We say: My own eyes saw it; my own ears heard it; and the same idea is conveyed when we say: I saw it and heard it. We say: My hand did it; my fingers wrote it; and we also say: I did it, I wrote it.

Likewise, the deeds and words of the angels of higher ranks are counted as the deeds and words of those of lower rank who follow the former's orders, and vice versa. And similarly, the actions and words of all the angels – the leaders and the followers – are attributed to Allah Himself. Look at the action of giving death: In one place, Allah attributes it to Himself:

"Allah takes completely the souls at the time of their death" (***39:42***).

Another verse ascribes it to the angel of death:

"Say: 'The angel of death who is given charge of you shall take you completely'" (***32:11***).

And yet another one attributes it to a group of the angels:

"Until when death comes to one of you, Our messengers take him completely" (***6:61***).

A similar interchange is seen in the following verses:

"Surely, We have revealed to you" (***4:163***).

The Faithful Spirit has descended with it" (***26:193***)

"Upon your heart" (***26:194***);

Say: "Whoever is the enemy of Jibril – for surely he revealed it to your heart …" (***2:97***)

And also these verses:

"Nay! surely it is an admonishment" (***80:11***).

"So let him who pleases mind it" (***80:12***).

"In honoured books" (***80:13***).

"Exalted, purified" (***80:14***).

"In the hands of scribes" (***80:15***).

"Noble, virtuous" (***80:16***).

Now it is clear that the announcement of good news by Gabriel was precisely the announcement by the group of the angels under his authority. And Gabriel is one of the chiefs of the angels, one of those who are nearer to Allah, as these Divine Words show:

Most surely it is the word of an honoured messenger" (***81:19***).

"The possessor of strength, having an honourable place with the Lord of the Throne" (***81:20***).

"One (***to be***) ***obeyed, and faithful in trust"*** (***81:21***).

We shall explain it further, Allah willing, under Chapter 35.

You may have a glimpse of the above-mentioned reality in the verse:

"He said: 'Even so; Allah creates what He pleases' …" (***3:47***).

Apparently, the speaker of these words is Allah, while in chapter 19 the same thing has been attributed to the Spirit:

"He (i.e., the Spirit) said: 'I am only a messenger of your Lord: That I should give you a pure boy'" (19: 19).

"She said: "How shall I have a boy and no mortal has touched me, nor have I been unchaste?"" (19: 20).

"He said: "Even so, your Lord says: 'It is easy to Me…'" (19: 21).

That the angels and the Spirit talked with Maryam, shows that she was one of "the spoken to". Not only this; the earlier quoted words of chapter 19 show that in addition to hearing their speech, she even saw an angel: ***"then we sent to her Our Spirit, and there appeared to her a well-made man" (19: 17)***. We shall further explain it, Allah willing, under the Traditions.

Qur'an: ***"A Word from Him whose name is the Messiah, 'Isa son of Maryam" (3:45).***

We have fully explained the significance of the "speech of Allah", under the verse ***"Those apostles, we have made some of them to excel the others" (2:253).***

al-Kalimah (اَلْكَلِمَةُ = word) is a collective noun, one unit of which is called *al-kalim* (اَلْكَلِمُ), as is the case with *at-tamrah* and *at-tamr* (اَلتَّمْرُ، اَلتَّمْرَةُ = date). *al-Kalimah* is used for one meaningful word as well as for a sentence (e.g., Zayd is standing); also, it is used with equal validity for a phrase or incomplete sentence (e.g., If Zayd is standing …). This explanation is according to language. As far as the terminology of the Qur'an is concerned, as for example where it attributes a word to Allah, it means: 'that which shows the will of Allah'; it may be an order, e.g., the word of creation when He says to a thing, 'Be'; or it may be a word of revelation and inspiration, etc.

What is the meaning of 'a Word from Allah' when it is applied to 'Isa ('a)? Some people say: This title was given to 'Isa ('a) because the prophets who preceded him (or especially the prophets of Israel) had foretold his advent, giving the good news that he would be the saviour of Israel. We say in similar situations: This is my word which I had said. And it is in the same meaning that this word has been used by Allah in connection with the advent of Musa ('a):

"And the good word of your Lord was fulfilled in the Children of Israel because they bore up (sufferings) patiently…" (7: 137).

Comment: Although the books of the Bible may support this interpretation, the Qur'an does not subscribe to it. According to the Qur'an, 'Isa son of Maryam was a prophet who had brought ***"the good news of a Messenger who will come after me, his name being Ahmad" (61:6)***; he was not the one whose good news was given by the others. Moreover, the phrase, "***whose name is the Messiah" (3:45),*** does not fit this interpretation; because according to this interpretation, ***"a Word from Him" (3:45),*** refers to the advent of 'Isa, and not to 'Isa himself; while the phrase "whose name is the Messiah", says that the Messiah is the name of the word – and not the name of him in whom the word of

Allah was fulfilled.

Another interpretation: The "Word" refers to 'Isa ('a) because he explained the Torah giving it the meaning intended by Allah, pointing out the interpolations and alterations made by the Jews, and clarifying the religious matters in which they had differed. Allah quotes him as saying to the Children of Israel:

***"... So that I may take clear to you part of what you differ in"* (*43:63*).**

Comment: This interpretation justifies application of the "Word" to 'Isa ('a); but there is no association or proof in the Qur'an to support it.

Third interpretation: The "Word" refers to the good news itself; Maryam was told that she would conceive 'Isa and deliver him. Accordingly, ***"Allah gives you good news of a Word from Him,"* (*3:45*),** means that Allah gives you good news that you will give birth to 'Isa without the agency of man.

Comment: Obviously, the phrase, "***whose name is the Messiah, 'Isa son of Maryam"* (*3:45*),** does not fit this interpretation.

Fourth interpretation: It refers to 'Isa ('a) because he was the word of creation, i.e., the Divine Command, 'Be'. No doubt every man, nay, everything, comes into being by the creative word, 'Be'; but every man is conceived and born according to the well-known normal system: the usual course is for the male sperm to fertilize the female ovum - and it requires many main and supporting causes to materialize. That is why conception is attributed to man as its efficient cause - as every effect is attributed to its immediate cause. But the conception of 'Isa did not follow this course; many usual and gradual causes were simply missing. His existence was just by the creative word, 'Be', and no usual causes intervened. And in this way, he became the "Word" itself, as we see in the verse:

***"... And His Word which He communicated to Maryam"* (*4:171*).**

It gets support from the verse 3:59, coming at the end:

***"Surely the likeness of 'Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him, "Be", and he was."* (*3:59*)**

Comment: This is the best of the interpretations.

al-Masih (اَلْمَسِيْحُ = anointed; wiped clean), 'Isa ('a) was given this name because he was anointed with success and blessing. Or because he was wiped clean of sins, was purified. Or because he was anointed with holy olive oil, with which the prophets were anointed. Or because Gabriel wiped him with his wings at his birth, so that it should be a protection from Satan. Or because he used to touch and wipe the heads of the orphans. Or because he used to wipe the eyes of the blind and they gained eyesight. Or because whenever he touched and wiped any suffering person, he became whole. These

are the reasons given by the exegetes for this name.

The fact is that this name was included in the good news given by Gabriel to Maryam, as Allah quotes him as saying: ***"O Maryam! surely Allah gives you good news of a Word from Him whose name is al-Masih, 'Isa son of Maryam"*** (***3:45***). This word is the Arabized form of the Meshiha, which is found in the Old and the New Testaments.[1]

The Bible shows that when a king was enthroned among the Children of Israel, the priests anointed him with the holy oil, so that he might be blessed in his rule. The king was therefore called messiah. It may be inferred from it that the messiah means either the king or the blessed one.

It appears from their books that 'Isa ('a) was called the Messiah because the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament contained the prophecy of his kingdom; it was believed that there would appear in the Children of Israel a king who would deliver them from bondage. The Gospel according to Luke describes the angel's good news to Maryam in these words:

And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail thou that are highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. (*Luke, 1/28-33*).

And that was the excuse offered by the Jews for not accepting 'Isa's claim of prophethood. They said that the good news contained the prophecy of his kingdom and it did not materialize at any time during his life. And it was precisely to overcome this objection that the Christians interpreted the promised kingdom as the spiritual, and not the temporal one. Some Muslim exegetes too have taken the same line.

The author says: It is not unlikely that the name *al-Masih* used in the good news[2] may have meant "the blessed". When they anointed a king with the holy oil, it was done to bring blessings on him. This connotation may be supported by the verses: He said:

"Surely I am a servant of Allah, He has given me the Book and made me a prophet" (***19:30***).

"And He has made me blessed wherever I may be..." (***19:31***).

'Isa was originally Yashu', which they interpret as deliverer, saviour. Some Muslims' Traditions say that it means "he lives". It seems more appropriate in view of the perfect similarity between 'Isa and Yahya whose name too means "he lives".[3]

The name 'Isa is qualified with the phrase, son of Maryam, although the good news was being given to

Maryam herself. It was done to emphasize the fact that he would be born without the agency of a father, and therefore would be known with this name; and that Maryam would jointly share this sign with him. Allah says:

"And made her and her son a sign for the worlds" (***21:91***).

Qur'an: ***"Worthy of regard in this world and the hereafter and of those who are made near*** (***to Allah***)***"*** (***3:45***).

Al-Wijahah (اَلْوِجَاهَةُ = translated here as worthiness of regard) means esteem, prestige, eminence and acceptability. 'Isa's eminence and acceptability in this world is not a secret; and the Qur'an confers this position to him in the hereafter too. Undoubtedly 'Isa ('a) was one of "those who are made near". He is near to Allah, included in the rank of the friends of Allah and the near angels in the verse:

"The Messiah does by no means disdain that he should be a servant of Allah, nor do the angels who are near to Him" (***4:172***).

Allah has explained the importance of being made near to Him, in the chapter 56 (Verses 1 -11). He says:

"When the great event comes to pass" (***56:1***).

"There is no belying its coming to pass." (***56:2***).

"Abasing (***one party***)***, exalting*** (***the other***)***,"*** (***56:3***).

"When the earth shall be shaken with a (***severe***) ***shaking,"*** (***56:4***).

"And the mountains shall be made to crumble with (***an awful***) ***crumbling,"*** (***56:5***).

"So that they shall be as scattered dust. (***56:6***).

"And you shall be three sorts" (***56:7***).

"Then (***as to***) ***the companions of the right hand; how happy are the companions of the right hand!"*** (***56:8***).

"And (***as to***) ***the companions of the left hand; how wretched are the companions of the left hand!"*** (***56:9***).

"And the foremost are the foremost" (***56:10***).

"These are they who are drawn near (***to Allah***)***"*** (***56:11***).

These verses point to the reality of the nearness to Allah: Man presses forward leaving others behind in

the way that leads one back to Allah, then he comes nearer to Allah. Proceeding on this way is prescribed for every man, nay, everything. Allah says:

"O man! Surely, thou art striving to thy Lord, a hard striving, so that thou art to meet Him" (***84:6***).

Also, He says:

"Now surely to Allah do all affairs eventually come" (***42:53***).

There is another aspect to this reality. Nearness to Allah is an attribute of some angels. It means that this nearness is not necessarily a thing to be acquired by one's endeavours; whatever it is a gift from Allah. It may therefore be said that it is a rank it is a gift from Allah. It may therefore be said that it is a rank and status that the angels gain by Divine bestowal, and as for men, by their striving.

The expression: ***"worthy of regard in this world and the hereafter"*** (***3:45***), is a circumstantial phrase; and so are other words in conjunctive with it, i.e., ***"and of those who are made near"*** (***3:45***); ***"and he shall speak"*** (***3:46***); ***"and one of the good ones"*** (***3:46***); ***"and He will teach him…"*** (***3:48***); ***"and a messenger to the Children of Israel …"*** (***3:49***).

Verse 46

Qur'an: ***"And he shall speak to the people when in the cradle and when of mature age…"*** (***3:46***).

Al-Mahd (اَلْمَهْدُ = cradle; bed or cot for infant, especially one on rockers). *al-Kahl* (اَلْكَهْلُ = one of mature age) is derived from *al-kuhulah* (اَلْكُهُوْلَةُ = to be of mature age); it is the middle age between youth and old age, it is the time when the body is at the height of its perfection and strength. That is why it is said that middle age is when white hair mixes with black. Others say that mature age means the age of forty-three.

In any case, it was a prophecy that he would live until he reached middle age; it was another good news for Maryam.

The Gospels say that he did not live on the earth more than thirty-three years. And yet the Qur'an clearly talks about his middle age. It is a point to be pondered upon. It is because of this that some people have said that his middle age speech would occur after his coming down from the heaven – because he was not on the earth till his middle age. Some others have claimed that according to "historical research" 'Isa ('a) lived for about sixty-four years, contrary to what the Gospels say. But the expression: ***"when in the cradle and when of mature age"*** (***3:46***), shows that he would not reach old age – his life on this earth would end in his middle age. In other words, the verse gives us both sides of his age – the infancy and the middle age.

Usually, a child is put in cradle in the beginning of its life when it is in diapers before it starts crawling or walking – generally in its second year or even before; and it is the age when it starts talking. Therefore,

for a child to speak in cradle is not an extraordinary achievement. But the verse obviously has another importance: It means that he would speak to the people, when in the cradle, a complete and thought-provoking speech which men of understanding would listen to, as they listen to the talk of a middle-aged man. In other words, he would talk to them in his cradle in the same manner as he would do in his mature age. Surely such a talk from an infant is extraordinary sign, a miracle.

Apart from that, the story as given in the chapter 19, clearly shows that he had spoken to the people in the very first hour of his life, when Maryam brought him to them soon after his birth. And undoubtedly when a child talks on the day he is born, it must be a miracle. Allah says:

"And she came to her people with him, carrying him (with her). They said: 'O Maryam! surely you have done a strange thing'" (***19:27***).

"'O sister of Harun! your father was not a bad man, nor was your mother an unchaste woman'" (***19:28***).

"But she pointed to him. They said: 'How should we speak to one who is a child in the cradle?'" (***19:29***).

"He ('Isa) said: 'Surely I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a prophet'" (***19:30***).

"'And he has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined on me prayer and zakat so long as I live'" (***19:31***).

"'And dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me insolent, unblessed'" (***19:32***).

"And peace on me on the day I was born, and, on the day I die, and on the day I am raised to life" (***19:33***).

Verse 47

Qur'an: ***"She said: 'My Lord! how shall there be a son (born) to me while no man has touched me?'"*** (***3:47***).

She addressed her talk to the Lord, although it was the Spirit in the form of a well-made man who was talking to her. It was based on the earlier explained reality that the talk of the angels and Spirit is in fact the talk of Allah. She knew that it was God who was talking to her although the talk occurred through the agency of the Spirit or the angels. That is why she expressed her perplexity to her Lord.

Also, it is possible to look at this sentence as a cry for help. In that case, it will be a sentence in parenthesis, somewhat similar to the expression: he says:

"Send me back, my Lord, send me back" (***23:99***).

Qur'an: ***"He said: "Even so; Allah creates what He pleases when He has decreed a matter, He only says to it, 'Be', and it is'"*** (***3:47***).

We have described earlier the syntactic position of the word, "Even so". We have shown that, putting this reply by the side of the verse:

"He said: 'Even so; your Lord says: 'It is easy to Me: and that we may make him a sign to men and a mercy from Us; and it is a matter which has been decreed'" (***19:21***).

It may be inferred that the word, "Even so", is a complete sentence, implying: Even so is the matter. That is, what you have been told is a matter which has been decreed; nothing can avert it.

As for her astonishment, it could only be in place if the matter was beyond the power of Allah, or very difficult for Him to do. So far as His power is concerned, it is unlimited, He does whatever He pleases. And as for difficulty it is imaginable only where the matter depends on preliminaries and causes – the more numerous and more formidable the causes and preliminaries, the more difficult that matter. But Allah does not create whatever He creates with the help of the causes;

"…When He has decreed a matter, He only says to it, 'Be', and it is" (***3:47***).

It is thus evident that the word, "Even so", is a complete sentence meant to remove Maryam's perplexity; the next sentence: ***"Allah creates what He please"*** (***3:47***), aims at doing away with the possible misunderstanding about Allah's power. And lastly, the sentence: ***"when He has decreed a matter, He only says to it, 'Be', and it is"*** (***3:47***), removes the delusion of difficulty and hardship.

Verse 48

Qur'an: ***"And He will teach him*** (***'Isa***) ***the Book and the Wisdom and the Torah and the Injil"*** (***3:48***).

The definite articles, in "the Book" and "the Wisdom", denote the genes of the Book and the Wisdom. The Book, as explained earlier refers to revelation that removes the differences among people. The Wisdom is the useful knowledge related to the belief and action. Now the Torah and the Injil themselves were books containing Wisdom. Yet, the Spirit or the angels mentioned them separately after the Book and the Wisdom. Sometimes a particular person or thing is mentioned after description of its genes because that thing is important enough to deserve separate mention. The definite article in "the Book" is not for comprehensiveness. In other words, it does not say that 'Isa ('a) was taught all the book, all the revelation. Allah says:

"And when 'Isa came with clear arguments, he said: 'I have come to you indeed with Wisdom, and so that I may make clear to you part of what you differ in; so, fear Allah and obey me'" (***43:63***).

Note the word, “part of”; we have written about it earlier.

When the Qur’an mentions the Torah, it refers to the revelation that Allah had sent down to Musa (‘a) inscribed on the tablets when he was on Mount Sinai, as Allah describes in the chapter 7, i.e., “The Battlements”. As for the books presently in the hands of the Jews, they themselves admit a big vacuum and void, a large gap, in its chain of narrators between the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, and Cyrus, King of Persia. Nevertheless, the Qur’an confirms that the Torah which was with the Jews in the days of the Prophet (S) was not altogether different from the original Torah – although it had been altered and interpolated to a great extent. The Qur’anic verses clearly show these facts.

As for the Injil – and it means “good news” – the Qur’an says that it was a single book that was revealed to ‘Isa (‘a), it was therefore a revelation sent especially to him. Allah says:

***“…And He revealed the Torah and the Injil”* (*3:3*).**

***“Aforetime, a guidance for the people…”* (*3:4*).**

But the present Gospels attributed to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, were admittedly written and composed long after ‘Isa (‘a).

The Qur’an also shows that the Law was only in the Torah; the Injil did not bring any new *Shari‘ah*, except that it abrogated some rules of the Torah. Allah says in the verses under discussion:

***“And a verifier of that which is before me of the Torah, and that I may allow you part of that which has been forbidden to you”* (*3:50*).**

Again, He says:

***“And We gave him the Injil in which was guidance and light, and verifying what was before it of Torah, and a guidance and an admonition for those who guard* (*against evil*)*”* (*5:46*).**

***“And the people of the Injil should have judged by what Allah revealed in it…”* (*5:47*).**

It may be inferred from this verse that there were some affirmative rules too in the Injil.

The Qur’an also shows that the Injil, like the Torah, contained the good news of the advent of the Prophet (S), Allah says:

***“Those who follow the Messenger Prophet, the ummi, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Injil”* (*7:157*).**

Verse 49

Qur’an: ***“And* (*make him*) *a messenger to the Children of Israel…”* (*3:49*).**

Evidently ‘Isa (‘a) was sent particularly to the Children of Israel; and the verses concerning Musa (‘a) imply the same thing about him. But while writing on the subject of prophethood, under the verse:

“Mankind was but one people; so Allah sent the prophets…” (***2:213***).

We have explained that ‘Isa (‘a), like Musa (‘a), was one of the ‘*Ul Al–’Adhm* prophets, who were sent to the whole world.4

This problem may be solved if you look at the difference between a messenger and a prophet written there. It was mentioned that a prophet conveys to his people what is good for them in this world and the hereafter; and an apostle brings to them a special message that decides between the people with truth and finality – either providing them with eternal blissful life or bring to them destruction and perdition, as has been described in the words of Allah:

“And every nation had a messenger; so when their messenger came, the matter was decided between them with justice and they shall not be dealt with unjustly” (***10:47***).

In other words, a prophet is a man who is sent to explain the religion to men, while a messenger is sent to convey a special message whose rejection brings destruction and perdition in its wake, and whose acceptance bestows eternity and bliss.5 This idea gets strengthened if we ponder on the messages given by the messengers (like: Nuh, Hud, Salih, Shu‘ayb, and others, peace of Allah be on them) to their nations, and which are quoted in the Qur’an.

This being the case, being a messenger to a particular nation does not necessarily mean that he was sent as prophet to them only. Possibly a messenger sent to a particular nation could have been appointed as prophet to that nation together with other people – as was the case with Musa and ‘Isa (‘a).

We find in the Qur’an evidence in support of the above views. For Example, Musa (‘a) was sent to Pharaoh, as Allah said to him:

“Go to Pharaoh, surely he has exceeded all limits” (***20:24***).

And the magicians of the Pharaoh’s nation believed in Musa (‘a); evidently their belief was accepted by Allah although they too were not from the Children of Israel, as Allah says:

“And the magicians were cast down making obeisance; they said: We believe in the Lord of Harun and Musa” (***20:70***).

Likewise, the call to the Divine Religion was addressed to the whole nation of Pharaoh:

“And certainly, We tried before them the people of Pharaoh, and there came to them a noble messenger” (***44:17***).

A similar phenomenon is seen about ‘Isa (‘a). Before the appearance of the Prophet (S), a multitude of

non–Israelites, like the Romans, the Franks, the Austrians, the Prussians and the Anglo–Saxons in the West, and the tribe of Najran in the East. had entered into the religion of ‘Isa. When the Qur’an speaks about the Christians, it does not single out the Israelite Christians. When it says something for or against them, it covers all Christians – Israelites and non–Israelites alike.6

Qur’an: ***“‘That I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, that I create for you out of dust like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird with Allah’s permission, and I heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead ones to life with Allah’s permission’”*** **(*3:49*).**

“*al–Khalq*” (اَلْخَلْقُ = to create; to assemble the parts of a thing). This verse ascribes creation to someone other than Allah; the same idea is implied by the verse:

“…So blessed be Allah, the best of the creators” **(*23:14*).**

al–Akmah (اَلْاَكْمَهُ = one who is born blind). *ar–Raghib* says that it is sometimes used for one who has lost his eyesight, i.e., as synonymous to blind. It is said: His eyes *kamahat* (كَمَهَتْ = lost their sight until they became white).

al–Abras (اَلْاَبْرَصُ) means one having *al–bars* (اَلْبَرْصُ = leprosy, a well–known skin disease).

He said, ***“and bring the dead ones to life”*** **(*3:49*)**, using the plural. It proves, or at least hints, that he brought to life many dead persons. And he said, ***“with Allah’s permission”*** **(*3:49*),** to make it clear that these miraculous signs appearing on his hands were actually attributed to Allah, not that ‘Isa (‘a) had any independent power to do so. He went on repeating this phrase to place utmost emphasis on this aspect.

There was a real danger of people believing him to be a god – because of these miracles. That is why he repeatedly added the proviso, “with Allah’s permission”, after every miracle which could confuse and mislead the people, like creation of bird, and bringing the dead to life. And it was because of this very reason that he ended his talk saying:

“Surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord, therefore worship Him; this is the straight path” **(*3:51*)**

The verse ***“that I create for you…”*** **(*3:50*)**, apparently means that these miracles had actually happened on his hands; it was not just a talk, nor just a challenge. Had he wanted only to tell them that he had that power – just to complete his argument against them – he would have added some proviso like, “if you ask for it”, or “if you so desire”.

Moreover, the talk that Allah will have on the Day of Resurrection with ‘Isa clearly shows that these miracles had actually happened: When Allah will say:

“O ‘Isa son of Maryam! remember My favour on you and on your mother… and when you created out of clay a thing like the form of a bird by My permission, then you breathed into it and it became a bird by My permission, and you healed the blind and the leper by My permission; and

when you brought forth the dead ones by My permission…" (***5:110***).

Some people have said: Utmost that can be proved from these verses is that Allah had given him this power, and that he mentioned that power when he argued with the people. Thus, he completed his proof against them, because he would have shown those miracles, if they had asked for them. But it does not prove that all or some of these miracles did actually happen.

Comment: The explanation we gave and the Divine Speech on the Day of Resurrection make it abundantly clear that all these miracles did actually took place, and that it is absolutely wrong to cast any doubt on them.

Qur'an: ***"And I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your houses…"*** (***3:49***).

This is news of the unseen that is reserved for Allah and his messengers who knew it by Divine Revelation. It is another miracle, an information of the unseen which was beyond any doubt or confusion. Man, after all, cannot have any doubt about what he has eaten or has stored in his house.

This miracle does not have the proviso, "by permission of Allah", although no miracle can take place without Allah's permission. Allah Himself says:

"…And it was not meet for a messenger that he should bring a sign except with Allah's permission…" (***40:78***).

The reason of this omission lies in the verb "inform". 'Isa ('a) was to give them those pieces of information; it would be a speech emanating from 'Isa ('a). In other words, it was 'Isa's action, and as such was not worthy of being attributed to Allah, in contrast to the preceding two signs, i.e., creation and bringing the dead to life, which are really the actions of Allah and cannot be attributed to anyone else except by His permission.

Moreover, these two signs were not like giving those pieces of information. They had more potentiality of leading people astray, when compared to his informing them of what they ate and what they kept in store. Simple-minded people can very easily accept Godship of a creator of birds and resurrector of the dead, rather than the divinity of one who gives them the news of the unseen.

Ordinary people do not think that the knowledge of the unseen is exclusively reserved for Allah; they think that it is not so difficult an art and may be attained to by any magician through training and practice. That is why 'Isa ('a) found it necessary, when talking to them, to put the condition of Allah's permission, on the two signs, and not on this last one.

The same is the case of healing; it was sufficient just to mention, as he did in the beginning, that it was "a sign from your Lord"; and especially when he was talking with the people who claimed to be believers. That is why he ended his talk with the words, ***"most surely there is a sign in this for you, if you are believers"*** (***3:49***), i.e., if you are truthful in your claim that you are a believer.

Verse 50

Qur'an: ***"And a verifier of that which is before me of the Torah, and that I may allow you part of that which has been forbidden to you"*** (***3:50***).

It is in conjunction with ***"And a messenger to the Children of Israel…"*** (***3:49***).

Of course, this phrase is in the first person (i.e., spoken by 'Isa, 'a) while the former is in the third person (i.e., spoken by the Spirit); but it makes no difference because the former, i.e., ***"and a messenger…"*** (***3:49***), has been immediately explained by 'Isa ('a) in the following words: ***"That I have come to you with a sign from your Lord…"*** (***3:49***)***;*** and this has changed the mode from the third to the first person – and this makes the conjunction perfect.

He came as a verifier of the Torah; he verified the Torah which was revealed before him and which he was taught by Allah, as the preceding verse says. In other words, he verified the original Torah which was given to Musa ('a). This phrase, therefore, does not show that he verified the Torah which was with the Jews in his time, nor does it imply that the Torah of his days was unaltered. The same applies to the verification of the Torah by our Prophet (S).

Qur'an: ***"…And that I may allow you part of that which has been forbidden to you…"*** (***3:50***).

Allah had forbidden them some of the good things, as He says:

"Wherefore for the iniquity of those who are Jews did We disallow to them the good things which had been made lawful for them…" (***4:160***).

This talk shows that 'Isa ('a) had endorsed the laws of the Torah with the exception of some tough rules prescribed for them in the Torah, which he abrogated. That is why it is said that the Injil does not contain a new *Shari'ah*.

The phrase, ***"and that I may allow you…"*** (***3:50***), is in conjunction with, the phrase, ***"with a sign from your Lord"*** (***3:50***); the preposition, *li* (لِ = that), describes the purpose; the sentence therefore means: I have come to you for the purpose of abrogating some of the hard rules imposed on you in the Torah.

Qur'an: ***"And I have come to you with a sign from your Lord…"*** (***3:50***).

Apparently, this is to make it clear that the following phrases, ***"therefore fear Allah and obey me"*** (***3:50***), are based on his bringing a sign from Allah, and not on his allowing some of the forbidden things. It is to remove this possible misunderstanding that the phrase, ***"and I have come to you with a sign from your Lord"*** (***3:50***), has been repeated.

Verse 51

Qur'an: ***"Surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord, therefore worship Him…"*** (***3:51***).

'Isa ('a) said it in order to cut off the excuse of those who were to believe in his divinity – either because he ('a) had detected such tendency in them or because he was informed through revelation of these future happenings. It was a sincere attempt to remove all chances of misunderstandings, as he had done when he added the proviso, ***"with Allah's permission"*** (***3:49***), while talking about creating a bird and bringing the dead ones to life.

But it appears from his talk on the Day of Judgment as quoted by the Qur'an in the verse below that he had said it in pursuance of the order of Allah and His revelation.

"I did not say to them aught save what Thou didst enjoin me with: That serve Allah, my Lord and your Lord, and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst cause me to die, Thou wert the watcher over them, and Thou art witness of all things." (***5:117***).

Verse 52

Qur'an: ***"But when 'Isa perceived unbelief on their part, he said: "Who are my helpers to Allah?"*** (***3:52***).

The narration leaves unsaid his life story from his conception to the early days of his mission, because its important milestones had already been mentioned in the good news given to Maryam. That is why this verse picks up the thread of narration from the point when 'Isa ('a), after announcing his mission and showing the aforesaid miracles, faced resistance from his people. It describes how he selected his disciples, how his people planned against him, and how Allah defeated their conspiracy by purifying him, taking him away to Himself and making him to ascend to Him. And thus, the story ends.

The narration throws light on those aspects only which were immediately needed for clarifying the subject matter to the Christians of Najran, whose delegation was then at Medina for discussion and argument. That is why many other points of the story, mentioned in the Chapters of: 'The Women,' 'The Table,' 'The Prophets,' 'The Embellishment' and 'The Ranks,' have been omitted in this one.

The use of the word, perception, or sense, in connection with unbelief – although disbelief is a matter pertaining to heart – implies that their disbelief was so transparent that it could be perceived by external senses. It could alternatively mean that when they, because of their disbelief, planned to harm and kill him, he sensed it and, in this way, perceived their disbelief. The verse therefore means:

When 'Isa perceived, i.e., felt, sensed, and noticed the unbelief of the Children of Israel – whose name was mentioned in the good news given to Maryam – he said: ***"Who are my helpers to Allah?"*** (***3:52***). He asked this question as he wanted to distinguish and set apart a selected group of his people who

would be solely dedicated to truth; they would strengthen the power of religion and form the nucleus around which the structure of religion would be built – they would be the centre from which the Divine Religion would spread.

We find this phenomenon in every physical, social, and other forces: When a party begins its activities, it finds it necessary to take for itself a core of dedicated cadre, on which it gets its strength. Otherwise, it could not pursue its activity and would become useless. In Islamic history, the same phenomenon is seen in the pledges of allegiance of the mountain pass and the tree. The Messenger of Allah's aim in the two pledges was to concentrate the full strength of Islam, reinforcing its power, in order that the Divine Mission could spread and succeed.

Thus 'Isa ('a) became sure that his mission was not achieving success with the Children of Israel – with a majority of them – and that they were not ready to believe in him no matter what he did. He was afraid that if they succeeded in destroying his life, the mission would fail, and the difficulties would increase. Therefore, he wanted to make arrangements as a safeguard against that eventuality. He sought help of a selected group in proceeding towards Allah. The disciples answered his call and thus were distinguished from among the whole nation by their belief. It paved the way to distinguish belief from disbelief, by making the faith victorious over faithlessness, spreading his mission, and establishing proofs. Allah says:

"O you who believe! Be helpers of Allah, as 'Isa son of Maryam said to (his) disciples: "Who are my helpers to Allah?" The disciples said: "We are helpers of Allah." So a party of the Children of Israel believed and another disbelieved; then we aided those who believed against their enemy, and they became uppermost" (61:14).

'Isa ('a) qualified his question, ***"Who are my helpers" (3:52)***, with the phrase, ***"to Allah" (3:52)***. He did so to awaken their longing and arouse their eagerness to proceed towards Allah, to be near Him. And this was the real reason for asking this question. The same was the idea behind the question,

"Who is it that will lend to Allah, a goodly loan… (2:245).

It is the preposition 'to', in ***"my helpers to Allah" (3:52)***, which implies the meaning of going or proceeding, etc. A similar connotation is found in the declaration of Ibrahim ('a) as quoted in the Qur'an:

"Surely I go to my Lord: He will guide me" (37:99).

Some commentators have said that 'to' in the above sentence means 'with'; the question, according to them means: Who are my helpers with Allah? But there is no evidence to support this explanation. Moreover, it is against the manners of the Qur'an to count Allah in line with others. The Qur'an cannot count others as the helpers when it counts Allah as the Helper. Nor is it in conformity with the manners of 'Isa ('a) which shines so brightly everywhere in his narrative in the Qur'an. Furthermore, the reply of the disciples too does not support this interpretation. In case this meaning were correct, the disciples

should have said: 'We are your helpers with Allah.' (Think over it).

Qur'an: ***"…The disciples said: "We are helpers of Allah: We believe in Allah and be* (*our*) *witness that we are submitting ones…* (*3:52*).**

A man's "*al-hawariyy*" (اَلْحَوَارِيُّ) is the one exclusively attached to him. It is reportedly derived from *al-hawr* (اَلْحَوْرُ = intense whiteness; marked contrast between the white of the corona and the black of the iris). The Qur'an has not used this word except for the close companions of 'Isa ('a).

The sentence: ***"We believe in Allah"*** (***3:52***), is a sort of explanation of their former declaration, "***We are helpers of Allah"*** (***3:52***). This too supports the above exegesis that 'Isa's phrase, ***"my helpers to Allah"*** (***3:52***), implies proceeding on the way leading to Allah, because true belief is the prescribed way.

Was it their first entry into the circle of faith? Obviously not. The wordings used in the following verse show that it was a belief after belief.

"…'Isa son of Maryam said to* [*his*] *disciples: "Who are my helpers to Allah?" The disciples said: "We are helpers of Allah." So, a party of the Children of Israel believed…" (***61:14***).

And there is nothing strange in it, as we have already explained that the Iman and Islam are of various ranks, one upon the other.

Going a step further, look at the verse:

"And when I revealed to the disciples, saying, "Believe in Me and My messenger," they said: "We believe and be our witness that we are the submitting ones" (***5:111***).

It clearly shows that this reply of theirs was based on a revelation from Allah; in other words, they were prophets. Therefore, the belief referred to in their reply was a belief after belief.

Proceeding further, we find them saying:

"…And be our witness that we are submitting ones. (***3:52***).

"Our Lord! we believe in what Thou hast revealed and we follow the messenger; so write us down with those who bear witness" (***3:53***).

The *'Islam'* or 'submission' to which they have referred, is unconditional surrender and submission to all that Allah demands from them and desires for them. This too implies that it was not the initial belief, but a belief after belief, because such submission is not found except in the sincere believers; it is not within the reach of those who merely bear witness to the Oneness of God and the prophethood of the Prophet.

We have earlier explained in detail that every stage of *Iman* is preceded by a relevant stage of *Islam*. Their words: ***"We believe in Allah and be* (*our*) *witness that we are submitting ones,"*** (***3:52***) also

point to this very fact: They used the verb for belief (implying a new occurrence) and adjective for submission (implying a sort of permanence). The first stage of Islam is submission and generally bearing witness to the basic of religion.

This is followed by a heartfelt belief in the above testimony in principle. Then comes the second stage of Islam and that is the sincere submission to the meaning of the said belief. When this stage comes, all possibilities are removed of anger or annoyance with what Allah and His messenger has ordered. In other words, the believer puts in practice the tenets of religion. It is followed by the second stage of *Iman*.

This is the stage when deeds become sincere, and the attributes of servitude are deeply ingrained in all actions and activities. This is followed by the third stage of Islam which means surrender to the love of Allah and to His will; such a Muslim does not love anything except because of Allah and does not want anything except for Allah; then nothing happens on his hands except that which Allah loves and desires, and the man's own love and desire are completely forgotten. It is followed by the third stage of Iman, when this servile submission permeates all his actions and deeds.

Keep in view this short description of the stages of Islam and Iman. Then ponder on the call of 'Isa ('a) as he said:

"… Therefore, fear Allah and obey me" (***3:50***).

"Surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord, therefore worship Him; this is the straight path". (***3:51***).

Note that he ('a) first told them to fear Allah and obey himself. And he gave the reason for that order, in these words, ***"Surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord"*** (***3:51***). That is, Allah is your Lord, O people of my nation, and He is also the Lord of His messenger whom He has sent to you. Therefore, it is obligatory for you to fear Him by believing in Him, and to obey me by following me.

In short, you are obliged to worship and serve Him with piety and fear of Him, obeying His messenger, i.e., with belief and following. This much is clearly understood from his words. That is why the fear of Allah and obedience of the prophet have been changed to the phrase, "***therefore worship Him"*** (***3:51***); He effected this change to make it clear that this order and this affair is attributed to Allah, and that attribution becomes crystal clear in the worship. Then he said that this worship is a straight path – it is a way that leads the walker to Allah.

After issuing that call, he perceived their disbelief, and he felt that there was no ground for hoping that their general public would accept true faith. Therefore, he said: ***"Who are my helpers to Allah?"*** (***3:52***). He was seeking helpers for proceeding on this straight path to which he had invited the people. That is the path of servitude – the piety and obedience. The disciples answered his call accepting the same thing he had asked for.

They said: ***"We are helpers of Allah"*** (***3:52***). Then they proceeded to explain it in these words: ***"We believe in Allah and be*** (***our***) ***witness that we are submitting ones"*** (***3:52***). The submission here refers to their obedience and following. It was for this reason that when they humbly and beseechingly spoke to their Lord, telling Him what they had promised 'Isa ('a), they changed the word 'submission' to the following; and expanded the circle of belief to cover all that was revealed by Allah. They said: ***"Our Lord! we believe in what Thou hast revealed and we follow the messenger"*** (***3:53***).

It means that they believed in all that Allah had revealed, and in what He had taught 'Isa son of Maryam of the Book and the Wisdom and the Torah and the Injil, and they followed the messenger in this matter. You will appreciate that it is among the highest ranks of belief, not its lower ones.

The disciples did not say: We believe in Allah and we are submitting ones. Instead, they asked 'Isa ('a) to be their witness regarding their submission and following. They did so in order that they should have a proof when they spoke to their Lord and said: ***"Our Lord! we believe in what Thou hast revealed and we follow the messenger"*** (***3:53***). It was as though they said: Our Lord! This is our condition, and Thy messenger is our witness for it.

Verse 53

Qur'an: ***"Our Lord! we believe in what Thou hast revealed and we follow the messenger; so write us down with those who bear witness"*** (***3:53***).

It is direct quotation of what the disciples said – without using an introductory phrase, like, 'They said.' This dramatic style of the Qur'an (as we have mentioned somewhere) puts the audience in a position where they seem to hear the words directly from the speakers – not through a narrator. The disciples asked their Lord to write them down with those who bear witness. And they based this prayer on their *Islam* and *Iman* both.

A messenger conveys his message when he explains what Allah has revealed to him – both in words and in practice. He teaches the tenets of religion and he himself acts upon them. Those who shall bear witness that the messenger conveyed the Divine Message to his people shall do so by learning the message from the messenger and following him in the *Shari'ah*. In this way, it will be seen that the messenger himself practises what he tells others to do – he does not ignore it nor does he transgress it.

Apparently, this witnessing refers to their testimony that the messenger had truly conveyed the message, as Allah says in this verse:

"Most certainly then We will question those to whom were sent (***the messengers***)***, and most certainly We will question the messengers"*** (***7:6***).

As for the witnessing mentioned in this verse below, it refers to bearing witness for the truth of the messengership not for conveying the message. And Allah knows better.

"And when they hear what has been revealed to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears on account of the truth that they recognize; they say: "Our Lord! we believe, so write us down with the witnesses" (***5:83***).

Another possible explanation: They had asked the messenger to be witness for their *Islam*; thereafter they prayed to Allah to write them down with those who bear witness. Probably they wanted Allah to write them among those who shall bear witness for deeds, as appears from the prayer of Ibrahim and Isma'il ('a) quoted in the Qur'an:

"Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and (***raise***) ***from our offspring a group submitting to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion..."*** (***2:128***).

For details, please refer to what we have written relating to that verse.

Verse 54

Qur'an: ***"And they planned, and Allah*** (***also***) ***planned, and Allah is the best of planners"*** (***3:54***).

The planners were the Children of Israel, as appears from the preceding verse, "***But when 'Isa perceived unbelief on their part..."*** (***3:52***). We have explained under the verse 2:26 what 'planning' means when it is attributed to Allah.

Verse 55

Qur'an: ***"And when Allah said: "O 'Isa! I am going to take you away completely and cause you to ascend unto Me..."*** (***3:55***).

"at-Tawaffi" (اَلتَّوَفِّي) is to take something completely. It is for this reason that it is also used for death, because at the time of death Allah takes man's soul away from his body. See, for example, the following verses:

"... Our messengers take him completely (***6:61***)***".***

I.e., cause him to die.

"And they say: "What! when we have become lost in the earth, shall we then indeed be in a new creation?" (***32:10***).

"Say: "The angel of death who is given charge of you shall take you completely[7]***then to your Lord you shall be brought back"*** (***32:11***).

"Allah takes completely the souls at the time of their death, and those that die not during their sleep, then He withholds those on whom He has passed the decree of death and sends the others back till an appointed term..." (***39:42***).

Pondering on the last two verses you will see that the Qur'an has not used *at-tawaffi* in the meaning of death, rather the word gives the idea of taking and preserving. In other words, when *at-tawaffi* is used for death, it is not because it means death; rather it is used to emphasize the connotation of taking and preserving, to show and establish that man's soul does not perish, is not destroyed by death – contrary to what ignorant people think; Allah keeps and preserves it until comes the time to return it to its body for resurrection. At other places where this sense is not involved, Allah uses the word *al-mawt* (اَلْمَوْتُ = death), and not *at-tawaffi*. For example:

"And Muhammad is no more than a messenger, the messengers have already passed away before him; if then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels?" (***3:144***).

"… It shall not be finished with them entirely so that they should die…" (***35:36***).

There are a lot of other verses of this type, including some verses in the story of 'Isa's itself. For example, there are, 'Isa's words about himself:

"And peace be on me on the day I was born, and on the day I die, and on the day I am raised to life" (***19:33***).

And Allah's words about him:

"And there is not one of the people of the Book but most certainly shall believe in him before his death, and on the Day of Resurrection he (***'Isa***) ***shall be a witness against them"*** (***4:159***).

It all shows that *at-tawaffi* does not necessarily mean death.

This interpretation is also supported by the words of Allah refuting the claim of the Jews:

"And their saying: 'Surely we killed the Messiah, 'Isa son of Maryam, the messenger of Allah'; and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so (***like 'Isa***)***; and most surely those who differ therein are only in a doubt about it; they have no knowledge respecting it, but only follow a conjecture; and they killed him not for sure"*** (***4:157***).

"Rather, Allah took him up to Himself; and Allah is Mighty, Wise" (***4:158***).

"And there is not one of the people of the Book but most certainly shall believe in him before his death and on the Day of Resurrection he (***'Isa***) ***shall be a witness against them"*** (***4:159***).

The Jews claimed that they had killed the Messiah, 'Isa son of Maryam, and likewise the Christians think that the Jews had killed 'Isa son of Maryam by crucifixion, and that after he was crucified Allah raised him up from his grave to the heaven, as the Gospels say. But the Qur'anic verses, as you see, unequivocally refute the story of killing and crucifixion both.

It is apparent from the Divine Words, ***"and there is not one of the people of the Book…"*** (***4:159***), that

‘Isa (‘a) is alive in a position before Allah and that he will not die until all the people of the Book shall believe in him. Keeping all these factors in view, the word *at–tawaffi*, used in the verse under discussion, would only mean that Allah was to take him away completely from being amidst the Jews. Yet the verse does not say so clearly; it is only its apparent connotation.[8]

Qur’an: ***“… And cause you to ascend unto Me and purify you of those who disbelieve…”*** **(*3:55*).**

“*ar–Raf‘* ” (اَلرَّفْعُ = to raise, to cause to ascend) is opposite of *al–wadh‘* (اَلْوَضْعُ = to put down); *at–taharah* (اَلطَّهَارَةُ = cleanliness, purity) is opposite of *al–qadharah* (اَلْقَذَارَةُ = dirtiness, impurity). We have already explained the meaning of cleanliness. The phrase, “cause you to ascend”, is qualified by the word, “unto Me”; and it implies that the ascension was spiritual, rather than physical; because Allah has no place like the physical spaces in which a body or things related to body arrive, stay or settle down, and from which they depart or to which they come nearer.

Accordingly, this phrase will have the same connotation as the words at the end of this very verse do:

“Then to Me shall be your return” **(*3:55*).**

This interpretation will be strengthened if *at–tawaffi* is taken to mean “to cause to die”; because in that case, “to cause to ascend to Me” would imply raising his rank and taking him nearer to Allah. Its meaning will, then, be similar to the verse 3:169, wherein Allah says about those who are martyred in His way: they are alive near their Lord; and the verse 19:57, where He says about Idris (‘a):

“And We raised him to a high station” **(*19:57*).**

Another interpretation: The ascension refers to his being raised alive with his body and soul together to the heaven; because the apparent meaning of the Qur’anic verses suggests that the heaven – i.e. the physical one – is the place of nearness to Allah, the venue from which the Divine favours and blessings are sent down, and where the honoured angels dwell. Probably, we shall discuss the meaning of *as–sama’* (اَلسَّمَآءُ = sky, heaven) somewhere else, Allah willing.

Purification from the unbelievers, as it is preceded by ascension to Allah, implies spiritual, rather than physical purification. Accordingly, it means that Allah would keep him away from the unbelievers, protect him from association with them, and remove him from their community – the community that is polluted by their unbelief and rejection of truth.

Qur’an: ***“…And make those who follow you above those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection …”*** **(*3:55*).**

In this verse Allah gives a promise that He will surely make the followers of ‘Isa (‘a) prevail over his adversaries who disbelieved in his prophethood, and that this predominance will continue up to the Day of Resurrection. This verse distinguishes the superior group from the inferior one, saying that the superior ones are those who follow ‘Isa (‘a) and the opposite group is that of the unbelievers – without

mentioning that they were from the Children of Israel, or that they were the Jews who professed to follow the *Shari'ah* of Musa ('a) or pointing to them in. any other way.

Of course, looking at the fact that his adversaries have been defined as unbelievers, it appears that the phrase, ***"those who follow you"*** (***3:55***)***,*** refers to the following in the way of truth, a following that is approved by Allah and which He is pleased with. Accordingly, his followers would be those Christians who did not deviate from his straight path before Islam came to abrogate 'Isa's religion; and after the advent of Islam, it is the Muslims who are his followers – because only these two groups are his followers in the path of truth.

If so, then the promised superiority would mean their superiority in their arguments and proofs, not their material domination or their rule over his adversaries. The meaning thus will be as follows: The proof of your followers, i.e., the above-mentioned Christians and the Muslims, shall be victorious over the proof of those who disbelieve in you, i.e., the Jews, up to the Day of Resurrection.

The above was the explanation given and chosen by the exegetes. But I think that the verse does not support this interpretation either explicitly or implicitly. Evidently the whole sentence,

"I am going to take you away completely and cause you to ascend unto Me and purify you of those who disbelieve, and make those who follow you above those who disbelieve to the Day of Resurrection" (***3:55***)***.***

Is news of what was to happen in the future: His being taken away, his ascension to Allah, his purification from disbelievers and the domination of his followers over unbelievers – all was to happen sometimes after Allah had given him this news.

Moreover, the words,

"And make those who follow you above those who disbelieve" (***3:55***)***.***

Contain a promise and a good tiding, and good tiding always refer to some future event. And it is known that the proof of the 'Isa's followers is nothing but the proof of 'Isa himself. These are the very proofs which were mentioned in the good news given to Maryam. And those proofs had certainly gained ascendancy over those of the unbelievers, both when 'Isa ('a) was present before his ascension, as well as after his ascension.

It may rather be said that before his ascension those proofs were more decisive and more convincing in face of his adversaries' claims than they were after his ascension. This being the case, what is the meaning of a promise that his followers' proofs would overcome those of his adversaries – in future? Again, why should this dominance be limited "to the Day of Resurrection" only? If a proof is victorious and convincing it should remain so for all times, without any limitation of time or day. Moreover, victory of a true proof over false ones will be even more manifest on the Day of Resurrection, as the Qur'an

informs us in connection with that Day's happenings.

A suggestion: Perhaps predominance of proof means that it would be more popular, more widely accepted – people would heed more to it, would accept it more readily; in this way their number would increase, and their power be more formidable.

Comment: Does it mean that his true followers would prevail over the disbelievers, would rule over them and overwhelm them with their power? But the fact is otherwise. It is no use saying that it may be a good news that would come true in distant future in the last days of the world, because the wordings of the verse do not allow such delay.

Or does it mean predominance in number? That is, his followers – the followers of truth after 'Isa ('a) – would be more numerous than the followers of falsehood? But reality belies this. The followers of falsehood have always been in majority, and the people of truth always in minority, right from the time of 'Isa ('a) up to these days of ours – a long period of two millennia.

Moreover, the wordings of the verse do not support this interpretation either. Look at the context; the verse gives 'Isa ('a) the good news that Allah's displeasure was to descend on the Jews, that they were to be overwhelmed by Divine Anger. In this background, the predominance of his followers conforms more with his followers' hold and dominance over his adversaries – either through convincing proofs or through rule and domination. But in no way does it point to the majority in number.

Let us have a fresh look at this verse: It distinguishes the two groups with two verbs: "those who follow you", and "those who disbelieve". The verb shows that an action has taken or will take place within the framework of a time – past, present, or future. The implication would differ if these phrases were changed to adjectives: 'followers' and 'disbelievers' because adjectives show a rather permanent attribute which transcends time limits, the said attribute is found in its related thing or person at all times.

Suppose there is a group of people who do something good or bad, and the rest of the nation is pleased with it, even the coming generations agree with what their ancestors did, then this much ideological identity and psychological identification are enough to ascribe that action or thing to the whole nation.

For example, the Qur'an admonishes the Jews and condemns them because of their ancestors' actions like hurting and slaying the prophets, their arrogance in face of the commands of Allah and His messengers, their alterations and interpolations in the Book of Allah and many other things like that. In view of the above-mentioned two principles, ***"those who disbelieve"*** (***3:55***)***,*** may be interpreted as the whole Jewish nation; and ***"those who follow you"*** (***3:55***)***,*** may mean all the Christians because their early fathers had believed in and followed 'Isa ('a) – and it was a correct belief and true following – although Allah was not pleased with those among them who believed in the trinity (before Islam), nor was He pleased with the whole nation when they continued to follow 'Isa ('a) even after the advent of Islam.

The sentence therefore means that Allah was to make the Christians – whose ancestors had truly followed ‘Isa (‘a) – dominant over the Jews because they had disbelieved in ‘Isa (‘a) and had planned and conspired against him. The aim is to show that Allah’s wrath has descended on the Jews, and His severe chastisement has engulfed their nation. (We have explained above that the early Christians had truly followed ‘Isa [‘a]; and therefore, the whole Christian nation may be included in the phrase, “***those who follow you”*** (***3:55***).

Going further, we find the phraseology changed. Instead of saying ***“those who follow you”*** (***3:55***), Allah says: ***“And as to those who believe and do good deeds…”*** (***3:57***) This too supports our interpretation that ***“those who follow you”*** (***3:55***) covers all the Christians, irrespective of their present belief and behaviour. It does not mean only the Muslims and those Christians who had correct belief and had truly followed ‘Isa (‘a). In short, it is not confined to those who will be saved in the hereafter. Otherwise, Allah would have continued the earlier mode of expression and said: And as to those who follow you, He will pay them fully their rewards.

Another interpretation: “***those who follow you***” (***3:55***) covers all the Christians and all the Muslims; and the verse foretells that up to the Day of Resurrection the Jews would always remain under the domination of those who believe that it is obligatory to follow ‘Isa (‘a) – and the basis of the explanation is the same as above. And it is the best of the interpretations written for this verse.

Qur’an: ***“…Then to Me shall be your return, so I will decide between you concerning that in which you differed…”*** (***3:55***).

This talk is addressed jointly to ‘Isa (‘a) and those who followed him and those who disbelieved in him. It gives their ultimate result on the Day of Resurrection. And with this verse the story of ‘Isa (‘a) comes to its end – from the time Maryam got the good news to the end of his earthly life.

Verse 56

Qur’an: ***“Then as to those who disbelieve, I will chastise them with severe chastisement in this world and the hereafter…”*** (***3:56***).

Apparently, it branches out from the phrase, “***so I will decide between you***” (***3:55***); it gives detail of that preceding general statement, describing the Divine Judgment on the Day of Resurrection – severe chastisement for the Jews who disbelieve, and full reward for the believers.

But the phrase “***in this world***” (***3:56***) shows that the verse branches out from two preceding sentences: “***and make those who follow you above those who disbelieve…”*** (***3:55***); “***Then to Me shall be your return…”*** (***3:55***). Thus, the verse says that as a result of that “making” and that “returning”, the disbelievers shall be severely punished in this world on the hands of those whom Allah has made dominant above them, and in the hereafter with the Fire, and they shall have no helpers.

It is another proof to show that in the preceding verse, making dominant means domination through power and rule, not through proofs.

The sentence, ***"and they shall have no helpers"*** (***3:56***), proves that they will not be able to avail of any intercession which could protect them from the chastisement. It is a firm decree which cannot change.

Verse 57

Qur'an: ***"And as to those who believe and do good deeds, He will pay them fully their rewards…"*** (***3:57***).

It is an attractive promise of good reward for those who followed 'Isa ('a). But, as mentioned above, the phrase "***those who follow you"*** (***3:55***) could be applied to the whole nation even when only a few of them truly followed him. The application of a name is one thing and truly having that attribute personally is something else. Good result and lovely reward are given only to him who truly has that attribute – not to him who is merely included in nomenclature.

Allah says:

"Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabaeans, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve" (***2:62***).

This then is the reward for those who believed and did good deeds from among those who followed 'Isa ('a); Allah will pay them fully their reward. The other group from those followers shall get no reward. Allah has pointed to this fact at the end of the verse:

"And Allah does not love the unjust" (***3:57***).

It is now clear why this verse – a verse of mercy and paradise – has ended with the phrase ***"and Allah does not love the unjust"*** (***3:57***). Otherwise, such verses usually end with Divine Names of mercy and forgiveness, or on praise of those for whom the verse is revealed. For example:

"…And Allah has promised good to all; and Allah is aware of what you do" (***57:10***).

"If you lend to Allah a goodly loan, He will double it for you and forgive you; and Allah is grateful, forbearing" (***64:17***).

"… And whoever believes in Allah and does good, He will remove from him his evil and cause him to enter gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide therein for ever; that is the great achievement" (***64:9***).

"Then as to those who believed and did good, their Lord will make them enter into His mercy;

that is the manifest achievement" (***45:30***).

We may go on quoting such examples from the Qur'an. However, it is now clear that the phrase ***"and Allah does not love the unjust"*** (***3:57***) describes the other group from among those who claim to follow 'Isa ('a) but are not true believers, nor do they do good deeds.

Verse 58

Qur'an: ***"This we recite to you of the signs and the wise reminder"*** (***3:58***).

It indicates the end of the story. The ***"wise reminder"*** is the Qur'an; it reminds one of Allah and is firm and wise in its verses and descriptions; falsehood cannot enter it, nor can non–serious talk pollute it.

Verse 59

Qur'an: ***"Surely the likeness of 'Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: "Be," and he was"*** (***3:59***).

It is the summary of the necessary points described in detail in preceding verses. Such way of summing up after detailed description – especially in arguments and discussions – is a beauty of style. The verses were revealed for arguments with the delegation of the Christians of Najran. It was proper to sum up the basic point of 'Isa's creation – after giving the story in detail – to show that the particular circumstances of his birth do not prove anything except that he was a created man like Adam (peace be on them both). Therefore, it is not permissible to say about him more than that which is said about Adam ('a) – that is, he was a man whom Allah created without the agency of a father.

The verse therefore means: The condition of 'Isa ('a) in the eyes of Allah – as Allah knows how He had created 'Isa – is only that the manner of his creation resembles that of Adam's creation. How was Adam created? Allah gathered various portions of earth and said to him, "Be", and he became a human being without any father.

This verse actually contains two independent proofs, either is sufficient to refute the idea of 'Isa's divinity.

First: 'Isa is a creature created by Allah – as Allah knows, and He is never confused in His knowledge. He created him a man, albeit without a father. And such a person is a servant of Allah, not a god.

Second: 'Isa's creation is not greater than that of Adam. If 'Isa's unusual creation may in any way justify the belief in his godhead, then Adam's creation will justify the same belief. But no Christian says that Adam was God. Therefore, they should not have such belief about 'Isa ('a). After all, both cases are the same.

The verse shows that 'Isa's creation, like that of Adam, was physical and of this world, although it happened against the usual manner of conception, because usually a child is conceived through the

agency of a father.

Apparently, *fa–yakun* (فَيَكُونُ = lit: and he is) is used here to describe a past event – that is why we have translated it as "and he was".

The phrase, ***"then said to him, 'Be', and he was"*** (***3:59***), shows instant, not gradual creation, but we know that both Adam and 'Isa had undergone a gradual process of creation. The fact is that there is no contradiction in these two aspects – because condition changes with the change of context. All things, whether they come into being gradually or instantly, are created by Allah, brought into being by His command, i.e., by the word, "Be", as He says:

"His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it, "Be", and it is" (***36:82***).

Many of these things, come into existence gradually – when they are seen in the framework of their gradual causes. But when they are seen in relation to Allah, then there is no gradualness in their existence, no gap between the command, "Be", and their "being"; Allah says:

"And Our command is but one, as the twinkling of an eye" (***54:50***).

We shall explain it in detail in a more appropriate place, Allah willing.

The main idea behind the statement, ***"then said to him, 'Be', and he was"*** (***3:59***), is as follows: Allah is not dependent on causes when He creates a thing. Things that He intends to create have equal relation with Him. If they were related to Him through causes, their conditions could have differed one with another, some would have looked possible, others impossible; one would have been easy, the other difficult; one nearer, another far away – all depending on the conditions of the relevant causes. But Allah does not need any cause to bring about an effect; whatever He intends, He says to it, "Be", and it comes into being.

Verse 60

Qur'an: ***"The truth is from your Lord, so be not of the doubters"*** (***3:60***).

It emphasizes the meaning of the preceding verse which was itself emphasized by the use of the particle "surely". It serves the same purpose as the verse, "***This We recite to you of the signs and the wise reminder"*** (***3:58***), revealed at the end of the detailed story. It was to set the Prophet's mind at rest that he was on truth, and to strengthen him in the argument.

The sentence ***"The truth is from your Lord"*** (***3:60***) is one of the finest expressions of the Qur'an. It uses the preposition, "from", which shows the beginning point. The truth starts from your Lord. If you were to change it to some other particle, e.g., "with", saying, 'the truth is with your Lord', it would give a hint of polytheism; and would actually show God as helpless, in need of that truth.

The true maxims and the propositions showing real and unalterable facts are self-evident and impossible to change; for example, four is an even number; one is half of two; and so on. Man finds out these self-evident truths from the things that exist; and existence - all of it - is from Allah. Therefore, the truth - all of it - is from Him. That is why Allah is not questioned concerning what He does, while men are. An action of a creature, if it is correct and right, accompanies the truth, but the action of Allah is existence itself, and therefore, truth itself.

Traditions

The Imam (‘a) said[9] about the words of Allah, ***“O Maryam! surely Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds”*** (***3:42***): (Allah) chose her twice: As for the first, He chose her, i.e., selected her; and as for the second, she conceived without a husband; in this way, He made her excel over the women of the worlds.”[10]

Abu Ja‘far (‘a) said about this verse: “It means that He selected you for the progeny of the prophets, and purified you from unchastity, and chose you for the birth of ‘Isa (‘a) without a husband.”[11]

The author says: The saying of the Imam, “He selected you for the progeny of the prophets”, means that He selected you to be a good offspring worthy of being related to the prophets. The phrase, “***and purified you from unchastity***” (***3:55***)**,** means that He gave you protection from unchastity; this is the best explanation of the Qur’anic words, because she had given birth to ‘Isa (‘a) without a husband. Thus, the tradition describes some concomitants of her selection and purification.

The two Traditions are not in conflict with each other, as may be seen manifestly. And we have explained that the verse implies this meaning.

It has been narrated by Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi (and he said that it is correct), Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Habban, and al-Hakim from Anas, that he said: “Verily the Messenger of Allah (S) said: *“Sufficient are in excellence from among the women of the worlds, Maryam bint ‘Imran, and Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, and Fatimah bint Muhammad* (*S*) *and Asiyah wife of Pharaoh!”*[12]

As-Suyuti has said that Ibn Abi Shaybah has narrated it from al-Hasan without connecting the chain of narrators with the Holy Prophet (S).

Al-Hakim has narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas (and has said that it is correct), that he said: *“The Messenger of Allah* (*S*) *said: ‘The most excellent of the women of the worlds are Khadijah, and Fatimah, and Maryam, and Asiyah wife of Pharaoh.’”* [13]

Ibn Marduwayh narrates from al-Hasan that he said: *“The Messenger of Allah* (*S*) *said: ‘Verily, Allah chose four* (*women*) *over the women of the worlds: Asiyah bint Muzahim, and Maryam bint ‘Imran, and Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, and Fatimah bint Muhammad* (*S*)*.’*[14]

Ibn Abi Shaybah and Ibn Jarir have narrated from Fatimah (may Allah be pleased with her!) that she said: *"The Messenger of Allah (S) said to me: "You are the chief of the women of the people of the Garden, (and) not Maryam, The Virgin."* 15

Ibn 'Asakir has narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: *"The Messenger of Allah (S) said: 'The chief of the women of the people of the Garden are Maryam bint 'Imran, then Fatimah, then Khadijah, then Asiyah wife of Pharaoh.'* 16

Ibn 'Asakir has narrated through the chain of Muqatil from ad-Dahhak from Ibn 'Abbas from the Prophet (S) that he said: *"Four women are the chiefs of the worlds: Maryam bint 'Imran, and Asiyah bint Muzahim, and Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, and Fatimah bint Muhammad (S); and the most excellent of them in the world is Fatimah."* 17

Ibn Abi Shaybah narrates from 'Abdu 'r-Rahman Ibn Abi Layla that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) said: *'Fatimah is the chief of the women of the worlds after Maryam bint 'Imran, and Asiyah wife of the Pharaoh, and Khadijah bint Khuwaylid.'* 18

As-Saduq narrates through his chains from 'Ikrimah from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) drew four lines, then said: *'The best of the women of the Garden are Maryam bint 'Imran, and Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, and Fatimah bint Muhammad, and Asiyah bint Muzahim, wife of the Pharaoh.'* 19

Also, he narrates through his chains from Ab al-Hasan al-Awwal ('a) that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) said: *'Verily Allah, the Mighty, the Great, has selected four from among the women: Maryam, and Asiyah, and Khadijah, and Fatimah...'* 20

The author says: There are numerous traditions of nearly the same meaning, narrated by both sects. The fact that these four are the chiefs of the women does not preclude the difference in excellence as amongst themselves, as may be seen in the sixth tradition quoted from *ad-Durr al-Manthur*, as well as other Traditions. And a similar discourse was written under the verse 3:33.

A point to ponder: The verse talks about selection and choosing, while the above traditions describe their supremacy.

There is a difference between selection and supremacy; the latter being a degree of the former's perfection.

al-Baqir ('a) said explaining the words of Allah: ***"... when they cast their pens (to decide) which of them should have Maryam in his charge" (3:44)***: They were drawing the lot about her, when she was orphaned of her father.21

The Imam ('a) said about the verse: And when the angels said. ***"O Maryam! surely Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds" (3:42)***: (Allah) chose her

twice: As for the first, He chose her, i.e., selected her, and as for the second, she conceived without a husband; in this way He made her excel over the women of the worlds.

Then Allah said to His Prophet:

"***This is of the tidings of the unseen which We reveal to you,*** (***O Muhammad!***) ***and you were not with them when they cast their pens*** (***to decide***) ***which of them should have Maryam in his charge, and you were not with them when they contended one with another"*** (***3:44***).

When she was born, the family of 'Imran contended one with another about her; everyone said: 'We shall have her in our charge.' So, they went out and cast lot among themselves with the arrows, and the arrow of Zakariyya came out (in the draw)"[22]

The author says: The Commentary written above supports this and the preceding tradition. There are numerous traditions giving the details regarding the good news given to Maryam, birth of 'Isa ('a), his mission and his miracles. But the general outline of his story, given in these verses is enough for the purpose of exegesis. That is why we have not written them here except the important ones.

Al-Baqir ('a) said about the words of Allah, ***"and I inform you of what you eat..."*** (***3:49***).

'Isa ('a) used to say to the Children of Israel: ***"I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, and I create for you out of dust like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird with Allah's permission, and I heal the blind and the leper"*** (***3:49***). [23]

They said: 'We do not think that what you do is anything but sorcery. Show us therefore a sign by which we may know that you are truthful.' He said: 'Do you think that you would know I was truthful if I informed you of what you eat and what you store in your houses, i.e., what you had eaten before you came out of your houses and what you had stored at night?' They said: 'Yes.' So, he used to tell them: 'You ate this and this.' Some of them confirmed his words and became believers, and other rejected it. And there was for them a sign in it if they were believers."[24]

The author says: The style of the verse when describing the latter two signs differs from that used for the former ones, as we had pointed out in the Commentary. And this difference supports the theme of this tradition.

As-Sadiq ('a) said explaining the verse, ***"And a verifier of that which is before me of the Torah, and that I may allow you..."*** (***3:50***). There was (a distance of) four hundred years between Dawud and 'Isa; and it was the *Shari'ah* of 'Isa that he was sent with monotheism and sincerity, and with what (Allah) had enjoined on Nuh, Ibrahim and Musa; and He revealed to him Injil; and took from him the covenant that was taken from (all other) prophets; and He ordained for him in the Book establishing the prayer with religion, and enjoining good, and forbidding evil, and prohibiting unlawful, and allowing lawful; and revealed to him in Injil the sermons and the parables, and the panel code which did not have retaliation;

it contained neither (detailed) rules of panel code nor the shares of inheritance; and He revealed to him alleviation of what was (ordained) for Musa in the Torah. And this is (the meaning of) the words Allah quoting what ‘Isa said to the Children of Israel: ***“and that I may allow you part of that which has been forbidden to you”*** (***3:50***). And ‘Isa ordered those who were with him, from among those who followed him of the believers, to believe in the *Shari‘ah* of the Torah and the Injil.”25

The author says: This tradition is narrated in *Qisas al-anbiya’*, in detail, from as-Sadiq (‘a), and there it says that there was a period of four hundred and eighty years between Dawud and ‘Isa (‘a). But neither of these dates conforms with the history of the People of the Book.

Ar-Rida’ (‘a) was asked: “Why were the disciples called *al-hawariyyun*?” (اَلْحَوَارِيُّونَ = companions, disciples; the root word denotes “intense whiteness”). He said: “According to (other) people, they were named *al-hawariyyun*, because they were washer-men, they cleansed the dirt from clothes by washing; and it is a name derived from *al-hawr* (اَلْحَوْرُ = to bleach, to whiten). But according to us, they were given this name because they were pure in their own selves and cleansed others from filth of sins by sermon and reminder.”26

The same Imam said that they were twelve men, and the most excellent and most learned of them was Luke.27

As-Sadiq (‘a) said, inter alia, in a tradition: “Allah sent ‘Isa son of Maryam; and entrusted to him light, knowledge and wisdom; and (gave him) all knowledge of the previous prophets, and added Injil to it. And He sent him to Baytu’l-Maqdis, to the Children of Israel, (he came) calling them to his Book and his wisdom, and to the belief in Allah and His messenger. But most of them insisted on exceeding (the limits) and disbelieving. When they did not believe (in him), he prayed to his Lord, and adjured on Him (to punish them). So (Allah) transformed (some) satans from among them, in order to show them a sign, so that they might take lesson from it.

But it did not increase in them except (their) transgression and disbelief. Then (‘Isa) came to Baytu’l-Maqdis, and continued calling them to, and awakening their interest in, that which is with Allah, for thirty-three years, until the Jews rose in his pursuit. And they claimed that they tortured him and buried him in the earth alive.

And some of them claimed that they killed and crucified him. But Allah was not to give them power over him; but it only appeared to them so; and they were not able to torture and kill him or to kill and crucify him, because if they could do so it would have been a refutation of the words of Allah; but Allah caused him to ascend after taking him away completely.”28

The author says: The words of the Imam: “Allah transformed (some) satans from among them,” means that He transformed a group of evil persons from among them. “And continued calling them... for thirty-three years”; perhaps it refers to his span of life, as it is well-known that he lived on this earth for thirty-three years. ‘Isa (‘a) talked to them from his cradle up to his mature age, and he was prophet from his

early childhood, as the Qur'an quotes him saying in the verses:

"But she pointed to him. They said: "How should we speak to one who is a child in the cradle?" (***19:29***).

"He said: 'Surely I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a prophet'" (***19:30***).

"... it would have been a refutation of the words of Allah; but Allah caused him to ascend after taking him away completely". It is a paraphrase of the Qur'anic words:

"Rather Allah took him, up to Himself (***4:158***).

And:

"...I am going to take you away completely and cause you to ascend unto Me..." (***3:55***).

As this verse mentions taking him away before causing him to ascend, the tradition infers that the events happened in the same sequence.

Al-Baqir ('a) said: "'Isa ('a) made a promise to his companions, the night when Allah took him up to Himself. So, they gathered near him in the evening, and they were twelve men; and he made them enter into a house. Then he came to them from a fountain that was in the corner of the house, shaking off water from his hair. Then he said: 'Verily Allah has revealed to me that He is going to take me up just now to Himself and purify me from the Jews. Now who among you (agrees) that my features be put on him, in order that he is killed and crucified (in my place) and he shall be with me in my rank?' A young man among them said: 'I, O Spirit of Allah!' He said: 'So you are that.' Then 'Isa said to them: 'Why! surely there is one of you who will reject me twelve times before it is morning.' One of them asked: 'Am I that? O prophet of Allah!' 'Isa said to him: 'Do you feel it in your heart? Then be you that.' Thereafter 'Isa told them: 'Why! surely you will divide after me in three groups: two groups, forging lie against Allah, (shall be) in the Fire; and one group following Sham'un,[29] being true to Allah, (shall be) in the Garden.' Then Allah caused 'Isa to ascend to Him from the corner of the house while they were looking at him."

Then the Imam ('a) said: "The Jews came searching for 'Isa the same night. And they caught the man about whom 'Isa had said: 'Surely there is one of you who will reject me twelve times before it is morning'; and they took the young man who had been given the features of 'Isa and he was killed and crucified. And he for whom 'Isa had said that he would reject him twelve times before it was morning, did (indeed) reject him."[30]

The author says: Traditions of nearly the same meaning have been narrated from Ibn 'Abbas, Qatadah, and others. Some people have said that the man who was made to look like 'Isa was the same person who had guided the Jews so that they could arrest and kill him. There are some other views regarding those details. But the Qur'an is silent on this subject; and we shall write on it in detail under the verse

4:157.

Ar-Rida ('a) said[31]: "There never was, in the eyes of the people, any uncertainty concerning the affairs of any prophet or Proof of Allah except the affair of 'Isa alone; because he was taken up from the earth alive, and he was given death between the heaven and the earth, then he was taken up to the heaven. And this is (the meaning of) the words of Allah, the Mighty, the Great:

"And when Allah said: 'O 'Isa! I am going to take you away completely and cause you to ascend unto Me and purify you ..." (***3:55***).

And (also) Allah says quoting the words of 'Isa (which he will say) on the Day of Resurrection:

"...And I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst take me (away) completely, Thou wert the watcher over them, and Thou art witness of all things." (***5:117***).

As-Sadiq ('a) said: "'Isa son of Maryam was taken up with a woollen outer garment, spun by Maryam, and woven by Maryam, and sewn by Maryam. But when he reached the heaven, he was addressed: 'O 'Isa! Lay down your worldly embellishment.' "[32]

The author says: We shall explain the meaning of the above quoted two traditions, God willing, at the end of the Chapter 4, "The Women."

It is written in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* about the verse: "***Surely the likeness of 'Isa is with Allah..."*** (***3:59***): 'Abd Ibn Hamid and Ibn Jarir have narrated from Qatadah that he said: "We have been told that as-Sayyid and al-'Aqib, the two chiefs and bishops of the people of Najran, met the Prophet of Allah (S) and asked him about 'Isa, and said to him: 'Every human being has a father. Then why is it that 'Isa ('a) had no father?' Then Allah revealed this verse about him: ***"Surely the likeness of 'Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam..."*** (***3:59***).

The author says: Traditions of nearly the same meaning have been narrated from as-Suddi, 'Ikrimah and others; al-Qummi also has narrated in his *at-Tafsir*, that the verse was revealed on the same occasion.

Some Other Traditions About Al-Muhaddath

Zurarah said: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah ('a) about the messenger, the prophet, and *al-muhaddath* (اَلْمُحَدَّثُ = the one spoken to). He said: 'The messenger is the one who sees the angel (who) brings the message of his Lord to him and tells him: "(Allah) orders you so-and-so." And the messenger is a prophet with (the added rank of) messengership. And the prophet does not see the angel, something comes down to him - the news (comes) to his heart; and he becomes as though he be in a trance, and he sees (the vision) in his dream.' I said: 'Then how does he know that what he saw in his dream was truth?' He said: 'Allah makes it clear to him, so that he knows that it is truth; and he does not see the angel. And *al-*

Muhaddath is the one who hears the voice and does not see (the speaker) in person.'[33]

The Author says: It has been narrated from the same Imam in *al-Kafi* also.

The original word of the Imam at the end of the tradition is *shahidan* (شَاهِداً = translated here as "in person"); it literally means "at present"; also it may be a conditional phrase related to the subject; in other words, it may mean, "he does not see manifestly".

Burayd enquired from al-Baqir and as-Sadiq (peace be on both of them), inter alia, in a tradition: "Then what is a messenger, a prophet and 'the one spoken to'?" He (the Imam) said: "A messenger is one to whom the angel appears and speaks; and a prophet is one who sees in his dream; and possibly the messengership and the prophethood is combined in a single person. The *muhaddath* is the one who hears the voice of the angel but does not see his person." Burayd said: "I said: 'May Allah make things right for you! How can he know that what has he seen in his dream is the truth and that it is from the angel?' He (the Imam) said: 'He is directed in the right way until he knows it (with certainty). Allah has surely set a seal on the (divine) books with your Book, and on the prophets with your prophet.'[34]

Muhammad Ibn Muslim said: "I mentioned *al-Muhaddath* in the presence of Abu 'Abdillah ('a). He said: 'Verily he hears the voice but does not see his person.' I said: 'May Allah make things right for you! How does he know that it is the speech of the angel?' He said: 'He is given tranquillity and dignity so that he knows that it is the angel (speaking).'[35]

Abu Basir narrates from the same Imam that he said: " 'Ali was a *muhaddath*, and Salman was a *muhaddath*." Abu Basir says: "I said: 'Then what is the sign of a *muhaddath*?' He said: 'The angel comes to him and scratches his heart (i.e., communicates to him) so-and-so.' "[36]

Humran Ibn A'yan said: "Abu Ja'far ('a) said to me that 'Ali was a *muhaddath*. (When I told this to) our Companions, (they) said: 'You did nothing when you did not ask him who used to speak to him?' Then it happened that I (again) met Abu Ja'far; and I said to him: 'Did not you inform me that 'Ali was spoken to?' He said: 'Surely.' I said: 'Who used to speak to him?' He said: 'An angel.' I said: 'Then I may say that he was a prophet or a messenger?' He said: 'No. But you should say that his likeness was the likeness of the Companion of Sulayman and the Companion of Musa; and his likeness was the likeness of Dhul-Qarnayn. Why! Have not you heard that 'Ali was asked about Dhul-Qarnayn whether he was a prophet?' He said: 'No. But he was a servant who loved Allah, so (Allah) loved him; and he was sincere towards Allah, so (Allah) gave him good advice (i.e., guided him). So, this also is like that.' "[37]

The author says: There are numerous traditions narrated from the Imams of the Ahl Al-Bayt about the meaning of 'the one spoken to' found in *Basa'ir ad-darajat*, *al-Kafi*, *Kanz al-fawa'id*, *al-Ikhtisas* and other books. This topic is found in the Sunni traditions too.

As for the distinction given by these traditions, between a prophet, a messenger and 'the one spoken to', we have described the difference between a messenger and a prophet. Also, it has been explained that

through revelation Allah speaks to His servant, and it creates by itself firm and certain knowledge, and this knowledge does not require any other proof. Among all Divine messages, revelation has the same position as the self-evident truths have in human knowledge - man does not need any proof or logical deduction to know that it is truth.

As for the dream, you must have noted that the traditions explain it in another way; it is not the vision which one sees normally in sleep; rather it denotes something like a trance, in which the external senses of the prophet are suspended, and then he observes what Allah wants him to see - in the same way as we observe the things while we are awake. Then Allah strengthens his conviction by bestowing on him the certainty that what he has seen is from Allah and not a Satanic manipulation.

As for 'being spoken to', it denotes hearing the voice of an angel. But he hears it by his heart, not by the ears, nor is it something like ideas or imaginations occurring in the mind, because idea or imagination is not called 'hearing the voice' - except as a far-fetched allegory. That is why the traditions describe it as hearing the voice and also as communicating to the heart; and yet name it as speech and talk. In short, the *muhaddath* hears the voice of the angel and listen to it with his 'hearing power' just as we hear and listen to normal talks and voices heard in this material world; but no other person can share in that talk or hear that voice, and therefore it is called a matter of heart.

As for his firm knowledge that what he heard was an angel's talk and not a Satanic whispering, it happens by the help of Allah, as is explained in the above-quoted tradition of Muhammad Ibn Muslim: "He is given tranquillity and dignity so that he knows that it is the angel (speaking)." The Satanic whispering - surely a falsehood - may come in either of the two ways: It may appear in a form which the believer knows to be false, and then he naturally will know that it cannot be the talk of an angel because angels do not disobey Allah and do not go against His command. Or it may appear wearing a mask of truth and fact - hoping to bring in its wake falsehood and lie. In such case, the Divine Light, which always leads the believer, exposes its reality. Allah says:

"Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people…" (***6:122***).

Apart from that, whispering and evil suggestions always create restlessness in soul and turmoil in heart, contrary to the remembrance of Allah and His speech which create gravity, and tranquillity. Allah says:

"It is only the Satan that frightens his friends…" (***3:175***).

"… Now surely by Allah's remembrance are the hearts set at rest" (***13:28***).

"Surely those who are pious, when a visitation from the Satan afflicts them, they become mindful, then lo! they see" (***7:201***).

When therefore the heart of the *muhaddath* is blessed with tranquillity and dignity at the time when he

hears the message, it conclusively proves that the message is from Allah. Conversely, restlessness and anxiety would show that it was a Satanic whispering, which brings precipitation, anxiety, anguish, etc., in its wake.

The traditions say that a *muhaddath* hears the voice of the angel and does not see him. It looks at the reality of 'being spoken to' and gives its academic definition. But it does not mean that the *muhaddath* cannot see the angel. A man becomes *al-muhaddath* (اَلْمُحَدَّثُ = the one spoken to), as soon as he hears an angel's voice, it is not necessary for him to see the angel. And if the *muhaddath* sees the angel, it is not because he is spoken to; it is an added excellence. Many verses clearly show that some of those spoken to had seen the angels when they spoke to them.

For example, in case of Maryam:

"...Then We sent to her Our Spirit, and there appeared to her a well-made man" (***19:17***).

"She said: "Surely I fly for refuge from you to the Beneficent Allah, if you are pious" (***19:18***).

"He said: "I am only a messenger of your Lord: That I should give you a pure boy" (***19:19***).

In case of the wife of Ibrahim:

"And certainly, Our messengers came to Ibrahim with good news. They said: "Peace," "Peace," said he..." (***11:69***).

"And his wife was standing (***by***)***, so she laughed; then We gave her the good news of Ishaq and after Ishaq of*** (***a son's son***) ***Ya'qub"*** (***11:71***).

"She said: "O woe to me! shall I bear a son (***now***) ***when I am an*** (***extremely***) ***old*** (***woman***) ***and this my husband an*** (***extremely***) ***old*** (***man***)***? Most surely this is an amazing thing"*** (***11:72***).

"They said: "Do you wonder at the decree of Allah? The mercy of Allah and His blessings be on you, O people of the house surely, He is Praised, Glorious" (***11:73***).

However, there may another explanation the above traditions: The statement that a *muhaddath* does not see the angel, may mean that he does not see the reality of the angels, although he might see them in the form which they assume when appearing before him. After all, the above-quoted verses only show that Maryam and the wife of Ibrahim had seen the angels in human form - the assumed form.

Someone has suggested a third interpretation: The statement means that the angel does not bring to him any revelation of the *Shari'ah*; he does not appear before him with a legislative order; and this distinction is meant to protect the dignity of the messengers and the prophets.

But this interpretation is far-fetched.

1. The original Hebrew mashiah became mashiha in Aramaic; in Greek this became messiah, the form now in common use. (tr.).

2. Referring to the New Testament [note of al-Islam.org].

3. See the translator's note in vol. 5, p. 263, under the explanation of the verse 3:39. (tr.).

4. See al-Mizan, vol.3, p.212. (tr.)

5. See al-Mizan, vol.3, p.205. (tr.).

6. This argument seems inconclusive. 'Isa ('a) himself said: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew, 15/23); and when he sent his Apostles to spread the Divine Message, he expressly forbade them to go to non-Israelites: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and unto the city of the Samaritans enter you not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew, 10/5-6). But St. Paul, who had never seen 'Isa ('a) in his life, over-ruled the Apostles who had spent their time with 'Isa ('a) and were privy to his ideas and ideals. Thus, St. Paul took Christianity to non-Israelites; and this transplantation bore out such fruits which could never be palatable to 'Isa ('a) himself.
Clearly, we cannot bring as evidence an action of St. Paul (or more precisely, the fruit of that action), which was diametrically opposed to a clear instruction of 'Isa ('a). (tr.).

7. This means to cause you to die

8. We shall write in detail on this subject at the end of the fourth Chapter, 'The Women'. (Author)

9. This is the Commentary of 'Ali Ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi himself and not the saying of the Imam, (See al-Qummi, at-Tafsir, an-Najaf al-Ashraf, ed., vol. 1, p. 102). (ed.).

10. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.

11. Majma' al-bayan.

12. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

13. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

14. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

15. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

16. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

17. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

18. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

19. al-Khisal.

20. al-Khisal

21. al-'Ayyashi

22. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi

23. al-Akmah (in the Arabic text) means blind

24. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi

25. al-'Ayyashi

26. 'Uyun al-akhbar

27. Quoted in at-Tawhid.
Apparently, this phrase is an interpolation by one of the narrators, because Luke was not among the twelve disciples. (tr.)

28. Kamal ad-din.

29. Simon the Peter, in English. (tr.).

30. At-Tafsir, al-Qummi.

31. 'Uyun al-akhbar.

32. al-'Ayyashi.

33. Basa'ir ad-darajat.

34. Basa'ir ad-darajat.

35. Basa'ir ad-darajat.

36. Basa'ir ad-darajat.

37. Basa'ir ad-darajat.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Sura ’Aal–’Imran: Verses 61 – 63

فَمَنْ حَآجَّكَ فِيهِ مِنۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَكَ مِنَ ٱلْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا۟ نَدْعُ أَبْنَآءَنَا وَأَبْنَآءَكُمْ وَنِسَآءَنَا وَنِسَآءَكُمْ وَأَنفُسَنَا وَأَنفُسَكُمْ ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَل لَّعْنَتَ ٱللَّهِ عَلَى ٱلْكَـٰذِبِينَ

“But whoever disputes with you in this after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: “Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves and your selves, then let us pray earnestly and bring about the curse of Allah on the liars” (***3:61***).

إِنَّ هَـٰذَا لَهُوَ ٱلْقَصَصُ ٱلْحَقُّ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَـٰهٍ إِلَّا ٱللَّهُ وَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَهُوَ ٱلْعَزِيزُ ٱلْحَكِيمُ

“Most surely this is the true story, and there is no god but Allah; and most surely Allah is the Mighty, the Wise” (***3:62***).

فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا۟ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلِيمٌۢ بِٱلْمُفْسِدِينَ

“But if they turn back then surely Allah knows the mischief makers” (***3:63***).

Commentary

Verse 61

Qur’an: ***“But whoever disputes with you in this after what has come to you of knowledge…”*** (***3:61***).

“Fa” (فَ = translated here as “But”) shows that the offer of *al–mubahalah* (اَلْمُبَاهَلَةُ = earnest imprecation) branches out from the Divine teaching explained above so clearly and convincingly about ‘Isa son of Maryam (‘a), and ended so emphatically with the words,

“The truth is from your Lord, so be not of the doubters” (***3:60***).

“In this”: The pronoun “this” refers either to ‘Isa or to the “truth” mentioned in the preceding verse.

The preceding verses were Divine Revelation in which there could be no doubt at all. Apart from that,

they contained a clear logical proof, that is, the verse: "***Surely the likeness of 'Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam…"*** (***3:59***). Thus, the knowledge emanating from these verses is two-fold: one, because it is a Divine Speech: two, because of its rational proof. That is why this knowledge was not reserved for the Prophet only; others too could understand it. Even if someone did not believe it to be a Divine Revelation, he could not entertain any doubt about the truth of the subject discussed, because it contained rational argument which unbiased mind was bound to accept. Perhaps that is why Allah said: "***after what has come to you of knowledge"*** (***3:61***); and did not say, after what We have explained to them.

Another point: By reminding the Prophet of the Divine Knowledge, Allah wanted to assure him that he would overwhelm his adversaries by Allah's permission and that Allah would surely be on his side supporting him in that dispute.

Qur'an: ***"Then say: "Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves and your selves"*** (***3:61***).

The first-person plural pronoun in "let us call" has a different import from the plural pronouns in "our sons" "our women" and "our selves". The former refers to both parties of the argument, that is, the advocates of Islam and those of Christianity, while the latter refer to the side of Islam only.

Accordingly, the meaning would be as follows: Let us both call the sons, the women and the 'selves'; we should call our sons, our women and our 'selves', and you should call your sons, your women and your 'selves'. The verse thus has shortened a long sentence in a meaningful and pleasant way.

al-Mubahalah (اَلْمُبَاهَلَةُ) and *al-mula'anah* (اَلْمُلَاعِنَةُ) both have the same meaning: to curse each other. The actual parties to the argument were the Messenger of Allah on one side, and the Christian men on the other. But in the challenge for the imprecation, the call was extended to the sons and women, as it would show more convincingly that the claimant is perfectly sure of the truth of his claim, that he is absolutely right. Allah has put in man the love of his children and family, to such an extent that he places himself in jeopardy to save them, plunges into perilous situations to keep them safe. And precisely for this reason, sons have been mentioned before women, because man loves his sons more than his women.

An exegete has said: "The verse means, let us call your sons, your women and your selves; and you call our sons, our women and our selves." But the explanation given by us above shows how absurd this meaning is. This meaning does not leave any justification for including the sons and the women in the earnest imprecation.

The detailed description of the invitees is a further proof that the caller (i.e., the Prophet) has absolute confidence in the truth of his claim. The import of the call is as follows: Let my whole group and your whole group enter into earnest imprecation, so that both groups pray earnestly to Allah and bring about the curse of Allah on the liars. In this way, the Divine curse and chastisement shall cover the sons,

women and selves of the liars, and the enemies of truth shall be annihilated completely, they shall be rooted out without leaving any trace.

Consequently, the truth of this speech does not depend on numerousness of the sons, the women or the 'selves'. The main brunt of the challenge is that one party – that which is on wrong – should perish together with all its near and dear ones – male and female, old and young. The exegetes unanimously say – and traditions and history support them – that when the Messenger of Allah (S) came out for the imprecation, the only persons whom he brought with him were: 'Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn (peace be on them all!). Therefore, the only participants, on the side of Islam, were two 'selves', two sons and one woman – and yet the Prophet did fully comply with the Divine Command.

Moreover, the meaning of a word in a verse is one thing, and it is quite another matter as for whom, or on how many people, could that word be applied in practice. We find numerous examples in the Qur'an where an order, a promise or a threat has been mentioned using plural words, but the circumstances of its revelation show that it was revealed for one person only. For example:

"(As for) those of you who put away their wives by likening their backs to the backs of their mothers, they are not their mothers" (58:2).

"And (as for) those who put away their wives by likening their backs to the backs of their mothers then would recall what they said…" (58:3).

"Allah has certainly heard the saying of those who said: "Surely Allah is poor, and we are rich" (3:181).

"And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: "Whatever can be spared" (2:219).

There are a lot of verses that were revealed with plural words, although the events for which they were revealed concerned only one person.

Qur'an: *"then let us pray earnestly and bring about the curse of Allah on the liars" (3:61)*

"al-Ibtihal" (اَلْاِبْتِهَالُ) is derived from al *bahlah* (اَلْبَهْلَةُ) also pronounced *al-buhlah* (اَلْبَهْلَةُ = curse). This is its basic meaning; then it was commonly used for earnest prayer.

The words, ***"and bring about the curse of Allah" (3:61)***, are a sort of explanation for the preceding verb, ***"then let us pray earnestly" (3:61).*** The verse said, ***"and bring about the curse of Allah" (3:61)***; it did not say 'and ask from Allah to curse'. It was an indication that that prayer would surely be granted because at that juncture it was the only way to distinguish the truth from the falsehood.

The word, "the liars", does not refer to all the liars found anywhere in the world, nor does it mean the genes of the liars. It refers to a particular group – that party to the argument (between the Prophet and the Christians) which was wrong in its claim. The Prophet was saying that Allah is One, there is no god

besides Him, and that 'Isa was His servant and messenger; while the Christians said that 'Isa was God, and son of God, and that God had three persons.

This observation leads us to another reality. All those who came out for the proposed imprecation were equal partners in their respective claim. Had the claim and the resulting imprecation been between the Prophet only and the Christians, one party (i.e., the Prophet) would demand singular words, and the other, plural. In such cases, it is necessary to use an expression which would cover singular and plural both. For example, the sentence under discussion could have been written like this: and bring about the curse of Allah on whosoever is lying. But it says: ***"... on the liars."*** (***3:61***) It proves that indeed there were liars (in plural) in one party to the argument, either on the side of the Prophet or on the Christians' side.

Consequently, all those who came out for the imprecation would be partners in the claim – because lie presupposes a claim. Therefore, those who were present on the side of the Prophet for the imprecation – i.e., 'Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn – were partners in the claim of the Messenger of Allah (S) and his Mission. It is one of the most excellent virtues which were given exclusively to these family members of the Prophet (peace be on them all!). Another exclusive excellence: Allah gave them the names of 'selves', women, and sons of the Prophet to the exclusion of all the men, women, and children of the *ummah*.

Question: You have mentioned above that the Qur'an uses – more often than not – plural words for singular; and even this verse says "our women" while it was only one lady, i.e., Fatimah ('a), who participated in the imprecation. Then why should the plural, "the liars", be not explained in the same way?

Reply: There is a vast difference between the two. There is a situation that may happen again and again, and there is another which is not expected to repeat itself. In the former situation, it is perfectly all right to use a plural in place of a singular, so that the rule or comment would cover even those who would be doing the same act in future. But in the latter situation, it is not allowed to use plural in place of singular, because the event is not to repeat itself and no one else is expected to be included in that order or comment, etc. Look for example at the following verses:

"And when you said to him to whom Allah had shown favour and to whom you had shown favour: Keep your wife to yourself and fear Allah..." (***33:37***).

"...The tongue of him whom they are inclined to blame (***for it***) ***is barbarous and this is clear Arabic tongue."*** (***16:103***).

"O Prophet! surely We have made lawful to you your wives whom you have given their dowries,... and a believing woman if she gave herself to the Prophet, if the Prophet desired to marry her – specially for you, not for the (***rest of***) ***believers..."*** (***33:50***).

And the order for calling to the imprecation could not be extended beyond that particular situation, that is, the imprecation between the Prophet and the Christians. Therefore, when Allah uses a plural, there should be more than two in both parties which were called; otherwise, the use of the plural "the liars" would be out of place.

Question: All the Christians who had come in the delegation of the Najran were a party to a claim – the claim that 'Isa was God, and the son of God, and one of the three persons of God. There was no discord among them in this matter, nor was there any difference in this claim between their men and women. Likewise, the claim on the side of the Prophet – that Allah is One, there is no god but He; and 'Isa son of Maryam was His servant and His messenger – was upheld by all the believers; it was not confined to any one of them – not even the Prophet. Therefore, it is out of place to say that those who were brought by the Prophet for the imprecation had any superiority or excellence over the rest of the believers. In fact, the Prophet had brought them just as examples of the sons, women and selves mentioned in the verse.

Moreover, claim and mission are two different things. Those who participated in the imprecation were party to the claim. How is it that you have made them partners in the Mission too?

Reply: Had the Prophet brought them just as samples, it was necessary for him to bring at least two other men, three women and three sons – to comply with the demand of the plurals. Yet, he did not do so. It proves that only those who came with him were worthy of being called his sons, his women and his selves – to the exclusion of all the others. Only on accepting this fact, we can say that he obeyed the Divine Order given in this verse. In other words, he could not find any one worthy of being included in these categories, except the one man, one woman and two children whom he brought with him. There was no one else whom he could be included in compliance with the plural words of the verse. In these circumstances, he fully complied with the order, although he could not bring three persons in any category.

Moreover, if you ponder on the events, you will see that the only aim of the Christians of Najran in coming to Medina was to confront the Messenger of Allah (S) and to argue with him about 'Isa son of Maryam. It was the Messenger of Allah who was claiming that 'Isa was a servant of Allah and His messenger. It was he who called others to believe in this claim, saying that it was based on Divine Revelation – the revelation which, he said, was sent to him. As for the rest of the believers, the Christians had nothing to do with them; nor did they argue with them. That is why Allah has used singular verbs and pronouns in the beginning of this verse, when referring to the Prophet: "But whoever disputes with you (literally: thee) in this after what has come to you (lit.: thee) of knowledge, then say (lit.: say thou)..." The same is the case of this verse:

"***But if they dispute with you (lit. :thee), say (lit. :say thou): "I have submitted myself (entirely) to Allah and (so has) everyone who follows me" (3:20).***

The above explanation shows that the Messenger of Allah (blessings of Allah be on him and his progeny!) had not brought those personalities as samples or examples of other believers – because the believers, per se, had no part in that disputation or imprecation; and there was no reason why they should be offered as targets for the curse and punishment which were to come to one of the two parties (the Christians and their adversary, i.e., the Prophet).

The Prophet himself was a party to that argument and it was his obligation to offer himself as the target of the calamity which could come to him in case his claim was (God forbid!) wrong. Now, there was no reason why he should bring 'Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn ('a) with him, if his claim were not dependent on them also, as it was on his own self. He had come with them for imprecation because they were the only sons, woman and self on whom his claim depended. Surely, he had not brought them as samples or examples. It is now crystal clear that these personalities were his partners in his claim; the claim depended on them as it did on him.

Furthermore, the Christians had come to argue with the Prophet not just because he believed that 'Isa son of Maryam was the servant and messenger of Allah. They had taken upon themselves to come all the way to Medina because in addition to claiming those things about 'Isa, he had called and invited them to believe likewise. This call, this mission, was the main reason why they had come in a delegation for argument. Consequently, when the Prophet came to the appointed place of imprecation, bringing with him the four personalities, it was because of that claim and that call together. Thus, these personalities were his partners in his mission, as they had been his partners in his claim.

Question: We accept that the Prophet came with them because they were a part of him; and this attribute was not found in others, it was their exclusive excellence. But it appears – and normal practice confirms it – that when a man brings his near and dear ones, his women and children, in dangerous and frightening places, it shows that he is fully confident of his and their safety and comfort. His bringing them for imprecation proves only that he was absolutely sure of his truth – it does not show anything else. It is quite irrelevant to say that his action proves that they were his partners in the mission.

Reply: It is true that the beginning of the verse does not show more than that which has been mentioned above. But the end of the verse, that is, ***"on the liars"*** (***3:61***), shows that there were surely liars (in plural) in one of the two sides of the argument and imprecation. Such expression could only be used if there were several people in each group, all making some claim – be it true or false. Therefore, those who were brought there by the Prophet were indeed his partners, both in the claim and in the mission, as was explained above. It is thus proved that those who were present there with the Prophet – all of them – were parties to the claim and the mission, together with the Prophet, and were his partners in it.

Question: It follows, from what you have said, that they were his partners in the prophethood.

Reply: Not at all. We have explained earlier where we have discussed "Prophethood"[1] that the Call and Propagation are not one and the same with the prophethood, although they are among its conditions and

concomitants, and are parts of the divinely bestowed responsibilities which a prophet takes upon himself. Likewise, we have made it clear in the discourse about the *Imamah* 2 that they are not identical with *Imamah* either, although they are in a way among its concomitants.

Verse 62

Qur'an: ***"Most surely this is the true story, and there is no god but Allah…"*** **(*3:62*).**

The demonstrative pronoun "this" refers to the earlier mentioned stories of 'Isa ('a). There is a fine literary transposition in the sentence. What it says is as follows: Most surely the stories We have told you concerning 'Isa are the truth – not that which is told by the Christians.

There is multiple emphasis in this sentence: *Inna* (إِنّ = surely), and *la* (ل = surely) followed by an additional pronoun *huwa* (هؤ =this) are all combined together to put utmost emphasis on this statement. It was done to cheer the Prophet and to encourage him and strengthen his heart for the coming imprecation, by augmenting his certainty and insight, and fortifying his confidence in the revelation which Allah had sent to him. It is further strengthened by additional emphasis contained in the next sentence which describes an accompanying reality: ***"and there is no god but Allah"*** **(*3:62*).** This fact once again shows that the preceding stories are truth.

Qur'an: ***"… And most surely Allah is the Mighty, the Wise"*** **(*3:62*).**

The conjunctive "and" joins it to the first sentence of the verse. The same modes of emphasis have again been used here. It aims at further comforting the Prophet and strengthening his heart. It says that Allah is Mighty: He has power to help the side of the truth. And He is Wise: He cannot neglect or forget this aid, because ignorance or oblivion cannot reach Him. He is not like those false deities whom the enemies of the truth have taken for themselves besides Him.

This explanation shows why these two Divine Names were chosen for concluding this verse. The sentence contains an exclusiveness: Only Allah is the Mighty and the Wise.

Verse 63

Qur'an: ***"But if they turn back then surely Allah knows the mischief makers"*** **(*3:63*).**

What should be the actual aim of any argument or imprecation? The manifestation of the truth. If so, then it is unthinkable for a seeker of truth to turn back from it. If the Christians really wanted the truth to be manifested – and they knew that Allah was the Guardian of truth and that He would never allow it to be destroyed or invalidated – they would not turn back from the proposed imprecation. And if they did, it would show that their aim by all this argumentation and disputation was not the manifestation of truth; they only wanted apparent victory, preservation of the status they had and beliefs they followed, and continuation of the customs and Traditions with which they were familiar.

Their only goal was that which their desire, lust and greed had made to seem fair to them – and it was not the good life which conforms with truth and happiness; it was but a semblance of life. In other words, they did not want reform and improvement; they wanted to make mischief in the world by corrupting the good life. Their turning back would mean that they were mischief-makers.

The sentence uses a metaphorical device of putting the cause in place of the effect; it mentions their mischief-making instead of saying that they do not want the truth to be manifested.

The second part of the sentence refers to the Divine Attribute of knowledge, and it has been emphasized with addition of *inna* (surely), as it says: "***then surely Allah knows…"*** (***3:63***). It was to show that mischief-making and thwarting the manifestation of truth was ingrained in their psyche, and Allah knows that as a result of that deep-rooted trait they will surely turn back from the imprecation. And so they did, and by doing so proved the truth of the Divine Words.

Traditions

As-Sadiq ('a) said: "When the Christians of Najran came to the Messenger of Allah (S) as a delegation – and their leaders were al-Ahtam, al-'Aqib, and as-Sayyid – and (the time of) their prayer came, they began to ring hand-bells and prayed. The Companions of the Messenger of Allah said: 'O Messenger of Allah! This in your Mosque?' He said: 'Let them be!' When they finished (their prayer) they came near the Messenger of Allah and said: 'To what do you call (us)?' He said: 'To bearing the witness that there is no god except Allah, and that I am the Messenger of Allah, and that 'Isa was a servant created (by Allah), he used to eat, drink and relieve himself.' They said: 'Then who was his father?' Thereupon came the revelation to the Messenger of Allah saying: 'Say to them, "What do you say about Adam? Was he a servant created (by Allah) who used to eat, drink, relieve himself and cohabit?"' The Prophet put this question to them, and they replied: 'Yes.' He said: 'Then who was his father?' and they became speechless. Then Allah sent down (the verse):

"Surely the likeness of 'Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust…" (***3:59***).

And the verse:

"But whoever disputes with you in this after what has come to you of knowledge… and bring about the curse of Allah on the liars" (***3:61***).

Then the Messenger of Allah said: '(If you do not agree with what I say) then enter into earnest imprecation with me; thus, if I am truthful the curse will be sent down on you and if I am a liar, it will be sent down on me.' The said: 'You have done justice.'

So, they made an appointment for the imprecation. When they returned to the place they were staying, their leaders as-Sayyid, al-'Aqib and al-Ahtam, said: 'If he comes for the imprecation against us with his

nation (i.e., people unrelated to him), we shall enter into imprecation against him, because then he is not a prophet. But if he enters into imprecation against us with only the people of his House, we shall not enter into imprecation against him, because he will not put the People of his House forward unless he is truthful.'

When the morning came, they came to the Messenger of Allah (S) – and there were with him the Leader of the Faithful ('Ali), Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn ('a). The Christians said: 'Who are these?' They were told: 'This is his cousin, *al-wasiy* (الوصى = executor of will) and son-in-law, and this is his daughter Fatimah, and these are his sons al-Hasan and al-Husayn.' So, they were frightened and said to the Messenger of Allah: 'We shall pay you whatever you are pleased with but excuse us from the imprecation.' Thereupon the Messenger of Allah (S) made agreement with them on (the condition of) *al-jizyah* (الجزْيَة = tax); and they went away."3

Ar-Rayyan Ibn as-Salt narrates a talk between ar-Ridha' ('a) with al-Ma'mun and the scholars about the difference between the Prophet's progeny and the rest of the *ummah* and the superiority of the former over the latter, in which he, inter alia, says: "The scholars said: 'Has Allah explained (this) selection in His Book?' ar-Ridha' ('a) said: 'He has explained the selection manifestly in twelve places – apart from the hidden (references).' Then he described those places of the Qur'an, during which he said: 'As for the third (verse, it was) when Allah distinguished His purified creatures and ordered His Prophet to earnestly pray with them for His curse on the liars, in the verse of imprecation. So Allah, the Mighty, the Great, said:

***"But whoever disputes with you in this after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: "Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves and your selves"* (3:61).**

The scholars said: 'our selves means the Prophet himself.' Abu al-Hasan (ar-Ridha') said: 'You are mistaken. He only meant 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib. And one of the proofs to show it is the saying of the Prophet (himself): "Banu Wali'ah should give up (their mischief); otherwise, I will surely send to them a man like my own self" – referring to 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib. And He meant al-Hasan and al-Husayn with "sons" and meant Fatimah with "women". So this is an exclusive virtue in which no one can precede them, and an excellence in which no man can equal them, and an honour in which no creature can overtake them, because He made 'Ali's person like his (Prophet's) own self (person)...' "4

As-Saduq narrates through his chain from al-Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far (peace be on both of them!), that he had a talk with (Harun) ar-Rashid, during which ar-Rashid said to him: "How is it that you say, 'We are the offspring of the Prophet', while the Prophet did not leave any offspring? And progeny is through male, not through female; and you are the children of the daughter, and her child is not (her father's) progeny." The Imam said: "I said to him: 'I ask you by the right of kinship and that of the grave (i.e., of the Prophet) and of him who is therein, that you should excuse me from (replying to) this question.' He said: 'You shall tell me of your proof for it, O son of 'Ali, and you, O Musa! are their leader and their

present Imam – thus I have been informed – and I am not going to excuse you from any question I put to you until you bring me a proof from the Book of Allah; because you claim, O children of 'Ali! that nothing of it (the Book) comes out from you – not even an *alif* or a *waw* – but you know its interpretation; and you advance the word of Allah, the Mighty, the Great, as your proof; "***We have not neglected anything in the Book."*** (***6:38***), and you are not in need of the opinion of scholars and their analogy.'

"Then I said: 'Do you permit me to reply?' He said: 'Let me have.' I said (reciting the Qur'anic verse): I seek refuge of Allah from the cursed Satan5. In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful....

"....And of his (Ibrahim's) offspring, Dawud and Sulayman and Ayyub and Yusuf and Musa and Harun; and thus do We reward those who do good" (***6:84***).

"And Zakariyya and Yahya and 'Isa and Ilyas; each one was of the good ones" (***6:85***).

I asked: Who was the father of 'Isa? O Leader of the Faithful!' He said: 'He had no father.' Then I said: 'Yet He (Allah) has joined him with the progeny of the Prophets through Maryam; and in the same way Allah, the High, has joined us with the progeny of the Prophet through our mother, Fatimah.' (Then I said): 'Should I tell you more? O Leader of the Faithful!' he said: 'Let me have.' I said: '(It is) the word of Allah, the Mighty, the Great:

"But whoever disputes with you in this after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: "Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves and your selves, then let us pray earnestly and bring about the curse of Allah on the liars" (***3:61***).

And nobody has ever claimed that the Prophet – on the occasion of the imprecation with the Christians – made anyone enter under the drape except 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn. So (this) was the interpretation of His Word: "our sons" meant al-Hasan and al-Husayn; and "our women", Fatimah; and "our selves", 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib.' " 6

Al-Ma'mun had asked ar-Ridha' ('a) several questions, one of which was as follows:

Al-Ma'mun said: "What is the proof for the caliphate of your grandfather, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib?"

(The Imam) said: "The verse of our selves."

He (al-Ma'mun) said: "If there were not our women."

He (the Imam) said: "If there were not our sons."

The author says: The Imam argued on the strength of the word, our selves. He meant that Allah had made 'Ali ('a) like the person of the Prophet. (And who could have more right to succeed the Prophet than his own person?). Al-Ma'mun said: "If there were not our women." He wanted to say that the reference to "women" indicates that the word "our selves" means "our men", and as such it would not

show any excellence. The Imam replied: “If there were not our sons.” That is, if “our selves” referred to the men, then why should the sons be mentioned separately? They would have been included in “our men”.

Hariz narrates from Abu ‘Abdillah (‘a) that he said: “The Leader of the Faithful (‘Ali, ‘a) was asked about his excellent virtues. He mentioned some of them. Then they said to him: ‘Tell us (some) more.’ So he said: ‘Verily two Bishops of the Christians of Najran came to the Messenger of Allah, and talked (with him) on the subject of ‘Isa (‘a). Thereupon Allah revealed the verse: “***Surely the likeness of ‘Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam…”*** **(*3:59*).** Then the Messenger of Allah entered (the house),.and held the hands of ‘Ali, al-Hasan, al-Husayn, and Fatimah; then he came out, and raised his palms to the heaven and separated his fingers one from another; and called them (the Christians) to the imprecation.’”

(Abu ‘Abdillah, ‘a) then said: “And Abu Ja‘far (‘a) has said: ‘And that is the way of imprecation; one intertwines his hand in one’s (adversary’s) hand raising them to the heaven.’ “Thereupon when the two Bishops saw him, one of them said to his companion: “By God! If he is a prophet, we shall surely perish; and if he is not a prophet his (own) people would save us (from the trouble of confronting him).” So they gave up (the imprecation) and went back.’” 7

The author says: This or nearly the same meaning has been narrated in other traditions through the Shi‘i chains. All of them unanimously say that those who were brought by the Prophet for the imprecation were ‘Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan, and al-Husayn only.

Ash-Shaykh at-Tusi has narrated it in his *al-Amali*, through his chains from ‘Amir Ibn Sa‘d from his father; and also through his chains from ‘Abdu’r-Rahman Ibn Kathir from as-Sadiq (‘a); and also through his chains from Salim Ibn Abi ’l Ja‘d, raising it to Abu Dharr; and also through his chains from Rabi‘ah Ibn Najid from ‘Ali (‘a).

Al-Mufid has narrated it in his *al-Ikhtisas*, through his chains from Muhammad Ibn az-Zibriqan from Musa Ibn Ja‘far (‘a); and also from Muhammad Ibn al-Munkadir from his father from his grandfather.

Al-‘Ayyashi has narrated it in his *at-Tafsir* from Muhammad Ibn Sa‘id al-Urdunni from Musa Ibn Muhammad Ibn ar-Ridha’ (‘a) from his brother; and also from Abu Ja‘far al-Ahwal from as-Sadiq (‘a); and also from al-Mundhir from ‘Ali (‘a); and also through his chains from ‘Amir Ibn Sa‘d.

Al-Furat has narrated it in his *at-Tafsir* several traditions to this effect, which separately reach to Abu Ja‘far (‘a), Abu Rafi‘, ash-Sha‘bi, ‘Ali (‘a), and Shahr Ibn Hawshab and several other Traditions to the same effect have been narrated in *Rawdat al-wa‘izin, I‘lam al-wara, al-Khara’ij* and other books.

It has been narrated in *at-Tafsir of ath-Tha‘labi*8 from Mujahid and al-Kalbi: “When the Prophet called the Christians for the imprecation, they said: ‘Let us return and think over it.’ When they were alone, they asked al-‘Aqib - and he was a man of good judgment among them: ‘O ‘Abd al-Masih! What is your

opinion?' He said: 'By Allah! You are well-aware, O ye Christians! that Muhammad is a prophet, sent by Allah, and that he has brought to you the decisive word about your Companion ('Isa, 'a). By Allah! whenever a nation has entered into imprecation with a prophet, their elders have perished, and their youngsters have died. And if you do it, we shall surely perish; but, if you turn down, for the love of your religion and (want) to remain on what you have at present, then make peace with the man and go back to your towns.'

"So they came to the Messenger of Allah; and he had come out in the morning carrying al-Husayn in his lap, holding the hand of al-Hasan, with Fatimah walking behind him and 'Ali was behind her; and he was saying: 'When I pray, you say "Amen"'. Then the Bishop of Najran said: 'O ye Christians! Surely, I see the faces that if they ask Allah to remove a mountain from its place, He would surely remove it. Therefore, do not do imprecation, otherwise you will perish, and there will not remain any Christian on the face of the earth, up to the Day of Resurrection.'

"Then they said: 'O Ab al-Qasim! We have decided that we should not enter into imprecation against you; and that we leave you on your religion and we remain on our religion.' He said: 'Well, if you refuse imprecation, then accept Islam - you will have (the rights) which (other) Muslims have, and on you shall be (the duties) which are on them.' But they refused. So (the Prophet) said: 'Then I shall fight you.' They said: 'We do not have strength to fight against the Arabs. But we shall make peace with you that you will not fight against us or frighten us; nor will you turn us away from our religion, on the condition that we shall pay to you every year two thousand robes - one thousand in Safar and one thousand in Rajab - and thirty coats of mail, (of) common (quality), made of iron.' So the Prophet made agreement with them on these conditions. And he said, 'By Him in Whose hand is my soul! Surely destruction had almost descended on the people of Najran.' And if they had entered into imprecation they would have been transformed into monkeys and pigs, and there would have erupted in the valley a conflagration of fire engulfing them all; and surely Allah would have annihilated Najran and its inhabitants - even the birds on tree tops; and the year would not have ended for all the Christians but they would have perished."

The author says: The event, nearly in similar words, has also been narrated in *Kitabu al-Maghazi* from Ibn Ishaq. Also, al-Maliki has narrated it in his *al-Fusul al-muhimmah* from many exegetes; and al-Hammuyi has narrated nearly similar tradition from Ibn Jurayh.

The agreement contains the phrase, "one thousand in Safar;" it means al-Muharram of Islamic calendar, which was the first month of the year in Arabia. In pre-Islamic days it was called "Safar" - the first two months were called Safar al-Awwal and Safar ath-Thani. Arabs in the days of ignorance used to postpone Safar al-Awwal. Then Islam confirmed the sacredness of the Safar al-Awwal; so it was called, "the sacred (المُحَرَّمُ = al-Muharram), month of Allah;" then it became known as *al-Muharram*.

'Amir son of Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqas narrates from his father that he said: "Mu'awiyah Ibn Abi Sufyan ordered Sa'd telling him, 'What prevents you from abusing Abu Turab ('Ali, 'a)?' He said, 'As for this matter, as long as I remember three things which the Messenger of Allah (S) has said (about 'Ali) I will

never abuse him; if even one of them were for me, it would have been dearer to me than red livestock.'

I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) saying, when he left him ('Ali) as his Deputy (when going) for one of his battles. 'Ali said to him, 'O Messenger of Allah! Are you leaving me behind with women and children?' Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah (S) said to him: *'Are you not pleased that you should have the same position with me that Harun had with Musa – except that there is no prophet after me?'* And I heard him saying on the day of Khaybar: *'Most surely tomorrow I will give the standard* (*of army*) *to a man who loves Allah and His Messenger, and whom Allah and His Messenger do love.'* (Sa'd) said: 'So we held our heads high (hoping to catch the eye of the Prophet).

But he said: 'Call 'Ali to me.' So, he was brought (before him), sore-eyed; and (the Prophet) put (his) saliva in his eyes (and he was cured); and gave the standard to him. And Allah conquered (Khaybar) on his hand. And when this verse was revealed: ***"... then say: "Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves and your selves, then let us pray earnestly..."*** **(*3:61*),** the Messenger of Allah called 'Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and said: 'O Allah! These are the People of my House.' "[9]

The author says: This tradition has been narrated by at-Tirmidhi in his *as-Sahih*, Abu al-Mu'ayyad al-Muwaffaq Ibn Ahmad in his *Kitab Fada'il 'Ali*, Abu Nu'aym in his *Hilyat al-awliya*' (from the same narrator as above), and al-Hammuyi in his *Fara'idu 's-simtayn*.

Abu Nu'aym narrates through his chains from 'Amir Ibn Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqas from his father that he said: "When this verse was revealed, the Messenger of Allah (S) called 'Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn and said: '*O Allah! These are the People of my House.'* [10]

Also he narrates in the same book through his chains from ash-Sha'bi from Jabir that he said: "al-'aqib and at-Tayyib came to the Messenger of Allah (S), and he invited them to Islam. They said: 'We are (already) Muslims, O Muhammad! He said: 'You tell a lie. If you wish, I would tell you what prevents you from (accepting) Islam.' They said: 'Then let us have.' He said: 'The love of the cross, drinking liquor, and eating the flesh of pig.' Jabir further said: "Then the Prophet invited them to imprecation, and they promised him to come to him in the morning. When the morning came, the Messenger of Allah held the hands of 'Ali, al-Hasan, al-Husayn, and Fatimah. Then he sent (someone) to them. But they refused to accept his call (for imprecation); instead, they acknowledged to him (his sovereignty). Then the Messenger of Allah (S) said: '*By Him Who has sent me with truth! Had they done* (*the imprecation*) *the valley would have rained fire on them.' "*Jabir said: "About them was revealed the verse: "**.. *let us call our sons and your sons..."* (*3:61*).** Jabir further said: " 'our selves' refers to the Messenger of Allah and 'Ali; and 'our sons' to al-Hasan and al-Husayn; and 'our women' to Fatimah."

The author says: This tradition has been narrated by Ibn al-Maghazili in his *al-Manaqib* through his chains from the same ash-Sha'bi from Jabir; by al-Hammuyi in his *Fara'idu 's-simtayn*, through his chains from the same narrator; by al-Maliki in his *al-Fusul al-muhimmah* from the same; by Abu Dawud

at-Tayalisi from the same; and by as-Suyuti in his *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from al-Hakim (who has said that this tradition is correct), and from Ibn Marduwayh as well as Abu Nu'aym (in his *Dala'il al-khayrat*) - all from Jabir.

Abu Nu'aym has narrated in his *Dala'il al-khayrat* through the chain of al-Kalbi from Abu Salih from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "Verily a delegation of the Christians of Najran came to the Messenger of Allah (S), and there were fourteen persons of their nobles. Among them were as-Sayyid (and he was the leader) and al-'Aqib, the second in rank and a man of good judgment among them." (Then he has described the event as given above.) 11

Al-Bayhaqi has narrated in his *Dala'il an-Nubuwwah* through the chain of Salmah Ibn 'Abd Yashu' from his father from his grandfather that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) wrote to the people of Najran, before the (chapter of) Ta Sin Sulayman12 was revealed: '*In the name of Allah, the God of Ibrahim and Ishaq and Ya'qub. From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah to the Bishop of Najran and the people of Najran. If you accept Islam, then I extol before you Allah, the God of Ibrahim and Ishaq and Ya'qub. Now after* (*the praise of Allah*)*, I call you to the worship of Allah leaving aside the worship of the servants* (*of Allah*)*, and I invite you to* (*come under*) *the guardianship of Allah instead of the guardianship of the servants. But if you refuse* (*it*)*, then* (*you should pay*) *the head-tax; and if you refuse* (*even this*)*, then I declare war against you. And peace* (*be on you*)*.*'

When the Bishop read the letter, he was shocked and extremely terrified. So he sent (someone) to call a man of Najran Shurahbil Ibn Wada'ah by name; and gave him the letter of the Prophet and he read it. Then the Bishop said to him: 'What is your opinion?' Shurahbil said: 'You surely know the promise which Allah made to Ibrahim about the prophethood in the progeny of Isma'il. Therefore, how can one be sure that it is not this very man? I would not give any opinion regarding the prophethood. If it were an opinion about a worldly matter, I would have advised you about it and made efforts on your behalf.' Then the Bishop called the people of Najran one after another, but all said as Shurahbil had said. Thereupon, they decided to send Shurahbil Ibn Wada'ah, 'Abdullah Ibn Shurahbil and Jabbar Ibn Fayd, so that they might bring them the (correct) news of the Messenger of Allah (S)

"So, the delegation proceeded until they came to the Messenger of Allah (S). And he asked them (questions) and they asked him, and this questioning between him and them continued, until they said to him: 'What do you say about 'Isa son of Maryam?' The Messenger of Allah (S) said: *'Today, I do not have anything about him; therefore you stay* (*here*)*, in order that I may tell you tomorrow morning what is to be said about 'Isa.'* Then Allah sent down these verses:

"Surely the likeness of 'Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust..." (***3:59***).

"(***This is***) ***the truth from your Lord, so be not of the disputers."*** (***3:60***).

"... And bring about the curse of Allah on the liars." (***3:61***).

“But they refused to agree to that (truth). Thus, when the next morning came after the Messenger of Allah (S) had given them that information, he proceeded for the imprecation to a place thick with trees that belonged to him, carrying al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and Fatimah was walking behind him; and he had many wives those days (but did not take any of them with him). And Shurahbil said to his two companions: ‘Surely, I see a (serious) matter coming (to us). If this man is a prophet sent (by Allah) and we ventured to imprecate against him, there would not remain on the face of the earth any hair or claw of us (i.e., any cattle or bird belonging to us), but it will perish.’ They said to him: ‘What is your view?’ He said: ‘My opinion is that we should leave the judgment to him, because I see (in him) a man who will never exceed the proper limits in his decision.’ They said: ‘You may do as you like in this matter.’ Thereupon, Shurahbil met the Messenger of Allah (S) and said: ‘I have thought (of one thing) better than the imprecation against you.’ He said: ‘And what is it?’ He said: ‘(We give you the authority) to decide (between us) this day up to the night and from the night to the (next) morning. Whatever you will decide will be binding on us.’

“So, the Messenger of Allah (S) returned without doing imprecation, and made agreement with them on the head-tax.”[13]

Ibn Jarir has narrated from ‘Ilba’ Ibn Ahmar al-Yashkuri that he said: “When the verse was revealed... then say: ***‘Let us call our sons and your sons...’* (*3:61*),** the Messenger of Allah (S) sent (someone) to (call) ‘Ali, Fatimah and their sons, al-Hasan and al-Husayn; and invited the Jews to enter into imprecation against them. Then a young Jew said: ‘Woe unto you! Are you not familiar with (the story) of your brothers who were yesterday transformed into monkeys and pigs? Do not enter into (this) imprecation.’ So, they desisted (from it).”[14]

The author says: This tradition supports the view that the pronoun “this” in the opening sentence, ***“disputes with you in this”* (*3:61*)**, refers to “truth” in the preceding verse, The truth is from your Lord. In this way, the order of imprecation would cover other matters too, besides the controversy about ‘Isa son of Maryam. In that case, it would be another story[15] after the events which took place with the delegation of Najran as narrated in numerous traditions supporting each other, a large portion of which has been quoted above.

Ibn Tawus has written in *Sa‘du ’s-su‘ud*: “I saw in the book *Ma nazala min al-Qur’ani fi ’n-Nabiyyi wa Ahli baytih* [16] that he has narrated the tradition of the imprecation through fifty-one chains from the companions and others; and some of them are: al-Hasan Ibn ‘Ali (peace be on them both), ‘Uthman Ibn ‘Affan, Sa‘d Ibn Abi Waqqas, Bakr Ibn Sammal, Talhah, az-Zubayr, ‘Abdu ’r-Rahman Ibn ‘Awf, ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbas, Abu Rafi‘[17] Jabir Ibn ‘Abdillah, al-Bara’ Ibn ‘Azib and Anas Ibn Malik.”

Likewise (Ibn Shahrashub) has narrated this tradition in *al-Manaqib*, from a number of narrators and exegetes. as-Suyuti has done the same in *ad-Durr al-Manthur*.

A very strange thing has been written by an exegete who said:

“The traditions unanimously say that the Prophet selected ‘Ali, Fatimah and their two sons for the imprecation; and they apply the word ‘our women’ to Fatimah, and ‘our selves’ to ‘Ali only. The source of these traditions are the Shi‘ahs, and their motive in this respect is well–known. They have tried as much as they could to propagate such traditions until it has spread among a vast number of the Sunnis too.”

“But those who forged these traditions did not succeed in properly fitting their interpretation on the verse. When an Arab says, ‘our women’ he never means his daughter – especially when he has wives too. Such thing is not known in their language. Even more far–fetched is the claim that ‘our selves’ means ‘Ali. Moreover, the delegation of Najran – concerning whom the verse is said to be revealed – had not come to Medina with their women and children.”

“The only thing the verse shows is that the Prophet was ordered to call the People of the Book (who were disputing with him about ‘Isa) to gather all – men, women and children – together; and he was to gather the believers – men, women and children – together, in order that they might earnestly pray to Allah to curse the party which was in the wrong regarding its claim about ‘Isa (‘a).”

“Such thing would prove that the Prophet had strong conviction in the truth of his claim and had utmost confidence in it. And likewise, the desistence by those who were challenged to imprecation – the Christians or other People of the Book – would show that they had no confidence in their own claim and were disputing not for the purpose of ascertaining the truth; their belief was shaky, and they had no clear proofs. How can a believer in Allah agree to gather such a group – consisting of the truthful ones and the liars – in one place to fix their attention to Allah asking for His curse, to pray to remove the liars from His mercy? Can anyone be more daring than such a person? Can anything be a bigger mockery of the Divine Power and Majesty than this?”

“The Prophet and the believers had full confidence in the truth of what they believed about ‘Isa (‘a). It may be understood from the words of Allah ***“after what has come to you of knowledge”*** (***3:61***) because ‘knowledge’ in matters of belief only means ‘certainty’.

“The words of Allah, ***“let us call our sons and your sons …”*** (***3:61***), may be interpreted in either of the two ways:

“First: Each group should call the other; you should call our sons and we should call your sons and likewise about the other two categories of women and selves.”

“Second: Each group should call his family. We, the Muslims, should call our sons, women, and ourselves, and you should do likewise with your family.”

“There is no difficulty in either case in calling the ‘selves’. The difficulty arises when this phrase is restricted to one person, as the Shi‘ahs and their followers do.”

Comment: This is such a nonsense that no knowledgeable person would ever like to write it in academic

books; and perhaps someone might venture to say that we have wrongly attributed it to such a renowned man! Yet, we have quoted it in full to show how low a man can sink in misapprehension and jaundiced views because of his bias and prejudice. He goes on demolishing what he had earlier built, and reconfirms what he had rejected before, without caring or even knowing what he was doing. Also, we wanted evil to be known to all, so that they could protect themselves from it.

We may comment on this talk in two ways:

First, to show that the verse proves utmost excellence and superiority of ‘Ali (‘a). But it is a subject more appropriate for the books of theology, and is not so much related to our subject, that is, explanation of the meanings of the Qur’anic verses.

Second, to review what the above exegete has written about the meaning of the verse of imprecation and concerning the traditions showing what had happened between the Prophet and the Christians of Najran. This comes within the purview of exegesis, and we shall deal with it here.

You have already seen what the verse means. And the numerous traditions (which support each other), quoted by us, perfectly fit the meaning of the verse. If you ponder on what we have written earlier, you will see where and how his innovated “proof” has gone wrong, and at what points his blinkered vision has made him stumble. Here are some details:

He says: “The source of these traditions are the Shi‘ahs, and their motive in this respect is well-known. They have tried as much as they could to propagate such traditions until it has spread among a vast number of the Sunnis too.” This, he says after admitting that the traditions are unanimous! Would that I knew which traditions he speaks about? Does he mean the abovementioned traditions which support and strengthen each other, which the scholars of traditions have unanimously accepted and narrated? They are not one, two or three; they are countless in number. The scholars of traditions have quoted them with one voice; the compilers of traditions have written them in their books, including Muslim and at-Tirmidhi in their collections of ‘correct’ traditions; and the historians have confirmed them by describing the events in a similar way. The exegetes of the Qur’an have unanimously quoted and copied them, without expressing any doubt or levelling any objection against them - and there are among them stalwarts of traditions and history, like at-Tabari, Abu al-Fida’, Ibn Kathir and as-Suyuti etc.

And who were those Shi‘ahs who were the source of this story? Does he mean those companions who narrated it in the first place - like Sa‘d Ibn Abi Waqqas, Jabir Ibn ‘Abdillah, ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbas and others? Or the disciples of the companions who took this tradition from them and conveyed it to others? Like Abu Salih, al-Kalbi, as-Suddi, ash-Sha‘bi and others? Does he want to say that those companions and their disciples became Shi‘ahs - just because they narrated a tradition which he does not like? It is these companions and disciples - together with other like them - who are the final links in the chains of the narrators of the Prophet’s Traditions. Discard them, and you will be left neither with any tradition nor any biography of the Prophet. How can a Muslim - nay, even a non-Muslim researcher - aspire to know

the details of the Prophet's message, if he rejects the traditions? How can he know the teachings and laws brought by the Messenger of Allah? The Qur'an clearly upholds the authority of the sayings and actions of the Prophet; and declares that the religion is based on his life. Reject the authority of the traditions and you have lost the Qur'an as well; there will remain no trace of the Divine Book, nor will there be any fruit of this revelation.

Or perhaps he thinks that the Shi'ahs have interpolated and surreptitiously inserted these traditions in the books of traditions and history? But then the problem, instead of going away, would rather increase and be more overwhelming: the tradition will lose its authority and the *Shari'ah* will be nullified.

He says: "They apply the word 'our women' to Fatimah and 'our selves' to 'Ali." Probably he wants to say that according to the Shi'ahs, the words 'our women' and 'our selves' literally mean only Fatimah and 'Ali respectively. Perhaps he got the idea from an earlier quoted tradition in which Jabir said: "Our selves refers to the Messenger of Allah and 'Ali;... and our women to Fatimah." But obviously he has not understood its meaning. The traditions do not say so. They only mean that because the Prophet when acting on the verse, did not bring (any other person for imprecation) except 'Ali and Fatimah, it made it clear that she was the only one worthy of being included in the category 'our women', as he (Ali) was the only one qualified for the category 'our selves'; and likewise al-Hasan and al-Husayn were the only two for the category our sons. The words: 'sons', 'women' and 'selves' taken together meant the family. Therefore, these four were the family of the Messenger of Allah and his closest relatives, as we have seen in some traditions that he (S) said after coming with them at the appointed place: "O Allah! These are the people of my house." The sentence implies: I did not find anyone whom I could call, except these four.

That this is the correct explanation may be seen in the wording of some traditions which say: "'our selves' refers to the Messenger of Allah and 'Ali." It clearly shows that the tradition aims at describing who had come under which category - not at explaining the literal meaning of the words.

He says: "But those who forged these traditions did not succeed in properly fitting their interpretation on the verse. When an Arab says 'our women' he never means his daughter - especially when he has got wives too. Such thing is not known in their language. Even more far-fetched is the claim that 'our selves' means 'Ali."

First, he has given an imaginary meaning to the traditions, then he uses it as an excuse to discard all those narrations – despite their numerousness, despite of their great number. Then he discredits its narrators and all those who have accepted them by accusing them of the crime of Shi'ism! Had he been a true seeker of knowledge, he should have studied the books of exegesis, and remembered the vast multitude of the masters of eloquence and authorities on rhetoric, since they have quoted and written these traditions in their books of exegesis and other subjects without any hesitation, without any objection.

Look at the author of *Tafsir al-Kashshaf*. He is a recognized authority on Arabic language, grammar, and literature. He has often pronounced judgment on various recitations of the Qur'an, showing why a certain recitation was not in keeping with the norms of language or usage. And see what he has to say about this verse: "And this verse contains a proof – unsurpassed in strength – of the excellence of the people of the mantle, peace be on them. And there is in it a clear proof of the truth of the prophethood of the Prophet, because nobody – either a supporter or an antagonist – has ever narrated that they (the Christians) answered that call (for imprecation)."

How come that those giants of rhetoric and champions of literature could not realize that these traditions – in spite of their vast multitude and their repeated narrations in the books of traditions – accuse the Qur'an of using incorrect expression by employing a plural (women) for one woman only?

Not, by my life! This exegete is in fact confused; he does not know the difference between the literal meaning of a word and its application. Obviously, his thinking goes like this: "Allah said to His Prophet,

***"But whoever disputes with you in this after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: 'Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves and your selves…"* (*3:61*).**

Now if we admit that the disputers at that time were the delegates of Najran numbering according to some Traditions, fourteen men; and that there were no women or children with them; and if after that we admit that when the Messenger of Allah (S) went for the imprecation, he had with him only: 'Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, then the phrase, 'whoever disputes with you' would literally mean the delegation of Najran; our women would mean one woman; 'our selves' would mean one 'self'; and your sons and your women would become words without meaning because there were neither women nor sons in that delegation!"

I wonder why he forgot to add that it would also mean use of 'our sons' (a plural, meaning at least three sons) for only two sons, because it is more repugnant than the use of plural for singular. Since post-classical period, people have been using plural in place of singular – although such use is not found in the classical Arabic, except when done as a mark of respect. But the use of plural for dual is something unheard of – it has no justification at all.

However, it was this pattern of thought which led him to discard all these traditions, saying that they were forged. But he has completely misunderstood the talk.

The fact is that an eloquent speech conforms with the situation which it is related to and throws light on what is important to explain in a given context. Sometimes the talk is between two strangers, neither knowing the other's life condition. Then they use normal expressions which are applied in general talk.

Suppose two groups are facing each other; one of them wants the other to know that their conflict is deep-rooted, and that the whole tribe – men and women, elders, and youngsters – shall continue the

fight till the last. In such a situation, he will say: We shall fight you with our men, women, and children. Now this sentence is based on the assumption that normally and naturally a tribe does have women and children. The statement aims at making it clear to the enemy that the speaker's tribe is one in its determination to fight against their adversary. On the other hand, if he were to say, 'We shall fight against you with our men, a woman and 'two sons', it would be a superfluous detail, uncalled for in this context – unless there be some good reason for it in a particular situation.

But when the talk is between friends who know each other's family, then it may be couched in general terms. For example, one may say while inviting the other to his home: We are at your service – we ourselves as well as our women and children. Or, he may wish to be more specific and say: All of us will be at your service – the men, the daughter and the two children.

In short, normal way of expression is one thing and its application to real facts is another matter. Sometimes they may coincide, at other times they may be different. If a man speaks in normal and general terms and then it appears that the real situation is different, he is not accused of telling a lie.

This verse is based on the same principle. Accordingly, the words ***"… then say: 'Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves and your selves…'"*** (***3:61***), means as follows: Tell them that you are coming with your closest relatives who are your partners in your claim and knowledge, and invite them to come with their closest relatives. Thus, the verse proceeds in the normal way assuming that the Messenger of Allah had in his family men, women and sons, and the Christian delegates had likewise men, women and sons in their families; it was a challenge couched in general and usual terms.

But when the time came to act on that challenge, it was found that the Prophet did not have any men, women, and sons except one man, one woman and two sons, while his adversaries had no woman or son with them – there were only men in their group. But this difference in implementation did not falsify the challenge. That is why when the Prophet came out with one man, one woman and two sons, the Christians did not accuse him of lying or of not fulfilling the conditions; nor did they cover their refusal by saying that the Prophet had told them to bring their women and sons while they did not have with them at that time and therefore they were unable to enter into imprecation. Also, it was because of this that those who heard this story never imagined that it was a forgery.

The above explanation also shows the absurdity of his assertion where he says: "Moreover, the delegation of Najran – concerning whom the verse is said to be revealed – had not come to Medina with their women and children."

He says: "The only thing which the verse shows is that the Prophet was ordered to call the People of the Book (who were disputing with him about 'Isa) to gather all – men, women and children – together; and he was to gather the believers – men, women and children – together; in order that they might earnestly pray to Allah to curse the party that was in the wrong in its claim about 'Isa. How can a believer in Allah

agree to gather such a group – consisting of the truthful ones and the liars – in one place to fix their attention to Allah asking for His curse, to pray to remove the liars from His mercy? Can anyone be more daring than such a person? Can anything be a bigger mockery to the Divine Power and Majesty than this?"

In short, the verse invites both parties to gather with their "selves", their women, and their sons in one place and then to earnestly pray for Allah's curse on the liars. Now let us find out what is the meaning of this gathering that he talks about.

Was it a call to gather all the believers and all the Christians? But the believers at that time[18] included all – or almost all – Arabs of the tribes of Rabi'ah and Mudar residing from Yemen and Hijaz to Iraq and beyond. And the Christians included those in Najran (then forming a part of Yemen), Syria and the regions around the Mediterranean Sea, the Romans and the Franks, as well as the people of the Britain, Austria and other places.

Such a vast multitude of people, scattered from the East to the West, must have exceeded millions upon millions, counting men, women, and children all together. There can be no doubt whatsoever in the mind of a sane person that it was almost impossible for all of them to gather in one place. Normal ways and means reject such a proposition altogether.

If the Qur'an had offered this proposal, then it had asked for something impossible. It would mean that the Prophet was offering a conditional proof for the authenticity of his claim – and the condition, on which it depended, was an impossible one! It would have given an excuse – a valid excuse – to the Christians not to accept his call of imprecation. In fact, it would have been more damaging to his claim, rather than weakening the Christians' case.

Or does he mean that it was a call to gather from both groups only those who were present thereby – the believers of Medina and nearby places, and the Christians of Najran and the places in its vicinity? This alternative – although less absurd than the preceding one – was no less impossible. Who was capable that day of gathering all the residents of Medina and Najran and their neighbouring places – not leaving a single woman and child out – in one place for the intended imprecation? Such proposal would have been an admission that the truth was impossible to prove because the proof depended on an impossible condition.

Or was it a call covering only those who were actively engaged in the disputation and arguments? That is, the Prophet and the believers around him, and the delegation of the Christians of Najran. But then his own objection would boomerang. Moreover, the delegation of Najran – concerning whom the verse is said to be revealed – had not come to Medina with their women and children. So, the problem would not go away.

Further he says: "The Prophet and the believers had full confidence in the truth of what they believed about 'Isa ('a). It may be understood from the words of Allah, after what has come to you of knowledge;

because knowledge in matters of belief means certainty only."

It is true that the knowledge, as used in this verse, means certainty. But would that I knew where does it say that the believers were sure of the truth of their belief concerning 'Isa? The verse does not speak about anyone except the Prophet in singular pronouns: ***But whoever disputes with you*** (lit. thee) ***in this after what has come to you*** (lit. thee) ***of knowledge, then say*** (lit. say thou). And there was no reason why the verse should have addressed anyone except the Prophet alone; the Christians' delegation had only one aim before their eyes – to dispute and argue with the Prophet. It was not their intention to meet the believers; they had not argued at all with the believers, nor had the believers spoken to them.

If the verse at all shows that anyone other than the Prophet had attained knowledge and certainty, it does so about those whom the Prophet had brought with himself for imprecation, as we have inferred from the words ***"and bring about the curse of Allah on the liars"*** (***3:61***).

On the other hand, the Qur'an shows that not all the believers had attained knowledge and certainty. For example:

"And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating others (***with Him***)***"*** (***12:106***).

Here Allah announces their polytheism. How can polytheism co-exist with certainty?

"And when the hypocrites and those in whose heart was a disease began to say: "Allah and His Messenger did not promise us (***victory***) ***but only to deceive"*** (***33:12***).

"And those who believe say: "Why has not a chapter been revealed?" But when a decisive chapter is revealed, and fighting is mentioned therein you see those in whose hearts is a disease look to you with the look of one fainting because of death. Woe to them then!" (***47:20***).

"Obedience and a gentle word (***was proper***)***; but when the affair becomes settled, then if they remain true to Allah it would certainly be better for them."*** (***47:21***).

"But if you held command, you were sure to make mischief in the land and cut off the ties of kinship!" (***47:22***).

"Those it is whom Allah has cursed so He has made them deaf and blinded their eyes." (***47:23***).

The fact is that certainty was attained by only a few of the followers of the Prophet who had got clear sight. Allah says:

"But if they dispute with you, say: "I have submitted myself (***entirely***) ***to Allah and*** (***so has***) ***everyone who follows me"*** (***3:20***).

"Say: "This is my way, I invite (***you***) ***unto Allah; with clear sight*** (***which***) ***land he who follows me***

(***possess***)***.”*** (***12: 108***)***.***

He says: ***“The words of Allah, let us call our sons and your sons…”*** (***3:61***) may be interpreted in either of these two ways: First: Each group should call the others; you should call our sons and we should call your sons; and likewise, about the other two categories of women and selves.”

You have already seen in the Commentary that this interpretation (which he gives as his first choice) is totally absurd and is not in conformity with the wordings of the verse. So far as the call for imprecation was concerned, it would have sufficed to say: ***“Come, let us earnestly pray and bring about the curse of Allah on the liars***” (***3:61***)***.*** Why then were the remaining phrases – “***Let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our ‘selves’ and your ‘selves’”*** (***3:61***) – added:

These phrases were meant to bind each party to bring for the imprecation those who were dearest and most precious to them, that is, the sons, the women, and the selves. This challenge could be meaningful only if each party was to bring its own sons, women, and selves. It would lose its meaning completely if it was interpreted as he says: You should call our sons, women and selves and we should call your sons, women, and selves.

Moreover, common sense rejects this interpretation. Why should the Messenger of Allah (S) give the Christians power and authority over his sons and women? Because only after getting that power and authority could each party call the other’s sons and women and bring them at the place of imprecation. Surely the aim could be achieved in a better way if each party called its own sons and women.

Further, as we have shown above, such interpretation makes it necessary to add in the verse the idea of giving someone the power and authority over others. But how and on what ground can we do so? The truth is that this interpretation is completely wrong. Only the other interpretation is correct – that each party was to call its own family members.

He says: “There is no difficulty in either case in calling the ‘selves’. The difficulty arises when this phrase is restricted to one person, as the Shi‘ahs and their followers do.”

The difficulty, to which he refers, arises from the following objection: How can a man call himself? But this objection has nothing to do with either interpretation. It has been levelled against the explanation that ‘our selves’ means the Messenger of Allah (S) himself. Reportedly during one religious discussion, one group said that ‘our selves’ referred to the Messenger of Allah (S), not to ‘Ali. The opposite party said that it would imply that he called himself, which is manifestly wrong.[19]

It will be seen from the above that his claim that “the difficulty arises from the Shi‘ahs’ interpretation”, is absolutely wrong. The Shi‘ahs say that the word, ‘our selves’ means the men from the family of the Prophet; and when the order was implemented, it was applied to the Messenger of Allah and ‘Ali (blessings and peace be on them!). And there could be no difficulty in their calling one another.

Accordingly, no objection can be directed at the Shi'ahs, even according to the interpretation which he ascribes to them, that 'our selves' means 'All. What difficulty could there be if the Messenger of Allah (S) was to call 'Ali ('a)?

His disciple20 has written in *al-Manar*, after mentioning some traditions: "Ibn 'Asakir has narrated from Ja'far Ibn Muhammad from his father in explanation of the verse, then say: ***"Come let us call our sons and your sons..."*** (***3:61***) 'Then (the Prophet) brought Abu Bakr and his son, 'Umar and his son, and 'Uthman and his son.'" Then he comments: "Apparently the verse speaks about a group of the believers." Thereafter he has copied the above-quoted writing of his teacher, and then has opined as follows: "As you see the verse orders women to participate with men in national struggles and religious wars. It is based on the principle of equality between men and women even in public affairs - except where an exception has been made. (Then he goes on elaborating the same points).

Comment: As for the tradition which he has quoted, it is an isolated and peculiar one and goes against all the other Traditions on this subject; and it is needless to say that the other traditions are so numerous and so well known. That is why the exegetes have not mentioned it. Moreover, it contains statements which do not tally with the facts: It supposes that all the people mentioned therein had sons, but surely not all of them had sons at that time.

He says: "Apparently the verse speaks about a group of the believers." Probably, he wants to infer from the tradition (quoted by him) that the Messenger of Allah (S) had brought there all the believers and their children; thus, the words that the Prophet, "brought Abu Bakr and his son..." would indirectly imply that he brought all the believers. In this way he wants to support the interpretation of his teacher, discussed above. But you see how isolated, shunned, and discarded this tradition is; and how defective is its text. Apart from that it does not give the meaning he infers from it.

Now look at the principle adduced by him that women should participate in the public affairs just as men do. If his reasoning is accepted, then it would also prove that small children too should participate in those affairs with their elders. This one point alone is enough to show the falsity of his observation.

We have discussed at length the subject of the women's participation, under the verses of divorce in the second volume21 ; and we shall be writing some more in a relevant place that there is no need to make such inferences as he has done from this verse.

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1. Vide vol. 3 (Engl. transl.), under the verse 2:213. (Author's note).
2. Vide vol. 3 (Engl. transl.), under the verse 2:124. (Author's note).
3. at-Tafsir, alQummi.
4. 'Uyun al-akhbar.
5. Refer to verse 16:98.
6. 'Uyun al-akhbar.
7. al-'Ayyashi.

8. The author now gives references from the Sunni books. (tr.).
9. as-Sahih, Muslim.
10. Hilyat al-awliya'.
11. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
12. the 27th Chapter, the Ant. The author has proved, while writing the traditions under the next verse, that this particular tradition is false. (tr.).
13. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
14. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
15. This tradition is not supported by other traditions or history. (tr.).
16. By Muhammad Ibn al-'Abbas Ibn Marwan.
17. A slave of the Prophet.
18. It was the 9th year after Hijrah according to some historians, and the 10th according to others. But both timings are open to question, as we shall describe when writing the "Traditions" related to the subsequent verses. (Author's Note).
19. See the second tradition, quoted from 'Uyun al-akhbar.
20. i.e., Rashid Rida, author of Tafsir al-Manar. (tr.)
21. Vide Vol. 4 (Engl. transl.), pp. 61 - 83. (tr.)

[1] [1]
SHARES

Sura 'Aal-'Imran: Verses 64 – 78

قُلْ يَـٰٓأَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَـٰبِ تَعَالَوْا۟ إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍۭ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِۦ شَيْـًٔا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا۟ فَقُولُوا۟ ٱشْهَدُوا۟ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

"Say: "O People of the Book! come to a word, common between us and you, that we shall not worship any but Allah and (that) we shall not associate anything with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah"; but if they turn back, then say: "Bear witness that we are Muslims (Submitting ones)" (3:64).

يَـٰٓأَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَـٰبِ لِمَ تُحَآجُّونَ فِىٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ وَمَآ أُنزِلَتِ ٱلتَّوْرَىٰةُ وَٱلْإِنجِيلُ إِلَّا مِنۢ بَعْدِهِۦٓ ۚ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

"O People of the Book! why do you dispute about Ibrahim, when the Torah and the Injil were not revealed till after him? Do you not then understand?" (3:65).

هَـٰٓأَنتُمْ هَـٰٓؤُلَآءِ حَـٰجَجْتُمْ فِيمَا لَكُم بِهِۦ عِلْمٌ فَلِمَ تُحَآجُّونَ فِيمَا لَيْسَ لَكُم بِهِۦ عِلْمٌ وَٱللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

"Behold! you are they who disputed about that of which you had knowledge; why then do you

dispute about that of which you have no knowledge? And Allah knows while you do not know (3:66).

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَٰهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَٰكِن كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُّسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ ٱلْمُشْرِكِينَ

"Ibrahim was not a Jew nor a Christian. but he was (an) upright (man), a Muslim, and he was not one of the polytheists (3:67).

إِنَّ أَوْلَى ٱلنَّاسِ بِإِبْرَٰهِيمَ لَلَّذِينَ ٱتَّبَعُوهُ وَهَٰذَا ٱلنَّبِىُّ وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ وَلِىُّ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

"Most surely the nearest of people to Ibrahim are those who followed him and this Prophet and those who believe; and Allah is the Guardian of the believers." (3:68).

وَدَّت طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ لَوْ يُضِلُّونَكُمْ وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّآ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ

"A party of the People of the Book desire that they should lead you astray,and they lead not astray but themselves, and they do not perceive (3:69).

يَٰٓأَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِـَٔايَٰتِ ٱللَّهِ وَأَنتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ

"O People of the Book! Why do you disbelieve in the communications of Allah while you witness (them)? (3:70).

يَٰٓأَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُونَ ٱلْحَقَّ بِٱلْبَٰطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُونَ ٱلْحَقَّ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

"O People of the Book! Why do you confound the truth with the falsehood and hide the truth while you know?" (3:71).

وَقَالَت طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ ءَامِنُوا۟ بِٱلَّذِىٓ أُنزِلَ عَلَى ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَجْهَ ٱلنَّهَارِ وَٱكْفُرُوٓا۟ ءَاخِرَهُۥ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

"And a party of the People of the Book say. "Avow belief in that which has been revealed to those who believe (in) the first part of the day, and disbelieve (at) the end of it, perhaps they go back on their religion (3:72).

وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوٓا۟ إِلَّا لِمَن تَبِعَ دِينَكُمْ قُلْ إِنَّ ٱلْهُدَىٰ هُدَى ٱللَّهِ أَن يُؤْتَىٰٓ أَحَدٌ مِّثْلَ مَآ أُوتِيتُمْ أَوْ يُحَآجُّوكُمْ عِندَ رَبِّكُمْ قُلْ إِنَّ

ٱلْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ ٱللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَآءُ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

"And do not believe but in him who follows your religion." Say: "Surely the guidance is the guidance of Allah – that one may be given (by Him) the like of what you were given; or they would contend with you by an argument before your Lord." Say: "Surely grace is in the hand of Allah, He gives it to whom He pleases; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing" (3:73).

يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِۦ مَن يَشَآءُ وَٱللَّهُ ذُو ٱلْفَضْلِ ٱلْعَظِيمِ

"He specially chooses for His mercy whom He pleases; and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace" (3:74).

وَمِنْ أَهْلِ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ مَنْ إِن تَأْمَنْهُ بِقِنطَارٍ يُؤَدِّهِۦٓ إِلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُم مَّنْ إِن تَأْمَنْهُ بِدِينَارٍ لَّا يُؤَدِّهِۦٓ إِلَيْكَ إِلَّا مَا دُمْتَ عَلَيْهِ قَآئِمًا
ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا۟ لَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا فِى ٱلْأُمِّيِّۦنَ سَبِيلٌ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ ٱلْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

"And among the People of the Book there are some such that if you entrust one (of them) with a heap of wealth, he shall pay it back to you; and among them there are some such that if you entrust one (of them) with a dinar he shall not pay it back to you except that you remain standing over him; this is because they say: "There is not upon us in, the matter of the unlearned people any way (to reproach);" and they tell a lie against Allah while they know" (3:75).

بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِۦ وَٱتَّقَىٰ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُتَّقِينَ

"Yea, whoever fulfils his promise and guards (against evil) – then surely Allah loves those who guard (against evil)" (3:76).

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ يَشْتَرُونَ بِعَهْدِ ٱللَّهِ وَأَيْمَٰنِهِمْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ لَا خَلَٰقَ لَهُمْ فِى ٱلْءَاخِرَةِ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ ٱللَّهُ وَلَا يَنظُرُ إِلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ
ٱلْقِيَٰمَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

"(As for) those who take a small price for the covenant of Allah and their (own) oaths – surely they shall have no portion in the hereafter, and Allah will not speak to them, nor will He look upon them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement." (3:77).

وَإِنَّ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيقًا يَلْوُۥنَ أَلْسِنَتَهُم بِٱلْكِتَٰبِ لِتَحْسَبُوهُ مِنَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ مِنْ عِندِ ٱللَّهِ وَمَا هُوَ
مِنْ عِندِ ٱللَّهِ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ ٱلْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

***"Most surely there is a party amongst those who distort the Book with their tongues that you may consider it to be* (*a part*) *of the Book, while it is not* (*a part*) *of the Book, and they say, "It is from Allah," while it is not from Allah; and they tell a lie against Allah whilst they know."* (*3:78*).**

Commentary

Now begins the second phase of the exposition of the People of the Book, particularly the Christians, and some related matters.

The preceding verses described the condition of the People of the Book generally, beginning with the verse, ***"Surely the religion with Allah is Islam…*** (***3:19***)**,** taking a turn at the verse, ***"Have you not considered those who are given a portion of the Book?"*** (***3:23***). Then it focused its attention on the Christians beginning with the verse, ***"Surely Allah chose Adam and Nuh…"*** (***3:33***), guiding the believers earlier, in the verse 3:28, not to take the unbelievers for friends rather than the believers – ***"Let not the believers take the unbelievers for friends rather than the believers…***" (***3:28***). This was the first phase.

Now, the same subjects are explained in other words in a different style. First, it comments on the People of the Book in general. Apart from the verses under discussion, it throws light on various other relevant matters in other places, for example:

"Say: O People of the Book! why do you disbelieve in the signs of Allah…?" (***3:98***).

"Say: "O People of the Book! why do you hinder him who believes from the way of Allah…?" (***3:99***).

Second, it exposes the condition of the Christians and their belief concerning 'Isa ('a):

"It is not meet for a man that Allah should give him the Book, and the wisdom and prophethood, then he should say to men: "Be my servants…" (***3:79***).

Then the talk turns to the matters related to the believers, calling them to submission and unity and warning them against befriending the unbelievers and being intimate with them in preference over the believers. All these things are explained in numerous verses in various places.

Verse 64

Qur'an: ***"Say: "O People of the Book! come to a word, common between us and you…"*** (***3:64***).

This call is addressed to all the People of the Book in general. The invitation to "come to a word" really means to unite on the meaning of the word by acting upon it. The call to the word is based on the idiom found in Arabic and other languages, as for example, they say: The nation is united on this word. It implies the meanings of belief, acknowledgment, recognition, and propagation. The verse therefore

means: Come let us adhere to this word, co-operating with one another in its propagation and acting on its demands.

As-Sawa' (اَلسَّوَآءُ) is a *masdar*, although it is commonly used as an adjective to denote an object both sides of which are equal. The phrase 'common between us and you' means that you and we both are equally bound to acknowledge it and to act on it. Obviously, the use of this adjective for "word" is metaphorical. What is actually equal is its acknowledgment and the resulting action.

Again, action is related to the import of the word, not the word itself. Moreover, the call for unity about the word in itself has metaphorical connotation. In this way, this sentence has many fine points of rhetoric: Calling to unite on a meaning, then using the "word" for the meaning and then ascribing the adjective "common" to the "word".

Also, it has been said that the "common word" refers to that which the Qur'an, the Torah and the Injil commonly invite to with one voice - and that is the belief of monotheism. If this suggestion is correct then the next words, ***"that we shall not worship any but Allah..."*** (***3:64***)***,*** would serve as the correct explanation of the word common between the Muslims and the People of the Book; it would invite the latter to leave aside their own interpretation of the Oneness of God - the interpretation used to fit this pristine "word" on their own desire; for example, their belief that God was incarnated, took a son, was one but had three persons; their worship of their rabbis, priests and bishops. The meaning in that case would be as follows: Come to a word common between us and you, and that is the belief in One God; and if we unite on it then we would have to discard and reject all that is associated with Allah and would not take others for lords besides Him.

But the ending of the verse, ***"but if they turn back, then say: 'Bear witness that we are Muslims*** (***submitting ones***)***'"*** (***3:64***), supports the first meaning given by us. In short, the verse calls to this word that "we shall not worship any but Allah...", as it is the demand of Islam, the total submission, which is the religion with Allah. Although submission is also a concomitant of the belief in the Oneness of God, the verse calls the People of the Book not to the theoretical, but practical, monotheism; that is, to discard worshipping anyone but Allah. (Think over it).

Qur'an: ***"...That we shall not worship any but Allah and*** (***that***) ***we shall not associate anything with Him, and*** (***that***) ***some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah"*** (***3:64***)***.***

It is the explanation of 'the common word', and it is what submission to Allah demands. The words, ***"we shall not worship any but Allah"*** (***3:64***), reject the worship of any other than Allah; it is not their aim to prove or affirm the worship of Allah. We have already mentioned in the explanation of the "creed" - There is no god except Allah - that the phrase, "except Allah", is not an exception but *al-badal* (اَلْبَدَلُ = appositional substantive standing for another substantive) of "god"; consequently, the sentence aims at rejecting partners for Allah, not at affirming the existence of Allah.[1] According to the Qur'an, the existence of Allah and His being the Truth needs no proof, it is a self-evident reality.

This sentence calls them not to associate anyone to Allah in worship. But it does not nullify the other types of polytheism emanating from the belief that Allah had a son or the idea of trinity and similar ones. That is why the call continues:

"***And*** (***that***) ***we shall not associate anything with Him, and*** (***that***) ***some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah."*** (***3:64***).

The fact is that merely saying that a worship is meant for Allah does not make it the worship of Allah, unless it is done with pure and sincere faith, unless the heart is purged of all beliefs and superstitions springing from polytheism.

Otherwise, the worship would be for a god who had a partner. And a worship devoted to one of the alleged partners in godhead – even if it is done for him exclusively – would still be a product of polytheism. Why? because such a worship, by its very definition is a share devoted to one of the two or more partners; as such it acknowledges the right of the other partner or partners and is therefore the worship of those partners too.

On the other hand, the Prophet calls them, by order of Allah, to the pure monotheism,

"That we shall not worship any but Allah and (***that***) ***we shall not associate anything with Him, and*** (***that***) ***some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah."*** (***3:64***).

It is this call which combines in itself all the aims and objectives of prophethood; it is this that the prophets taught their men, and which they propagated in the human society.

We have described (while explaining the verse 2:213) that mankind was but one people, and that prophethood is a God-inspired awakening, a true advancement, the purpose of which is to spread the word of religion. The religion, in its reality, is equilibrium in the society's march of life; and a well-balanced society creates well-balanced individual in life. In this way, everyone is accorded his due position that nature has meant for him to have.

Thus, the society gets the freedom and the felicity of natural perfectness based on justice and equity; and likewise, the individual gets complete freedom to enjoy the life in all its aspects, as he thinks fit and as he likes – except when it is likely to harm the society's life. And all these freedoms and enjoyments are conditional to servitude and submission to Allah, subservient to the unseen authority and power.

We may summarize the prophets' message in these words: They want human species – individually and collectively – to march forward according to the dictate of their nature, which adheres to the belief of monotheism. That belief in its turn demands that man should base all his individual and social actions and activities on submission to Allah, and that he should spread justice and equity. In other words, all should be given equal rights in life, and all should have equal freedom of good intention and good deed.

This goal cannot be achieved until and unless the roots of conflict and unlawful transgression are

completely destroyed; so that no strong person exploits or enslaves a weak man, no one dominates another, and no powerless person serves the interests of someone powerful. There is no god but Allah; there is no Lord except Allah; and there is no rule for anyone except Allah.

This is what this verse says: ***"that we shall not worship any but Allah and*** (***that***) ***we shall not associate anything with Him, and*** (***that***) ***some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah."*** (***3:64***). There are many verses of the same connotation.

For example, Allah quotes Yusuf ('a) as saying:

"O my two mates of the prison! are sundry lords better or Allah, the One, the Supreme?" (***12:39***).

"You do not worship besides Him but names which you have named, you and your fathers; Allah has not sent down any authority for them; judgment is only Allah's; He has commanded that you shall not worship aught but Him; this is the right religion." (***12:40***).

Also, Allah says:

"They have taken their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allah, and (***also***) ***the Messiah son of Maryam, and they were not enjoined but that they should worship one God only, there is no god but He..."*** (***9:31***).

And the same is the importance of many admonitions addressed to their peoples by the prophets like Nuh, Hud, Salih, Ibrahim, Shu'ayb, Musa and 'Isa (peace be on them all). For example:

"Nuh said: My Lord! surely they have disobeyed me and followed him whose wealth and children have added to him nothing but loss" (***71:21***).

"(***Hud said***)***: Do you build on every height a monument? Vain is it that you do."*** (***26:128***).

"And you make strong fortresses that perhaps you may abide." (***26:129***).

"And when you lay hands (***on men***) ***you lay hands*** (***like***) ***tyrants."*** (***26:130***).

"(***Salih said***)***: And do not obey the bidding of the extravagant ones."*** (***26:151***).

"When he (***Ibrahim***) ***said to his father and his people: 'What are these images to whose worship you cleave?'"*** (***21:52***).

"They said: "We found our fathers worshipping them" (***21:53***).

"He said: "Certainly you have been, (***both***) ***you and your fathers, in manifest error"*** (***21:54***).

"(***And Allah said to Musa and Harun***)***: Go both to Pharaoh, surely he has become inordinate"*** (***20:43***).

"Then speak to him a gentle word haply he may mind or fear." (***20:44***)

"Both said: O our Lord! Surely we fear that he may hasten to do evil to us or that he may become inordinate." (***20:45***)

"He said: Fear not, surely I am with you both: I do hear and see" (***20:46***).

"So go you both to him and say: Surely we are two messengers of your Lord; therefore send the children of Israel with us and do not torment them! Indeed, we have brought to you a communication from your Lord, and peace is on him who follows the guidance" (***20:47***).

And lastly 'Isa said to his people:

"… And so that I may make clear to you part of what you differ in; so fear Allah and obey me" (***43:63***).

The natural religion is that which negates transgression and mischief and eradicates injustice and unlawful dominations – the unjust dominations which destroy the foundation of happiness and uproot the basis of truth and reality. It was this fact which the Prophet alluded to when he said in the last pilgrimage[2] *"Indeed the time has come full circle to its* (*original*) *form* (*as it was*) *the day when Allah created the heavens and the earth."* Perhaps he (S) meant that the men have come back to the rule of nature because the Islamic character had become firmly rooted among them.

The sentence, ***"that we shall not worship any but Allah…"*** (***3:64***), not only covers all the aims and objectives of prophethood, but also explains the reason of this commandment.

"That we shall not worship any but Allah" (***3:64***).

Godhead is that which everything worships, is bewildered about and is loved – in every way. God is the origin and fountainhead of every perfection in all things; despite their magnitude in number, they are related to one another, and all are one in that each component looks to God for its needs; He is the source of every perfection desired by these things.

This reality leads us to the oneness of God. As the created things are interrelated, the Creator can be no more than one. He is the Owner in Whose Hand is the management of everything. Therefore, it is obligatory to worship Allah, because He is the One and Only God, there is no partner or colleague for Him. And it is obligatory not to ascribe any partner to Him in worship. In other words, this universe with all that it contains cannot submit except to One Creator. These creatures are joined in a uniform system, they are united in their existence: naturally there cannot be more than one Lord for them, because there is not more than one Creator for them.

"And (***that***) ***some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah"*** (***3:64***)

Human beings, despite their great number, are parts of one reality, that is, human species and humanity. All those merits and abilities which the hand of creation has placed in them in equal measure demand that they must have equal rights in life and must be accorded equal treatment in all those matters.

On the other hand, there are differences in the conditions of the individuals and in their ability to procure and acquire some advantages and prerogatives of life; they are the gifts of general humanity which are bestowed to some specific individuals or groups here and there; such prerogatives also should be allowed to mankind – but only in the way it demands. For example, sexual intercourse, pregnancy, and medical treatment, all are the affairs of the humanity in general; yet sexual intercourse is the prerogative of an adult human being, male or female, while pregnancy is exclusively reserved for the female; and medical treatment is accorded only to an ill person.

In short, the members of the human society are components of a single reality – the components being similar to each other. No one has a right to impose his will on another, until and unless he takes on himself a similar burden on behalf of the other. And this is what co–operation in acquisition of life's advantages means.

But if the society or individual surrenders to an individual, if the whole or a part of the humanity submits to another part; raising him from the level of equality to that of superiority, giving him domination and arbitrary powers, making him an autocratic despot – he rules as he likes, is obeyed in whatever he says, and is taken as a lord whose will has to be complied with – then it negates the nature and destroys the foundation of humanity.

Moreover, Lordship exclusively belongs to Allah, there is no lord but He. Thus, if a man puts himself under the authority of another man like himself, allowing that master to do with his follower whatever he wants, then it means that the said master has been taken as a lord besides Allah. It is such a proposition which can never be accepted by him who has surrendered himself to Allah.

It is now clear that the words of Allah, ***"and*** (***that***) ***some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah"*** (***3:64***), throw light on two realities: One, human beings are parts of a single reality, the parts being similar to each other. Two, Lordship is the exclusive prerogative of Godhead.

Qur'an: ***"…But if they turn back, then say: "Bear witness that we are Muslims*** (***Submitting ones***)***"*** (***3:64***)***.***

It is a call to them to witness that the Prophet and his followers are on a religion which Allah is pleased with, and it is Islam. Allah says:

"Surely the religion with Allah is Islam…" (***3:19***)***.***

This declaration will cut their argument and objection because no proof prevails against the truth and the people of the truth.

This sentence points to the fact that monotheism in worship is a concomitant to Islam.

Verse 65

Qur'an: ***"O People of the Book! why do you dispute about Ibrahim, when the Torah and the Injil were not revealed till after him? Do you not then understand?"*** **(*3:65*).**

Apparently, it is governed by the imperative verb, "say", placed in the preceding verse; and so are the verses 70 – 71, coming after four verses. Thus, it will be an order to the Prophet to say these things to the People of the Book. On the other hand, the verse coming two verses after,

"Most surely the nearest of people to Ibrahim are those who followed him and this Prophet and those who believe…" **(*3:68*).**

Gives an association which shows that the verse under discussion too may be a direct talk of Allah, and not of the Prophet (by Allah's Command).

The People of the Book disputed among themselves about Ibrahim ('a). Probably it was, in the beginning, an argument by which each group wanted to show its veracity. The Jews might be saying: Ibrahim, whom Allah has praised so much, was from us; a claim which the Christians might have countered by saying: Ibrahim was on truth, and the truth has been manifested by the advent of 'Isa. Then the arguments might have degenerated into bigotry and obstinacy.

Then the Jews claimed that Ibrahim was a Jew; and the Christians, that he was a Christian. However, it is a known fact that Judaism and Christianity came on the scene after the revelation of the Torah and the Injil respectively; and these Books were revealed long after Ibrahim ('a). How could it be possible for him to be a Jew (a follower of the religion brought by Musa, 'a)? Or a Christian (a follower of the S*hari'ah* of 'Isa, 'a)?

All that can be said about Ibrahim ('a) is this: He was on truth, sincerely adhering to right, away from wrong, submitting himself to Allah. These verses, therefore, have a connotation similar to this verse:

"Or do you say that Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ishaq and Ya'qub and the tribes were Jews or Christians? Are you better knowing or Allah? And who is more unjust than he who conceals a testimony that he has from Allah?……" **(*2:140*).**

Verse 66

Qur'an: ***"Behold! you are they who disputed about that of which you had knowledge; why then do you dispute about that of which you have no knowledge? And Allah knows while you do not know"*** **(*3:66*).**

The verse affirms that they did possess a particular knowledge in respect of the disputation which they

indulged in; and negates another knowledge and ascribes it to Allah. The exegetes have variously explained the knowledge which they had, and that which they did not. According to them it may mean as follows: 'You had disputed about Ibrahim and you had some knowledge about him, for example, that he existed at a certain time and was a prophet. Why then do you dispute about a matter of which you have no knowledge at all – claiming that he was a Jew or a Christian? The fact is that Allah knows while you do not know.'

Alternatively, the knowledge that has been affirmed may refer to the little knowledge they had about 'Isa. The verse thus says: 'You have disputed about 'Isa while you had some knowledge about him and his affairs. Why do you then dispute about a subject of which you have no knowledge, claiming that Ibrahim was a Jew or a Christian?'

The above two explanations, given by the exegetes, do not conform with the apparent context of the verse. The first is wrong because the People of the Book had never contended with each other about the existence or prophethood of Ibrahim ('a). The second is incorrect because neither party was right concerning their disputation about 'Isa ('a). Both were mistaken in their respective beliefs, making erroneous claims about him. How then can their disputation about 'Isa be called a disputation of which they had knowledge?

In any case, the verse says that they disputed about something of which they had knowledge, and also about that of which they had no knowledge. The question arises as to what was the disputation about which they had had knowledge? Moreover, it apparently shows that both disputes were among the People of the Book themselves. It does not refer to any argument between them and the Muslims; otherwise, the Muslims would obviously have been in wrong in that matter of which the People of the Book had knowledge.

The appropriate explanation would be as follows, and Allah knows better:

It is well known that there was a never–ending dispute between the Jews and the Christians which covered all the subjects in which they differed. The main point of contention was the 'Isa's prophethood and the claims made by the Christians concerning his status – that he was God and son of God, and the belief of trinity. The Christians disputed with the Jews about his being a prophet sent by God – and the Christians had its knowledge. The Jews disputed with the Christians and refuted his godhead, his sonship and the trinity – and they talked with knowledge about it. These were the disputations about which they did have knowledge. As for the disputation about that of which they had no knowledge, it was their contention that Ibrahim was a Jew or a Christian.

When the Qur'an says that they had no knowledge of this matter, it does not mean that they were unaware of the fact that the Torah and the Injil were revealed after Ibrahim – as it was something obvious. Nor that they were oblivious of the fact that a person that lived in an earlier era cannot be a follower of one who come later, because the admonition at the end of the preceding verse, ***"Do you not***

then understand?" (***3:65***), does not leave room for this suggestion; it shows that it is so obvious that a mere hint is enough to focus attention on it. They knew that Ibrahim preceded the Torah and the Injil, but they were oblivious of its logical corollary that he therefore could not be a Jew or a Christian, that he would be on the Divine Religion, that is, submission to Allah.

The Jews also said: There cannot be more than one true religion and that is the Judaism. Thus, Ibrahim would inevitably be a Jew. The same argument was used by the Christians to 'christianize' Ibrahim. The error they committed in this argument sprang from ignorance, not obliviousness. The fact is that the religion of Allah is one – and that is Islam, the submission to Allah. It is one, progressing towards perfection, with passage of time and in keeping with the progress of mankind – as humanity advances to perfection.

Judaism and Christianity are two branches of the perfection of Islam – the root religion. The prophets (peace be on them all!) were the builders of that building, each of them had a hand in it, laying down the foundation and raising such a lofty edifice. No doubt, Ibrahim ('a) was the founder of Islam – i.e., submission to Allah – and it was the basic and true religion; then the true religion appeared with the name of Judaism and then Christianity; these were two of the branches of its perfection, two of the stages of its completion.

What the Jews and the Christians did not know was that these propositions do not make Ibrahim a Jew or a Christian. He would remain, as before, an upright Muslim; his name would be always linked with that of Islam, the religion which he himself had founded. That Islam is the root of Judaism and Christianity; but it is neither Judaism nor Christianity. The root is not attributed to its branches; it is the branch that should be related to the root.

To say that Ibrahim ('a) was a Muslim and not a Jew or a Christian does not imply claiming that he was the follower of the Prophet of Islam, acting according to the Qur'anic *Shari'ah*. Nobody should rush to say that as Ibrahim ('a) had preceded the revelation of the Torah and the Injil and therefore could not be counted as a Jew or a Christian, so had he preceded the revelation of the Qur'an and the advent of Islam, therefore, in a completely identical manner, he should not be called a Muslim.

As a matter of fact, the use of 'Islam' for the Qur'anic *Shari'ah* is a terminology which came up after the revelation of the Qur'an, when the fame of the religion brought by Muhammad (S), had spread far and wide. The *'Islam'* that is attributed to Ibrahim means submission to Allah, humbling oneself before His Lordship. The two uses are different, and consequently there is no room for any objection whatsoever.

The People of the Book were unaware of the true meaning of the basic religion; they did not know that it was a reality that had various levels, and which had evolved, passing through stages, to the summit of its perfection. It was this ignorance of theirs to which Allah refers when He says:

"And Allah knows while you do not know. Ibrahim was not a Jew nor a Christian…" (***3:66***).

This meaning is also supported by the next verse:

"Most surely the nearest of people to Ibrahim are those who followed him and this Prophet and those who believe…" (***3:68***).

as well as the verses 84 – 85 coming later:

"Say: We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ishaq and Ya'qub and the tribes, and what was given to Musa and 'Isa and to the prophets from their Lord; we do not make any distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit" (***3:84***).

"And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers" (***3:85***). 3

Verse 67

Qur'an: ***"Ibrahim was not a Jew nor a Christian, but he was*** (***an***) ***upright*** (***man***)***, a Muslim, and he was not one of the polytheists"*** (***3:67***).

This verse has been explained above. Some exegetes have explained it as follows: The Jews and the Christians claimed that Ibrahim ('a) was one of them, on their religion. Likewise, the idol-worshipping Arabs claimed that they were the followers of *ad-din al-hanif* (اَلدِّيْنُ اَلْحَنِيفُ = the upright religion) the religion of Ibrahim ('a); even the People of the Book came to call them *al-hunafa'* (اَلْحُنَفَآءُ) and thus *al-hanifiyyah* (اَلْحَنِيْفِيَّةُ = uprightness; religion of Ibrahim) was misconstrued to mean idol-worship.

When Allah praised Ibrahim ('a) by saying that "he was upright (حَنِيْفاً = *hanifan*)", it was necessary to explain the word, so that people should not take it in the sense of idol-worship. That is why Allah added the words, ***"A Muslim, and he was not one of the polytheists"*** (***3:67***)***,*** he followed the religion which Allah is pleased with, and that is Islam, submission to Allah, and he was not a polytheist like the Arabs of the days of Ignorance.

Verse 68

Qur'an: ***"Most surely the nearest of people to Ibrahim are those who followed him and this Prophet and those who believe; and Allah is the Guardian of the believers"*** (***3:68***).

This verse gives the reason behind the foregoing talk and explains the reality of the subject matter. The meaning is as follows (and Allah knows better).

If we look at relationship between this great Prophet, Ibrahim, and those who came after him, obviously he cannot be counted as a follower of later generations; rather, we have to decide who among them all is nearest to him. He can only be nearest of all to a prophet – coming with a *Shari'ah* and a Book – who

follows the truth like him and accepts the religion which he brought.

According to this criterion, the nearest to Ibrahim (‘a) is this Prophet (S) and those who believe. They are on the *Islam* for which Allah had chosen Ibrahim. Likewise, those who were his followers were nearest to him – not those who disbelieve in the communications of Allah and confound the truth with falsehood.

The words, ***“those who followed him”* (*3:68*),** are an allusion against the People of the Book, indirectly telling the Jews and the Christians that they were not the nearest to Ibrahim because they did not follow him in submitting to Allah.

The phrase, ***“and this Prophet and those who believe”* (*3:68*),** distinguishing the Prophet and his followers from the followers of Ibrahim (‘a); this was done to show the exalted position of the Prophet; he was too great to be called someone’s follower. The same consideration is reflected in other verses, for example:

***“These are they whom Allah guided, therefore follow their guidance”* (*6:90*).**

Note that Allah did not say, ‘therefore follow them’.

The sentence ***“and Allah is the Guardian of the believers”* (*3:68*)** complete this reasoning and explanation. Ibrahim was a *waliyy* (اَلْوَلِيُّ = friend) of Allah, and his *al–wilayah* (اَلْوِلَايَةُ = friendship, guardianship) was a part of Allah’s guardianship; and Allah is the Guardian of the believers, not of the others who disbelieve in His Signs and confuse the right with wrong, the truth with falsehood.

Verse 69

Qur’an: ***“A party of the People of the Book desire that they should lead you astray, and they lead not astray but themselves, and they do not perceive.”* (*3:69*).**

“at–Ta’ifah” (اَلطَّآئِفَةُ = party; lit.: rover, walker about). The people, and especially Arabs, used to live – in the beginning – a nomadic life; their tribes and clans used to wander around with their cattle looking for water and pasture, from season to season; they travelled in groups as a safety measure against attack and assassination. They were then called “a wandering party”; gradually the noun, ‘party’ was dropped, and the adjective *at–ta’ifah* (wanderer, rover, walker about) took its place.

How is it that the People of the Book lead not astray but themselves? The first and foremost human virtue is inclination towards truth and its acceptance. A desire to divert the people away from the truth, to turn them towards falsity (being a psychological trait) is a depravity of soul – and how evil this depravity is! It is a sin, a crime, a transgression against truth; and what is there beyond the truth except lie and error? Thus, when they desire to lead the believers astray (when those believers are on truth), they in fact lead themselves astray although they do not perceive it.

And even if they got hold of a believer and led him astray by planting some doubts in his heart, they

would be leading themselves astray before him. Man does not do anything – good or bad – but for himself. Allah says:

"Whoever does good, it is for his own self, and whoever does evil, it is against himself" (***45:15***).

As for those who go astray because of someone's misguidance, it is not so much a result of the influence of the deceiver, as the misdeed and wrong choice of the straying person himself – by permission of Allah. The Qur'an says:

"Whoever disbelieves, he shall be responsible for his disbelief, and whoever does good, they prepare (***good***) ***for their own souls"*** (***30:44***).

"And whatever affliction befalls you, it is on account of what your hands have wrought, and (***yet***) ***He pardons most*** (***of your faults***)***"*** (***42:30***).

"And you cannot escape in the earth, and you shall not have a guardian or a helper besides Allah." (***42:31***).

Some details about the effects and characteristics of human actions have been given in the second volume4, under the verse:

"... These it is whose deeds are forfeited in this world and the hereafter" (***2:217***). 5

This explanation is among those Qur'anic realities which spring from *at-tawhid* (اَلتَّوْحِيْدُ = monotheism) of action, and that active belief is in turn based on the realities of Lordship and Kingdom. Only in this way, we can explain the exclusiveness found in the words of Allah: ***"and they lead not astray but themselves, and they do not perceive"*** (***3:69***), As for the explanation given by others, they do not help in understanding this exclusiveness; that is why we have not mentioned them here at all.

Verse 70

Qur'an: ***"O People of the Book! Why do you disbelieve in the communications of Allah while you witness*** (***them***)***?"*** (***3:70***).

It has already been explained that disbelieving in communications of Allah is not the same as disbelieving in Allah Himself. Disbelief in Allah entails open rejection of monotheism, as the idol-worshippers and atheists do; while disbelief in communications means rejection of the Divine Knowledge after it is clarified and explained.

The People of the Book do believe that the universe has One God. What they disbelieve in are described in the books revealed to them and to others, like the prophethood of Muhammad (S), the fact that 'Isa was the servant and the messenger of Allah, that Ibrahim was neither a Jew nor a Christian, that the hand of Allah is open6, that Allah is Self-sufficient and other such things.

The People of the Book, in Qur'anic language, are disbelievers in communications of Allah, not in Allah Himself. Of course, there is the verse which goes against it:

"Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, from among those who were given the Book, until they pay the jizyah[7] with their hands while they are in a state of subjection" (***9:29***).

It clearly says that those People of the Book did not believe in Allah, i.e., they disbelieved in Allah. But it goes on mentioning their non-prohibition of prohibited things and their deviation from the religion of truth; and it shows that when the verse attributes disbelief to them it really uses a concomitant to allude to the related characteristic. In other words, when they disbelieve in communications of Allah, it follows that they do not believe even in Allah and the latter day although they may not realize it. But it does not speak about open and direct disbelief in Allah.

"While you witness (***them***)***"*** (***3:70***)

"*ash-Shahadah"* (اَلشَّهَادَةُ = presence; knowledge through external senses; witness). It shows that their disbelief in communications refers to their rejection of the Prophet; they did not accept that the Prophet was the promised Prophet whose advent was foretold in the Torah and Injil although they clearly saw that the signs and descriptions mentioned therein perfectly fitted on the Prophet.

Somebody has said that the word "communications" is general and comprehensive; it covers all the communications and there is no reason why it should be restricted to the signs of the Prophet; the word therefore refers to their rejection of all the true signs and communications.

Comment: The explanation given by us clearly shows the invalidity of this interpretation.

Verse 71

Qur'an: ***"O People of the Book! Why do you confound the truth with the falsehood and hide the truth while you know?"*** (***3:71***).

"*al-Labs*" (اَللَّبْسُ = to create doubt; to confuse; to confound). Why do you manifest the truth in the form of falsehood? The words, "while you know", show or at least allude, that the confusion and the hiding refer to their confounding and hiding the religious knowledge and realities; and not to the verses of scriptures; that is, it does not speak about the verses which they had altered, hidden or misinterpreted.

These two verses, beginning with, ***"O People of the Book! Why do you disbelieve..."*** (***3:70***), and ending with, ***"while you know?"*** (***3:71***), complete the talk which began with the words, ***"A party of the People of the Book desire..."*** (***3:69***). The whole community has been admonished for the wrongdoings of some of its members because they were all united in race, tribe, and character, and all accepted what

some of them were doing. Such usage is commonly found in the Qur'an.

Verse 72

Qur'an: ***"And a party of the People of the Book say: "Avow belief in that which has been revealed to those who believe*** (***in***) ***the first part of the day, and disbelieve*** (***at***) ***the end of it, perhaps they go back*** (***on their religion***)***"*** (***3:72***).

"*Wajha 'n-nahar*" (وَجْهُ النَّهَارِ = lit. face of the day) means the first part of the day, because it has been used in contrast with "the end of it"; also the face of a thing is what it appears to others with, and as far as the day is concerned, it is its early part.

The context of this saying shows that something was revealed to the Prophet in the early hours of the day which conformed with tenets of the People of the Book, and another revelation came at the end of the day which was against their belief. And this prompted them to say these words.

Therefore, the clause "***that which has been revealed to those who believe"*** (***3:72***) refers to a particular Qur'anic revelation which agreed with the belief and practice of the People of the Book. The words, "the first part of the day ", are an adverbial phrase of time, and it is related not to "Avow belief", but to "has been revealed" because it is nearer.

The words ***"and disbelieve*** (***at***) ***the end of it"*** (***3:72***) mean: disbelieve in that which has been revealed (to those who believe) at the end of the day; it is an allegorical expression putting the adverbial phrase of time in place of the thing which happened at that time; a similar device has been used in the verse where it says:

"Nay, (***it was***) ***planning of night and day"*** (***34:33***).

Accordingly, it supports what has been narrated from the Imams of the Ahl Al-Bayt('a), relating the circumstances in which this verse was revealed. This idea was propagated by the Jews at the time when the *qiblah* was changed. The Messenger of Allah (S) had prayed the morning prayer towards Bayt al-Maqdis which was the *qiblah* of the Jews.

Then the *qiblah* was changed towards the *Ka'bah* in the noon prayer. Then a group of the Jews said: Believe in that which was revealed to those who believe in the early hours of the day, that is, praying towards Bayt al-Maqdis, and disbelieve in that which has been revealed at the end of it, that is, facing towards the *Ka'bah*.

This explanation is further supported by their assertion which has been quoted in the next verse, "***And do not believe but in him who follows your religion"*** (***3:73***)***,*** that is, do not trust anyone who does not follow your religion and does not believe in it, lest you disclose to him some of your secrets and the good tidings which were revealed to you about the promised Prophet - one of the signs foretold of the Prophet

was that he would change the *qiblah* towards the *Ka'bah*.

Another interpretation: Some exegetes have said that the phrase "the first part of the day" is related to the verb "Avow belief"; and "the end of it" is an adverbial phrase, (in which "in" is deleted and understood) and it is related to the verb "disbelieve". Accordingly, the meaning would be as follows: Some of them should pretend to believe in the Qur'an and attach themselves with the Muslims; then they should renounce Islam at the end of the day saying that they had believed in the morning because they were deceived by apparent signs of truth of Islam but they had to renounce it by the end of the day because they had seen many things which proved its falsity; and because the good tidings of the prophethood and signs of veracity which they were told by the previous prophets did not fit on this Prophet. This was a devious plan to deceive the believers, so that the believers would be overwhelmed by doubts about their religion and become weakened in their conviction; in this way their power would break down and their mission fail.

This meaning itself is not far-fetched especially from the Jews who had left no stone unturned to defeat Islam and to extinguish its light by any possible means. But the wording of the verse does not fit this interpretation. We shall write some related materials under the Traditions, Allah willing.

Someone has explained it as follows: Avow belief in their praying towards the Ka'bah in the first part of the day and disbelieve in it at the end of the day; perhaps they would go back on their religion.

A fourth explanation: Pretend to believe in the first part of the day by agreeing that the signs of the promised prophet were present in the Prophet; and disbelieve at the end of it saying that those attributes did not fit on him; this would put doubts in the believers' minds and perhaps they would renounce their religion. There is no proof for these two interpretations; and whatever the meaning, there is no ambiguity in the verse.

Verse 73

Qur'an: ***"And do not believe but in him who follows your religion." Say: "Surely the guidance is the guidance of Allah - that one may be given*** (***by Him***) ***the like of what you were given; or they would contend with you by an argument before your Lord." ...*** (***3:73***).

The context shows that this too is the saying of the People of the Book, completing their talk which started with the words, ***"Avow belief in that which has been revealed to those who believe."*** (***3:72***) And likewise, the words ***"that one may be given*** (***by Him***) ***the like of what you were given; or they would contend with you by an argument before your Lord,"*** (***3:73***), are continuation of their speech. And therefore, the sentence ***"Say: 'Surely the guidance is the guidance of Allah"*** (***3:73***), is a parenthetical sentence in reply of their talk beginning with, "***Avow belief,***" (***3:72***) and ending with, ***"who follows your religion."*** (***3:73***), The change of style supports this view.

Similarly, the words ***"Say: 'Surely grace is in the hand of Allah...,"*** (***3:73***) are in reply of their talk, "***that***

one may be given (***by Him***) ***the like of what you were given."*** (***3:73***). In this way, all the segments of this talk are inter-woven and the meanings of the two preceding verses inter-related with one another. Also, the two verses stand face to face with the verses describing the Jews' obstinacy, disputation, and deception.

The meaning is therefore as follows, and Allah knows better:

A party of the People of the Book, that is, the Jews, said one to another: Attest the truth of the Prophet and the believers regarding their prayer towards Bayt al-Maqdis in the first part of the day and do not accept their truth when they prayed towards *Ka'bah* in the afternoon. Do not trust others when you talk with them, lest they inform the believers that the changing of *qiblah* to the *Ka'bah* was foretold as a sign of the truth of the Promised Prophet. For, if you accepted the affair of the *Ka'bah* and disclosed what you knew about it[8], then you would have to face two dangers: First, the believers would get a *qiblah* of their own, like that of yours; it would destroy your supremacy and neutralize your precedence in the matter of *qiblah*; second, the believers would contend with you before your Lord establishing a proof against you that although you knew about the new *qiblah* and were witnesses of its truth, you did not accept the Islam.

Allah replied to their talk - that they should believe what was revealed in the early part of the day and disbelieve what happened at the end of it and their admonition to one another to hide the matter of *qiblah* so that the believers would not know the truth - that the guidance which the believers needed was the true guidance and it was the guidance of Allah, and not theirs! The believers do not need their guidance; they may follow the believers' guidance if they like and reject it if they so desire; they may proclaim the truth if they wish and hide it if they want.

Then Allah replies to their fear that one might be given by Allah the like of what they were given.

He says that the grace is in the hand of Allah, He gives it to whom He pleases. It is not in the hands of the Jews' such that they could reserve it for their own selves blocking the way to the others. Allah has made no comment on their conspiracy to hide the truth so that the believers would be unable to argue with them before their Lord; it was such a conspicuously fallacious presumption that needed no reply.

The same disdainful silence is maintained in another verse exposing the same fallacy:

"And when they meet those who believe they say: "We believe," and when they are alone one with another, they say: "Do you talk to them of what Allah has disclosed to you that they may argue with you by this before your Lord? Do you not then understand?" (***2:76***).

"What! Do they not know that Allah knows what they conceal and what they proclaim?" (***2:77***).

The exclamatory "What!" in the sentence "***What! Do they not know..."*** (***2:77***) shows that it is not a reply to the Jews; it is just an indication that their talk goes against correct understanding, for they know that

their hiding or proclaiming makes no difference in Allah's knowledge.

It will be seen from the above explanation that the words ***"And do not believe"*** (***3:73***)***,*** mean 'do not trust anyone', 'do not expect anyone to keep your secret'. It has the same connotation as this verse:

"And there are some of them who molest the Prophet and say: He is one who believes every thing that he hears; say: A hearer of good for you (***who***) ***believes in Allah and believes the faithful and a mercy for those of you who believe; and*** (***as for***) ***those who molest the Messenger of Allah, they shall have a painful punishment"*** (***9:61***)***.***

The words, ***"him who follows your religion,"*** (***3:73***) mean 'the Jews'. Their aim was to prevent the disclosure of what they knew regarding the truth of the change of *qiblah* to the *Ka'bah*. Their knowledge of this truth was also referred to in these verses:

"...turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque... and those who have been given the Book most surely know that it is the truth from their Lord..." (***2:144***)***.***

"Those whom we have given the Book recognize him as they recognize their sons; and a party of them most surely conceal the truth while they know (***it***) (***2:146***)***.***

The exegetes have written various explanations for these verses. One of them says that the whole verse, ***"And do not believe... Ample-giving, Knowing"*** (***3:73***), is a direct speech of Allah, not a quotation of the Jews' talk; and the second person plural pronouns – "And do not believe", "What you were given", "they would contend with you", "before your Lord" – are all addressed to the believers; while the second person singular pronoun in "Say" refers to the Prophet.

Some others agree with this explanation with one difference: They say that the second person plural pronouns in the above-mentioned words are addressed to the Jews, and the speech admonishes and rebukes them. Still others have said that the words ***"And do not believe but in him who follows your religion"*** (***3:73***)***,*** are the quotation of the Jews' talk; while the words "***Say: 'Surely the guidance is the guidance of Allah – that one may be given*** (***by Him***) ***..."*** (***3:73***) are spoken by Allah in reply to what the Jews had said. Likewise, there is a difference about the meaning of "grace" whether it means religion, worldly blessings, dominance, or something else.

These interpretations, despite their bewildering number, are far removed from the connotation given by the context, as we have already shown. That is why we have not spent much time on them.

Qur'an: ***"...Say: 'Surely grace is in the hand of Allah, He gives it to whom He pleases; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing"*** (***3:73***)***.***

"*Al-Fadl"* (اَلْفَضْلُ = surplus; that which is in excess). This word is used in commendatory sense, while *al-fudul* (اَلْفُضُولُ) is used as a derogatory term. *Ar-Raghib* says: Every voluntary gratis benefaction is called *al-fadl*; as Allah says:

"… And ask Allah of His grace.." (***4:32***)

"…This is Allah's grace…" (***5:54***)

"…And Allah is the Lord of mighty grace (***2:105***)

"Say: 'In the grace of Allah' " (***10:58***)

"…And were it not for the grace of Allah…" (***4:83***).

Accordingly, the sentence, ***"Say: 'Surely grace is in the hand of Allah'"*** (***3:73***), is a sort of abbreviated syllogism from which the first premise has been omitted. The full deductive syllogism shall be as follows: Say: This revelation and Divine bestowal (which you are trying to reserve for yourself by pretending to believe and disbelieve and admonishing each other to hide the truth) is not a thing which we mortals can impose on Allah, it is really a grace. Grace is in the hand of Allah (to Whom belong the Kingdom and the Command). Therefore, He has the power to give it to whom He pleases. And Allah is Ample giving, Knowing.

This verse does not leave any room for the Jews to reserve the Divine Grace for themselves (despite their mistaken belief reflected in their words and deeds). Why should some people enjoy the grace of Allah to the deprivation of others (as the Jews wanted to do with religion and *qiblah*)? One may imagine only three ways for that.

The first possibility is that the grace of Allah would fall under the influence of someone else, who then would manipulate the Divine Will, diverting it to one side, preventing it from going in another direction. But the fact is otherwise, as the verse says:

"Surely grace is in the hand of Allah, He gives it to whom He pleases" (***3:73***).

The second possibility is that the bounty is in short supply and is insufficient to reach all the aspirants. In that case it would need some external factors to select a few and reject others. But the fact is otherwise. Because Allah is Ample giving; All-powerful, Whose grace knows no limit.

The third possibility is that it could be that the grace – even if it was unlimited and is in the hand of Allah – could not reach a certain group because that group was hidden from Allah, was unknown to Him. Thus, the 'privileged' group plans devious ways to hide the other groups and keep them concealed from Allah, in order to deprive them of the Divine Grace. But the fact is the opposite because Allah is All-knowing; ignorance cannot reach Him; nothing can be hidden from Him.

Verse 74

Qur'an: ***"He specially chooses for His mercy whom He pleases; and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace"*** (***3:74***).

As the grace is in the hand of Allah, He gives it to whom He pleases; and as He is Ample giving, Knowing, it is in His power to choose some of the servants for some of His favours. It is for Him to manage His property as He likes. The fact, that His grace and His bestowal of bounties are unrestricted, or that nobody can place any restraint on Him, does not make it necessary for Him to bestow His grace on each and every person indiscriminately. Otherwise, it would again be a restraint on His absolute power. It is His prerogative to specially choose for His grace whomever He pleases.

The verse ends with the sentence, ***"and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace"*** (***3:74***). In a way it explains the reason of all that has been mentioned above. The grace is mighty. Consequently, it must be in His hand to give it to whom He pleases. Also, Allah should be Ample giving in His grace, knowing the condition of His servants, well-aware of which type of grace would be more suitable to a given person. And therefore, it should be His prerogative to specially choose for His grace whomever He pleases.

In the sentence, ***"He specially chooses for His mercy whom He pleases"*** (***3:74***), the word, "grace" has been replaced by "mercy". It shows that the grace, being a free gift, a discretionary bounty, is a branch of mercy. Allah says:

"And My mercy encompasses all things..." (***7:156***).

"...And were it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy, not one of you would have ever been pure..." (***24:21***).

"Say: "If you control the treasures of the mercy of Lord, then you would withhold (***them***) ***from fear of spending..."*** (***17:100***).

Verse 75

Qur'an: ***"And among the People of the Book there are some such that if you entrust one*** (***of them***) ***with a heap of wealth, he shall pay it back to you; and among them are some such that if you entrust one*** (***of them***) ***with a dinar he shall not pay it back to you except that you remain standing over him, this is because they say: "There is not upon us in the matter of the unlearned people any way*** (***to reproach***) ***and they tell a lie against Allah while they know"*** (***3:75***).

The verse points to the glaring differences seen in the characters of various People of the Book, for example, in keeping the trust and fulfilling the agreements. Their dishonesty and breach of trust is in itself a national disgrace; this characteristic has permeated their society as a well-accepted feature. Unfortunately, it is based on their ideology which is reflected in the statement:

"There is not upon us in the matter of the unlearned people any way (***to reproach***)***"*** (***3:75***).

They called themselves the People of the Book and called others, gentiles, unlearned people. The above-quoted statement means that no gentile (non-Israelite) can have any way against an Israelite.

Even more disturbing was their claim that that behaviour was approved by religion. It is to this aspect that the next sentence refers:

"And they tell a lie against Allah while they know…" (***3:75***).

They believed – as they do even today – that they were the chosen people; Divine Grace was their exclusive property; others had no share in Allah's favour; Allah had given them Prophethood, the Book and the Kingdom; therefore, they had precedence and excellence over all races, and had a right to subjugate the others. This misconception gave rise to various misunderstandings.

For example, they came to believe that the sociological and financial rights and obligations (like prohibition of interest, of devouring others' property and usurping people's rights) were applicable within their own circle only. A Jew should not unjustly devour the property of another Jew; an Israelite should not usurp the rights of his own people.

In short, only the People of the Book had a way to reproach against the People of the Book. As for the gentiles, the non-Israelites, they had no way of reproach against the People of the Book. The Jews thought they could deal with non-Israelites anyway they liked; they could do with others whatever they wanted. In their eyes the gentiles were no better than animals and they dealt with them as they did with animals.

Of course, the conception was not found in the books that are said to be revealed, like the Torah, etc. They had taken this idea from their rabbis and blindly followed them. Moreover, the religion of Musa was meant for the Children of Israel only; others were neither invited nor allowed to enter it. Thus, it became a racist religion.

This gave rise to a belief that this excellence and Divine Grace was something based on race, for which the Children of Israel were exclusively chosen. Being born of Israel parents was the essence of dignity, the root of excellence, the basis of supremacy. The one who was related to Israel had absolute precedence over all others. When such arrogant spirit governs the structure of a nation, it incites them to create mischief on the earth, and to annihilate the essence of humanity found in a society.

Of course, sometimes it becomes necessary in a human society to deprive some individuals or groups of some common rights. But what should be the criterion for such treatment? A healthy society believes that whoever tries to negate others' rights or to damage or destroy the society itself, should be deprived of his own rights. From Islamic point of view the only criterion of rights is acceptance of Islam or coming under the protection of Islamic State. One who is neither a Muslim nor a *dhimmi* (اَلذِّمِّي= one under the protection of Islamic State), has no right in the life. This criterion conforms with the dictate of nature; and you have seen that the human society also recognizes such test in a general way.

Now, we come back to the verse under discussion, ***"among the People of the Book"*** (***3:75***). Apparently, it should have been 'among them'. Why was the noun used in place of the pronoun? It was

done to remove a possible misunderstanding: the preceding two verses had spoken about: "***A party of the People of the Book"*** (***3:72***)***;*** if these verses had said, 'among them', it could give the impression that it was speaking about a group of the previously mentioned in ***"A party of the People of the Book"*** (***3:72***). You will see that after removing this possible cause of misunderstanding, the next verse uses pronoun when it says:

"Most surely there is a party amongst those who distort the Book with their tongues" (***3:78***)***.***

Also, mentioning of the attribute – i.e., their being the People of the Book – points to a sort of reason. That is, such words and deeds – their saying that there is not upon us in the matter of the unlearned people any way to reproach, and their swallowing the people's wealth in this way – would not have looked so strange if they had been uttered by unlearned people, who did not know anything about prophethood and revelation.

But these were the People of the Book; they had the Book which contained God's Commandments; and they knew very well that the Book did not give them any such latitude, nor did it allow them to take other people's wealth and property just because they were gentiles, non–Israelites. Such statements and deeds were more strange and more disgraceful because they were uttered and done by the People of the Book. Therefore, they deserved more severe condemnation and rebuke.

"al–Qintar" (100 = اَلْقِنْطَارُ *ratl*; figuratively used for huge amounts); "*ad–dinar*" (اَلدِّيْنَارُ = a coin). Apart from their rhetorical beauty,9 their parallel setting in the context of trustworthiness shows that these words have been used for large and small amounts respectively. The verse means that there are some among them who faithfully keep the amount entrusted to them, no matter how large and valuable it may be; while there are others among them who would embezzle it even if it is a trivial and worthless thing.

The second person singular pronoun in the phrase, "***if you entrust one*** (***of them***) ***with a heap of wealth, he shall pay it back to you"*** (***3:75***), does not refer to any specific person; it is a sort of indefinite pronoun showing general applicability of the statement. In other words, the sentence means: If someone – anyone – gives him something in trust he shall pay it back to him, no matter how great the amount may be.

"illa ma dumta 'alayhi qa'lman" (إِلَّا مَا دُمْتَ عَلَيْهِ قَآئِماً): It is said that "*ma*" (مَا) has changed the verb into *al–masdar* (اَلْمَصْدَرُ = infinitive verb); and the sentence means "except that you remain standing over him." The word, "standing", points to urgency and insistence; when the claimant remains standing on his feet without sitting, it shows his impatience and inability to wait. Someone has said that "*ma*" is an adverb of time; but it makes no sense.

"This is because they say: 'There is not upon us in the matter of the unlearned people any way (***to reproach***)***'"*** (***3:75***)***.***

Apparently, the context shows that the pronoun, "this", refers to the whole description written before, that

is, the fact that some of them keep their trust even if it is a huge amount, and others do not pay it back even if it is a small thing; this difference has arisen from their belief that there is on them no way to reproach in the matter of the unlearned people. This idea has created among them a great disparity in ethical and spiritual standard although they know that Allah has not ordained any such thing in His Book, nor is He pleased with such practices of theirs.

Alternatively, it may be referring to the second group only, which is mentioned by the sentence:

"And among them there are some such that if you entrust one (of them) with a dinar he shall not pay it back to you" (3:75).

In this case, the first (i.e., trustworthy) group may have been mentioned here just to give the complete picture, to fulfil the demand of justice. Consequently, the plural pronouns in, "they say", and "they know", may refer to, "the People of the Book", or to, "some such that if you entrust one (of them) with a dinar". In the latter case, the first-person pronoun in "upon us" may refer to all "the People of the Book", or to a certain group of them. The translation will differ in each case, but all the possibilities are correct and credible. (Think it over.)

Qur'an: ***"…And they tell a lie against Allah while they know …" (3:75).***

It refutes their claim that there was not upon them any way to reproach in the matter of the unlearned people. Also, it proves that they used to justify their behaviour on religious grounds, claiming that it was a Divine Revelation, as we have mentioned earlier.

Verse 76

Qur'an: ***"Yea, whoever fulfils his promise and guards (against evil) - then surely Allah loves those who guard (against evil)" (3:76).***

It answers their argument and affirms what they wanted to negate with their statement that there was no way to reproach upon them regarding the non-Israelites. Fulfilment of promise means acting on it and guarding against its breach. "*at-Tawfiyah*" (اَلتَّوْفِيَةُ = to give completely); "*al-istifa'* " (اَلْاِسْتِيْفَآءُ = to take completely).

The promise refers to the covenant which Allah had taken from His servants that they would believe in Him and worship Him. This meaning is supported by the next verse which says:

"(as for) those who take a small price for the covenant of Allah and their (own) oaths" (3:77).

Or it may mean all promises in general, including the covenant of Allah.

The sentence ***"then surely Allah loves those who guard (against evil)" (3:76)*** is a syllogism from which a premise has been omitted for brevity. Its completed form would be as follows: then surely Allah

loves him, because he guards against evil, and Allah loves those who guard against evil. The idea is that Allah bestows honour and dignity on His pious servants by loving them, and not by giving them licence to deceive, exploit and oppress His other servants.

The verse indicates that the divinely bestowed dignity is not so easily obtainable; it is not a commonplace thing which could be attained by just verbal expression of belonging, or which may be used for racial or national supremacy by crafty and wily persons. The important condition for attainment of Divine Dignity is piety and fulfilment of the covenant made with Allah.

When these conditions are fulfilled, the said dignity is achieved. That dignity means Allah's love, friendship, and guardianship, which are not given except to His pious servants. It results in Divine help and happy life, which in its turn brings them prosperity and betters their condition in this world and raises their rank in the hereafter.

This is the meaning of dignity which Allah bestows. It does not give rise to imposition of a certain race or nation on the shoulders of His servants, good and bad alike, giving the supposed "master race" freedom to do whatever they want and to say whatever they like. Thus, one day they would claim ***"there is not upon us in the matter of the unlearned people any way*** (***to reproach***)***"*** (***3:75***); saying next day that they were the friends of Allah to the exclusion of the other people;10 and yet another day, that they were the sons of Allah and His beloved ones.11 Thus, it leads them to create mischief in the earth and to destroy the tilth and the stock.

Verse 77

Qur'an: ***"(As for) those who take a small price for covenant of Allah and their (own) oaths... (3:77).***

It explains the reason of the preceding statement. The Divine Dignity is exclusively reserved for those who fulfil the covenant of Allah and guard against evil – are pious; because the others – those who take a small price for the covenant of Allah and their own oaths – have no honour, no dignity at all.

The fact is that whoever breaks the covenant of Allah and forsakes piety – not guarding himself against evil – does so just for the enjoyment of the vanities of this world, giving preference to immediate desires over everlasting happiness. He exchanges the covenant of Allah and the piety with a few worldly trinkets. That is why it has been likened to a trade deal: Covenant of Allah is the item sold; and insignificant worldly provision, its small price. "*al–Ishtira'* " (اَلْإِشْتِرَآءُ = to sell); "they take a small price for the covenant of Allah and their (own) oaths", that is, they exchange the covenant and oaths for provisions of this world.

Qur'an: ***"Surely they shall have no portion in the hereafter, and Allah will not speak to them... they shall have a painful chastisement"*** (***3:77***).

"al-Khalaq" (اَلْخَلَاقُ = portion, share); "*at-tazkiyah"* (اَلتَّزْكِيَةُ = to make grow, good growing; to purify). The descriptions of this group stand face to face with the attributes of the first group, "***Yea, whoever fulfils his promise and guards*** [***against evil***]***."*** (***3:76***); and the consequences of their behaviour are all negative. Keeping it in view, we find that:

First: The verse points to them with the demonstrative pronoun, *ula'ik*a (أُولئِكَ = those, they), which is used for a distant object. It shows that they are far removed from nearness to Allah. Conversely, the pious ones who fulfil their covenant are brought nearer to Allah because He loves them.

Second: When Allah loves someone, he is given a portion in the hereafter; Allah will speak to him and look upon him on the Day of Resurrection, will purify him and forgive him, that is, will remove chastisement from him. Allah has mentioned three traits for those who break the covenant of Allah and their own oaths.

The first trait: They shall have no portion in the hereafter. *"al-Akhirah"* (اَلْاخِرَةُ = the hereafter); it stands for *ad-dar al-akhirah* (اَلدَّارُالْاخِرَةُ = the abode in the hereafter; the everlasting abode); it is used for life after death. In the same way, *ad-dunya* (اَلدُّنْيَا = the world) stands for *ad-daru'd-dunya* (اَلدَّارُالدُّنْيَا = worldly abode), which is used for the life before death.

They shall have no portion in the hereafter because they themselves had preferred the share of this world. It shows that "a small price" refers to this world. Of course, we have explained it above as the worldly provision; it was done because Allah has used adjective "small" for it and the same adjective has been used for the worldly provision in the verse:

"Say. 'The provision of this world is small'" (***4:77***).

In other word, the provision of the world is the world (itself).

The Second trait: Allah will not speak to them, nor will he look upon them on the Day of Resurrection. It stands vis-a-vis the love which Allah has for His pious servants; in love, the lover wants to enjoy nearness to the beloved, by looking at him and talking to him when they are together. As Allah does not love this group, He will not speak to them nor look upon them on the Day of Resurrection, the day when they will be brought in His presence. The verse first mentions not speaking and then not looking upon; the description is in descending order; speaking shows more intimacy than looking upon; it is as though the verse wants to say: Allah shall not confer upon them any honour, neither great nor small.

The third trait: Allah will not purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement: The statements are unrestricted and unconditional. It implies that they shall remain unpurified and in chastisement both in this world and in the hereafter.

Verse 78

Qur'an: ***"Most surely there is a party amongst those who distort the Book with their tongues that you may consider it to be (a part) of the Book, while it is not (a part) of the Book, and they say, "It is from Allah," while it is not from Allah; and they tell a lie against Allah whilst they know" (3:78).***

"al-Layy" (اَللَّيُّ = to spin, to entwine); when used with the head or tongue as its object, it means inclining, bending or tilting it. Allah says:

"...They turn back their heads..." (63:5).

"...Distorting (the word) with their tongues..." (4:46).

Apparently, it means that they recite the lies which they have invented against Allah in the same tone and style which they use for the Book, in order to confuse the people, making them believe that it was a part of the Book while it is not so.

The word "Book" has been repeated thrice in this sentence, in order to remove all possible ambiguity. The first "Book" refers to that which they wrote with their own hands and attributed to Allah; the second refers to the "Book" which was revealed by Allah; the third refers to the same Divine Revelation but the word was repeated to remove ambiguity and to indicate that the "Book", being the Book of Allah, was too high and sublime to contain such forgeries – it is because the word "Book" has a connotation that points to sublimity.

The same was the cause of repeating the Divine Name, Allah, in the sentence, ***"and they say, it is from Allah, while it is not from Allah" (3:78).*** It means it is not from Allah Who is the true God and Who does not say except truth, as He Himself says:

"...And the truth do I speak" (38:84).

The verse ends with the words,

"And they tell a lie against Allah whilst they know" (3:78).

It is refutation after refutation of their ascribing their forgeries to Divine Revelation. They were confusing the people by their distorted recitation; Allah refuted it and said, ***"while it is not (a part) of the Book" (3:78).***

Then they used to say, ***"it is from Allah" (3:78)***; Allah refuted them first by saying, ***"while it is not from Allah" (3:78)***; and then by declaring that ***"they tell a lie against Allah" (3:78).*** This repeated denial points to two new factors: First, telling lies is their ingrained habit and persistent trait. Second, it is not because of any confusion or ignorance that they have told such lies; they know that it is a lie and yet they say it.

Traditions

As-Suyuti writes in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* under the verse: ***Say: "O People of the Book! come to a word, common between us and you…"*** (***3:64***): "Ibn Jarir has narrated through his chains from as-Suddi that he said: 'Then the Messenger of Allah (S) called them - that is, the delegation of the Christians of Najran - and said: "O People of the Book! come to a word, common between us and you…" ' "

The author says: The same book quotes another tradition of the same meaning through Ibn Jarir from Muhammad Ibn Ja'far Ibn az-Zubayr. The tradition apparently means that this verse was revealed about the Christians of Najran. We have written a tradition in the beginning of the chapter 12, that its early part (up to eighty odd verses), was revealed about the Christians of Najran; and this verse is included in that number.

Some Traditions say that the Messenger of Allah (S) invited the Jews of Medina to a common word, until they accepted to pay *jizyah*. However, it is not in conflict with its revelation about the delegation of Najran.

Al-Bukhari narrates through his chains from Ibn 'Abbas from Abu Sufyan a long hadith in which he, inter alia, mentions the letter sent by the Messenger of Allah (S) to Heraclius, the Roman emperor. Abu Sufyan says: "Then he (i.e., Heraclius) asked for the letter of the Messenger of Allah (S) and read it; and it was written therein: *'In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah to Heraclius, the emperor of Rome. Peace be on him who follows guidance. After this, I invite you to Islam. Accept Islam, and you will be saved (in the hereafter). Accept Islam and Allah will give you double reward. But if you turn back, then the sin of your people also will be on your shoulders.*

'O People of the Book! come to a word, common between us and you, that we shall not worship any but Allah and (that) we shall not associate anything with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah'; but if they turn back, then say: 'Bear witness that we are Muslims (3:64)' 13

The author says: It has also been narrated by Muslim in his *as-Sahih*; and by as-Suyuti in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from an-Nasa'i, 'Abdu'r-Razzaq and Ibn Abi Hatim, all from Ibn 'Abbas.

And it has been said that also the letter sent by the Messenger of Allah (S) to Muqawqis, the Chief of the Copts, contained these very words of Allah, ***"O People of the Book! come to a word, common between us and you…"*** (***3:64***). There is a Cufic writing reputedly the original letter of the Prophet, its text conforming with his letter to Heraclius; and its photos are easily available throughout the Muslims world. 14

However, the historians say that the Messenger of Allah (S) wrote the letters which he sent through various envoys to many kings and rulers (like: Heraclius, *Kisra* and *an-Najashi*) in the sixth year of *hijrah*. It proves that this verse was revealed in the sixth year or even earlier. On the other hand, the historians (like at-Tabari, Ibn al-Athir and al-Maqrizi) have written that the delegation of the Christians of Najran had come to the Messenger of Allah (S) in the tenth year of *hijrah*, while others (like Abu al-Fida' in *al-Bidayah wa 'n-nihayah* and al-Halabi in *as-Sirah al-Halabiyyah*) say that it was in the ninth year. If so, then the verse would have been revealed in the ninth or tenth year of *hijrah*. Sometimes, it is said that it was revealed in the early years of *hijrah* as the traditions written hereafter will show. Others say that it was revealed twice, as al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar has reported.

Nevertheless, the verses of the chapter are connected to each other in a single context, as we had pointed out in the beginning of the chapter; and it supports the view that the verse was revealed long before the ninth year. Consequently, the delegation must have come in the sixth year of *hijrah* or even earlier.

It is difficult to believe that the Prophet would write letters to rulers of Rome, Egypt and Fars and ignore the people of Najran who were nearer.

There is a point to note in the above quoted tradition. The letter begins with the formula, "In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful". Keeping this in view, we may know the worth of the tradition copied earlier (in the story of Najran's delegation), from al-Bayhaqi's *Dala'il an-nubuwwah.* He narrates: "The Messenger of Allah (S) wrote to the people of Najran, before the (chapter of) *'Tasin Sulayman'* (i.e., the Ant) was revealed: *'In the name of Allah, the God of Ibrahim and Ishaq and Ya'qub. From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah to the Bishop of Najran and the people of Najran. If you accept Islam, then I extol before you Allah, the God of Ibrahim and Ishaq and Ya'qub. After that I call you to the worship of Allah leaving aside the worship of the servants* (*of Allah*)*, and I invite you to* (*come under*) *the guardianship of Allah instead of the guardianship of the servants. But if you refuse* (*it*)*, then* (*you should pay*) *the head-tax; and if you refuse* (*even this*)*, then I declare war against you. And peace* (*be on you*)*.'*"

Now, the chapter of 'The Ant' is a Meccan one; and its textual evidence almost clearly proves that it was revealed before *hijrah*; how can that period be juxtaposed with the event of Najran? Apart from that, the purported letter contains some other things which cannot be explained, like the demand of *jizya*h and ultimatum of war and other such things. And Allah knows better.

at-Tabarani narrates from Ibn 'Abbas: "Verily the letter of the Messenger of Allah to the unbelievers was: 'come to a word common between us and you...'[15]

It is written in the same book about the words of Allah ***"O People of the Book! why do you dispute about Ibrahim..."*** (***3:65***)**.** Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jarir and al-Bayhaqi (in his *Dala'il an-nubuwwah*) have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: 'The Christians of Najran and rabbis of the Jews came to the Messenger of Allah (S) and disputed with one another near him. The rabbis said: "Ibrahim was but a Jew"; and the

Christians said: “Ibrahim was but a Christian”.

Thereupon, Allah revealed about them: ***O People of the Book! why do you dispute about Ibrahim, when the Torah and the Injil were not revealed till after him?*** (***3:65***) ***until the verse “and Allah is the Guardian of the believers”*** (***3:68***). Then Abu Rafi’ al-Qurazi (a Jew from Banu Qurayzah) said: “Do you demand from us, O Muhammad! that we should worship you as the Christians worship ‘Isa son of Maryam?” And one of the Najranites said: “Is it what you wish, O Muhammad?” And the Messenger of Allah (S) said: *“I seek protection of Allah that I should worship other than Allah or enjoin worship of other than Him. Not for this He has sent me or enjoined me.”* Then Allah revealed concerning their talk:

“***It is not meet for a man that Allah should give him the Book and Judgment and Prophethood, then he should say to men: “Be my servants rather than Allah’s”; but rather*** (***he would say***)***: “Be worshippers of the Lord because of your teaching the Book and your reading*** (***it yourselves***)***”*** (***3:79***)***.***

“Or that he should enjoin you that you should take the angels and the prophets for lords; What! would He enjoin you with unbelief after you are Muslims?” (***3:80***)***.***

Thereafter Allah mentioned the covenant He had made with them and their forefathers that they should believe in the Prophet when he came to them, and to their acceptance of this fact; so, He said:[16]

“And when Allah made a covenant through the prophets: “Certainly what I have given you of the Book and Wisdom - then an Apostle comes to you verifying that which is with you, you must believe in him, and you must aid him.” He said: “Do you affirm and accept My compact in this (***matter***)***?” They said: “We do affirm.” He said: “Then bear witness, and I*** (***too***) ***am of the bearers of witness with you”*** (***3:81***)***.***

The author says: According to the text and context of the verses ***“It is not meet for a man that Allah should give him the Book and Judgment and Prophethood…”*** (***3:79***)***,*** that are applicable to ‘Isa son of Maryam (‘a) is more meaningfully and in an easier way than to the Messenger of Allah (S). We shall explain when writing on these verses. Perhaps what the tradition says concerning the revelation of these verses about the Messenger of Allah (S) is just an inference of Ibn ‘Abbas. Moreover, when the Qur’an deals with such talks, it invariably always brings it in the form of question and answer or as a quotation with its refutation.

Al-Kalbi has narrated the story of the *hijrah* to Abyssinia through Abu Salih from Ibn ‘Abbas; and it has also been narrated by Muhammad Ibn Ishaq from Ibn Shahab through his chains, that he said: “When Ja‘far Ibn Abi Talib with a group of the Companions of the Prophet migrated to Abyssinia and settled there; and the Prophet migrated to Medina and there happened in Badr what happened, the Quraysh assembled in *Daru’n-Nadwah* (the Town Hall) and said to each other: ‘You may avenge those who have been killed at Badr with those Companions of Muhammad who are with *an-Najashi* (Negus). Collect some money and send it as a present to *an-Najashi*; perhaps he would hand over your tribesmen to

you; and there should go two of your wise men as your envoys to him.'

"They sent 'Amr Ibn al-'As and 'Umarah Ibn Abi Mu'ayt[17] with presents (of) leathers, etc. They sailed the sea and arrived at Abyssinia. When they came to *an-Najashi*, they prostrated before him and greeted him; and said: 'Our people are sincere and thankful to you, and they love your courtiers. They have sent us to you to warn you against these people who have come to you for, they follow an imposter who has stood up, claiming to be a Messenger of Allah; and none of us has followed him except a few simpletons.

And we made life difficult for them and compelled them to take shelter in a narrow mountain valley of our land, with nobody visiting them, until hunger and thirst (nearly) destroyed them. When the situation became too tough for him, he sent his cousin to you, in order to create mischief here - in your religion, kingdom and subjects. Therefore, beware of them and hand them over to us; it will save you the trouble of dealing with them.' Also, they said: 'And it is a sign (of their mischief) that when they come here, they will not prostrate before you, nor will they greet you in the way the people greet you; (it is because of their) disliking your religion and customs.'

"Then *an-Najashi* called them (i.e., the Muslims). When they came, Ja'far called at the door: 'The party of Allah ask permission to come before you.' An-Najashi said: 'Tell this caller to repeat his words.' Ja'far did, and an-Najashi said: 'Yes; let them enter with safety of Allah and His protection.' 'Amr looked at his colleague and said: 'Do you not hear how they jabbered about the party of Allah and how the King responded to them?' And they were displeased with it.

"Then (the Muslims) entered and did not prostrate before him. 'Amr Ibn al-'As said: 'Do you not see that they deem themselves too great to prostrate before you?' *An-Najashi* said to them: 'What prevents you from prostrating before me and greeting me in the way all those do who come to me from furthest regions?' They replied: 'We do *sajdah* (prostration) to Allah Who created you and gave (this) kingdom to you. Of course, we were using the customary greeting when we were idolaters; then Allah raised among us a truthful Prophet, and he taught us the greeting which Allah is pleased with, and that is, "Peace", the greeting of the people of the Garden.' *An-Najashi* knew that it was true and that it was in the Torah and Injil. Then he said: 'Who among you had called, "The party of Allah asks permission to come before you?" Ja'far said: 'I did'

Then he (Ja'far) said: 'You are a king from the People of the Book, and it is not proper to talk much before you, nor to do any injustice. I would like to answer on behalf of my companions; therefore, order these two people that one of them should speak and the other should just listen; and you should listen to our talk.' 'Amr said to Ja'far: 'Speak.' Ja'far said to *an-Najashi*: 'Ask these two people whether we are slaves or free people. If we are slaves (and) have fled from our masters, then you should return us to them.' *An-Najashi* said: 'Are they slaves or free people?' He ('Amr) said: 'Nay; (they are) free and noble people.' An-Najashi said: 'They are saved from slavery.' Ja'far said: 'Ask them if we have shed any blood unjustly, so that they want its requital from us?'

‘Amr said: ‘No; not a single drop.’ Ja‘far said: Ask them, if we have taken other people’s property without right, so that we have to repay it?’ An-Najashi said: ‘Even if it is a heap of money, I shall repay it.’ ‘Amr said: ‘No; not even a small amount.’ *An-Najashi* said: ‘Then what do you want from them?’ (‘Amr) said: ‘We and they were together on one religion, the religion of our forefathers; and they have left it and followed another religion. Therefore, our people have sent us so that you may hand them over to us.’ *An-Najashi* said: ‘What was the religion you followed and what is that which they have now accepted?’

Ja‘far said: ‘As for the religion we followed before, it was the religion of the Satan; we disbelieved in Allah and worshipped the stone. And as for the religion to which we have turned, it is the religion of Allah, the Islam; it has been brought to us from Allah by a Messenger, coming with a Book like the Book of the son of Maryam and conforming to it.’ *An-Najashi* said: ‘O Ja‘far! you have spoken a very great thing.’

“Then *an-Najashi* ordered the gong to be rung. It was done and every priest and monk gathered near him. When all were assembled, *an-Najashi* said: ‘I adjure you by Allah Who revealed the Injil to ‘Isa, do you find (any news of) a prophet messenger between ‘Isa and the Day of Resurrection?’ They said: ‘By God! Yes. He has given us the good news of him and said: “Whoever shall believe in him shall believe in me, and whoever shall disbelieve in him shall disbelieve in me.” ’ *an-Najashi* said to Ja‘far: ‘What does this man say to you? What does he enjoin you to do? And what does he forbid you from?’ (Ja‘far) said: ‘He recites to us the Book of Allah and enjoins us to do good and forbids us the evil; he enjoins us to be good to our neighbours and relatives and to the orphans, (and) tells us that we should worship Allah, the One, (Who) has no partner.’

(*an-Najashi*) said to him: ‘Recite to me from what he recites to you.’ Then (Ja‘far) recited to him the Chapters of ‘The Spider’ and ‘The Romans’. The eyes of *an-Najashi* and his companions overflowed with tears, and they said: ‘Recite to us some more from this good talk.’ Then Ja‘far recited to them the Chapter of ‘The Cave’. (At this stage) ‘Amr, intending to incite (the anger of) *an-Najashi* against them, said: ‘These people abuse ‘Isa and his mother.’ *an-Najashi* said (to Ja‘far): ‘Well, what do you say about ‘Isa and his mother?’ Then he (Ja‘far) recited the Chapter of ‘Maryam’. When he came to the story of Maryam and ‘Isa, *an-Najashi* raised his tooth-stick just a small bit (enough to disturb one’s eyes) and said: ‘By God! The Messiah did not say more than what you have said.’

Then he said, turning towards Ja‘far and his Companions: ‘Go, you are free in my land; you are safe from ill-treatment, and it will be a crime to give you any trouble.’ Again, he said: ‘Be of good cheer; do not be afraid; there is no downfall today for the party of Ibrahim.’ ‘Amr said: ‘O *an-Najashi*! and who are the party of Ibrahim?’ (*an-Najashi*) said: ‘This group and their companion (i.e., the Prophet) whence they have come here, and those who follow them.’ The polytheists denied it and claimed (themselves to be on) the religion of Ibrahim. Then *an-Najashi* gave back to ‘Amr and his companion the presents they had brought (to him) and said: ‘Surely your present is just a bribe; you take it back because God gave this kingdom to me, and He did not take any bribe from me.’

Ja'far said: 'Then we returned (from the court), and we were under the best protection.' And Allah revealed to the Messenger (S) (who was in Medina) the verse about their dispute about Ibrahim: "***Most surely the nearest of people to Ibrahim are those who followed him and this prophet and those who believe; and Allah is the Guardian of the believers."*** (***3:68***) 18

The author says: This story has been narrated with other chains, and also from the Ahl Al-Bayt('a). We have copied it here despite its length, and although it has nothing to do with the circumstances in which the verses under discussion were revealed, because it contains important information about the trials of the first migrants among the Muslims.

It has been narrated from as-Sadiq ('a) about the words of Allah ***"Ibrahim was not a Jew nor a Christian..."*** (***3:67***), that he said: "The Leader of the Faithful, said: 'Neither a Jew praying to the West nor a Christian praying to the East; but he was an upright Muslim on the religion of Muhammad (S).'"19

The author says: We have explained in the Commentary the meaning of his being on the religion of Muhammad, blessing of Allah be on them and their progeny! This tradition looks at the direction of prayer when the *qiblah* was changed to the Ka'bah (and the Ka'bah is almost to the south of Medina). The Jews and the Christians denied its validity; and felt themselves obliged to turn towards the west (where Bayt al-Maqdis is situated), or the east (to which the Christian face). This has been counted as a deviation of these two groups from the middle course. This aspect is supported by wordings of the verse:

"And thus We have made you a medium nation." (***2:143***).

However, it is just an interesting and fine literary inference, and nothing more.

Explaining this verse, as-Sadiq ('a) said: "Pure, sincere, totally free from idol-worship."20 The Leader of the Faithful said explaining the verse: "***Most surely the nearest of people to Ibrahim are those who followed..."*** (***3:68***), "Surely the nearest of the people to the prophets is he who practises most faithfully what they have brought." Then he recited this verse and said: "Surely the friend of Muhammad is he who obeys Allah, even if his relationship is far from him; and surely the enemy of Muhammad is he who disobeys Allah, even if he has a near relationship with him."21

As-Sadiq ('a) said: "They are the Imams and their followers."22

'Umar Ibn Udhaynah narrates from the same Imam that he said: "You, by Allah, are from the progeny of Muhammad." I said: "From themselves? May I be your ransom!" He said: "Yes, by Allah, from their own selves." He said it three times; then he looked at me and I looked at him and he said: "O 'Umar! surely Allah says in His Book: "***Most surely the nearest of people to Ibrahim..."*** (***3:68***)23 "

There is a tradition narrated from al-Baqir ('a) that he said about this verse: ***"And a party of the People of the Book say: "Avow belief..."*** (***3:72***): "Verily, when the Messenger of Allah (S) came to Medina he was praying towards Bayt al-Maqdis, (and) the people (i.e., the Jews) were pleased with it. When Allah

turned him from Bayt al-Maqdis towards His Sacred House, the Jews were annoyed. And the change of *qiblah* had happened during the noon prayer. So, they said: 'Muhammad prayed the morning prayer facing towards our *qiblah*; therefore, believe in that which was revealed to Muhammad in the first part of the day; and disbelieve the latter part'; they meant (disbelieve in) the *qiblah* when the Messenger of Allah (S) faced towards the Sacred Mosque."[24]

The author says: As you see, the tradition takes the adverbial phrase, '(in) the first part of the day' as related to the verb, was revealed; and not to the verb 'Avow belief'. And we have explained it in the Commentary.

Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim have narrated through al-'Awfi from Ibn 'Abbas, that he said about the verse: ***"And a party of the People of the Book say: 'Avow belief…' "*** (***3:72***): "A party of the Jews said: 'Avow belief when you meet the Companions of Muhammad in the first part of the day; and when it is the end of it then pray (according to) your own prayer; perhaps they, that is, the believers, would say: "These are the People of the Book and they are more knowledgeable than us." Perhaps they would then turn away from their religion.' "[25]

The author says: This meaning has been narrated in the same book from as-Suddi and Mujahid also.

Al-Baqir ('a) said about the verse, it has been revealed about the covenant:

"(As for) those who take a small price for the covenant of Allah and their own oaths - surely they shall have no portion in the hereafter, and Allah will not speak to them, nor will He look upon them on the Day of Resurrection nor will He purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement" (***3:77***).

And 'portion' means share. So, he who shall have no share in the hereafter, with what will he enter the Garden?"[26]

Ash-Shaykh at-Tusi narrates through his chains from 'Adiyy Ibn 'Adiyy from his father that he said: "Imra' al-Qays and a man from Hadramawt brought their dispute concerning a land to the Messenger of Allah (S). (The Prophet) said: 'Do you have a proof?' He said: 'No.' (The Prophet) said: 'Then (it will be decided) by his (i.e., the opposite party's) oath.' He said: 'Then, by Allah, he will take away my land.' (The Prophet) said: 'If he takes your land by his (false) oath, he shall be among those that Allah will not look upon him on the Day of Resurrection nor will He purify him and he shall have a painful chastisement.' (Hearing this) the man was frightened and gave the land back to him."[27]

The author says: As you see, the tradition does not show that the verse was revealed about this event. Several traditions have been narrated through Sunni chains that it was revealed about this event. But those traditions give conflicting reports. Some, like the above, say that the dispute was between Imra' al-Qays and a man from Hadramawt; others say that the conflict was between al-Ash'ath Ibn al-Qays and a Jew concerning a land; yet, another tradition says that it was revealed about an unbeliever, who

had offered in the market a merchandise for sale, and in order to deceive a Muslim customer, swore by Allah that he was offered for it a price which in reality he was not offered. Then the verse was revealed.

You have seen in the Commentary that obviously the verse explains the reason of the preceding verse. In this background the utmost that is possible is to take these traditions as an application of the verse on that event; but they cannot be accepted as an account of the circumstances in which the verse was revealed.

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1. Vide al-Mizan (Engl. transl.), vol. 2, 2:163. (tr.).
2. Al-Mas'udi has mentioned it in his Muruju 'dh-dhahab, in the events of the year 10 of Hijrah
3. We shall explain these verses later when we get there.
4. Of the Arabic text.
5. See al-Mizan (Engl. transl.), vol. 3, pp. 245 - 274. (tr.).
6. An Arabic expression referring to the generosity of Allah [Note of al-Islam.org].
7. Tributory tax.
8. That it was a sign of the Prophet's truth.
9. Like rhyme and similarity of paradigm. (tr.)
10. Say: "O you who are Jews, if you think that you are the friends of Allah to the exclusion of other people..." (Qur'an, 62:6). (Author's note).
11. And the Jews and the Christians say: "We are the sons of Allah and His beloved ones" (Qur'an, 5:18). (Author's note).
12. See al-Mizan (Engl. transl.), vol. 5, p. 21. (tr.).
13. as-Sahih, al-Bukhari. It is to be note that the word 'Muslimun' in the verse means 'submitting ones'.
14. The first such letter discovered was that sent to Muqawqis. Its photo was published in the al-Hilal of November 1904. It is now in Istanbul (Turkey). A third letter sent to the co-rulers of Oman, 'Abd and Jayfar, sons of Julanda, was discovered not very long ago. (tr.).
15. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
16. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
17. The right name of this person is 'Umarah Ibn 'Uqbah Ibn Abi Mu'ayt. But the real person who accompanied 'Amr Ibn al-'s to Abyssinia, in the first journey, was 'Umarah Ibn al-Walid Ibn al-Mughirah al-Makhzumi, the brother of Khalid Ibn al-Walid; and in the next journey 'Amr was accompanied by 'Abdullah Ibn Abi Rabi'ah Ibn al-Mughirah al-Makhzumi. (ed.).
18. at-Tafsir, al-Khazin.
19. at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.
20. al-Kafi.
21. Majma' al-bayan.
22. al-Kafi; at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.
23. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi; at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.
24. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
25. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
26. al-Kafi.
27. al-Amali, ash-Shaykh.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Sura ’Aal-’Imran: Verses 79 – 80

مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَن يُؤْتِيَهُ ٱللَّهُ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ وَٱلْحُكْمَ وَٱلنُّبُوَّةَ ثُمَّ يَقُولَ لِلنَّاسِ كُونُوا۟ عِبَادًا لِّى مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ وَلَـٰكِن كُونُوا۟
رَبَّـٰنِيِّـۧنَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تُعَلِّمُونَ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ وَبِمَا كُنتُمْ تَدْرُسُونَ

“It is not meet for a man that Allah should give him the Book and the Judgment and Prophethood, then he should say to men: “Be my servants rather than Allah’s;” but rather (he would say): “Be worshippers of the Lord because of your teaching the Book and your reading (it yourselves)” (3:79).

وَلَا يَأْمُرَكُمْ أَن تَتَّخِذُوا۟ ٱلْمَلَـٰٓئِكَةَ وَٱلنَّبِيِّـۧنَ أَرْبَابًا أَيَأْمُرُكُم بِٱلْكُفْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أَنتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ

“Or that he should enjoin you that you should take the angels and the prophets for lords; what! would he enjoin you with unbelief after you are Muslims (Submitting Ones)?” (3:80).

Commentary

The verses come after those related to the affairs of ‘Isa (‘a); it implies that it is the second stage of the argument exonerating ‘Isa from the responsibility of what the Christians believe about him. We may summarize the whole argument as follows:

‘Isa (‘a) was not as you think about him. Neither was he Lord nor had he claimed Lordship for himself. First, he was not Lord, because he was a mortal creature; was conceived in his mother’s womb who gave birth to him and brought him up in a cradle. Of course, just like Adam (‘a), he had no father, thus his likeness was with Allah as the likeness of Adam. Second, nor had he claimed to be Lord, because he was a prophet, and was given the Book, the Judgment and Prophethood; and a prophet, having that status, cannot transgress the limit of servitude, nor can he divest himself of submission to Allah.

How can a prophet tell people: Take me as your Lord, be my servants rather than Allah’s? Or how can he allow it for any other creature of Allah? A prophet would never enjoin men to take the angels or the prophets for lords. He would not give to any servant of Allah more than his due, nor would he deny prophethood of any prophet of Allah divesting him of his status and dignity.

Verse 79

Qur’an: ***“It is not meet for a man that Allah should give him the Book and the Judgment and Prophethood, then he should say to men: ‘Be my servants rather than Allah’…” (3:79).***

"al-Bashar" (اَلْبَشَرُ = man) is synonymous with *"al-insan"* (اَلْاِنْسَانُ); it is used for singular as well as plural; one man is *al-bashar* and also a group of men is *al-bashar*.

Ma kana li basharin (مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ = it is not meet for a man); *li* (لِ) in *li-basharin* (لِبَشَرٍ) denotes ownership; that is, it does not belong to him; it is not meet for him; he has no right to it. The same expression has been used in some other places, for example:

***"…It does not beseem us that we should talk of it"* (*24:16*).**

***"And it is not attributable to a prophet that he should act unfaithfully…"* (*3:161*).**

The clause, ***"that Allah should give him the Book and the Judgment and Prophethood"* (*3:79*)**, is the subject of *kana* (كَانَ = was; is). It prepares the ground for the next statement; ***"then he should say to men; 'Be my servants rather than Allah's.' "* (*3:79*)**. Apparently, the sentence could be shortened by omitting the introductory clause, ***"that Allah should give him the Book…"* (*3:79*)**; yet it was inserted to give a new connotation to the phrase, ***"It is not meet for a man"* (*3:79*)**.

Let us see what happens if the sentence is rewritten, omitting the introductory clause; then the verse would run as follows: It is not meet for a man that he should say to men. The meaning then would be as follows: He was not given that right, although possibly he could say so if he transgressed the limit and became insolent. But there is no room for such inference in the sentence as it now stands.

The verse in the present form means as follows: When Allah gives a man knowledge and gnosis of reality, and brings him up with Divine Care, that man can never transgress the boundary of servitude; nor does he feel free to interfere in what does not belong to him, or to dispose what he has no right to; as Allah describes the declaration of 'Isa ('a), in the verse:

***"And when Allah will say: O 'Isa son of Maryam! did you say to men, 'take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah', he will say: "Glory be to Thee, it did not befit me that I should say what I had no right to* (*say*)*"* (*5:116*).**

The verse says ***"that Allah should give him…"* (*3:79*)** instead of saying: a man whom Allah gave the Book and the Judgment and Prophethood. The reason for that is clear from the above explanation. The latter wording points only to the basic legislative prohibition of such transgression. On the other hand, the present construction, ***"that Allah should give him…."* (*3:79*)**, shows that such behaviour is definitely impossible. The Divine Guidance and upbringing cannot fail to attain its goal, as Allah says:

***"These are they whom We gave the Book and the Judgment and the Prophethood, therefore if these*[1]*disbelieve in it, We have* (*already*) *entrusted with it a people who are not disbelievers in it"* (*6:89*).**

In short, the verse says that it is not possible for a man to join these Divine Favours with calling the men to his own worship. It is not possible when he is given a Book, the Judgment and Prophethood that he

should say to men: Be my servants rather than Allah's. In this context the verse resembles to a certain extent these verses:

"The Messiah does by no means disdain that he should be a servant of Allah, nor do the angels who are near to Him, and whoever disdains His service and is proud, He will gather them all together to Himself" (***4:172***).

"Then as for those who believe and do good, He will pay them fully their rewards and give them more out of His grace; and as for those who disdain and are proud, He will chastise them with a painful chastisement. And they shall not find for themselves besides Allah a guardian or a helper" (***4:173***).

The implication is that the Messiah and the angels who are near to Allah are too high in prestige and too great in status to disdain the worship of Allah; because disdaining His worship brings painful chastisement on the culprit; and far be it from Allah to chastise His honoured prophets or the near angels.

Objection: The verse uses the word, *thumma* (ثُمَّ = then) in the phrase, ***"then he should say to men"*** (***3:79***)***;*** this conjunctive denotes some delay; and the delay does not conform with the joining you have mentioned.

Reply: What we have said about joining the Divine Favours with calling men to disbelief gives the gist of the matter. Togetherness and combination can happen with simultaneous things as well as with two things appearing consecutively – that too is a sort of combination.

"Be my servants rather than Allah's" (***3:79***): *al-'Ibad* (اَلْعِبَادُ) like *al-'abid* (اَلْعَبِيْدُ) is plural of *al-'abd* (اَلْعَبْدُ = slave; servant); the difference between the two plurals is in usage; *al-'ibad* is mostly used in relation to Allah, for example, *'ibadu'llah* (عِبَادُ اللّهِ = slaves/servants of Allah); while *al 'abid* is generally used when related to man; they say, '*abid an-nas* (عَبِيْدُ النَّاسِ = slaves/servants of men), and not *'ibad an-nas* (عِبَادُ النَّاسِ)

The proviso "rather than Allah's" has been added after the words, "my servants", as a matter of necessity. Allah does not accept any worship unless it is purely for His own person. Allah says:

"Now, surely, sincere religion (***obedience***) ***is for Allah*** (***alone***)***; and*** (***as for***) ***those who take guardians besides Him,*** (***saying***)***, "We do not worship them save that they may make us nearer to Allah", surely Allah will judge between them in that in which they differ; surely Allah does not guide him aright who is a liar, ungrateful"*** (***39:3***).

Thus, Allah has rejected outright the worship of those who join worship of others with His worship, even if the others are worshipped merely as intercessors and intermediaries, and only with intention of reaching nearness to Allah through them.

Moreover, the reality of worship does not come into existence until some independence is admitted for the worshipped even in polytheism. The partner, per se, has some independence; while in reality it is only to Allah that absolute Lordship and Godhead belongs. Therefore, His Lordship cannot be complete, nor can His worship be correct except with negation of independence from every other thing in every possible way. The worship of someone else is worship of other than Allah, even if Allah is worshipped with him.

Qur'an: ***"…But rather (he would say): "Be worshippers of the Lord because of your teaching the Book and your reading (it yourselves)" (3:79).***

"ar-Rabbani" (اَلرَّبَّانِيُّ = translated here as worshippers of the Lord) is derived from *ar-Rabb* (اَلرَّبُّ = the Lord), to which "a" and "n" (اَنْ) have been added for augmentation of meaning; as for example, they use: *al-lihyani* (اَللِّحْيانِيُّ) for one having a luxuriant beard. Thus *ar-rabbani* means the one having special relationship with the Lord and spending his life in His servitude and worship. *Bi* (بِ) in *bi-ma* (بِمَا) is causative, and means "because"; while *ma* (مَا) is for *al-masdar* (اَلْمَصْدَرُ) and has changed the past tenses into infinitive verbs; that is why we have translated it in the following way: ***"but rather (he would say): 'Be worshippers of the Lord because of your teaching the Book and your reading (it yourselves)'" (3:79).***

ad-Dirasah (اَلدِّرَاسَةُ = to study) is more specific than *at-ta'allum* (اَلتَّعَلُّمُ = to learn; to study), as the former is generally used for studying from book by reading and reciting. *ar-Raghib* says: *"Darasa 'd-dar* (دَرَسَ الدَّارُ = vestiges of the house remained); it implies that the house itself was obliterated; and for this reason *ad-durus* (اَلدُّرُوْسُ) is translated as obliteration. Likewise*, darasa 'l-kitab* (دَرَسَ الْكِتَابُ) (or, *darasa 'l-'ilm* = دَرَسَ الْعِلْمُ) means, he got trace of book (or, knowledge) memorizing it; he grasped its meaning. As it is attained by regular recitation, such recitation is called memorization. Allah says:

"..And they have read what is in it…" (7:169).

"And We have not given them any books which they read, nor did We send to them before you a warner" (34:44).

The theme is that a man having such a high status will call you only to attainment of faith and to believe in the teachings of the Book which you learn and teach – the Book that contains the fundamental Divine Knowledge; he will enjoin you to acquire noble character and good traits found in the Book; and to practise and do good deeds to which you call the people. He will do so, in order that you attach yourselves exclusively to your Lord, and thus become divine scholars.

Bi-ma kuntum (بِمَا كُنْتُمْ = lit., because you were), being a past tense, shows that the action had already taken place; that the audience was already teaching and reading the Book. It gives a hint that, possibly, it is an allusion to the Christians, who said that 'Isa had told them that he was the son of God and His Word (with all the differences in the meaning of sonship).

The fact is that the Children of Israel had been given a revealed Book which they taught and read; then they differed in it – a difference that was accompanied by textual changes and alterations. 'Isa ('a) was sent only to explain to them a part of what they differed in and to allow them part of that which was forbidden to them; in short, to call them to fulfil their obligations concerning the learning and teaching – that they should attach themselves exclusively to their Lord in reading and teaching His Book.

Although the verse may somehow be applied to the Messenger of Allah (S) – because his mission covered the People of the Book too, who used to teach and read the Book of Allah – but 'Isa ('a) was before the Prophet and the verse applies to him in a more befitting manner; also because he was sent exclusively to the Children of Israel, unlike the Messenger of Allah (S).

So far as other *'Ul Al–'Adhm* prophets (who came with a Book), i.e., Nuh, Ibrahim and Musa are concerned, the verse obviously cannot be applied to them.

Verse 80

Qur'an: ***"Or that he should enjoin you that you should take the angels and the prophets for lord…"*** **(*3:80*).**

The verb "*aw ya'murakum*" (اَوْيَأْمُرَكُمْ = or that he should enjoin you), because of the vowel "*a*" after *ya'mur* (according to the well–known and common recital), is in conjunction with "he should say".

A group of the People of the Book had taken the angels for lords. For instance, the Sabaeans worshipped the angels and attributed that custom to the authority of religion. Likewise, the Arabs, while claiming to follow the religion of Ibrahim ('a), said that the angels were Allah's daughters.

As for taking the prophets for lords, the Jews, for instance, said that 'Uzayr was the son of Allah – as the Qur'an quotes them – although Musa ('a) had not allowed it to them, nor was there in the Torah anything other than monotheism. Had Musa ('a) allowed it to them he would be enjoining it – far be it from him!

The style of the verse, ***"then he should say to men: 'Be my servants rather than Allah's' "*** **(*3:79*),** differs in two ways from that of the next verse, ***"Or that he should enjoin you that you should take the angels and the prophets for lords"*** **(*3:80*).** First, the subject matter in the former is worship of other than Allah, and in the latter it is taking them for lords. Second, the people enjoined in the former are described in third person, "men", while the latter addresses them directly in second person. Let us look at both changes:

First: The former verse adversely alludes to the Christians concerning their worship of 'Isa. As is known, they believe in his godhead literally, saying that he had invited them to the worship of his own self. Thus, they have clearly ascribed this call to 'Isa that he said to them: 'Be my servants'. On the other hand, taking the angels and the prophets for lords (in the meaning used in the case of others than 'Isa) is opposed to the belief of monotheism only by implication, not directly. That is why the latter verse uses

the word, “lords”, instead of gods.

Second: Both expressions (‘Be my servants’ and ‘that he should enjoin you’) deal with a subject which was relevant to the audience of these verses, that is, the People of the Book and the Arabs. The first verse has used the word, “should say”; and “saying” implies a face-to-face talk. But the people present at the time of the Prophet were not present at the material time, that is, when ‘Isa was supposed to say it.

It is for this reason that the verse says, “***he should say to men”*** (***3:79***), instead of saying ‘he should say to you’. On the other hand, the second verse uses the word “enjoin”; enjoining does not necessarily require face to face talk; it may be done even when the person enjoined is absent. An order given to, or a matter connected with the ancestors, is also applicable to the later generations if the latter identify themselves with the former. As for “saying” - because it employs transmission of voice - it denotes oral conversation and presence of the audience (except when it is used simply in the meaning of instruction).

It is therefore evident that basically these verses require second person plurals - as in ***“or that he should enjoin you…”*** (***3:80***) - but exception was made in the first verse owing to special reasons.

Qur’an: ***“…What! Would he enjoin you with unbelief after you are Muslims*** (***Submitting Ones***)***?”*** (***3:80***)***.***

Apparently, the question is directed to all who followed a prophet like the People of the Book or those who claimed to do so like the Arabs of the days of Ignorance who believed that they were on the religion of Ibrahim. The talk is based on a hypothetical proposition and the meaning is as follows: If it is true that you do follow this man who was given the Book, the Judgment and Prophethood, then you have already submitted to Allah, acquiring the characteristics of Islam; then how will it be possible for that prophet to enjoin you with disbelief, diverting you from the very path to which he had guided you by the order of Allah?

It is clear from the above explanation that in this verse, Islam refers to the religion of monotheism; the religion which Allah sent all the prophets with. This view is supported by other verses preceding and following this verse, in which the word, “*Islam*”, has been used in this very meaning:

“Surely the religion with Allah is Islam…” (***3:19***)***.***

“Is it then other than Allah’s religion that they seek (***to follow***)***…”*** (***3:83***)***.***

“And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter, he shall be one of the losers” (***3:85***)***.***

An exegete has said that the two verses under discussion refer to the Messenger of Allah (S). His view is based on a tradition (quoted earlier) describing the circumstances of its revelation which says that Abu Rafi‘ al-Qurazi and a Najranite Christian said to the Messenger of Allah (S): “Do you want us to worship

you? O Muhammad!" Then Allah revealed: ***"It is not meet for a man that Allah should give him..."*** (***3:79***) and ***"... after you are Muslims?"*** (***3:80***). Then the said exegete has argued by the last phrase, 'after you are Muslims'; "because Islam is the religion brought by Muhammad (S)."

Comment: He has confused the *Islam* of Qur'anic terminology (the religion of monotheism which was preached by all the prophets) with the Islam of the Muslims' terminology – a term which came into use after the time of revelation. (We have explained this earlier).

Conclusion – Seven Parts

1. The Story Of 'Isa and His Mother In The Qur'an

Maryam, daughter of 'Imran, was the mother of the Messiah. When her mother was pregnant with her, she made a vow that she would release what was in her womb to be devoted to the service of the Temple. She believed that she was pregnant with a male child; but when she brought it forth and came to know that it was a female, she was disappointed and dejected. Then she named her Maryam, that is, servant.

Maryam's father, 'Imran, had died before she was born; so, the mother brought her to the Temple for handing her over to the priests – Zakariyya was one of them. They contended one with another to get the privilege of her custody; then they agreed to decide it by lot, in which Zakariyya's name was drawn; and he became her guardian. When she reached the age of puberty, Zakariyya made for her a partition to protect her from men's eyes.

She used to worship Allah therein and nobody entered that sanctuary except Zakariyya. Whenever Zakariyya entered the sanctuary to see her, he found with her food. He said: "O Maryam! whence comes this to you?" She said: "It is from Allah, and surely Allah gives sustenance to whom He pleases, without measure."

Maryam was a truthful woman, and was sinless by Allah's protection; purified, chosen, and spoken to; the angels spoke to her and purified her. She was obedient to the Lord and a sign of Allah for the worlds.[2]

Then Allah sent to her His Spirit when she had hidden herself behind a curtain, and he appeared to her as a well–made man. He said to her that he was a messenger of her Lord so that he should give her, by permission of Allah, a pure boy without a father. He also gave her good news of the manifest miracles which were to happen on the hand of her son; and informed her that Allah would surely strengthen him by the Holy Spirit, and would teach him the Book, the Wisdom, the Torah and the Injil. He also told her that her son would be a messenger to the Children of Israel and would have clear signs. After informing her of the boy's status and story, he breathed into her the Spirit and she became pregnant with 'Isa ('a), as a woman conceives her child.[3]

Then she withdrew herself with him to a remote place. And the throes of childbirth compelled her to betake herself to the trunk of a palm-tree. She said: "Oh, would that I had died before this, and had been a thing quite forgotten!" Then (the child) called out to her from beneath her: "Grieve not; surely your Lord has made a stream to flow beneath you: And shake towards you the trunk of the palm-tree, it will drop on you fresh ripe dates: So eat and drink and refresh the eye. Then if you see any man, say: 'Surely I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent God, so I shall not speak to any man today.' "And she came to her people with him, carrying him (with her).[4] His conception, birth, speech, and all related affairs were not similar to those of other ordinary men.

When her people saw her in such a condition, they were enraged, and blamed and taunted her - as was natural in case of an unmarried woman conceiving and bringing forth a child. They said: "O Maryam, surely you have done a strange thing. O sister of Harun! your father was not a bad man, nor was your mother an unchaste woman." But she pointed to him. They said: "How should we speak to one who is a child in the cradle?" He said: "Surely I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a prophet: And he has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined on me prayer and zakat so long as I live: And dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me insolent, unblessed: And peace on me on the day I was born, and on the day I die, and on the day I am raised to life."[5]

This talk of 'Isa ('a) was a sort of prologue which pointed to his future mission - that he would rise against oppression and injustice, revive and reform the *Shari'ah* of Musa ('a), renovate what was obliterated from the revealed knowledge and make clear to them what they had differed in.

'Isa ('a) grew up and became a young man. He and his mother used to eat and drink in normal way with all the necessary concomitants and accidents of human life up to the end.

Then 'Isa ('a) was made a messenger to the Children of Israel. He stood up calling them to the religion of monotheism and told them: "I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, that I create for you out of dust like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird, with Allah's permission, and I heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead to life, with Allah's permission, and I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your houses. Most surely there is a sign in this for you. Surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord, therefore, worship Him only."

He called them to his new *Shari'ah*, which verified the Law of Musa ('a); but he abrogated some parts of it, allowing them certain things which were forbidden in the Torah as a punishment to the Jews. 'Isa ('a) used to say: "Surely, I have come to you with wisdom, so that I may make clear to you a part of what you differ in. O Children of Israel! Surely, I am the messenger of Allah to you, verifying that which is before me of the Torah and giving the good news of a Messenger who will come after me, his name being Ahmad."

He showed the miracles which he had mentioned, e.g., creation of bird, raising the dead to life, healing the blind and leper, and giving the news of the unseen - all by Allah's permission.

He continued like that calling them to monotheism and his new *Shari'ah* until he was convinced that they would not believe in him. Seeing their insolence, enmity and hatred, and the arrogance of their priests and rabbis, he turned away from them and selected his apostles (from the small band that had believed in him) to be his helpers to Allah.

Then the Jews rose against him with the intention to kill him. But Allah took him away completely and raised him. The Jews were put in confusion: some thought that they had killed him, others thought that they had crucified him; but in fact, it was made to appear to them like that.[6]

This is in short, the story of 'Isa (son of Maryam) and his mother as given in the Qur'an.

2. Position Of 'Isa Before Allah and In His Own Eyes

'Isa ('a) was a servant of Allah and a prophet[7]; a messenger to the Children of Israel[8]; was one of the five *'Ul Al-'Adhm* prophets, bringing a new *Shari'ah* and a Book, i.e., Injil [9]; Allah named him the Messiah, 'Isa[10]; he was the Word of Allah and a Spirit from Him[11]; an Imam[12]; one of the witnesses of deeds[13]; he brought the good news of the Messenger of Allah (S)[14]; was worthy of regard in this world and the hereafter, and one of those who are made near to Allah[15]; was one of the chosen progenies[16]; one of the selected and righteous ones[17]; was made blessed wherever he might be, and purified; was a sign to the people, a mercy from Allah, and dutiful to his mother; greeted himself with peace[18]; and was among those whom Allah taught the Book and the Wisdom.[19]

These twenty-two characteristics, from the stations of *al-wilayah* (اَلْوِلَايَةُ = friendship and guardianship of Allah), give the gist of the attributes which Allah has used to praise this honoured prophet and to raise his rank. These may be divided in two categories:

(1) The acquired ones, like servitude, righteousness, and nearness to Allah.

(2) Those bestowed by Allah as His special grace.

We have explained each characteristic in relevant places of this book according to our understanding. Any reader seeking for more details should look up in those volumes.

3. What 'Isa Said, And What Was Said About Him?

The Qur'an says that 'Isa ('a) was Allah's servant and messenger; and that he did not claim for himself what the Christians ascribe to him, nor did he tell them anything other than conveying the Divine Message. Allah says:

"And when Allah will say: "O 'Isa son of Maryam! did you say to men, 'Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah' ", he will say: "Glory be to Thee, it did not befit me that I should say what I had no right to (say); if I had said it, Thou wouldst indeed have known it; Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I do not know what is in Thy mind; surely Thou art the great Knower of the

unseen things" (***5:116***).

"I did not say to them aught save what Thou didst enjoin me with: That worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord, and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst take me (***away***) ***completely, Thou wert the watcher over them, and Thou art witness of all things"*** (***5:117***).

"If Thou shouldst chastise them, then surely they are Thy servants; and if Thou shouldst forgive them, then surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise" (***5:118***).

"Allah will say: This is the day when their truth shall benefit the truthful ones; they shall have gardens beneath which rivers flow to abide in them for ever: Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Allah; this is the mighty achievement" (***5:119***).

This wonderful reply contains the essence of servitude and shows outstanding manner; it is a mirror of 'Isa's attitude and behaviour towards his Lord; it shows how he looked at himself in relation to his Creator and what he thought of the people and their deeds. He says that he looked at himself just as a servant of his Lord, who had nothing to do other than obeying the Lord; he does not proceed except when directed to and does not stop unless told to. And he was not ordered except to call people to the worship of Allah, and he did not tell them except what he was enjoined with: **That worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord**.

And so far as his relationship with his people is concerned, he shall be the witness for their deeds, and that is that; it is none of his business what Allah does with them and about them – whether He forgives them or chastises them.

Question: If so, then how would you justify what you had written in the topic of intercession that 'Isa shall be among the intercessors on the Day of Resurrection, he shall intercede, and his intercession will be honoured and accepted?

Answer: The Qur'an says expressly – or almost expressly – that he is an intercessor. Allah says:

"And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for intercession, but he who bears witness of the truth, and they know" (***43:86***).

"…And on the Day of Resurrection he (***'Isa***) ***shall be a witness against them"*** (***4:159***).

"…And when I taught you the Book and the Wisdom and the Torah and the Injil …" (***5:110***).

And we have already written extensively on the subject of intercession.

This intercession is something quite different from the atonement which the Christians believe in. The theory of atonement invalidates the system of reward and punishment, and consequently negates the

absolute sovereignty of Allah – as we shall explain later. It is the idea of atonement which the above–mentioned talk of ‘Isa (‘a) refutes.

But this verse has nothing to do with intercession – it neither confirms it nor rejects it. Had the verse wanted to confirm it – despite its inconsistency[20] with the context – it should have said: If Thou shouldst forgive them, then surely, Thou art the Forgiving, the Merciful. And if it wanted to refute intercession, it should not have mentioned his being a witness for the people. We shall describe in detail this topic later, Allah willing.

Looking at what the people said about ‘Isa (‘a), we find that they were divided after him into various sects and disintegrated into perhaps more than seventy denominations. This number looks at fundamental and major divisions only, because minor differences are too numerous to count.

Nevertheless, the Qur’an concerns itself only with what they say about ‘Isa (‘a) and his mother, because it affects the foundation of monotheism which is the only goal to which the Qur’an calls and the natural straight religion leads. The Book of Allah is not concerned with other relatively minor points, e.g., the problem of alteration of the Book and that of atonement.

The beliefs which the Qur’an ascribes to them (or quotes them) are as follows:

“…And the Christians say: “The Messiah is the son of Allah” (***9:30***).

“And they say: “The Beneficent God has taken to Himself a son”…” (***21:26***).

“Certainly they disbelieve who say: “Surely Allah, is the Messiah, son of Maryam”…” (***5:72***).

“Certainly they disbelieve who say: “Surely Allah is the third of the three” …” (***5:73***).

“…And say not, Three…” (***4:171***).

Apparently, these verses contain different phrases, describe different beliefs. (That is why some people [21] apply various verses to various sects, for example, the Melkites[22] who believe in real sonship; the Nestorians[23] who explain ancestry and sonship as radiance of light on a transparent body like crystal; and the Jacobites,[24] who explain it in the terms of change and transformation, that is, the God was transformed into flesh and blood.)

But evidently the Qur’an does not look at the peculiarities of their diverse sects. It is concerned only with one belief which is common between all of them – that ‘Isa is the son of God and of one substance with God, with the resulting belief of trinity – although they differ very much in its explanation (which has led to extreme conflicts and discords). That this explanation is correct is supported by the fact that the Qur’an brings one and the same argument to refute the views of all of them.

It may be explained as follows:

The present Torah and Gospels all together clearly mention the Oneness of Allah; on the other hand, the Gospel clearly mentions the sonship declaring that the Son is the Father and none else.

They do not interpret the postulated sonship in the terms of distinction, honour, and excellence, although many verses of the Gospels clearly give this meaning. For example:

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (*Matt., 5/44 – 48*)25

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (*Matt., 5/16*)

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven." (*Matt., 6/1*)

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." (*Matt., 6/9*)

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." (*Matt., 6/14*)

"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." (*Luke, 6/36*)

Also he said to Mary Magdalene: "go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God and your God." (*John, 20/17*)

These and other similar sentences of the Gospels refer to Allah as the Father of 'Isa as well as of others, all in the sense of distinction and honour.

There are some sayings in the Gospels which allude to the union of the Son with the Father. For example:

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." (*John, 17/1*)

Then he went on praying for his disciples and finally said: *"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gayest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them,*

and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (*John, 17/20 –23*).

However, there are other verses that apparently cannot be explained in the terms of distinction and excellence. For example:

"Thomas saith unto him (*i.e., Jesus*)*, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me."* (*John, 5/11*)

"For I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me." (*John, 8/42*)

"I and my Father are one." (*John, 10/30*)

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing [26]*them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."* (*Matt., 28/19*)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was light of men." (*John, 1/1 – 4*)

These and similar other statements of the Gospels have led the Christians to the belief of trinity in unity. The belief of trinity is an attempt to reconcile the belief that the Christ is the Son of God with the belief in one God which the Christ himself had taught. For example, Mark, 12:29 quotes him as saying: *"The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord."* (*Mark, 12/29*)

The believers in the trinity say (although it does not impart any intelligible meaning): God is one substance with three Persons. The word Person denotes an attribute with which a thing appears to others; and the attribute is none other than the thing itself. The three Persons are: The Person of existence, the Person of knowledge, i.e. the Word, and the Person of life, i.e. the Spirit.

These three Persons are the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The first is the Person of existence; the second, the Person of knowledge (the Word); and the third, the Person of life. The Son who is the Word and the Person of knowledge descended from his Father (i.e. the Person of existence) accompanied by the Holy Ghost (i.e. the Person of Life) that gives light to all things.

Then they differ among themselves in explanation of this vague statement; and ever-occurring conflicts

have divided them to more than seventy sects and denominations. We shall mention some of them to the extent that is necessary in the framework of this book.

Think over the above description; then look at what the Qur'an ascribes to the Christians, or quotes them as saying:

"And the Christians say, "The Messiah is the son of Allah" (***9:30***).

"Certainly, they disbelieve who say: "Surely Allah, He is the Messiah, son of Maryam" (***5:72***).

"Certainly, they disbelieve who say: "Surely Allah is the third (***Person***) ***of the three"*** (***5:73***).

"And say not, "three"; Desist" (***4:171***).

Then you will realize that all these statements point to a single idea, i.e. the trinity in unity which is the common factor of all the sects that sprang up in the Christianity (as we have said above).

Why did the Qur'an focus on this common factor? It was because the same objections apply to all their beliefs regarding 'Isa ('a) – despite their diversity and numerousness. The arguments put forward by the Qur'an are applicable to all their interpretations with equal force, as will be explained later.

4. Argument of The Qur'an Against The Belief Of Trinity

Coming to the belief of trinity, the Qur'an refutes it in two ways:

First: The general method, i.e. showing that it is impossible for Allah to take a son for Himself, no matter whether the presumed son be 'Isa or someone else.

Second: The particular method, i.e. describing that 'Isa son of Maryam was neither a son of God nor God; that he was but a servant created by Allah.

First Method: What is the quiddity of sonship and birth? What do these words really mean? A living material thing (like man, animal, or plant) separates from itself a portion of its own matter, then gradually develops it until it becomes another individual of the same species similar to its parent; the offspring has the same characteristics and traits as the parent body does. An animal separates semen from its body, or a plant removes a seed from itself, then it preserves and grows the semen or seed gradually until it becomes another animal or plant that is similar to its parent. This is what sonship and birth mean. It is no secret that such a thing is impossible for Allah for a few reasons.

The first reason is that such process needs a physical material body; and Allah is far above matter and its concomitants without which matter cannot exist like motion, time, space, and other such things.

The second reason is that to Allah belongs absolute Divinity and Lordship; consequently, He has absolute authority over all things, and total management of all things is in His hand. Everything is in

need of Him to bring it into existence and everything depends on Him for its continued existence. It is just impossible to imagine a thing similar to Allah in "species" – a being having the identity, attributes and characteristics similar to those of Allah and independent of Him.

The third reason is, if Allah begets or gives birth to a son, it entails graduality of action for Allah. In other words, He would be governed by the laws of matter and movement; and it is a contradiction in term, because whatever takes place by His Will comes into being at once without delay, without graduality.

The above explanations are inferred from the words of Allah:

"And they say: "Allah has taken to Himself a son." Glory be to Him; rather, whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His, all are obedient to Him" (***2:116***).

"The Originator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees an affair, He only says to it, "Be", and it is" (***2:117***).

As we have explained above, the words ***"Glory be to Him"*** (***2:116***) are a complete proof; the clause, ***"whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His; all are obedient to Him"*** (***2:116***) is another proof; and the verse ***"The Originator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees an affair, He only says to it, "Be", and it is"*** (***2:117***) is a third proof.[27]

It is also possible to take the clause ***"The Originator of the heavens and the earth"*** (***2:117***) as an allegorical expression in which the attribute of the object has been transferred to the subject. In other words, the clause may denote that the heavens and the earth are original in their creation and design; Allah has created them without any previous model. Therefore, He cannot beget anyone, otherwise it would be a creation on His own model. (After all, the Christians believe that the Son is one with the Father). In that case this clause would be an independent proof by itself.

The Christians generally use the sentence, 'the Messiah is the Son of God', in a somewhat allegorical sense, and not in its literal meaning. They expand the meaning of sonship. Probably, it means separation of a thing from another of similar quiddity without physical and material division and without graduality. This interpretation may remove the problems of body, materiality and graduality. Yet, the problem of similarity will remain unsolved.

The problem of similarity may be described thus: Evidently, to believe in God the Father and God the Son is to believe in number, in real plurality, even if we suppose that the Father and the Son are one in "species" or quiddity. A human father and his son are one because both have the same quiddity, both belong to the homo sapiens species; but they are in fact more than one because they are two individual human beings. Now, if we suppose that God is one, then all other things (including the Son) would be "non-God"; they would be owned by God and dependent on Him; consequently, the putative son would not be a God like Him. On the other hand, if we suppose a son similar to God, that is free of, not dependent on Him, then it would invalidate and negate the Oneness of God.

This exposition is found in the following words of Allah:

"…And say not, 'Three'. Desist, it is better for you; Allah is only one God; far be it from His glory that He should have a son; whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; and Allah is sufficient for a Protector" (***4:171***).

Second Method: 'Isa son of Maryam could not be a son of God sharing Godhead with Him, because he was a human being having all the concomitants of humanity.

The Messiah ('a) was conceived by Maryam and grew up in her womb; then she brought him forth as women give birth to their children, and brought him up, as a child is brought up by his mother. He grew up proceeding through normal stages: from infancy to childhood, from youth to the middle age. All this time, his condition was like any other normal human being in his march of life. He was governed by all normal accidents and conditions undergone by other men. He was hungry and satiated; felt joy and sorrow; was pleased and displeased; affected by delight and pain, comfort, and discomfort; he ate and drank, slept, and woke up, was tired and rested etc.

This was the condition of 'Isa ('a) when he was among the people. Doubtlessly a person having such characteristics is just a mortal man like any other member of his species. As such he, like all other human beings, was a creature made by Allah. Now, let us look at the miracles and supernatural things that happened on his hand, like giving life to dead bodies, creating the birds, and healing the blind and leper.

Also, there are extraordinary signs related to his birth, that is, his conception without father. All these things are supernatural, against the normal custom which people are familiar with; yet they are unfamiliar because of their rarity, not because they are impossible. There was Adam who by evidence of the heavenly Books was created from dust and had no father. And here are the prophets, for example: Salih, Ibrahim and Musa (peace be upon them) on whose hand so many miraculous signs had appeared (which are mentioned in revealed scriptures). But nobody thinks that those miracles negated their humanity or proved their divinity.

This method has been used in these verses:

"Certainly, they disbelieve who say: Surely Allah is the third (***person***) ***of the three; and there is no god but the one Allah, and if they desist not from what they say, a painful chastisement shall befall those among them who disbelieve"*** (***5:73***).

"Will they not then turn to Allah and ask His forgiveness? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful" (***5:74***).

"The Messiah, son of Maryam is but an apostle; apostles before him have indeed passed away; and his mother was a truthful woman, they both used to eat food. See how We make the signs clear to them, then behold how they are turned away" (***5:75***).

Eating food has been specially selected for mention in preference to other activities because it rather more forcefully proves his materiality and shows his neediness and wants, which cannot be joined with Godhead. Obviously, a person who by his nature feels hunger and thirst and satisfies it with a morsel of food and a cup of water, is nothing but an embodiment of poverty and need – a need that cannot be removed without the help of some extraneous agent.

How can such a man be God? What is the meaning of such divinity? A man surrounded by needs, depending for their fulfilment on something outside his own being, is deficient in himself, and managed by some other than himself. He cannot be a self–sufficient god; rather he shall be a creature who is looked after by the Lord Who has His creatures' affairs in His Own Hand. The verse 5:17 may possibly be explained in this light.

"Certainly, they disbelieve who say: "Surely Allah He is the Messiah, son of Maryam". Say: "Who then could control anything as against Allah when He wished to destroy the Messiah son of Maryam and his mother and all those on the earth?" And Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what is between them; He creates what He pleases; and Allah has power over all things" (***5:17***).

The same is the case with the verse (coming after 5:75 quoted above) addressing the Christians:

"Say: "Do you worship besides Allah that which does not control for you any harm, or any profit?" And Allah – He is the Hearing, the Knowing" (***5:76***).

The basis and theme of such arguments is this: 'Isa ('a), as is seen from his condition and affairs, lived according to, and was governed by, the natural law which permeates a man's life. He had all the attributes, did all the deeds, and underwent all the conditions which a human being does; like eating, drinking, fulfilling all other human needs, showing all characteristics of the human race. Also, this material involvement, these physical attributes were real, not merely an illusion or imagination.

'Isa ('a), was a real man who had those natural attributes, conditions, and actions. The Gospels contain many verses in which he calls himself man and son of man; are full of the stories of his eating, drinking, sleeping, walking, travelling, tiring, speaking and many such things which cannot be explained away, nor can they be interpreted otherwise. This being the case, the position of the Messiah would be the same as that of other human beings; he did not own or control any affair of the others, and he could be destroyed like others.

The same is the implication of his prayers and invocations; no doubt that he worshipped Allah, his intention being to reach nearer to Allah, with humbleness and humility to the sublimity and majesty of Allah; certainly, it was not for the purpose of teaching others how to pray or for any other such aim.

The verse 4:172 argues against 'Isa's supposed divinity points to his prayer. Allah says:

"The Messiah does by no means disdain that he should be a servant of Allah, nor do the angels who are near to Him, and whoever disdains His worship and is proud, He will gather them all together to Himself" (***4:172***).

'Isa's service and worship is the first and foremost proof that he was not God and that he had no share in Godhead which is reserved for the One other than him. How can a man put himself in the position of servitude to himself? How can he be the slave of himself? How can a being be self-sufficient in the same framework in which it is dependent on someone else? The answer is clear: In no way.

Likewise, the worship of God by the angels clearly shows that they are not Allah's daughters. Nor is the Holy Ghost a God because they all are worshippers of Allah and obedient to Him. Allah says:

"And they say: "The Beneficent God has taken to Himself a son." Glory be to Him. Nay! they are honoured servants" (***21:26***).

"They do not precede Him in speech and (***only***) ***according to His commandment do they act"*** (***21:27***).

"He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they do not intercede except for him whom He approves, and for fear of Him they tremble" (***21:28***).

Moreover, the Gospels contain verses showing that the Spirit or Ghost is obedient to Allah and His messengers, following their commands, acting on their orders. There is no sense in saying that a being orders itself or obeys itself, or that it accepts and acts on the orders of its own creatures (i.e., messengers).

In the same way as 'Isa's worship of Allah proves that 'Isa was not Allah, his call to the people to worship Allah also proves it, as the verse points out:

"Certainly, they disbelieve who say: "Surely Allah, He is the Messiah, son of Maryam "; and the Messiah said: "O Children of Israel! worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord, surely whoever associates (***others***) ***with Allah, then Allah has forbidden to him the garden, and his abode is the fire; and there shall be no helpers for the unjust"*** (***5:72***).

The method of argument used in this verse is self-evident.

Although the Gospels do not contain such comprehensive sentence as, "worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord", they are full of his sayings calling people to Allah and to His worship; he repeatedly declares that Allah is his Lord in Whose Hand is the management of his affairs; he openly says that Allah is the Lord of the people; and never invites them to his own worship – in spite of his reported saying: ***"I and my Father are one"*** (***John, 10:30***). If we accept that it is a correct reporting, then, all things taken together, it must mean: my obedience is Allah's obedience; thus, it shall have the same connotation as the verse of the Qur'an:

"Whoever obeys the Messenger, he indeed obeys Allah…" (***4:80***).

5. 'Isa Is an Intercessor, Not a Redeemer

The Christians believe that Jesus Christ atoned for their sins with his blood; and that is why they call him the Redeemer, the Saviour. They explain this belief as follows:

"Adam disobeyed Allah by partaking of the forbidden tree; it was a sin that remained with Adam, and it is inherited by his progeny who come into this world burdened with that original sin; and the recompense of sin is punishment in the next world, the eternal perdition, the everlasting ruin – which cannot be warded off. And Allah is Merciful and Just – both at the same time.

"This situation created a knotty problem which defied all solutions: If Allah were to punish Adam and his progeny for their sin, it would have been against the mercy for which He had created them; and if He were to forgive them, it would have been against His Justice. Justice demands that a sinner should be punished for his sins and errors, just as a good–doer and obedient person should be rewarded for his good deeds. 28

"This problem remained unsolved until Allah solved it through Christ. Christ – the Son of God who was Himself God – entered the womb of a descendant of Adam, that is, the Virgin Maryam, and was born from her as a human being is born. In this way, he was a complete man, because he was a son of man; and at the same time, was a complete God, because he was the Son of God.

"And the Son of God, being God Himself, was sinless and protected from every sin and error.

"He lived among his people for some time, mixing and dealing with them; he joined them in eating and drinking, talked and walked with them and befriended them. Thereafter he surrendered to his enemies enabling them to kill him the worst killing – killing by crucifixion, because one who is crucified is, according to the Divine Scriptures, cursed by God.

"He took upon Himself the Divine curse and crucifixion, with all the condemnations, sufferings, and chastisement which it entails. In this way he redeemed the people through his sacrifice, in order that they might be saved from the chastisement of the hereafter and the eternal perdition. Thus, he is the atonement for the sins of the believers, nay, for the sins of the whole world." 29 This is what the Christians believe.

The Christians have made this theory (i.e., the crucifixion and atonement) the foundation of their religion. It is the Alpha and Omega of their call and mission – in the same manner as the Qur'an has founded the Islam and its mission on monotheism, as Allah says addressing His Messenger (S):

"Say: "This is my way: I invite (you) unto Allah: with clear sight (are) I and he who follows me; and glory be to Allah; and I am not of the polytheists" (***12: 108***).

It is the Christians' belief despite the fact that Christ (as the Gospels clearly say, and we have mentioned earlier) used to admonish them first of all to believe in one God and to love Him.

The Muslims as well as many non-Muslims have shown the Christians the defects and invalidities of the above-mentioned belief of Christianity. Countless books and booklets have been written and numerous pamphlets and articles published, showing that this theory is not only contrary to logic and reason, but is also contradictory to the Books of the Old and the New Testaments. What we are concerned with here – and what comes within the purview of this book of ours – is to show how this idea is opposed to the basic Qur'anic teachings, and to explain the difference between intercession (as confirmed by the Qur'an) and atonement (as claimed by the Christians).

Moreover, the Qur'an clearly says that it speaks to the people explaining things in such a way as to bring it to the level of their understanding, to make it easier for them to grasp the realities. It explains what helps them to distinguish truth from falsehood, so that they may accept that and reject accordingly. It enables man to differentiate between virtue and evil, between the beneficial and the harmful, so that he may take one and leave the other. The fact that the Qur'an keeps in view a healthy level of reason and understanding is abundantly clear to all who study the Divine Book.

Now let us take a critical look at the above-mentioned Christian theory of atonement:

First: They say that Adam committed a sin by eating from the forbidden tree. The Qur'an refutes this idea in two ways:

1. The said prohibition was not like a binding order given by a master to his servant. It was only an advisory counsel intended for the good of the person so advised, in order that he may live more comfortably. Such an advice does not bring any judicial reward or punishment whether one acts upon it or ignores it. It is not different from the order or prohibition of an advisor to the one who seeks his advice, or the directions given by a physician to his patient. What happens in such situations is this. If the person concerned acts upon the advice, he achieves what is good and beneficial to him in this life; and if he neglects such advice, he may come to harm in this world. When Adam ate from the forbidden tree, the only harm he suffered was his removal from the Garden, and thus he lost the comfort and happiness he had been enjoying there. But there was no question at all about any punishment of hereafter because he had not disobeyed any compulsory legislative order which could have resulted in "punishment".[30]

2. Adam ('a) was a prophet: The Qur'an clearly says that the prophets were sinless; they were protected by Allah from committing sins and transgressing the "orders" of Allah. Logical reasons support this belief, and the Qur'an proves it.[31]

Second: They contend that the said sin remained with Adam. But the Qur'an rejects this idea when it says:

"Then his (Adam's) Lord chose him, so He turned to him (with mercy) and guided (him)" (20: 122).

"Then Adam received* (*some*) *words from his Lord, so He turned to -him mercifully; surely He is Oft-returning* (*to mercy*)*, the Merciful"* (*2:37*)*.

Reason also supports, nay, proves this. Retribution of sin is a frightening and formidable thing that reason - or the master – deems as necessary for him who disobeys the command or shows obstinacy. It is from fear of punishment that legislations and laws are obeyed. Had there been no reward and punishment, the authority of the master could not be enforced, and no order or prohibition would be obeyed.

The master has the right and power to punish the sinners for their sins as well as reward the obedient ones for their obedience. Likewise, it lies within his power to exercise his discretion in a way he thinks fit, within the jurisdiction of his authority. He has every right to pass over and overlook the disobedience and mistakes of wrongdoers by forgiving and pardoning their sins and wrongs.

This power of forgiveness is a part of management and rule as much as is the authority to mete out punishment. There is no doubt in any mind that forgiveness and pardon, in certain cases, is good and commendable when the forgiver has full power to punish; even today reasonable persons practise it and put it into effect. In this background, there is no reason why a wrong done by a man should remain attached to him forever. Otherwise, forgiveness and pardon would have no meaning at all.

One forgives and pardons to erase a mistake and nullify the effect of a sin; and if we say that the mistake and sin remains attached and cannot be removed, then forgiveness and pardon are meaningless. Moreover, the Divine Revelation is full of descriptions of forgiveness and pardon; also, the Old and New Testaments speak of it. Not only that, even the afore-mentioned "Christian dogma" speaks about it.

In short, the claim that a certain sin or mistake had been attached to a man, which could not be erased or forgiven even after repentance and expression of sorrow, even after returning to the Lord with sincerity, is something that no reason would accept, nor would any straight-thinking person agree with.

Third: They say that the sin of Adam has remained attached not only to him but even to his progeny up to the Day of Resurrection. It means that the punishment of the crime of one person was extended to the others too - those who had no hand in that sin. In other words, a slave commits a sin, and the master widens the circle of punishment to include even those who were in no way connected with that sin! 32

What the Christians say places the burden of sin on those who had nothing to do with that supposed sin. And the Qur'an rejects it when it says:

"That no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another'* (*53:38*)*.

"And that there is not for man* (*aught*) *except what he strives for"* (*53:39*)*.

Sound reason supports this dictum, because it is an evil to penalize someone for a sin he has not

committed.)[33]

Fourth: Their argument is based on a misconception that every mistake and sin – without any exception – throws the man into eternal perdition. In other words, sins do not differ in size and magnitude – all are great and capital. But the Qur'an teaches us that sins and errors are of various categories: some are major, others minor; some may be forgiven while others like polytheism shall not be forgiven except after repentance. Allah says:

"If you avoid the great sins from which you are forbidden, We will expiate from you your (small) sins and cause you to enter an honourable (place of) entering" (4:31).

"Surely Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases" (4:48).

Thus, Allah has taught us that some of the forbidden things, that is, sins and mistakes, are major, and others are, by implication, minor; some are not forgivable while others are forgiven. In any case, sins vary in their seriousness, and not every sin places the sinner in eternal perdition or ever-burning fire.

Reason also refuses to lump all sins together, to put all mistakes in one category. A slap on face is different from murder; a lustful eye and fornication are not the same; and so on. Never in the long human history have people treated all sins and errors alike. Sane persons in every age have prescribed different punishments for different crimes. How can it be possible to bracket all sins together without any discrimination, when there is so clear difference among them?

In view of this accepted difference, only a few of them may cause eternal perdition, never-ending chastisement (for example) associating others with Allah, as the Qur'an has said. Obviously, going against the prohibition of partaking of a tree cannot be put in the category of disbelief in Allah or polytheism or things like that. Thus, there is no reason why it should cause an eternal punishment.[34]

Fifth: Let us look at what they have said about the problem of the conflict between the Divine attributes of mercy and justice; how a plan was devised to overcome that difficulty; and how Christ came down and then ascended to heaven to effect that scheme, with all the ramifications they have mentioned.

Ponder on this statement and its concomitants, and see what type of god they believe in. Here you will find a Creator God Who is the beginning and the end of this created universe and all its components. But all His actions emanate from a will and a knowledge that are found in Him; and His will depends on an academic preference – in the same way as a man opts for a course of action after weighing its pros and cons according to his knowledge.

Likewise, God ponders on the positive and negative sides of a thing and then decides whether to do it or not. Sometimes He makes a wrong choice and repents for it;[35] at other times He meditates upon a problem without finding its correct solution; often He remains unaware of many affairs. In short, in their

eyes, God in His attributes and actions is not different from a man. Whatever He does, He does it after thinking and meditating over it, directing His endeavours to the advantages of that action. His decision is thus governed and controlled by some extraneous factors, that is, the said advantages.

He may find His way to the correct decision; also, He may take a wrong decision; there may be error, misunderstanding or forgetfulness in the course He has taken. Sometimes He knows, at other times He does not; often He overpowers, and frequently is Himself overpowered. His power, like His knowledge, is limited. When the belief about Him is such, then it should be equally possible for Him to be subjected to all the conditions that prevail in a human being who decides to do a work after pondering on its pros and cons: God will thus experience joy and grief, vainglory and shame, happiness and sorrow – and things like that. Needless to say that such a being would be a physical and material one, governed by the laws of movement, change and gradual completion. A being having these attributes must be a transient being, a created being; it cannot be the Self-existing God Who is the Creator of all things.

If you study the Old and New Testaments, you will know that all that we have said above is true; and that they believe in a god who has a body and has all the attributes found in a body, and especially in a man.

As for the Qur'an, it declares the Lord's glory in all these matters, showing that He is far above such myths and superstitions, as it says:

***"Glory be to Allah* (*being free*) *from what they describe"* (*37:159*).**

We have many incontestable rational proofs to show that Allah is One in Whom all the attributes of perfection are united. His are the existence without any hint of inexistence, absolute power without any shade of weakness, all-encompassing knowledge without any taint of ignorance, absolute life without any possibility of death or destruction. This being the case, there can never come any change in His existence, power, knowledge, or life.

Consequently, He cannot be a body or a being related to physical body, because body and the things connected to it are surrounded by change and alteration, subdued by incorporeality, neediness and shortcomings. As He is not a body, nor related to body, He is not subjected to varying circumstances or changing conditions; He is far above forgetfulness or obliviousness, mistake or repentance, undecidedness or uncertainty, reaction or despondency, weakness or defeat – and things like that. We have fully explained the rational arguments (related) to these topics in this book in relevant places; those who want a thorough study should look for them under the relevant verses.

A discerning reader may easily judge between the two beliefs: Here is the Qur'an, declaring the glory of the Lord of the universe; it affirms for Him every attribute of perfection, and asserts His freedom from every imperfection; and declares that He is too great to be comprehended by our understanding – beset as it is by limitations and imperfections. And there are the Old and New Testaments describing God in terms which can only be found in the Greek, Indian and Chinese mythologies of the ancient times; and ascribing to Him such things which primitive man imagined and those his superstition led him to believe.

Sixth: They say that Allah sent His Son, Christ, and told him to enter the womb of a woman – in order that he could be born a man while he was a god. It is the same unintelligible theory which has been strongly refuted by the Qur'an; there is no need to repeat here the earlier-explained Qur'anic arguments against it.

Also, reason does not support this theory. First, look at the attributes which are essential for the Self-existing Being. His existence is eternal, without beginning or end; there can be no change in Him; His existence knows no limit; He encompasses everything, but Himself is above the limits of time, space, and their concomitants. Then think over the creation of man from the time he was a sperm to the stage when it is a foetus in a womb.

No matter which interpretation you accept for this human birth of god: that of the Melchites, or the Nestorians, or the Jacobites, or some other groups, in the end you will have to admit that there is no relationship between a being that has a physical body with all its accidents and concomitants and a Being that has neither a body nor any of its concomitants or accidents (like time, space, movement etc.). How can one even think of unity between the two in any way?

The fact is that this theory does not agree with self-evident rational propositions. That is why St. Paul and other leaders of Christianity hold philosophy in contempt and spurn and disdain rational arguments. St. Paul writes: "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?... For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified."[36]

We find a lot of pronouncements – in similar vein – in his writings as well as in those of others. This line was adopted only for propagation of their ideas and missionary activities. Anyone pondering on these epistles and books and studying the way they address the people may easily understand the motive behind it.

The above discourse also exposes the flaw in their statement that: "God is sinless and protected from sins and errors." The God they have imagined is not safe from errors at all; He errs in His perceptions, and He errs in His actions. Of course, He does not disobey anyone because none is superior to Him. That is why the question of sin and disobedience does not arise at all, so far as God is concerned. Consequently, it is irrelevant, nay, unimaginable, to say that He is "protected from sins".

Seventh: They say that God became man and then lived with his people as a man live in society until he surrendered to his enemies.

It means that the Self-existent God may acquire for Himself some properties especially reserved for transient and incorporeal creatures – only then He can be God and man all at the same time. If so, then He can also become any of His other creatures; He may acquire for Himself the reality of any of the species created by Him. One day He may appear as a man, the next day as a horse, sometimes as a

bird, at other times as an insect, and so on. He may even acquire more than one reality at a time, that is, He may come to this world as a combination of several species, for example, He may appear as perfect man and perfect horse and perfect insect, all at the same time.

Likewise, He may act in the same way as His creatures do – because He may appear as a certain species and then would act in manners reserved for that species. Going a step further, it would be possible for Him to do two opposite things together like justice and injustice, or to acquire opposite attributes for Himself, for example, knowledge and ignorance, power and weakness, life and death, want and freedom from want. Glory be to Allah Who is far above such absurdities! (This snag is different from the one explained in the Sixth Objection.)

Eighth: They say that he suffered until he was crucified and took upon himself the curse, because a crucified person is cursed. What do they really mean when they say that he took the curse upon himself? What is the meaning of curse? In common usage and language curse means removal from Divine Mercy and Honour. Does that supposed curse imply the same meaning? Or is it something else? If it has the same meaning which is known to the language and common usage, then how can God remove Himself from His own mercy? Or how can anyone else remove Him away from His own mercy? What is mercy? It is a positive bestowal, a grant of favours and bounties, a bequeathal of specialities of existence.

When one is cursed – taken away from Divine Mercy – it results in poverty, disgrace, or similar effects – in this world or the next or in both. This being the case, what is the sense of saying that God was affected by curse? Choose any meaning for curse, it cannot apply to God – the God Who is Self-sufficient and fulfils the needs of everything.

The Qur'anic teaching is diametrically opposed to this truly amazing theory of the New Testament. Allah says:

"O men! you are the ones who stand in need of Allah, and Allah is He Who is Self-sufficient, the Praised One" (***35: 15***).

Also, the names and attributes of Allah mentioned in the Qur'an make it clear that it is impossible for any type of need or want, shortcoming or defect, loss or extinction, evil or abomination, disgrace or stigma to reach the sublime majesty of Allah.

Poser: God suffered disgrace and took the curse upon Himself only because He became one with man. Otherwise, He in His own Self is too high to be affected by such things.

Reply: Did God, by becoming one with man, take upon Himself that curse and those sufferings in real sense of the word? Or was it all just a metaphor, only an allegory? If it was in real sense, our objection stands. And if it was only in a metaphorical sense, then the original "problem" would remain unsolved; the birth of Christ would not solve the conflict between Divine Mercy and Divine Justice. If it was not God

– but someone else – who suffered all those indignities and curse, the so–called scheme of atonement would remain unfulfilled. Obviously, the said plan was based on the idea that God Himself should be the ransom for human beings.

Ninth: They say that ‘Isa atoned for the sins of the believers, nay, for the sins of the whole world. This talk shows that they do not understand the real meaning of sin and error, nor do they comprehend how the sins bring the punishment in next world, or how that punishment is effected. Also, they have not grasped the relationship between sins and errors on one side and Divine Legislation on the other. Nor do they know the stand of the *Shari‘ah* about it.

But the Qur’an clearly describes all these things and teaches us these realities – as we have explained in the Commentaries these verses, “***Surely Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable..***” (***2:26***) and ***“Mankind was but one nation..”*** (***2:213***). We have described therein that the orders and laws (which might be the subject of disobedience) and the sins and errors all are mentally posited things based on subjective consideration.

They have been made for the protection of society’s well–being; and the punishment for disobedience is the unpleasant result which has been prescribed with a single aim in view – to discourage and prevent a responsible man from indulging into sin, from disobeying the law. This is the view of the sages who have laid the foundation of human society.

But the Qur’anic teaching leads us to a still higher level in this respect (and the rational reasoning supports it, as we have explained). It says that when a man obeys the *Shari‘ah* prescribed for him by Allah, his psyche acquires some noble and praiseworthy inner traits; and if he disobeys the said *Shari‘ah*, he acquires unworthy, hideous and evil traits. It is these deeply ingrained traits and characteristics which prepare for him the rewards or punishments of the next life, respectively. That reward and punishment is represented by the Paradise and the Hell, respectively – and their respective reality is nearness to Allah or distance from Him. Thus, the merit and demerit of deeds are based on things that actually exist and have a system. Unlike our social laws they are not based on any imaginary thing emanating from subjective consideration.

Also, it is not a secret that the Divine Legislation perfects and completes the Divine Creation. It brings the creative guidance to its final destination. In other words, Allah brings everything to the perfections of its existence, to the final goal of its being. And among the perfections of human existence are a good social system in this world, and a happy, bounteous life in the hereafter.

The way to that perfection is religion that enacts and promulgates laws for society’s reform and development and contains directions for reaching nearer to Allah (and these directives are called acts of worship). When a man follows the laws of religion, his life and livelihood are improved, and his soul becomes ready to receive Allah’s bounties; and he is qualified – in his self and in his actions – for the Divine Honour in the hereafter. All of these emanate from the light put in his heart, and the purity that is

found in his self. This in short is the reality.

Man gets nearer to Allah or strays far away from Him. This nearness and distance are the foundations of his eternal happiness and unhappiness respectively and determine his social development (or otherwise) in this life. And religion is the only factor that brings about his nearness and distance. All these are real things, not based on imaginary assumptions or subjective considerations.

Now suppose that one putative sin of Adam – his partaking of the forbidden tree – brought eternal perdition on him, and not only on him, but on all his descendants also; and that there was no remedy for it, no relief from that ruination – except atonement through Christ. Then what was the use of sending religion – any religion – before Christ? And what was the use of ordaining it with Christ? And what is the use of promulgating it after Christ?

Let us put it this way: Eternal perdition and punishment in hereafter was a firmly decreed fate of man – because of the said sin; it could not be removed or averted from him either through good deeds or through repentance; the only effective remedy was the atonement through Christ's suffering and crucifixion. Then why did Allah promulgate the laws, revealed the books, and sent the prophets and messengers? What was the logic behind all this exercise? Were not all those promises and threats, all those good tidings and warnings devoid of truth? What could all those endeavours avail mankind when the whole species was doomed to perdition, and when eternal punishment was their firmly decreed fate?

Also, suppose there were people who perfected themselves by sincerely following the previous *Shari'ah* (and there were countless prophets and also men of God in previous *ummah* who were like that, for example, the honoured prophets Ibrahim, Musa and others); they lived perfectly and died before the time of atonement. Now what would you say about them? Did they end their life in infelicity and perdition? Or in felicity and happiness? What did they face when they met death and went to the next world? Did death bring them to chastisement and ruination? Or to Divine bounties and happy life?

Moreover, Christ clearly says that he was sent only to save the sinners and wrong–doers, and that good–doers and righteous have no need of such help.[37]

Frankly speaking, no valid reason can be given for promulgating the Divine Laws, for ordaining the religious values – before the supposed atonement was affected through Christ; it was but a vain, senseless, and aimless exercise. Nor can any good and correct reason be advanced for this "strange" action of God. The only thing that can be said is this:

God knew very well that unless the problem of Adam's sin was solved, no law promulgated by Him would do any good. Yet He went on promulgating those laws just to be on the safe side, hoping that one of these days He would get a chance to solve this problem and then He would be able to harvest the fruits of those legislations! Thus, He legislated the laws and promulgated them through the prophets – hiding the truth from the prophets and their people alike. He did not tell them that there was a big problem which – if it remained unsolved – would nullify all the efforts of the whole group of the prophets

and the believers, and which would render all the laws ineffective and useless. On the contrary, He pretended that the legislations and the prophetic missions were very serious, very important and very real things.

Thus, God deceived the people, and deceived Himself too. He deceived the people by promising that their safety and happiness was guaranteed if they faithfully followed the *Shari'ah*. And He deceived Himself because, once the atonement was affected, legislation of the *Shari'ah* would become irrelevant, without having any effect on the people's felicity – in the same way as it was without any effect as long as the problem of Adam's sin was not solved. This was the case before affectation of the said atonement.

Coming to the time when atonement was effected – and to the later days – the ineffectiveness and futility of the *Shari'ah* of prophetic mission and of Divine Guidance is much more self-evident. What is the use or benefit of believing in divinely sent realities and performing good deeds now that the problem of the original sin has been solved, and the atonement has brought about forgiveness and mercy to all men – believers and unbelievers, righteous and unrighteous, all alike – without any difference between the most impeccable righteous one and the most incorrigible impious one? Both were to suffer eternal perdition when the original sin was not redeemed, and both are to share in the Divine Mercy now that it has been redeemed through the said atonement. (Remember that no good deed could remove that stigma if there were no atonement.)

Objection: The atonement would benefit only those who believe in Christ. Therefore, the prophetic mission did have its use and benefit, as Christ has said in the Gospel.[38]

Reply: First, it contradicts the saying of St. John referred to earlier. Second, it destroys all the edifice built so far, because nobody – right from Adam to the Last Day – would enter the sanctuary of safety and deliverance except a very small group, that is, those who believe in Christ and the Holy Ghost; and not even all the Christians but only a certain group from among all those widely differing denominations – all other denominations would be thrown into eternal perdition. I wish I knew what would happen to the honoured prophets (who came) before Christ, and to the believers of their *ummah*! What would be the status of their mission, of the books they brought and of the wisdom they taught? Was it true? Or just a lie? The Gospels verify the Torah and its mission, and there is no mention at all of the Ghost and the atonement in the Torah. Does the Gospel verify a true book? Or does it verify a pack of lies?

Poser: As we know, the previously revealed books give the good tidings of Christ. This was a sort of a general call by them towards Christ, although they did not give any detail about his coming and atoning the sin. God was always telling His prophets about the advent of Christ in order that they might believe in him and be happy with what he would do.

Reply: First, to make such claims about the prophets before Musa is to shoot in the dark, to venture into *terra incognita*.[39] Moreover, if there was any good news, it was not an invitation to believe in, and follow,

him. Second, that good tiding does not solve the problem of the futility of the *Shari'ah*; if Christ delivered all those who believed in him, then was it not useless and futile to invite people to follow the laws of the *Shari'ah* and to practise good ethics and morality? Even Christ exhorted people to follow the rules of religion and be of good conduct; and the Gospels are full of his sermons to this effect. Third, the basic problem remains. They had talked about the original sin and the non-fulfilment of the Divine Purpose, and that purpose is still unfulfilled. God had created mankind to bestow His mercy on all of them, to cover all of them with His favour and bounties, felicity, and happiness. But what is the result? Almost all of them - exception for a small group - are going to be punished, suffering under the wrath of God, thrown into eternal perdition.

These are just a few of the rational reasons showing the absurdity and invalidity of this theory. The Qur'an too supports these reasons. Allah says:

"...Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (to its goal)" (20:50).

He has made it clear that everything is guided to its goal and to what its existence demands. The guidance is of two kinds: creative and legislative. It is the established way of Allah to bestow every relevant guidance on everything, and it includes the religious guidance bestowed on man.

Then Allah says - and it is the first religious guidance given to Adam and those who were sent down with him from the Garden:

"We said: "Get down you therefrom all together; if there comes to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve" (2:38).

"And (as to) those who disbelieve in and belie our signs, they are the inmates of the fire, in it they shall abide." (2:39).

It gives, in a nutshell, what various laws were to promulgate in detail up to the Day of Resurrection; it contains legislation as well as promise and threat - all in clear terms without ambiguity. Again, He says:

"...And the truth do I speak" (38:84).

"The word is not changed with Me, nor am I in the least unjust to the servants" (50:29).

Allah declares that He has no hesitation or misgiving about what He decides, He does not break what He has joined; whatever He decides, He enforces; and what He says, He enacts; His action does not deviate from the line He has prescribed for it. He does not waver or hesitate when He wills; nor is it befitting to His knowledge that He should intend a thing and then some demerit should appear in that course of action which He did not know before and thus He should decide not to do it. Nor can anyone else hinder His plan: It is not that He should will a thing, deciding to do it and then some rational defect should prevent Him from doing it, or some snag should appear in its execution and He should abandon the plan - because all such things, if they ever happened, would show helplessness of God. Allah says:

"…And Allah is predominant over His affairs…" (***12:21***).

"…Surely Allah attains His purpose…" (***65:3***).

And Musa is reported as saying:

"The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a book: errs not my Lord, nor does He forget" (***20:52***).

And Allah says about the Day of Judgment:

"This day every soul shall be rewarded for what it has earned; no injustice (***shall be done***) ***this day; surely Allah is quick in reckoning"*** (***40:17***).

These and similar other verses clearly show that Allah, after creating His creatures, has not neglected to look after their affairs, nor is He ignorant of what they would do, nor is He sorry for what He has done. As He is constantly looking after their well-being, He has ordained for them His laws – a serious and important legislation which He has ordained not because He is afraid of something or expects to gain something through it.

He shall reward every doer for his action – if good, then good; and if evil, then evil. In all these affairs nobody can overpower Him, nor can anyone impose his will on Him – because He has no partner or colleague. There will be neither any ransom nor any redemption to save anyone; nor can anyone intercede for someone without Allah's permission. Because all such propositions are against His absolute ownership which He has over His creatures.

Tenth: Let us look at the story of atonement. What is atonement or ransom? A man – or a thing related to him – is involved in some crimes or sin. As a result of that he faces the possibilities of harm or destruction of life or valuable property; and therefore, he offers something less important in order to save his life or the more valuable property. A man taken prisoner redeems himself with offer of some money; crimes are redeemed with money paid as fine. The thing given for this purpose is called ransom, fine or redemption. Atonement, in short, is a deal which transfers the right of the claimant from the person so redeemed to the thing given in ransom or redemption – and thus the redeemed one is saved from captivity or from the evil consequences of the crime he had committed.

This description shows that atonement and redemption is simply unimaginable in the matters related to Allah. The Divine Authority – unlike human authority, which is merely an abstracted idea and a subjective consideration – is the real authority which cannot be changed or transferred. Things, in their species and with their effects, actions and reactions, have been created by Allah and continue to exist because of Him.

It is a reality, a fact; and reality and fact cannot change into non-reality, non-fact. Such a proposition cannot be imagined – let alone its ever coming into being. Allah's ownership, authority and rights are not like those of us human beings. We are bound with social norms and laws. Our social rights, authority

and ownership are merely subjective considerations, abstracted ideas based on our imaginations; their status and worth are in our own hands; we may establish a right today and abolish it tomorrow – as our interest and outlook change concerning our life and livelihood.[40]

Allah has specifically refuted the idea of atonement in the following verse:

"So today ransom shall not be accepted from you nor from those who disbelieved; your abode is the fire." (***57:15***).

And as explained earlier, the same is the import of the words of the Messiah quoted by Allah in the Qur'an:

"And when Allah will say: "O 'Isa son of Maryam! did you say to men, 'Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah' ", he will say: "Glory be to Thee, it did not befit me that I should say what I had no right to (***say***)***…"*** (***5:116***).

"I did not say to them save that what Thou didst enjoin me with: 'That worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord', and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst take me (***away***) ***completely, Thou wert the watcher over them, and Thou art witness of all things"*** (***5:117***).

"If Thou shouldst chastise them, then surely they are The servants; and if Thou shouldst forgive them, then surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise." (***5:118***).

His words: ***"and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them…"*** (***5:117***), have the following import: 'I had nothing to do with them except what Thou hadst entrusted me to do, that is, conveying Thy message to them and being a witness over them ***"as long as I was among them"*** (***5:117***); whether Thou shouldst chastise them or shouldst forgive them, entirely depends on Thy discretion; I have nothing to do with it. I do not have any authority on Thy will, with which I could save them from Thy chastisement or sentence them to punishment.'

It clearly refutes the idea of ransom and atonement. Had there been any ransoming or redeeming, it would have been wrong for him to wash his hands of the fate of his ummah, telling Allah that it was His (Allah's) discretion whether to punish them or forgive them, and that he ('Isa – 'a) had nothing to do with it.

Of similar connotation are the following verses:

"And be on your guard against the Day when one soul shall not avail another in the least, neither shall intercession on its behalf be accepted, nor shall any compensation be taken from it, nor shall they be helped" (***2:48***).

"… before the day comes in which there is no bargaining, neither any friendship nor

intercession…" (***2:254***).

"The day on which you will turn back retreating; there shall be no saviour for you from Allah…" (***40:33***).

Obviously, the "compensation" (in the first verse), the "bargaining" (of the second) and the "saviour" (of the third) all apply to the idea of atonement and redemption; the verses in refuting these things refute the belief of atonement.

Of course, the Qur'an accepts the Messiah as one of the intercessors – but not as an atonement. We have explained about "Intercession" under the verse "***And be on your guard against the day when one soul shall not avail another…"*** (***2:48***). 41 We have explained therein that intercession shows the nearness of the intercessor and his good standing with the master, without there being any transfer of authority from the master to the intercessors; without affecting in any way the ownership or power of the master; without nullifying or abrogating the master's commandment which the sinner had disobeyed; and without negating the system of recompense, reward and punishment.

Intercession is but a sort of prayer and request by the intercessor that the master – in this case, the Lord – manage the affairs of His creature with mercy. The intercessor accepts the Master's right to punish the sinner (because he had sinned and the law of recompense makes him liable to punishment), but asks the Master to exercise His power of forgiveness – because He has the right to forgive as He has the right to punish.

The intercessor thus requests the Master to exercise His right of pardon and forgiveness, when the sinner has become liable for punishment, without in any way affecting the Master's ownership or authority. But atonement is something else; it is a deal, a bargain, which transfers the Master's authority from the sinner to the ransom given in his place, and removes the sinner from the Master's power as soon as the Master accepts the ransom in his place.

That the Messiah is an intercessor is proved by the following verse:

"And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for intercession, but he who bears witness of the truth, and they know" (***43:86***).

It clearly says that the people excepted would have the authority to intercede. 'Isa ('a) is among those whom they call besides Allah. But he has the authority of intercession because he is included in the exception: Allah confirms in the Qur'an that He had taught him ('Isa) the Book and the Wisdom, and that he ('Isa) shall be among the witnesses on the Day of Judgment. Allah says:

"And He will teach him the Book and the Wisdom" (***3:48***).

And Allah quotes 'Isa as saying:

"…And I was a witness of them so long as I was among them" (***5:117***).

He also says:

"…And on the Day of Resurrection he shall be a witness against them" (***4:159***).

All these verses read together prove that 'Isa ('a) is one of the intercessors. We have described it in detail under the following verse 2:48.

6. The Origin of These Beliefs

The Qur'an rejects the idea that these theories and beliefs were started or propagated by 'Isa ('a). The fact is that the Christians blindly followed their leaders, leaving all affairs in their hands; and the leaders transplanted the myths of ancient idolators into Christianity. Allah says:

"And the Jews say: "'Uzayr is the son of Allah"; and the Christians say: "The Messiah is the son of Allah" these are the words of their mouths; they imitate the saying of those who disbelieved before; may Allah destroy them; how they are turned away!" (***9:30***).

"They have taken their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allah, and (***also***) ***the Messiah son of Maryam, and they were not enjoined but that they should worship one God only, there is no god but He; far from His Glory be what they set up*** (***with Him***)***"*** (***9:31***).

Who are the unbelievers whom Allah refers to when He says: they imitate the saying of those who disbelieved before? Surely it does not refer to the idolaters of pre-Islamic Arabia, who said that the angels were the daughters of God. Because the People of the Book believed God to have a son long before they came into contact with the Arabs – and especially so the Jews; while the words, who disbelieved before, apparently refer to the unbelievers who were before the Jews and the Christians. Moreover, the Arabs themselves were not the originators of idol-worship – it was brought to them from abroad.[42]

Moreover, the idolaters of Rome, Greece, Egypt, Syria, and India were nearer to the People of the Book (who lived in Palestine and its neighbourhood), and it was easier for the Jews and the Christians to adopt those people's beliefs and rituals, and the influencing factors were more conducive to it.

Therefore, the unbelievers of earlier times (whose ideas concerning sonship of God, the People of the Book imitated) referred to by the Qur'an were the ancient idolaters of India and China, as well as those of Rome, Greece, and North Africa. The history shows close resemblance of such Jewish and Christians beliefs with the myths of those nations – like sonship, fathership, trinity, as well as the stories of crucifixion and atonement etc. These are the historical facts to which the Qur'an has drawn our attention.

Similarly, the following verse points to this historical fact:

Say: "O People of the Book! be not unduly immoderate in your religion, and do not follow the low desires of the people who went astray before and led many astray and went astray from the right path" (***5:77***).

This verse shows that their immoderation in religion – their excessive love of some personalities which led them to raise them to godhead – had come to them from some previous nations who had gone astray before them, and in whose footsteps the Jews and the Christians were following.

The phrase: the people who went astray before, does not refer to their scholars or monks. The phrase is unrestricted and unconditional; it does not say, 'the people among you'. or 'led many among you astray'. Nor does it point to the Arabs of the days of ignorance – as we have explained earlier.

Moreover, it describes those people as having led many people astray; in other words, they were leaders of falsehood, whose words were listened to and whose directions were followed. Arabs did not have such a position in those days; they were just a small group of unlettered people, and did not have any knowledge, civilization, and development in which – or because of which – other people could follow them. But the case of Iran, Rome, and India etc., was different; they were highly civilized and developed nations.

Clearly the verse points to the idol–worshippers of China, India, and the western countries, as we have explained.

7. Which Book The People Of The Book Belong To? What Is Its Condition?

Although traditions count the Zoroastrians among the People of the Book (and it means they must have had a special Book of their own, or should have belonged to one of the Books mentioned by the Qur'an, for example, the Book of Nuh, the Scriptures of Ibrahim, Torah of Musa, Injil of 'Isa and Zabur of Dawud), but the Qur'an does not make any reference to them, nor does it mention any book of theirs; the Avastha which they have is not mentioned in the Qur'an at all, and they do not acknowledge any of the other Books.

When the Qur'an uses the term, the People of the Book, it means the Jews and the Christians, because of the Books which Allah had revealed to them.

The Jewish Scripture contains 35,[43] Books: five are together called the Torah of Musa[44]; twelve are called the Kings;[45] then there are the Books of Job and Psalms of Dawud; then come three Books of Sulayman;[46] and last seventeen Books called the Prophets.[47]

The Qur'an has not mentioned any of them except the Torah of Musa and the Zabur of Dawud.

The Christians' Scriptures are as follows: The four Gospels (of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John); the Acts of the Apostles, and several Epistles,[48] and lastly the Revelation of John.

The Qur'an does not mention any of these Christians' Books. But it says that there was a Divine Book revealed to 'Isa son of Maryam, which was named Inji1; it was a single Book, not many. Although the Christians do not know it, nor do they acknowledge its existence, there are sentences in the writings of their leaders that contain admission that 'Isa did have a Book, Injil by name.49

Nevertheless, the Qur'an gives a hint that a portion of genuine Torah is still preserved in the Scriptures of the Jews, as is a part of genuine Injil still extant in the Scriptures of the Christians. Allah says:

"And how do they make you a judge and they have the Torah wherein is Allah's judgment?..." (***5:43***).

"And of those who say: "We are Christians", We did take their covenant, but they forgot a portion of what they were admonished with..." (***5:14***).

Both verses clearly imply what we have said.

Judaism And Christianity from Historical Point Of View

Judaism And Christianity From Historical Point Of View 50

1. The History of The Present Torah

The Israelites were descendants of Israel, that is, Ya'qub. In the beginning they lived a nomadic tribal life; then the Egyptian rulers51 brought them into Egypt, where they treated them as captive slaves. This continued until Allah delivered them through Musa from the Pharaoh and his deeds.

During Musa's time they followed the line of their Leader, that is, Musa ('a), and thereafter Yusha' ('a) (Joshua). For some time thereafter their affairs were in the hands of the judges like Ehud and Gideon etc. Then began the era of the Kings; the first of the Kings was Saul (Talut of the Qur'an); and then came Dawud and Sulayman ('a).

After Sulayman the Kingdom was divided52, and their power weakened. Still there came on throne more than thirty Kings like Rehoboam, Abijam, Jeroboam, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram and others.

The division continued to sap the nation's strength until they were vanquished by the Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar, who subdued Jerusalem, that is, Bayt al-Maqdis around 600 B.C. Later the Jews revolted; so, he sent his army which besieged them, and on reconquering the city, ransacked it, plundering the King's treasures as well as those of the Temple. The Babylonians gathered the Jews and took about ten thousand souls – wealthy people, strong youths, and artisans – in captivity to Babylonia, leaving only weak persons and beggars in Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar appointed Zedekiah (the last Israelite King) to govern them as his vassal.

Ten years passed, Zedekiah gathered some strength and established some contact with the Pharaoh of

the time. Then he revolted against Nebuchadnezzar. This enraged the latter who himself led his army against the Jews and besieged their towns. They fortified themselves and the siege continued for about one and a half year; the besieged population faced famine and epidemic.

Still the siege continued until Nebuchadnezzar conquered all the forts in the year 586 B.C.; he massacred the Jews, turned their towns into ruins, demolished the Temple and destroyed every religious symbol. When he left, the Temple was only a mound of dust and rubble; and the Torah and the Ark in which it was kept were irretrievably lost.

Things continued like that for about fifty years. The Jews were captives in Babylonia; their Book (Torah) was lost and there was nowhere any trace of it; their Temple was a ruin, their towns middens of rubble.

Then Cyrus, the Persian King, appeared on the scene. He vanquished Babylonians, conquered Babylonia, and stayed there for a short time. He released the Israelite captives, and appointed Ezra as their leader; Ezra was authorized by him to rewrite the Torah for them, rebuild their Temple and re-establish their original rites and rituals. Ezra led the Israelites back to Jerusalem in 457 B.C.[53] Thereafter he compiled and edited the books attributed to Musa – and it is what is known today as the Torah.[54]

If you think over these events, you will see that the chain of narrators of today's Torah is broken and is not connected all the way to Musa ('a) – except through a single person, that is, Ezra. But first of all, we do not know who Ezra was; second, we do not know how much he knew of the Torah or how deep his knowledge was; third, we do not know how honest and trustworthy he was; fourth, we do not know from where he collected what he compiled as the books of the Torah; and last, we do not know with which authentic source he compared his collection to correct the mistakes which might have crept into the text.

This unfortunate episode has given rise to another disturbing theory. Some western scholars now deny the existence of Musa ('a) and the events related to him. They say that he is a mythical being who never existed. (The same theories have been advanced about 'Isa son of Maryam. But we the Muslims cannot entertain such ideas because the Qur'an in very clear terms confirms his existence (peace be on him).

2. The Story Of 'Isa and The Gospel

The Jews pay particular attention to their history. They have recorded the main events through which they have passed. Nevertheless, if you hunt through their books and literature, you will not come across any mention of 'Isa son of Maryam. Jewish literature throws no light on his birth or mission, nor does it say anything about his character and life story.

It is silent about the miracles appearing on his hand; and does not say how his life on the earth ended – did he die a natural death? Was he killed or crucified? Or was there something else? Why this silence? Why had his affairs remained hidden from them? Or why did they keep it hidden?

The Qur'an mentions that the Jews had falsely accused Maryam and calumniated her regarding the birth of 'Isa, and that they claimed to have killed 'Isa. Allah says:

"And for their unbelief and for their having uttered against Maryam a grievous calumny." (***4: 156***)

"And their saying: "Surely, we killed the Messiah, 'Isa son of Maryam, the messenger of Allah"; and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so (***like 'Isa***)***; and most surely those who differ therein are only in a doubt about it; they killed him not for sure."*** (***4: 157***)***.***

Was this claim of theirs based on some oral tradition which was never put to writing? Every nation does have such folklores – some facts, some myths – which should not be taken seriously unless they are based on correct, reliable sources.

Or was it that they heard the Christians talking about the Messiah and his birth and mission; and taking the story from them, they accused Maryam of indecency and claimed to having killed the Messiah? No definite answers can be found to these questions. As far as the Qur'an is concerned, it clearly ascribes to them only the claim of killing, not of crucifying; then it says that they are in confusion and there is a difference of opinion among them about the whole matter.

As for the Christians, the story of the Messiah is based on their Scriptures, that is, the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; as well as the Acts of the Apostles (by Luke) and several Epistles of Paul, Peter, Jacob, John and Jude. The authenticity of all depends on genuineness of the four Gospels; therefore, let us have a look at them.

The Gospel of Matthew: It is the first and earliest of the Gospels so far as compilation and publication is concerned. Some say that it was written in 38 C.E.; others that it was compiled between 50 and 60 C.E.[55] In any case, it was written after the Messiah.

The ancient and modern Christian scholars are of the opinion that it was originally written in Hebrew; and then translated into Greek and other languages. But the original Hebrew version is lost; and as for the translation, its condition (correctness, etc.) cannot be verified, nor is it known who had translated it.[56]

The Gospel of Mark: Mark was a disciple of St. Peter; he was not one of the twelve disciples of Christ. It is often said that he wrote his Gospel on Peter's orders, and that he did not believe in divinity of Christ.[57] Accordingly some people say that he had written his Gospel for the tribes and villagers, and that was why he introduced Christ as a messenger of Allah who brought and conveyed the *Shari'ah* of Allah.[58] He wrote this Book in 61 C.E.

The Gospel of Luke: Luke was neither one of the disciples nor had he seen Christ. He learnt Christianity from Paul. Paul was a Jew who hated the Christians and Christianity; he oppressed those who believed in Christ and used to hinder their activities and disturb their affairs. Then all of a sudden, he came to them and claimed that he had been seized by an epileptic fit in course of which Christ appeared to him

and admonished him for his bad treatment of the Christians; according to his claim, he believed in Christ in the same trance and Christ in the same vision appointed him as his apostle to propagate the Christ's Gospel.

It was St. Paul who laid the foundation of Christianity, as it is today.[59] He taught that mere belief in Jesus the Christ was enough for salvation; there was no need of acting on it. Accordingly, he allowed them to eat pork and dead animals; and forbade circumcision and a lot of the *Shari'ah* of the Torah.[60] This was despite of the fact that Injil was revealed just as a verifier of the Torah, and had made lawful only a few things that were forbidden in Torah. 'Isa ('a) had come to re-establish the *Shari'ah* of Torah, and to bring the deviators and transgressors back to it; he had not come to abrogate the *Shari'ah* or to build the eternal felicity based on a belief devoid of action.

Luke wrote his Gospel after that of Mark, and it was after the deaths of St. Peter and Paul. Some people have firmly opined that the Gospel of Luke is not a revelation like other Gospels, as may be understood from his Prologue.[61]

The Gospel of John: Many Christians say that the John who wrote it was John the son of Zebedee, the fisher, one of the twelve disciples, and the one whom Jesus loved.[62]

They say that as Cerinthus[63] and Ebionites[64] and their followers thought that Jesus was nothing more than a created human being whose existence did not precede his mother's existence, the bishops of Asia and others visited John in 96 C.E. and urged him to write what others had not written in their Gospels so that he could particularly describe the divinity of the Christ. John had to comply with their request and wrote this Gospel.[65]

There is a difference of opinion as to when it was written: Some say, in 65 C.E., some say, in 96 C.E., and others say, in 98 C.E. Another group says that it was not written by John the disciple: Some say that it is the work of a student of Alexandria[66]; others say that this Gospel as well as the Epistles of John were authored in the beginning of the 2nd Century by an unknown person who attributed them to John so that the writings might gain credence in people's eyes[67]; yet others think that the Gospel of John originally contained twenty chapters and after his death the Church of Ephesus added the twenty-first.[68]

This is then the condition of the four Gospels. What is certain is that all these narrations depend on seven persons: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, Paul and Jude; and they rely on the four Gospels, which in their turn rely on the earliest one, that is, the Gospel of Matthew. And we have already seen that it is a translation whose original is lost; nobody knows who had translated it. What was the theme and teaching of the original? Did it teach messengership of Jesus? Or was it his divinity?[69]

The present Gospels show that there had appeared among the Children of Israel a man named 'Isa son of Yusuf, the carpenter; he began calling towards Allah; he claimed that he was a son of God, born without agency of a human father, and that his Father had sent him to atone for the sin of the people through him being killed by crucifixion; that he gave life to the dead, healed the blind and the lepers, and

restored the possessed to health by removing devil from them; that there were twelve disciples with him, one of them being Matthew the Evangelist; he blessed them and sent them to propagate his religion.

This is the gist of the Christianity and its mission – despite its having been spread to every corner of the world. It all boils down to a report by one person whose name and particulars are unknown, whose identity and character is shrouded in obscurity.

This curious weakness just in the initial stage has compelled some independent minds of Europe to claim that Christ, 'Isa son of Maryam, is a mythical being, invented by some religious movements for or against the government of the time. This view has been strengthened by another mythical character which it resembles in every detail, and that is the character of Krishna: The idol–worshippers of India believe that Krishna was the son of God, who descended to earth from his divine abode, and atoned for the people by being crucified in order to deliver them from their sins and mistakes. It is the same belief which the Christians have about Christ 'Isa. (Details are given below.)

Other scholars have found it necessary to say that there were in fact two Christs, one uncrucified, the other crucified, who came more than five centuries after the former.

The Christian Era (which at the time of writing is 1956 C.E.) does not correspond with any of the above–mentioned two dates. The former (uncrucified) Christ had preceded it by more than two hundred and fifty years (and lived for sixty years), while the latter (crucified) Christ came more than two hundred and ninety years after the beginning of the said Era (and lived for about thirty–three years)[70]

However, the difference of the Christians Era with the actual birthdate of Christ is a fact which is not denied even by the Christians – and it is a historical disjunction.[71]

Moreover, there are some other matters that give rise to doubts and mistrust. They have written that during the first two centuries many more Gospels, including the four now used, were written and their number exceeded a hundred. Then the Church banned all of them except the four which were canonized because they corresponded with the views of the Church.[72]

Among the discarded ones was the Gospel of Barnabas, a copy of which was found years ago, and which has been translated into Arabic and Persian. The story of Christ, 'Isa son of Maryam, as given in this Gospel, generally corresponds with that given in the Qur'an.[73]

Strangely enough, even the non–Jewish historical records are silent about what the Gospels present as the Christ's mission – sonship, atonement, and other related matters. The famous American historian, Hendrick Willem Van Loon has given in his book, Story of Mankind, a letter of a Roman physician, Aesculapius Cultellus, which he wrote in 62 A. D. to his nephew, Gladius Ensa, who was a soldier in Syria.[74]

In that letter, he says:

A few days ago, I was called in to prescribe for a sick man named Paul. He appeared to be a Roman citizen of Jewish parentage, well-educated and of agreeable manners...

A friend of mine... tells me that he heard something about him in Ephesus where he was preaching sermons about a strange new god. I asked my patient if this were true... Paul answered me that the kingdom of which he had spoken was not of this world and he added many strange utterances which I did not understand...

His personality made a great impression upon me, and I was sorry to hear that he was killed on the Ostian Road a few days ago. Therefore, I am writing this letter to you. When next you visit Jerusalem, I want you to find out something about my friend Paul and the strange Jewish prophet, who seems to have been his teacher.... I would like to know the truth about all these rumours...

Six weeks later, Gladius Ensa, the nephew, [a captain of the VII Gallic Infantry], answered as follows:

[I received your letter and I have obeyed your order. Two weeks ago, our brigade was sent to Jerusalem...]

I have talked with most of the older men in this city, but few have been able to give me any definite information.[75]

A few days ago, a peddler came to the camp. I bought some of his olive and I asked him whether he had ever heard of the famous Messiah who was killed when he was young. He said that he remembered it very clearly.... He gave me the address of one Joseph, who had been a personal friend of the Messiah and told me that I had better go and see him if I wanted to know more.

This morning, I went to call on Joseph. He was quite an old man. He had been a fisherman on one of the freshwater lakes. His memory was clear, and from him at last I got a fairly definite account of what had happened during the troublesome days before I was born.

Tiberius, our great and glorious emperor, was on the throne, and an officer by the name of Pontius Pilatus was governor of Judaea and Samaria... In the year 783 or 784 (Joseph had forgotten when) Pilatus was called to Jerusalem on account of a riot. A certain young man (the son of a carpenter of Nazareth) was said to be planning a revolution against the Roman government. Strangely enough our own intelligence officers, who are usually well-informed, appear to have heard nothing about it, and when they investigated the matter, they reported that the carpenter was an excellent citizen and that there was no reason to proceed against him. But the old-fashioned leaders of the Jewish faith, according to Joseph, were much upset. They greatly disliked his popularity with the masses of the poorer Hebrews. The “Nazarene” (so they told Pilatus) had publicly claimed that a Greek or a Roman or even a Palestinian, who tried to live a decent and honourable life, was quite as good as a Jew who spent his days in studying the ancient laws of Moses. Pilatus does not seem to have been impressed by this argument, but when the crowds around the temple threatened to lynch Jesus, and kill all his followers,

he decided to take the carpenter into custody to save his life.

He does not appear to have understood the real nature of the quarrel. Whenever he asked the Jewish priests to explain their grievances, they shouted “heresy” and “treason” and got terribly excited. Finally, so Joseph told me, Pilatus sent for Joshua (that was the name of the Nazarene, but the Greeks who live in this part of the world always refer to him as Jesus) to examine him personally. He talked to him for several hours. He asked him about the “dangerous doctrines” which he was said to have preached on the shores of the sea of Galilee. But Jesus answered that he never referred to politics. He was not so much interested in the bodies of men as in Man’s soul. He wanted all people to regard their neighbours as their brothers and to love one single God, who was the father of all living beings.

Pilatus, who seems to have been well–versed in the doctrines of the Stoics and the other Greek philosophers, does not appear to have discovered anything seditious in the talk of Jesus. According to my informant he made another attempt to save the life of the kindly prophet. He kept putting the execution off. Meanwhile the Jewish people, lashed into fury by their priests, got frantic with rage. There had been many riots in Jerusalem before this and there were only a few Roman soldiers within calling distance. Reports were being sent to the Roman authorities in Caesarea that Pilatus had “fallen a victim to the teachings of the Nazarene”. Petitions were being circulated all through the city to have Pilatus recalled, because he was an enemy of the emperor. You know that our governors have strict instructions to avoid an open break with their foreign subjects. To save the country from civil war, Pilatus finally sacrificed his prisoner, Joshua, who behaved with great dignity and who forgave all those who hated him. He was crucified amidst the howls and the laughter of the Jerusalem mob.

That is what Joseph told me, with tears running down his old cheeks. I gave him a gold piece when I left him, but he refused it and asked me to hand it to one poorer than himself. I also asked him about your friend Paul. He had known him slightly. He seems to have been a tent maker, who gave up his profession that he might preach the words of a loving and forgiving God, Who was so very different from that Jehovah of whom the Jewish priests are telling us all the time. Afterwards, Paul appears to have travelled much in Asia Minor and in Greece, telling the slaves that they were children of one loving Father and that happiness awaits all, both rich and poor, who have tried to live honest lives and have done good to those who were suffering and miserable...[76]

This is the main theme of this letter as far as the subject of our present discussion is concerned.

On pondering over this letter, one may easily understand which direction Christianity had taken – among the Israelites – soon after ‘Isa (‘a). Clearly it was a prophetic mission of a messenger sent by Allah – not a claim of divinity calling people to believe that God had taken a human form and descended to the earth to deliver mankind by offering an atonement for their sins.

Then some disciples of ‘Isa and/or those claiming connection with him, like Paul, and the disciples of disciples journeyed – after the said crucifixion – to various regions of the world, like India, Africa, Rome,

etc., and spread the message of Christianity. But soon after that, in the wake of those missionary activities, they differed among themselves about the basic teachings of the new religion. Was Christ a God? Was belief in Christ enough for salvation without any need of following the Mosaic Law? Was the religion of the Gospel an independent one which had abrogated the Mosaic Law? Or was it a part of the Mosaic religion sent merely to perfect it? In this way they divided into various sects and groups.77

We should keep in mind the fact that all the nations where Christianity was propagated in the beginning – like Rome and India, etc. – were at that time idol–worshippers, the Sabaeans, the Hindus or the Buddhists, etc. Also, there was some mystic influence on one side and the hold of Brahmanic philosophy on the other.

All these systems and religions believed, to a great extent, in incarnation and appearance of gods and deities in human form. Also, the beliefs of trinity in unity, a deity descending in human body, and its suffering and being crucified78 to atone sins of mankind was very much prevalent among ancient idol–worshippers of India, China, Egypt, Chaledonia, Assyria and Iran. The same was the situation among ancient western idolators like Romans, Scandinavians, and others – as may be seen in the books written about ancient religions and beliefs.

Doane writes in his *Bible Myths and their Parallels in Other Religions:*

"If we return to India, we shall find that one of the most prominent features in the Indian theology is the doctrine of a divine triad, governing all things. This triad is called *Tri–murti* – from the Sanskrit (sic.) word *tri* (three) and *murti* (form) – and consists of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. It is an inseparable unity, though three in form."79

Then he goes on to explain that Brahma is the Father; Vishnu, the Son; and Siva, the Holy Spirit. 80

Then he writes [in the footnote] about Vishnu, the Son that he is "the Lord and Saviour Chrishna81 The Supreme Spirit, in order to preserve the world, produced Vishnu. Vishnu came upon earth, for this purpose, in the form of Chrishna. He was believed to be an incarnation of the Supreme Being, one of the persons of their holy and mysterious trinity, to use their language, 'The Lord and Saviour – three persons and one god.' 82

He writes that like the Christians, the Hindus too use the dove for the emblem of the third person of their trinity.83

[Doane further writes:]

"Mr. Faber, in his *Origin of Heathen Idolatry*, says: 'Among the Hindoos, we have the Triad of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva; so, among the votaries of Buddha, we find the self–triplicated Buddha declared to be the same as the Hindoo Trimurti. Among the Buddhist sect of the Jainists (sic.), we have the triple jiva, in whom the Trimurti is similarly declared to be incarnated.' 84

[Doane further quotes from the same book of Mr. Faber:]

“Among the Chinese, who worship Buddha under the name of Fo, we find this God mysteriously multiplied into three persons... “ 85

Doane now turns to Egypt:

“The priests of Memphis, in Egypt, explained this mystery to the novice, by intimating that the premier (first) monad created the dyad, who engendered the triad, and that it is this triad which shines through nature.

“Thulis, a great monarch, who at one time reigned over all Egypt, and who was in the habit of consulting the oracle of Serapis, is said to have addressed the oracle in these words:

“‘Tell me if ever there was before one greater than I, or will ever be one greater than me?’ ”

“The oracle answered thus:

“‘First God, afterward the Word, and with them the Holy Spirit, all these are of the same nature, and make but one whole, of which the power is eternal. Go away quickly, mortal, thou who hast but an uncertain life.’ ”86

Doane quotes Bonwick:

“Some persons are prepared to admit that the most astonishing development of the old religion of Egypt was in relation to the Logos or Divine Word, by whom all things were made, and who, though from God, was God.” 87

It should be noted that these are the very words with which the Gospel of St. John begins.88

Doane quotes from Higgins’ *Anacalypsis* that: “Mithras, the Mediator, and Saviour of the Persians, was called the Logos.” 89

Doane has proved that the ancient pagans used to believe in one god with three persons. He has extensively shown that the pagan belief of ‘trinity in unity’ was prevalent among the Greeks, Romans, Finns, Scandinavians, Chaldeans, Assyrians, and Phoenicians.90

[On the question of atonement], he writes:

“The idea of expiation by the sacrifice of a god was to be found among the Hindoos even in Vedic times.”91

Then giving the references, he, inter alia, writes.

“Crishna, the virgin-born, “the Divine Vishnu himself’92, ‘he who is without beginning, middle or end’,93

being moved 'to relieve the earth of her load',[94] came upon earth and redeemed man by his suffering – to save him."[95]

"In the earlier copies of Moor's *Hindu Pantheon* is to be seen as representations of Chrishna (as *Wittoba*) with marks of holes in both feet, and in others, of holes in the hands. [In Figures 4 and 5 of Plate II (Moor's work) the figures have nail–holes in both feet. Figure 6 has a round hole in the side;] to his collar or shirt hangs the emblem of a heart (which we often see in pictures of Christ Jesus). Instead of the crown of thorns usually put on the head of the Christians Saviour, it [Figure 7] has the turreted coronet of the Ephesian Diana...".[96]

Doane quotes Huc that among the Hindus, "the idea of redemption by a divine incarnation, who came into the world for the express purpose of redeeming mankind, was 'general and popular.' "[97]

"'A sense of original corruption,' says Professor Monier Williams, 'seems to be felt by all classes of Hindoos, as indicated by the following prayer used after the Gayatri by some Vaishnavas.

"""I am sinful, I commit sin, my nature is sinful, I am conceived in sin. Save me, O thou lotus–eyed Heri (Saviour), the remover of sin." ' [98]

Rev. Geo. W. Cox remarks on two opposite conceptions of Krishna's character, in one of which he is described "as a self–sacrificing and unselfish hero", who is, "filled with divine wisdom and love, who offers up a sacrifice which he alone can make."[99]

"P. Andrada la Crozius, one of the first Europeans who went to Nepal and Thibet (sic.), in speaking of the god whom they worshipped there – Indra – tells us that they said he spilt his blood for the salvation of the human race, and that he was pierced through the body with nails. He further says that, although they do not say he suffered the penalty of the cross, yet they find, nevertheless, figures of it in their books." [100]

"The monk Giorgi in his *Tibetinum Alphabetum* (p. 203), has given plates of a crucified god, who was worshipped in Nepal... He calls it the god Indra." [Figure 9 of these plates] shows a cross having arms of equal length fixed much high on the stem; Thus, the head portion is shorter and the body portion longer – no one would think that it represented a man except for the image of face on it.[101]

What the Buddhists narrate about Buddha fits even more perfectly on what the Christians believe about Jesus Christ. The Buddhists call Buddha, the Messiah, the Only Begotten, the Saviour of the World, the God who sacrificed his life to wash away the offences of mankind, and thereby to make them partakers of the Kingdom of Heaven.[102]

This subject has been explained by many orientalists, like Bell,[103], Huc, Muller,[104] and others.[105]

This was a sample of the belief of deities taking human form, and of crucifixion and atonement as it was found in ancient religions prevalent in the nations among which Christianity was propagated in the very

beginning. The new religion very much attracted the people in all these places where the Christian missionaries went. And the reason was clear: The Christian Fathers took the fundamentals of Christianity and remoulded them in the moulds of idolatry, and in this way had the people attracted to their call and made it easier to them to accept their teachings.

This view is strengthened when we see how Paul and others disparage the wisdom and philosophy of the philosophers, and how they look down with disdain at rational argument, declaring that the Lord God prefers the foolishness of the fools to the wisdom of the wise.

The fact is that they presented their teaching to the schools of logic and philosophy, and the intellectuals rejected it saying that there was no way of even understanding, let alone accepting it. To overcome this difficulty, they started talking of revelation, apocalypse, and vision; and claimed that they were filled of the Holy Ghost. In this, they followed the life of the ignorant mystics who claim that their way is beyond the reach of reason and intellect. Thereafter, their missionaries went to various cities and regions (as described in the Acts of Apostles and the history books) and propagated Christianity.

Wherever they went, the masses welcomed them. The main reason of their success – and especially within the Roman Empire – was the simmering discontent and disgruntling despair which had spread everywhere because of the never-ending oppression and injustice; the ruling class treated the masses as their slaves and serfs; there was a yawning gap between the lives of the rulers and the subjects, an unbridgeable chasm between the high and the low classes; the extravagant life-style of the rich was sustained by the sweat and blood of the poor and slaves. In this social structure, the Christian missionaries called the people to brotherhood, love, equality, and good neighbourliness; they exhorted them to discard this world and its transient painful life and to concentrate on the pure and happy life that was in heaven. It was this theme which the ruling classes – the kings and emperors – found advantageous to themselves, and they thought that it was in their interest to turn a blind eye to the missionaries' activities; as a general rule this tacit understanding saved the new group from punishment, torture and banishment.

Their number kept increasing, and so did their power. A great multitude embraced Christianity within and outside the Roman Empire; it reached Africa and even India. Invariably, opening of a church heralded the closure or destruction of a temple. With number and power, their attitude changed. Not only that they disregarded the resistance of the pagan leaders (as they went on undermining idol-worship) they even refused obeisance to the rulers and emperors. Their refusal to obey imperial decrees in this respect resulted in their punishment, imprisonment and even murder. Many were tortured and killed; others imprisoned or banished.

This continued until Emperor Constantine came on throne. He accepted Christianity and recognized it as the State religion. Churches were built in Rome and throughout the empire. It was in the second half of the fourth century of Christian Era[106].

From then on, the Church of Rome became the centre of Christianity. Bishops and missionaries were sent to all regions and countries within the Roman Empire. Countless churches, monasteries, and seminaries (to teach Christianity) were built.

There is an important point which the reader should ponder on: All their talks and discussions begin on some evangelical postulates, like the theme of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the scheme of crucifixion and atonement, and similar other principles. They base their talks on these ideas as though they were self-evident truths - and then go on building their edifice on them. They do not realize that it is their first and basic weakness. No matter how strong and lofty a structure may be, it cannot make up for the weakness of the foundation. And the foundation on which they have built their edifice - the three-in-one theology and the crucifixion and atonement - is simply incomprehensible.

Many Christian scholars agree that it is an idea that cannot be understood. Still, they say that it is a religious tenet, therefore, it must be believed without asking for reason - after all, there are many things in religion which the reason says are impossible.

But it is one of the invalid ideas which spring from that invalid base. How can there be an impossible principle in the religion of truth? As far as we are concerned, it is through reason and understanding that we accept a religion and discern its truth and validity. How can a true belief contain something which reason invalidates? Is it not a contradiction in term?

Of course, religion accepts validity of miracles - the things which are possible in reason but abnormal; but an idea impossible in reason can never happen.

However, the above-mentioned way of "argument" led their thinkers and scholars into conflicts, discords, and disagreements in the very early days when the students gathered to learn Christianity in Alexandria, Rome, and other places.

The church increased its watchdog role to preserve the unity of creed. Whenever a differing view was expressed or new idea raised its head, the church called a council of the bishops and presbyters to convince the party concerned to leave their ideas and beliefs; and if they persisted, they were anathematized, banished, or even killed.

The first such council was held in Nicaea, to counter the views of Arius,[107] who said that the Son was not like the Father, that only God was eternal while Christ was a created being.

The bishops, and presbyters assembled at Constantinople, in presence of Emperor Constantine; they were three hundred and thirteen in number. They adopted the following creed:

We believe in one God, the Father, almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages,

light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things came into existence, who because of us men and because of our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnated from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures and ascended to heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father and will come again with glory to judge living and dead, of whose Kingdom there will be no end;

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Life-giver, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son is together worshipped and together glorified, Who spoke through the prophets; in one holy Catholic and apostolic church. We confess one baptism to the remission of sins; we look forward to the resurrection of the dead[108], and the life of the world to come[109]. Amen!

That was the first Council; after that numerous Councils were held to anathematize newly appearing schisms, like the Nestorians, Jacobites, الالیانیة Ilyanites [?], الیلیارسیة Yalyarsites [110] [?], Macedonians,[111] Noetus,[112] Sabellians,[113] Paulianists[114] (or Paulicians),[115] and many others.

The Church was ever vigilant in guarding what in its eyes was the true faith. The missionary work continued in full force, until by the end of fifth century all European governments (except Russia) were parts of Christendom: France, England, Austria, Prussia, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Holland, etc., were all converted to Christianity by 496 C.E.

The Church continued to progress becoming stronger day by day. On the other hand, the Barbarians of the North were attacking the Roman Empire every now and then. The wars and internal strives and unrest weakened the Empire – until a time came when the people of Rome together with the victorious tribes decided to hand over the affairs of the State to the Church. Now the Pope of the time, Gregory the Great,[116] had in his hand the reins of the temporal as well as the spiritual powers. It was in 590 C.E.

Consequently, the Church of Rome acquired absolute power over the Christians world. But by that time the Roman Empire had divided in two parts: the Western Roman Empire with its capital at Rome and the Eastern Roman (i.e. Byzantine) Empire with its capital at Constantinople. The Byzantine Emperors claimed for themselves the headship of Church within their domain, without accepting the authority of the Church of Rome. This led to the division of Christianity between the Catholics – the followers of the Church of Rome and the Orthodox, i.e., others.

Things continued in this manner, until the Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople, and Palaeologus, the last Byzantine Emperor and Head of the Eastern (i.e. Orthodox) Church, was killed in the Cathedral, Hagia Sophia.[117]

The Tzars of Russia now claimed the headship of the Church – as a legacy of the Byzantine Emperors to whom they were related by marriage. (Russia had been Christian since the tenth century.) The Russian Emperors thus became he Heads of the (Orthodox) Church in their land, independent of the (Catholic) Church of Rome. It was in 1454 C. E.

Things continued in this way for about five centuries, until the last Tzar, Nicholas, was killed, with all his family, in 1918, by the Communists. Thus, the Church of Rome almost returned to the condition that prevailed before the division.

Meanwhile, during the Middle Ages when the Vatican had reached the highest point of its glory and the Popes controlled every aspect of the people's lives, a lot of good Christians revolted against the Vatican in order to free themselves from the shackles which the Church had put on them.

One group refused to follow the Church of Rome or to obey the Popes, but they continued to accept the religion as interpreted by the Councils and agreed upon by their scholars. They are called the [Greek] Orthodox. Another group discarded the Roman Church altogether; they neither accept the Roman Church's interpretation of religion nor do they recognize the Pope's authority in any religious matter. They are the Protestants.

In this way, the Christians world is mainly divided into three sects: the Catholics who follow the Vatican and its teachings; the Orthodox, who accept the Catholic teachings but do not recognize the authority of the Vatican. As described above, this group resulted from the division of the Church [on the line of the Western and Eastern empires] and especially after the transfer of the Patriarchate from Constantinople to Moscow; and the Protestants, who recognize neither the authority of Vatican nor its teachings – they became independent in the fifteenth century of the Christian Era.

This is, in a nutshell, the history of the Christian Church of the last two millenniums. Those who know the main theme of our book, will understand why we have written here this short account of their history. Our goal was three-fold:

First: To provide to a research scholar an insight into various changes taking place in the religion of the Christians; and to make them aware as to how alien ideas have been implanted in their beliefs and rituals; how pagan superstitions and idolatrous thoughts have crept into Christianity – by hereditary influences, or social concession, or wilful adoption, or just because of die-hard old habits.

Second: The power of the Church – and especially the Church of Rome – gradually increased until it reached its zenith in the Middle Ages; the Popes had taken both temporal and spiritual powers in their hands, and the kings and emperors in Europe had to submit to the Papal decrees and pay homage to the Popes. The Popes placed on throne whomsoever they wished and removed from it whoever they wished.[118]

It is narrated that the Pope once ordered the German emperor to stand barefoot on the door of the Papal Palace for three days (in winter) – for expiation of some mistakes which he beseeched the Pope to forgive.[119]

On another occasion, the Pope kicked with his foot the crown of a king who had approached him kneeling down to seek Papal pardon.[120]

Those church leaders had described the Muslims to their followers in a way that the Christians were bound to regard Islam as a religion of idol-worshippers. You will see it in the slogans and poems which were written to incite and arouse the Christians against the Muslims during the Crusades which raged between the two powers for long years.

The Christians were led to believe[121] that the Muslims worshipped idols; that they believed in three gods: (1) Mahom (who is also called افوميد Afomed [?] and Mahound, he is the first among gods and he is Muhammad; (2) Apollo who is the second; and (3) Termagant who is the third. Others added two more to this list: مارتوان to Maratwan [?] and Jupiter; but their rank was below the first three. They said that Muhammad's religion was based on his claim of divinity - that he claimed to be god. Sometimes the "information" was added that Muhammad had taken for himself an idol made of gold.

Richard composed poems to incite the Franks against the Muslims, in which he, inter alia, says: "Arise and dislodge Mahound and Termagant and throw them into fire, so that you may get near your God."

Roland described Mahom, the "god of Muslims", in a poem, in which he says: "It is made of gold and silver; if you see it, you will know that no artisan can even imagine a more beautiful face, let alone make it; big in size, admirable in workmanship, majesty radiating from its features, Mahom is made of gold and silver, its brilliant splendour dazzles the eyes to blindness; it has been placed on an elephant which is the finest work of art; its stomach is hollow, and an onlooker may find lustrous light glowing from it (because) it is set with precious brilliant gems, (it is transparent, and) its inside may be seen from outside; its fine workmanship is matchless.

"The gods of Muslims used to inspire them at times of trouble and turmoil. The Muslims were once defeated in a battle; so, their commander sent someone to call their god who was in Mecca (i.e., Muhammad, S). An 'eye-witness' says that the god (i.e., Muhammad, S) came to them; a huge mob of his followers surrounded him; they were beating drums, playing lutes, and blowing pipes and bagpipes made of silver; singing and dancing around him they brought him to the battleground, they were full of joy and happiness, making merry. His deputy was waiting for him; when he arrived (the deputy) stood up and began worshipping him with humbleness and humility."

Richard explains the revelation sent by the god, Mahom, in this manner: "The sorcerers captured a genie and put it in the stomach of that idol. That genie used to thunder and hammer inside and then speak to the Muslims, who listened to him with rapt attention."

Such droll flippancies are found in a lot of their books written during, or about, the Crusades. Our readers will, no doubt, be astounded and scandalized to read such accounts of their pure religion - may be some would even doubt the authenticity of these quotations. After all, they have ascribed such things to Islam that no one has ever seen in his life, nor has any Muslim imagined them or even dreamt of them.[122]

Third: A deep thinker may easily recognize the changes that have occurred in the Christianity during the

past twenty centuries. The idolatrous beliefs crept imperceptibly into Christianity: first it was excessive reverence for Christ; then his message was cast into the mould of trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), which was further developed in the theory of crucifixion and atonement, which in its turn gave rise to the belief that law and obedience to it was not needed at all, the faith was sufficient for salvation.

At first it appeared in religious garb; the Church insisted on some religious rites like prayer, fast and baptism. But opposite trends continued to grow, and various ideas raised their heads, until the Protestantism appeared on the scene; the political turmoil and unrest gave way to formal secular laws based on the principle of freedom in the matters which were not covered by those laws. In this way, the teachings of religion became weaker and weaker, and continued to give ground to anti-religion forces, until moral values and virtuous conduct could not stand the onslaught of materialism which "the unrestricted freedom" had let loose on humanity.

Then appeared socialism and communism, based on Dialectic Materialism; belief in God and adherence to moral virtues and religious rites and deeds were discarded. Spiritual humanism was succeeded by materialistic animality composed of only two instincts: greed to gain for oneself whatever one desires and impulse to crush down whoever comes in one's way. Today the world is speeding to that animalistic goal, to its doom.

Various new religious revival movements that have lately appeared everywhere are, but political games invented and played by political groups, who want to attain their goals through them. We know that politics, as a profession, now knocks at every door and uses every conceivable device to realize its aims.

According to Dr. Joseph Sittler, of Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary, the underlying weakness of the current U. S. religious revival is that it seeks to give divine sanction to the cultural values modern man lives by. 'We make God say amen to what we believe, instead of saying amen to God.' The greatest danger, he feels, is that this pious self-flattery may immunize Americans against any desire to join in a genuine religious revival if one should arise.[123]

According to Dr. Georges Florovsky, the 'foremost U. S. spokesman for Russian Orthodoxy', Christian teaching, which reaches most Americans through sentimental literature, consoles them instead of awakening them through deeply felt or 'witnessed' experience.[124]

Whence the caravan of religion started from, and where has it arrived? The message began in the name of revival of religion (i.e., belief), morality (i.e., virtuous character) and the *Shari'ah* (good deeds); and ended up by repudiating and abolishing all of it, replacing it with animalistic enjoyment.

This has happened because of the first deviation affected by St. Paul the Apostle and his disciples. We are living in a civilization that admittedly threatens mankind with extinction. Some people say that Christ is the leader and standard-bearer of the modern civilization. But it would be nearer to truth to call it the Paulian civilization.

Traditions

Al-Qummi narrates about the verse***: It is not meet for a man that Allah should give him the Book and the Wisdom and Prophethood, then he should say to men, "Be my servants rather than Allah's"*** (***3:79***). "Surely 'Isa did not say to men: 'I have created you, therefore you should be my servants rather than Allah's', rather he said to them: 'Be worshippers of the Lord', that is, having true knowledge."125

The author says: The context and associations given in the Commentary support this explanation. "Surely 'Isa did not say to men: 'I have created you.' " It is a sort of a proof to show that he had not said it. Had he told them to worship him, it would have been necessary to tell them that he was their creator; but he had not said it, nor had he created them.

The same exegete narrates about the verse: ***Or that he should enjoin you that you should take the angels and the prophets for lords."*** (***3:80***)**,** There were people who worshipped the angels; the Christians thought 'Isa was the Lord; and the Jews said that 'Uzayr was the Son of God. Allah therefore said that no prophet would enjoin you that you should take the angels and the prophets for Lords."126

The author says: It has been explained in the Commentary.

It is narrated in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim and al-Bayhaqi (in his *Dala'il an-Nubuwwah*) from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "When the Jewish scholars and Christians of Najran gathered near the Messenger of Allah (S) and he invited them to Islam, Abu Rafi' al-Qurazi said: 'Do you wish, O Muhammad, that we should worship you as the Christians worship 'Isa son of Maryam?' Thereupon a Christian of Najran said: 'Well, do you want this from us, O Muhammad?' The Messenger of Allah (S) said: 'I seek refuge in Allah that we should worship other than Allah, or that we should enjoin worship of someone else; He has neither sent me with it nor has He enjoined me this.' Therefore, Allah, revealed the verses (because of their question): It is not meet for a man... after you are Muslims (submitting ones)?" 127

It is reported in the same book: " 'Abd Ibn Hamid has narrated from al-Hasan that he said: 'I have been told that a man said: "O Messenger of Allah! We greet you (exactly) as we greet each other. Should not we prostrate before you?" He said: "*No. But you should honour your Prophet and recognize the right of the ones having that right; because prostration should not be done for anyone other than Allah."* Then Allah revealed the verses: It is not meet for a man... after you are Muslims (submitting ones)?"'128

The author says: Also, other events have been narrated concerning revelation of these verses. Obviously, all of them are based on academic inferences: and we have discussed in detail about them. Also, it is possible for various reasons to combine in relation to one verse. And Allah knows better.

1. i.e., the tribesmen of the Messenger of Allah (S).
2. Refer to Qur'an, verses 3:35– 44; 19:16; 21:91; 66:12.
3. Refer to Qur'an, verses 3:33–50.
4. Refer to Qur'an, verses 19:20 27.
5. Refer to Qur'an, verses 19:27– 33.
6. Refer to Qur'an, verses 3:45 – 58; 4:157 – 158; 5:110 – 111; 43:63 – 65; 61:6 – 14.
7. Refer to Qur'an, verses 19:30.
8. Refer to Qur'an, verse 3:49.
9. Refer to Qur'an, verses 5:46; 33:7; 42:13.
10. Refer to Qur'an, verse 3:45.
11. Refer to Qur'an, verse 4:171.
12. Refer to Qur'an, verse 33:7.
13. Refer to Qur'an, verses 4:159; 5:117.
14. Refer to Qur'an, verse 61:6.
15. Refer to Qur'an, verse 3:45.
16. Refer to Qur'an, verse 3:33.
17. Refer to Qur'an, verses 6:85 – 87.
18. Refer to Qur'an, verses 19:19–33.
19. Refer to Qur'an, verse 3:48.
20. Because the situation demands self–abasement, not relaxedness. (Author's note).
21. Like ash–Shahristani in his al–Milal wa 'n–nihal. (Author's Note).

The author has taken these descriptions from ash–Shahristani (vide al–Milal wa 'n–nihal [Egypt, 1381 A.H. = 1961 C.E.] vol. 1, pp. 220 – 228). But ash–Shahristani's information is superfluous and apparently based on hearsay; and his comments on Christianity remind us one of his flight of fancy regarding Shi'ite faith and its various imaginary branches.

The fact is that almost all the splits in the early Christian Church were centred around the nature and substance of the Christ. It is not the place to go into historical details. Suffice it to say that gradually four groups had come into being about the nature of Jesus Christ:

Homoousians who believe that the Son was of one substance with the Father; they are called the Orthodox;

Homoeans who believed that the Son was like the Father; they are called the Arians;

Homoiousians who believed that the Son was of like substance with the Father; they are called the Semi–Arians;

Anomoeans who believed that the Son was unlike the Father; they are called Ultra–Arians.

Ulimately the Orthodox (Homoousians) prevailed. They say that the Son was of one substance with the Father, and that the Incarnate Christ was a single Person of a doubt nature – Divine and human – at one God and man.

All the sects are united on the "sonship", although they differ in its interpretation. That is why the Qur'an rejects sonship – and the resulting trinity – to refute the Christians' belief in general. (tr.).

22. Melkites (or Melchites) were those Christians of Syria and Egypt who, refusing the doctrine of Monophysitism (the doctrine that in the Person of the Incarnate Christ there was but a single, that is, Divine, nature, as opposed to the orthodox belief of a single person of double nature), and accepting the definition of faith of the Council of Chalcedon (451 C.E.), remained in communion with the Imperial See of Constantinople; hence their name that means "Emperor's men". (ash–Shahristani thinks that Malka was some individual who started this sect!) They like other Orthodox Christians, believe that the Logo (Word) of God being conjoined with the man Jesus – together called the Christ – was begotten in a non–literal sense by God. They do not believe in physical human–like sonship. Today there are about a million Melkites, most of them belonging to the Patriarchate of Antioch, whose headquarters are at Damascus. (tr.).

23. Nestorians: Followers of Nestorius (cir. 380 – 451 C.E.), who was the Patriarch of Constantinople (428 – 431 C.E.). He believed that there were two separate Persons in the Incarnate Christ – that the physical nature of Jesus was separate from his divine one, as opposed to the orthodox doctrine. According to him, it was Jesus the man, who was born of the Virgin Mary. Consequently, he rejected the term, Theotokos, (lit., God–bearer; usually translated as "Mother of God"), that was used to refer to Maryam. For this heresy he was anathematized by the Council of Ephesus (431 C.F.). (ash–Shahristani

says that Nestorius lived during the reign of al-Ma'mun - 813 - 833 C. E.) (tr.).

24. Jacobites: The body of the Syrian Monophysites who rejected the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon (451 C.E.) on the Person of the Christ. Monophysitism was the doctrine that in the Person of the Incarnate Christ there was but a single, that is, Divine, nature, as opposed to the orthodox belief of a single person of double nature. They were named after Jacob Baradaeus through whom they became the national Church of Syria. They flourished despite recurring Imperial persecutions, which led them to welcome the Muslim army when it attacked Syria. Although there were many converts to Islam (cir. 640 C.F.), the Jacobite Church continued. The Mongol invasions in 13th and 14th centuries caused their real decline. (tr.).

25. The quotations of the Old and New Testaments, here and elsewhere, are from King James version, because the Arabic version (printed in 1811 C.E.) used by the author, conforms to it. (tr.).

26. Baptism is a Christian sacrament of initiation into Church by immersing in water or sprinkling water on the head. (Author's note).

27. The three proofs point to the above-mentioned three arguments respectively. (tr.)

28. That is what most of the Christians believe. But some of them, like Bishop Mar Ishaq, say that there is no difficulty if one refrains from inflicting a threatened punishment. In other words, it is all right not to fulfil a threat, although one is not allowed to break a promise of reward. (Author's Note).

Bishop Mar Ishaq's view has been taken from ash-Shahristani's al-Milal wa an-nihal, pp. 223 - 224. (tr.).

29. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ - the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (I John, 2/1-2) (Author's Note).

30. For details, see the Commentary of the verses 2:35-39 Vide al-Mizan [Engl. transl.], Vol 1, pp. 178 - 213. (pub.)

31. See our discourse on the sinlessness of the prophets given in the Commentary of the verse 2:213 Vide al-Mizan [Engl. transl.], Vol 3, pp. 195 - 204. (pub.).

32. We are not talking about a situation whereby someone had committed a sin and his descendants were pleased with his action, because in that case all would be counted as sinners.

33. See discourse on the "Deeds", under verses 2:216 - 218. Vide al-Mizan [Engl. transl.], vol. 3, pp. 239 - 278. (tr.).

34. Refer the above-mentioned discourse on Deeds.

35. "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." (Gen., 6/6). (Author's Note).

36. Epistle of Paul, chapter 1, I Corinthians, 1/19 - 23. (tr.).

37. "But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying: why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them: they that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke, 5/30 - 32) (Author's Note).

38. "Also, I say unto you, whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." (Luke, 12/8 - 9) (Author's Note).

39. The phrase means 'unknown territory' [Note by Al-Islam.org].

40. For details see Commentaries of the verses 1:4 (the Master of the Day of Judgment), Vide al-Mizan [Engl. transl.], vol. 1, pp. 29 - 31. (pub.) and verse, Say: 'O Allah, Master of the Kingdom..." (3:26), vol. 5, pp. 193 - 202. (pub.).

41. Vide al-Mizan [Engl. transl.], vol. 1, pp. 221 - 265. (pub.).

42. It is said that the first man to place idols in the Ka'bah and to call the people to their worship was 'Amr Ibn Luhayy, a contemporary of Shapur Dhu'l-Aktaf. He became the chief of his people in Mecca and took over the management of the House. Then he journeyed to the Syrian city, al-Balqa', and found the people there worshipping idols. He enquired about it. They said: "These are the Lords, we have made them in the images of the celestial deities and human sages; we seek help from them and we get help; we pray to them for rain and we get rain." 'Amr requested them to give him one of the idols; they gave him the Hubal. He brought it to Mecca and putting it on the Ka'bah, he invited the Meccans to worship it. He also had with him Asaf and Na'ilah in the image of a couple; he called people to them too in order to come nearer to Allah through them. This has been written by ash-Shahristani in his al-Milal wa 'n-nihal, as well as by others. It is very

interesting to see that the Qur'an uses names of some idols of Arabia in the story of Nuh ('a), where it quotes his complaint against his people: And they say: "By no means leave your gods, nor leave Wadd, nor Suwa'; nor Yaghuth, and Ya'uq and Nasr" (71:23). (Author's Note).

43. The Hebrew Old Testament contains 39 Books, as the list given by the author himself shows. Roman Catholic Church follows the Greek O. T. which includes some more books and passages. (tr.).

44. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. (Author's Note).

45. Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, II Kings, I Chronicles, II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. (Author's Note).

46. Proverbs, Ecclesiastics and Song of Solomon. (Author's Note).

47. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. (Author's Note) .

48. There are fourteen Epistles of Paul, one of James, two of Peter, three of John and one of Jude. (Author's Note) .

49. Paul writes to Galatians: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ." (Gal., 1/6 – 7)

an-Najjar has given in his Qasas al-Anbiya', this and similar other quotations from the Epistles of Paul to prove that there was there a book – other than the four Gospels – which was called the Injil of the Messiah. (Author's Note)

50. The author in this section has given a lot of references from the Christian and western writers. He had to rely on Arabic translations of English or other languages, given in Tafsir al-Manar (ed., Rashid Rida, Egypt, 4th ed., 1380/1961, vol. 6, pp.31 – 36 and 88 – 92), and some other books and Encyclopaedias. I tried to get hold of original sources, so that in my translation I could include those quotations in their original wordings – it would have been odd to retranslate into English an English passage through its Arabic rendering. Unfortunately, oriental authors generally do not give the original spellings of the names of western writers or their work, nor do they put vowels on them to help in pronunciation. To compound the difficulty, there were some printing mistakes in al-Manar which were faithfully copied in al-Mizan. For example, Anacaly psis of Higgins appears as الانگلوساكسن (al-Anglo-Saxon) in Arabic, and Monier Williams has become Morifore Lims!

After spending more than a month in various sections of the British Library, London, I was able to get many sources – and then it transpired that a large portion of quotations given in al-Manar was not taken directly from the original books, but from Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions (by Doane, Thomas William).

There are still some names which I could not ascertain. While writing such a name in English I have given first the Arabic rendering, then its English transliteration followed by question mark within brackets [?]. I shall be obliged if any reader could help me in finding their correct spellings. (tr.).

51. This happened before the time of Musa. At that time the rulers of Egypt had not yet adopted the title 'Pharaoh' [Note of al-Islam.org].

52. There appeared two Kingdoms, Judah in the south and Israel in the north. (tr.).

53. Modern scholars think that it happened in 397 B.C. (tr.).

54. Vide Qamus al-Kitabi 'l-Muqaddas (Dictionary of the Bible) by هاكس Mr. Hawks [?], and other books of history. (Author's Note).

Translator's Note: The first five books of the Old Testament, commonly known as the Torah, are also called Pentateuch. In the 18th Century, some Christian scholars started what is now known as the "Higher Criticism". Their views are now accepted by a great part of Christiandom. They have proved that it contains writings of unknown number of people right up to 1000 years after the death of Musa. I append below the time table and sequence of its editing (in short) as given by Rev. William Kemp Lowther Clarke, in his Concise Bible Commentary (S.P.C.K., London, 1952): He says that by the end of the 19th Century, it was generally recognized "that there are four main sources in the Pentateuch, to be assigned to the 9th, 8th, 7th and 5th or 4th Centuries (B.C.) respectively."

"The first look at the Pentateuch shows three characteristics styles illustrated by Genesis:1, Genesis:2 and Deuteronomy, and the documents marked by these styles were first to be noticed."

"The obviously early source begins in Gen. 2/4. This source is called 'J', after the J of Jehovah (pronounced Jahweh). 'J' is generally thought to have been put into written form about 850 B.C.

“Another source is ‘D’, so-called from the book of Deuteronomy, which was the book of law discovered in Josiah’s reign. The third source is called Priestly document, P for short. A large part of P is believed to have been composed in Babylonia and brought to Jerusalem by Ezra in 397 B.C. How much of P was omitted in final compilation of Pentateuch we have no means of knowing. There was a subordinate source, known as the Code of Holiness, H for short. Opinions differ whether it was written before 586 B.C. or after the fall of Jerusalem. It is found in Lev. 17/28.

“Now comes the fourth source. After taking P, D and J from the Pentateuch a considerable amount of material remains, parallel to J, but in Genesis using Elohim for God and not Yahweh. This non-P Elohim matter begins in Gen. 20/1 - 17 ... Altogether E is more mature religiously and is thought to have reached written from about 750 (B.C.).”

How were these four main sources compiled to form the Pentateuch? ‘The first step was to combine J and E. This must have been done after the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C. The two were combined in a document which is called JE. Then in 621 Deuteronomy was discovered, or at least a large part of it.

The next stage was to put JE, and D together. This will have taken place during the exile. A perceptible amount of editing of JE took place. P was written in Babylonia and brought to Jerusalem by Ezra in 397 B.C. Later, editors used it as a framework and incorporated JED, thus producing the Pentateuch ... in about 300 B.C.”

Rev. Clarke sums it up in these words: “Probably a multitude of persons have combined to give us Genesis (etc.), covering in their lives a span of 1,000 years.”

Even that minority of the Christian scholars which still holds fast to the theory of “Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch has to admit that it must have been rewritten by the subsequent generations to modernize the language. This concession has to be given because “it is hardly probable that the Hebrew of Moses’ day was like that of Biblical Hebrew.” See the Westminister Dictionary of Bible, under “Pentateuch”.

55. هاكس Hawks [?], Dictionary of Bible, under “Matthew”. (Author’s Note).

This Book is referred to hereafter as Dic. of Bib. (tr.).

56. Vide Mizan al-haqq; Dic. of Bib., too admits it with some reluctance. (Author’s Note)

57. ‘Abd al-Wahhab an-Najjar, Qasas al-anbiya’, [p.400, 2nd ed., Cairo, n.d.], quoting from بطرس قرماج Batrus Qarmaj [?] Maruj al-akhbar fi tarajimi ’l-abrar [Beirut, 1880]. (Author’s Note).

As described in the Dic. of Bib. It says: “Although the early fathers unanimously say that St. Mark had written his Gospel in Rome and that it was published after the deaths of Sts. Peter and Paul, but this is not very credible, because it appears from his Gospel that he had written it for the tribes and villagers, not for the (civilized) people leaving in cities - and especially Rome.” Ponder on this statement. (Author’s Note).

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59. Vide Dic. of Bib., under the heading “Paul”. (Author’s Note).

60. See the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of St. Paul. (Author’s Note).

61. Luke begins his Gospel with these words:

“Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word. It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus.” (Luke, 1/1 - 3)

It clearly shows that it is a book based on human understanding, not on revelation. This view has also been attributed to كدل Mr. Cadell [?] in the booklet, Revelation. St. Jerome has said that some early Fathers had doubts about the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke, and that they were missing from the version of the Marcionites*. Eichhorn** declares in his book (p.95) that verses 43 to 47 of the 2nd chapter of the Luke’s Gospel are an interpolation. Also, he says on p. 61 of his book: “Fictitious narratives have been mixed up in description of miracles mentioned by Luke; and the writer has included them as poetic exaggeration. But it is difficult at this point of time to separate truth from falsehood.” And an-Najjar quotes in Qasas al-anbiya’ (p. 401) the saying of كلي مي شيس Mr. Clemesious [?] that: Matthew and Mark differ in their narration; and when they identify, their report would be given preference over that of Luke (Author’s Note).

* Marcionites, followers of Marcion (d. cir. 160), who rejected the Law and believed in Gospel of Love only. He rejected the Old Testament and believed that the twelve Apostles and the Evangelists were blind to this reality and only St. Paul understood it. For them the only Canonical Scriptures were ten of the fourteen Epistles of Paul. (tr.).

** Eichhorn, Johann Gottfried (1752 – 1827) was Biblical scholars and orientalist. He was among the first to make comparison between the Biblical Books and other Semitic languages; and one of the earliest critics who laid foundation of the High Criticism of the Bible. (tr.).

62. Vide Dic. of Bib., under John. (Author's Note).

63. Cerinthus, who flourished around 100 C.E., was a Gnostic "heretic". Among other things, he taught that Jesus began his earthly life as a mere man; at his baptism 'the Christ', a "higher divine power", descended on him, only to depart from him again before the crucifixion. He seems to have had connections both with the Ebionites and Alexandrine Gnosticism. (tr.).

64. Ebionites, literally 'poor men', were a sect of Christian Jews that flourished in the early centuries of the Christian era. Apparently, two of their principal tenets were: (i) belief in humanity of the Person of Christ, to the effect, for example, that Jesus was the human son of Joseph and Mary, and that the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove lighted on him at his baptism; and (ii) emphasis on the binding character of the Mosaic Law. (tr.).

65. an–Najjar, Qasas al–anbiya', quoting Jirjis Zuwayn al–Futuhi of Lebnon. (Author's Note).

66. an–Najjar, op. cit., quoting from the Catholic Herald, 1844, vol.7, p. 205 quoting استادلن Ostadelane [?]; also Dic. of Bib. points to it, under 'John'. (Author's Note).

67. It is the view of Bretschneider, as an–Najjar has written in his Qasas al–anbiya', quoting from al–Faruq.,vol. 1. (Author's Note).

Bretschneider, Karl Gottlieb (1776 – 1848) had written a treatise on the Gospel of John in 1820. (tr.).

68. It is the view of Bretschneider, as an–Najjar has written in his Qasas al–anbiya', quoting from al–Faruq.,vol. 1. (Author's Note).

Bretschneider, Karl Gottlieb (1776 – 1848) had written a treatise on the Gospel of John in 1820. (tr.).

69. Traditionally, the Gospel of Matthew is held to be the oldest of the four. But modern scholars commonly hold that it is Mark which is the oldest. There occurs a large amount of common subject matter in the three Synoptic Gospels (i.e., Matthew, Mark and Luke) and often similar phrasing in more than one Gospel. That this parallelism, of varying degree of closeness, must be accounted for by their literary interdependence is nowadays almost universally held by scholars. There is also wide, but less complete, agreement that

(1) Mark is the earliest of the three Gospels and was used as a framework by both Matthew and Luke;

(2) the non–Marcan material common to Matthew and Luke is derived from a single lost source known to critics as 'Q' (from German 'Quelle' = source); and

(3) the authors of Matthew and Luke used further sources for the matter peculiar to them. In view of the fact that Matthew drew extensively on Mark, which he expanded with the aid of 'Q', the early tradition that the Gospel was written in Hebrew is untenable.

The chief objection to its ascription to St. Matthew is the unlikelihood that an Apostle, who was an eyewitness of the events, would have taken as his principal source of the work of St. Mark, whose material is in any case second–hand. Vide The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 2nd ed., 1974 (OUP). See also the Concise Bible Commentary (by Rev. W. K. L. Clark; pub. by S. P. C. K., London, 1952) and the Westminster Dictionary of Bible.

It is not only the Gospel of Matthew whose author is unknown; the Gospel of John suffers from the same fate. Many scholars believe that its author was some disciple and follower of the Apostle John the son of Zebedee. "His name is either unknown to us, or more likely, was John the Presbyter, or Elder." (tr.).

70. This subject has been described in detail by the scholar Behruz, in a book he recently wrote on the Prophetic foretelling. I hope to quote some parts of it at the end of the Commentary of Chapter Four "The Women". What is certain (and with which we are concerned here) is the incorrectness of the Christians Era. (Author's Note).

71. Vide the Die. of Bib., under Christ. (Author's Note).

72. Celsus, the 2nd Century's philosopher, admonished the Christians, in his book, Logos Alethes (The True Word) for their manipulations of the Gospels – that they erase by tomorrow what they had written yesterday. [He wrote this book about 176

– 180 C.E. It was the first notable polemic against Christianity. The book itself has perished, but fragments of high interest occur as quotations in Origen's Contra Celsum].

*In 384, Pope Damasus ordered a new Latin translation of the Old and New Testaments to be prepared for the Church – Emperor Theodosius had become tired of the polemics and controversies raging among the bishops. That translation, called Vulgate, was completed; it covered only the four Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The editors wrote: "After comparing various old Greek copies, we edited them, that is, we discarded what was contradictory, and left the remaining parts as they were." That version was confirmed by the Trent Council held in 1546, that is, some eleven centuries later.

In 1590, Pope Sixtus V declared that it contained errors and mistakes, and ordered a new version to be published. Pope Clement VIII found fault with the second version too and ordered, in 1592, publication of a new revised version – which is used by the Catholic Church today. (Tafsir al-Jawahir, 2nd ed., vol. 2, p.121) (Author's Note)

* Note: The material given within the brackets, here and elsewhere in the text or within the Author's Notes, has been added by the Translator for deeper understanding or greater clarity. (tr.).

73. This Gospel in Italian had been discovered some time ago. Dr. Khalil Sa'adah of Egypt translated it into Arabic, and the well-known scholar Sardar Kabuli, into Persian in Iran. (Author's Note).

The said manuscript was found in the Imperial Library, Vienna. Lonsdale and Laura Ragg edited the Italian text and translated it into English, which was published by the Clarendon Press, Oxford, in 1907. It was from that version that the above-mentioned Arabic version was prepared. Strange as it may seem, now only two copies of the 1907 edition are known to exist, one in the British Library, London, and the other in the Library of Congress, Washington. Within the last two decades Begum Aisha Bawany Waqf, Karachi, has printed it several times and distributed it widely throughout the Muslim World.

Understandably, the Christians, including the translators (Lonsdale and Laura Ragg) themselves claim that the Vienna manuscript is spurious, not genuine. Their arguments deserve careful consideration. (tr.).

74. It appears in the book, under the heading "The Story of Joshua of Nazareth, whom the Greeks called Jesus." I have copied verbatim a part of the physician's letter which the author of al-Mizan has given only a gist of it. (tr.).

75. This, when it was 62 C.E., and they were older men! Strange, isn't it? (Author's Comment).

76. Van Loon, Hendrick Willem: The Story of Mankind, London, 1922, pp. 119 – 123. (tr.)

77. It is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul; also, it is admitted by the Christians themselves. (Author's Note).

78. Killing by crucifixion is one of the oldest methods. They used to crucify the hardest criminals who had committed very heinous crimes, because crucifixion was the most torturous way of killing and left the blackest stigma on the name of the one so executed. The cross was made by joining two wooden logs at an angle with each other [like T, t or X] as we see the crosses nowadays; it was done in a way that a man could be placed on it. The criminal was attached to it with outstretched hands and arms; his palms were fixed on the horizontal piece with nails, and the legs nailed to the upright post – sometimes they were tied to it and not nailed. Then the cross was erected vertically in the earth, leaving a space of about a yard between the earth and the victim's feet. He was left on the cross for a day or more; then his legs were broken, and he was killed on the cross, or was brought down from the cross and then killed. The victim, before being put on cross, was tortured, whipped, or mutilated. It was an indelible disgrace for a family or clan if one of them was crucified. (Author's Note).

79. Doane, Thomas William: Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions; being a comparison of the Old and New Testament myths and miracles with those of heathen nations of antiquity, considering also their origin and meaning; New York, 1883, p. 369. (tr.)

80. Doane, Thomas William: Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions.

81. The author of al-Mizan, like many others, opines that the word 'Krishna' has been taken in European languages as Christ, to mean the Anointed Saviour. (tr.).

82. Doane, Thomas William: Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions, p. 370 (tr).

83. Doane, Thomas William: Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions, footnote no. 4 (tr).

84. Doane, Thomas William: Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions, p. 371 (tr).

85. Doane, op cit., p. 372 (tr).

86. Doane, op. cit., p.373, quoting from Higgins, Godfrey: Anacalypsis: An Enquiry into the Origin of Languages, Nations,

and Religions; London, vol. 2, p. 14. (tr.).

87. Doane, Thomas William: Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions quoting Bonwick, James: Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought; London, 1878; p.402. (tr.).

88. Doane op cit., says on p.375: "The celebrated passage: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,' is a fragment of some Pagan treatise on the Platonic philosophy, evidently written by Irenaeus." And he writes a footnote on it: "The first that we know of this Gospel [i.e., John] for certain is during the time of Irenaeus, the great, Christian forger." (tr.).

89. Doane, op cit., p.373, footnote no. 5, quoting Higgins: Anacalypsis, vol. 2, p. 102. (tr.).

90. Doane, op. cit., Vide his chapter, 'The Trinity', pp. 368 – 383, where he mentions some other ancient nations too, having such beliefs. (tr.).

91. Doane, op. cit., p. 181.

92. Vishnu Purana, A System of Hindoo Mythology and Tradition, translated by H.H. Wilson; London, 1840; p. 440. (tr.).

93. Vishnu Purana, A System of Hindoo Mythology and Tradition, translated by H.H. Wilson; London, 1840; p. 440. (tr.).

94. Vishnu Purana, A System of Hindoo Mythology and Tradition, translated by H.H. Wilson; London, 1840; p. 440. (tr.).

95. Doane, Thomas William: Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions. p. 185, quoting Edward Moor: Plates Illustrating the Hindu Pantheon; London, 1816; and Higgins: Anacalypsis, vol. 2. (tr.).

96. Doane, Thomas William: Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions, p.185, quoting Edward Moor: Plates Illustrating the Hindu Pantheon; London, 1816; and Higgins: Anacalypsis, vol. 2. (tr.).

97. Doane op. cit., quoting M. l'Abbe Huc: Travels (Christianity in China, Tartary and Thibet); London, 1857, vol. 1, pp. 326 – 327. (tr.).

98. Doane op. cit., quoting Monier Williams: Hinduism, London, 1877, p. 214. (tr.).

99. Cox, George William, The Mythology of the Aryan Nations; London, 1870, vol. 2, p. 132. (tr.).

100. Doane, op. cit., pp. 187 – 188, quoting Higgins: op. cit., p.118. (tr.).

101. Doane, op. cit., pp. 187.

102. Doane, op. cit., pp. 18–189.

103. John Bell, New Pantheon, or Historical Dictionary of Gods, Demi–Gods, Heroes and Fabulous Personages of Antiquity... in two volumes, London, 1790. (tr.).

104. Max Muller, A History of Ancient Sancrit Literature, so far as it illustrates the Primitive Religion of the Brahmins; London, 1860. (tr.).

105. Vide chapter XX (The Crucifixion of Christ Jesus) of the Doane's Book. (tr.)

The author of al–Mizan writes: "The reader will find these quotations in Tafsir al–Manar (vol. 6, under the Chapter of 'The Women'), various encyclopaedias and the book, al–'Aqa'id al–wathaniyyah fi 'd–diyanati 'n–Nasraniyyah, and others." The last–named book is authored by Muhammad Tahir fandi. (tr.).

106. It happened in the first (not the second) half of the fourth century. Constantine I (the Great) established Christianity as State religion in 324; Nicaean Council was held in 325; his new capital at Byzantium was inaugurated in 330 (hence Byzantine Empire) which was renamed Constantinople (City of Constantine); he died in 337. (tr.).

107. Arius was Presbyter of Bancalis. A follower of Origen, he believed that Christ was a created being, not of the substance of God but created from "nothing"; he had a beginning and was thus not eternal. Although he was defeated at the Nicene Council (held in 325), subsequent Councils held at Arles, Milan and Sirmium (held in 353, 355 and 357, respectively) upheld his views. But it was again defeated in the Constantinople Council held in 381. Christian scholars say that Arians' 'temporary triumph' "had been made possible by imperial interference." But so was the case with the "original Nicene success" and its later victories. (See Williston Walker, A History of Christian Church, Edinburgh, 1970, pp. 107 – 117.) (tr.).

108. Many have commented on the last sentence that it affirms physical resurrection, while the Christians believe in spiritual resurrection only as the Gospel shows. But I think that the Gospel only indicates the absence of physical worldly enjoyments in the next world; it does not say that man will be resurrected in spirit only without his body. It rather says that man in the resurrection will become like angels, and there will be no sexual enjoyment among them. On the other hand, the Bible shows that even God and angels have bodies, let alone the man after resurrection. (Author's Note).

109. The author has taken these details from ash-Shahristani's al-Milal wa 'n-nihal. Ash-Shahristani is confused when he says that the "first Council held at Nicaea" assembled "at Constantinople". The Nicene Council had assembled in 325 at Nicaea, and another Council was held at Constantinople in 381 C. E. The actual Nicene Creed is now only a matter of surmise. Probably it ended with the sentence, 'And in the Holy Spirit'.
However, the Constantinople Council reconfirmed and enlarged it. That is why scholars refer to it as, "the so-called Nicene Creed", and sometimes with its technically correct name, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. But in spite of all that, its first appearance was at the Council of Chalcedon (451 C.E.); it was signed on 25/10/451, in presence of the Emperor Marcian. (See J.N.D. Kelly, Early Christian Creeds, Longman, London, 3rd ed., 1972, pp. 296 - 297; and The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church, 2nd ed., O.U.P., 1977).
In ash-Shahristani's book, the number of participants of the first Council is given as 318 and not 313. (tr.).
110. The author has taken these names from ash-Shahristani. I could not find the names, الاليانية and اليليارسية in the books I referred to ash-Shahristani, however, it gives the following details:
Ilyanites: A sub-sect of the Jacobites, found in Syria, Yemen, and Armenia. They believed that 'Isa was not a body in reality; all the sufferings, killing and crucifixion happened only on an illusion (or illusory being).
Yalyarsites: They believed that people, on arriving at the heaven, would enjoy eating, drinking and sexual relations for a thousand years; thereafter, they would proceed to the bounties promised by Arius. (tr.).
111. Macedonians: Named after Macedonius (died c. 362), Bishop of Constantinople. He strongly supported the semi-Arian cause in Council of Seleucia (359). From end of the fourth century, he is regarded as the founder of Pneumatomachi who are called Macedonians after him. They denied the full Godhead of the Holy Ghost. See The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church; also W. Walker, A History of the Christian Church, p. 118. (tr.).
112. Noetus: In Arabic text this name is mentioned the last. I have put it before the Sabellians, etc., as it would facilitate understanding. Noetus, probably of Smyrna, taught in his native region in 180 to 200 "that Christ was the Father Himself, and the Father Himself was born and suffered and died". His views were called Modalistic Monarchianism. (W. Walker, A History of the Christian Church, p.69). Another name for that belief was Patripassion doctrine; Noetus also rejected Logo doctrine. (The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church). (tr.).
113. Sabellians: Sabellianism is an alternative title for the Modalistic Monarchianism. Named after Sabbellus, who was teaching in Rome cir. 215. His theology was essentially that of Noetus, but much more carefully wrought out, especially in that it gave a definite place to the Holy Spirit, as well as to the Son. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all one and the same. They are three names of one God, Who manifests Himself in different ways according to circumstances. (W. Walker, A History of the Christian Church, p. 69). (tr.).
114. Paulianists: Followers of Paul of Samosata; he became Bishop of Antioch cir. 260. He taught a form of Dynamic Monarchianism in which Godhead was a closely knit trinity of Father, Wisdom and Word, and until creation formed a single hypostasis. He was a precursor of Nestorius, holding that from Incarnation the Word rested upon the human Jesus as one person upon another, and that the Incarnated Christ differed only in degree from the prophets. (The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church). (tr.).
115. Paulicians: A sect of the Byzantine Empire. Their name may have been derived from St. Paul, or more probably from Paul of Samosata. Endlessly persecuted, many of them assisted the Muslims in their wars against the empire and adopted Islam. Apparently, they ceased to exist as an independent sect in the twelfth century. (ibid.) (tr.).
116. Gregory I (590 - 604) established the temporal power of the Papacy in that period of unrest in Italy. However, it was Pope Innocent III who during his Papacy (1198 - 1216) made several European Kings and Emperors to pay homage to him, accepting him as their overlord. (tr.).
117. Constantine XIII Palaeologus (1394 - 1453) was killed on 29th May 1453. (tr.).
118. al-Futuhat al-Islamiyyah. (Author's Note).
119. al-Futuhat al-Islamiyyah. (Author's Note).
120. al-Futuhat al-Islamiyyah. (Author's Note).
121. This and the following descriptions have been taken from هنري دوكاستري Cite Henry de Castries; ad-Diyanat al-Islamiyyah, chapter I. (Author's Note).
122. Many such astonishing "revelations" have been quoted by Norman Daniel in his, Islam and the West. The Making of

an Image, Edinburgh University Press, 1960. (tr.).

123. The Life (New York edition), John Knox Jessup, in the article, The World, the Flesh and the Devil, 26th December, 1955, p. 143. (tr.) .

124. The Life (New York edition), John Knox Jessup, in the article, The World, the Flesh and the Devil, 26th December, 1955, p. 143. (tr.).

125. Tafsir Qummi.

126. Tafsir Qummi.

127. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

128. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Sura ’Aal-’Imran: Verses 81 – 85

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ ٱللَّهُ مِيثَـٰقَ ٱلنَّبِيِّـۧنَ لَمَآ ءَاتَيْتُكُم مِّن كِتَـٰبٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِۦ
وَلَتَنصُرُنَّهُۥ قَالَ ءَأَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَخَذْتُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكُمْ إِصْرِى قَالُوٓا۟ أَقْرَرْنَا قَالَ فَٱشْهَدُوا۟ وَأَنَا۠ مَعَكُم مِّنَ ٱلشَّـٰهِدِينَ

“And when Allah made a covenant with the prophets: “Certainly what I have given you of Book and Wisdom – then a Messenger comes to you verifying that which is with you, you must believe in him, and you must aid him.” He said: “Do you affirm and accept My compact in this (matter)?” They said: “We do affirm.” He said: “Then bear witness, and I (too) am of the bearers of witness with you” (3:81).

فَمَن تَوَلَّىٰ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْفَـٰسِقُونَ

“Whoever therefore turns back after this, these it is that are the transgressors” (3:82).

أَفَغَيْرَ دِينِ ٱللَّهِ يَبْغُونَ وَلَهُۥٓ أَسْلَمَ مَن فِى ٱلسَّمَـٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ

“Is it then other than Allah’s religion that they seek (to follow), and to Him submits whoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him shall they be returned?” (3:83).

قُلْ ءَامَنَّا بِٱللَّهِ وَمَآ أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَآ أُنزِلَ عَلَىٰٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ وَإِسْمَـٰعِيلَ وَإِسْحَـٰقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَٱلْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَآ أُوتِىَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ
وَٱلنَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُۥ مُسْلِمُونَ

"Say: "We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ishaq and Ya'qub and the tribes, and what was given to Musa and 'Isa and to the prophets from their Lord; we do not make any distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit"" (***3:84***).

وَمَن يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ ٱلْإِسْلَـٰمِ دِينًا فَلَن يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِى ٱلْـَٔاخِرَةِ مِنَ ٱلْخَـٰسِرِينَ

"And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam it shall not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers" (***3:85***).

Commentary

The verses are not disjointed from the preceding ones; they have been revealed in the same context. Earlier, Allah had described that the People of the Book transgressed the limits by indulging in alteration of the Books they were given, creating doubts and confusion among the people, discriminating the prophets, and rejecting the signs of the truth of the Messenger of Allah (S); then He showed how impossible it was for a prophet like Musa, or 'Isa (peace be on them both) to tell the people to take him or some other prophets or the angels as their lords – as the Christians openly claimed and the Jews implied.

Now He puts more emphasis on the impossibility of such an idea. How can any prophet give such an order to his people, when Allah has made covenant with the prophets that they must believe in, and help every prophet regardless of whether he preceded them or came after them? They were to fulfil that promise by confirming the truth of the preceding prophets and giving good news of those who were to come after them – as 'Isa ('a) verified the prophethood of Musa ('a) and his laws and foretold the advent of Muhammad (S). Likewise, Allah made a covenant with them that they should make a similar covenant with their people and made them witnesses over them; and then declared that it was the Islam – submission – which dominates all those who are in the heavens and in the earth.

Then Allah enjoins His Prophet (S) to adhere to that covenant: he is to believe in Allah and all that was sent to His prophets – without making any distinction between them, and to surrender to Allah. He was to enter into the covenant on his own behalf, and also on behalf of his *ummah*. That is why it is said that the covenant was made with him directly, and with his *ummah* through him, as we shall explain later.

Verse 81

Qur'an: ***"And when Allah made a covenant with the prophets: "Certainly what I have given you of Book and Wisdom – then a Messenger comes to you verifying that which is with you, you must believe in him, and you must aid him…"*** (***3:81***).

The verse speaks of a covenant that was made. "*Mithaqa'n-nabiyyin*" (مِيْثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ = translated here as "covenant with the prophets"), literally means 'covenant of the prophets'. This covenant was taken for the prophets as the clause, ***"then a Messenger comes to you... you must aid him"*** (***3:81***)***,*** points to, as well as "with the prophets" as the clauses, ***He said: "Do you affirm..."*** (***3:81***)***,*** and, ***"Say: "We believe in Allah..""*** (***3:84***)***,*** show. The covenant was therefore made for the prophets and with the prophets – although it was made with the prophets' people too, through the prophets.

The phrase, "covenant of the prophets", may therefore refer to the covenant made "with" them and to that "for" them, while in fact it is the same covenant looked at from different angles. In other words, "the prophets", may refer to those prophets "for" whom the covenant was made and also to those "with" whom it was made. However, the import of the preceding two verses ***"It is not meet for a man*** (***3:79***) and ***"... after you are Muslims..."*** (***3:80***)) which were revealed in the same context, gives rather more weight to the idea that, "the prophets", refers to those "with" whom the covenant was made.

Looking in this context the verses have the following connotation: 'It was not possible for the prophets, after Allah gives them the Book, the Wisdom and Prophethood, to call the people to take someone other than Allah as their lord or to worship him. How can it be possible while Allah has made covenant with them to believe in, and help, other prophets of Allah – who enjoin their peoples to believe in one God.' It is for this reason that this verse begins with mention of the covenant – focusing our attention to it.

"*lama ataytukum min kitabin wa hikmah*" (لَمَا اَتَيْتُكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَ حِكْمَةٍ = Certainly what I have given you of Book and Wisdom): '*lama'* (with the vowel 'a' after 'l', and without putting emphasis on 'm') is in accordance with the well-known recital (of all the reciters except *Hamzah*). Accordingly '*ma*' (مَا) is relative pronoun meaning, "what" or "whatsoever"; "*ataytukum"* (اَتَيْتُكُمْ = I have given you) is its "*as-silah*" (اَلصِّلَةُ = antecedent). Its other recital is "*ataynakum"* (اَتَيْنَكُمْ = We have given you). The objective pronoun that should come here is omitted because the phrase "of Book and Wisdom", points to it. The whole phrase is the subject, and "you must believe in him, and you must aid him", the predicate. '*la*', in '*lama'*, denotes beginning of the sentence, while in "*latu'minunna bihi"* (لَتُومِنَنَّ بِهِ = you must believe in him) it is for emphasis and oath.

The whole sentence describes the covenant that was made, which would be as follows: 'That which I have given you of Book and Wisdom, then a Messenger comes to you verifying that which is with you, you should believe in that Messenger and aid him without fail.'

There is another syntactical possibility: '*ma*' in '*lama'* may be a conditional pronoun, meaning "when"; and "you must believe in him", its answer. The meaning, in this case, would be like this: 'When I have given you of Book and Wisdom and then a Messenger comes to you... you must believe in him, and you must aid him.' This explanation is rather more appropriate (because it is more common to add '*la'* of oath on the "answer" of a conditional sentence), and the meaning in this case is clearer; also, it is more usual to put conditional clauses in covenants.

A reciter has recited '*lima*' using the vowel 'i' (instead of 'a') for 'l'. In that case 'li' would denote reason, and *'lima ataytukum'* would mean 'because of that which I have given you'. But the first recital has more weight.

The second person plural pronoun "you" in "have given you" and "comes to you", apparently refers to "the prophets". But the speech, 'Do you affirm and accept my compact in this?' indicates that it includes the people of the prophets too; that is, the talk is directed to the prophets only but the order (i.e., covenant) covers their people too. The people are as much obliged to believe in and help the coming Messenger as are the prophets themselves.

The conjunctive "then" in the clause "then a Messenger comes to you", obviously shows a delay in time; in other words, it was incumbent on a preceding prophet to believe in and help a prophet who would come after him. On the other hand, the verse:

"Say: "We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Ibrahim…" (***3:84***).

Implies that the covenant was made with each of the preceding and the following prophets for the other – the following prophets too were required to believe in and help the preceding ones. But it is only an inference; the words are silent about this matter – as we shall explain later, God willing.

There are two third person singular pronouns in the clauses, ***"you must believe in him, and you must aid him"*** (***3:81***). Both may refer to the "Messenger" who was to come later; there is no difficulty in the idea of one prophet believing in another, as Allah says:

"The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (***so do***) ***the believers; each of them believes in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers*** (***2:285***).

Nevertheless, it appears from the verse: ***Say: "We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Ibrahim…"*** (***3:84***)***,*** that the first pronoun refers to the Book and the Wisdom that was revealed, and the second one to the Messenger.

The meaning therefore would be as follows: 'You must believe in what I have given you of the Book and the Wisdom, and you must aid the Messenger who comes to you verifying that which is with you.'

Qur'an: ***"…He said: "Do you affirm and accept my compact in this*** (***matter***)***?" They said: "We do affirm"…"*** (***3:81***).

The question was put for confirmation. "*al–Iqrar*" (اَلْإِقْرَارُ = affirmation; acknowledgement); "al–*isr*" (اَلْإِصْرُ = compact, covenant), it is the object of the verb, "accept". Literally, the clause means, 'and take my compact in this'. The prophets were to take or make God's covenant; obviously there should be a second party there to enter into covenant with them, and it could be none except their own *ummah*. The

verse therefore means: 'Do you affirm this covenant, and have you made this compact of mine with your people? They said: "We do affirm."

An exegete has said: Taking God's compact means that the prophets accepted that covenant for themselves. If so, then, "(Do you) take my compact in this (matter)", would be an explicative apposition of the preceding clause, "Do you affirm?" This explanation is strengthened by their response, as they only said, "We do affirm", without saying anything about taking the compact.

Accordingly, the covenant would be restricted to the prophets; their *ummah* would not be included in it. On the other hand, the next directive, Then, bear witness, goes against this explanation; obviously one bears witness for or against other than oneself. Also, the next directive in the verse: ***"Say: "We believe in Allah…"*** (***3:84***) uses plural pronoun, We, and not, I, apparently, it is a declaration of faith by the Messenger of Allah (S) for himself and on behalf of his *ummah*. Therefore, "taking of compact" would mean making the compact with the *ummah*. Although, it may be said that it is these two sentences, Then, bear witness, and, We believe in Allah, which prove the participation of the *ummah* with the prophets in this compact, while, "take my compact in this", is not related to this matter.

Qur'an: ***"… He said: "Then bear witness, and I*** (***too***) ***am of the bearers of witness with you"*** (***3:81***).

Obviously, the witness, as explained above, is borne for or against someone else; therefore, it is concerned both with the prophets and their people. As mentioned above, also the next directive, "***Say: "We believe in Allah"*** (***3:84***), proves it. And the context too supports this meaning: The verses were revealed to reprove the People of the Book for their rejecting the message of the Messenger of Allah (S) and for ascribing falsehoods to 'Isa, Musa and some other prophets (peace be on them all); and it is in this background that they have been rebuked: Is it then other than Allah's religion that they seek (to follow)?

Some exegetes have said that the order, "Then bear witness", refers to the prophets bearing witness for one another; others have written that this order was given to the angels who were to bear witness, and that it is not concerned with the prophets.

Comment: These two meanings, although possibly correct in themselves, cannot be inferred from the verse without an association; and you have seen that the association goes against it.

One of the fine points in this verse deserves special attention. Read the words, Allah made a covenant with the prophets, in conjunction with the clause, then a Messenger comes to you. You will see that the covenant was made with the prophets for the Messenger. And we have described in the Commentary of the verse: ***"Mankind was but one people…"*** (***2:213***) that messengership is more particular than prophethood, that every messenger is a prophet but not every prophet is a messenger. The verse therefore obviously means that the covenant was made with the rank of prophethood for the rank of messengership – but not vice versa.

Keeping this connotation in view, we may question the comprehensiveness of the explanation given by an exegete that the covenant was made with the prophets that they would believe in each other and would tell one another to believe in each other – the religion is one which all the prophets invite to.

The meaning in fact should be as follows: Allah made a covenant with the prophets and their people that if Allah gave them Book and Wisdom and then a messenger came to them, verifying that which was with them, they would surely believe in what he would bring to them and help him; a prophet coming later would help a preceding (or contemporary) messenger by affirming his truth, and a preceding prophet would foretell the coming of a later messenger and enjoin his *ummah* to believe in him (the coming messenger), affirm his truth and help him in his cause. This covenant thus implies and affirms the Oneness of Divine Religion.

Another exegete has explained the verse as follows: "Allah made a covenant with the prophets that they would affirm the truth of Muhammad (S) and give their people the good tidings of his advent." This meaning is correct in itself; but it cannot be discerned from the wording of the verse. Of course, we may infer it from the context, as we have explained earlier: The verse is among the ones that argue against the People of the Book, admonishing and rebuking them for their tendency of altering the Books, hiding the signs foretold of the Holy Prophet of Islam, transgressing the limit, and turning away from the clear truth.

Verse 82

Qur'an: ***"Whoever therefore turns back after this, these it is that are the transgressors"*** **(*3:82*).**

It places emphasis on the above-mentioned covenant. The meaning is clear.

Verse 83

Qur'an: ***"Is it then other than Allah's religion that they seek* (*to follow*)*, and to Him submits…?"*** **(*3:83*).**

The question arises from the preceding verses. Well, Allah's religion is one; it was about that religion that the covenant was made with the prophets and their people; it was incumbent upon the preceding prophets and their people to foretell the advent of the Messenger who was to follow, and they had to believe in his message and help him.

Well, is it not strange – with this background – the way the People of the Book are behaving? What do they want when they deny your truth? They show the desire to follow the religion. If so, then do they seek a religion other than Islam which is the only Divine Religion? There can be no other explanation why they do not accept your truth, why they do not hold fast to the religion of Islam. Undoubtedly, it was incumbent upon them to accept and follow Islam, because it is the religion which is based on nature – a religion should not go against nature. Do they need a proof? Then see how all those inhabitants of the

heavens and the earth (who have been endowed with sense and intelligence) submit to Allah – on the level of creation – then let them also submit to him on the level of legislation.

Qur'an: ***"…And to Him submits whoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly…"*** **(*3:83*).**

This is the Islam – submission – that encompasses all who are in the heavens and the earth, including the People of the Book, who it says, are not Muslims. The word used here is "*aslama"* (أَسْلَمَ = he submitted), in past tense, which shows that the action has already taken place; in other words, they have already submitted to Allah.

Obviously, it can only refer to their submission in creative affairs – they cannot go against His decree in matters of creation. It does not refer to Islam in the sense of religion, or in the meaning of belief and worship. The words, "willingly or unwillingly"***,*** support, nay, prove this explanation.

Keeping the above explanation in view it appears that the words, "to Him submits", gives a proof, a reason, without mentioning, for the sake of brevity, its result and conclusion. The complete talk would be as follows: 'Do they seek to follow a religion other than Islam? But it is the religion of Allah; whoever is in the heavens and the earth submits to Him and obeys His order. If these People of the Book would accept it, their submission would be done willingly; if they disliked what Allah has decreed for them and tried to seek something else, the Divine Decree would nevertheless be enforced, however they might dislike it.'

It appears from it that the conjunctive '*wa*' (وَ = or) in "willingly or unwillingly", denotes division. The alternatives point to their willing acceptance of what Allah has decreed for them of the things they like; and their resentment of Divine Decrees in matters they dislike, for example, death, poverty, and sickness, etc.

Qur'an: ***"…And to Him shall they be returned"*** **(*3:83*).**

It is another reason why they must seek Islam as religion. They are bound to return to Allah, their true Lord; they would not be able to hide from Allah or to go to what their disbelief and polytheism leads them to rely on.

Verse 84

Qur'an: ***"Say: "We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us"*** **(*3:84*).**

Allah enjoins the Prophet to adhere to the covenant which was made with him and the others. He should declare as follows, for himself and on behalf of the believers from his *ummah*: "We believe in Allah and what has been revealed…"

It is a proof, as we have said above, that the covenant was made with the prophets and their people

together.

Qur'an: ***"…And what was revealed to Ibrahim and Isma'il… and to Him do we submit"*** (***3:84***).

All those mentioned here were prophets from the progeny of Ibrahim. The verse implies that the word, "the tribes", refers to the prophets from the progeny of Ya'qub – from the Children of Israel – like Dawud, Sulayman, Yunus, Ayyub and others. Then comes the phrase, ***"the prophets from their Lord"*** (***3:84***); it makes the declaration comprehensive, as it covers Adam, Nuh and all the others. Then a reference is made to the whole group, saying,

"We do not make any distinction between any of them and to Him do we submit" (***3:84***).

Verse 85

Qur'an: ***"And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam… shall be one of the losers"*** (***3:85***).

It negates and nullifies all that is outside the purview of the said covenant. It further emphasises the obligation of following the terms of the covenant.

Traditions

The Leader of the faithful ('Ali, 'a) said: "Verily, Allah made covenant with the prophets (who came) before our Prophet that they should inform their people of his advent and his characteristics, give them good news about him and enjoin them to affirm his truth."[1]

Ibn Jarir has narrated from 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) that he said: "Allah did not send any prophet – Adam and those who came after him – without making a covenant with him about Muhammad (S): If he (Muhammad, S) was sent when that prophet was alive, he must believe in him and help him; and He enjoined him to make a (similar) covenant with his people." Then the Imam recited the verse,

"And when Allah made a covenant with the prophets: Certainly what I have given you of Book and Wisdom" (***3:81***).[2]

The author says: These two Traditions explain the verse keeping both the words and the context in view, as we have written above.

as-Sadiq ('a) explained this verse as follows: "When Allah made a covenant with the people of the prophets – (with) every *ummah* – for affirming the truth of its prophet and following what they (the prophets) would bring to them; but (the people) did not fulfil it (i.e., the covenant) and neglected much of their laws and altered (it) to a great extent."[3]

The author says: The above tradition applies the verse to a particular situation; it therefore does not

conflict with the explanation given in the Commentary that the verse refers to a covenant made with the prophets together with their people.

The Leader of the faithful (‘a) said explaining the words: He said: “Do you affirm..”: ***“He (Allah) said: ‘Do you affirm?* (*3:81*)** And have you made this compact with your people?’ They (i.e., the prophets and their people) said: ‘We do affirm what Thou hast enjoined us to affirm.’ Allah said: ***“Then bear witness over your people in this respect, and I too am one of the bearers of witness with you, over you and your people.”* (*3:81*)**[4]

Ibn Jarir narrates from ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib that he said about the words ‘Then bear witness...’: “Allah said: ‘Then bear witness over your people in this respect; and I too am one of the bearers of witness with you, over you and them.” Then whoever turns away from you, O Muhammad, after this covenant taken from all the people, these it is that are the transgressors, they are the disobedient ones, (steeped) in disbelief.’ ” [5]

The author says: Its explanation has been given earlier.

as-Sadiq (‘a) said: “(Allah) said to them (when they were) in (the state of) particle: ‘Do you affirm and accept my compact in this matter?’ They said: ‘We do affirm.’ Then Allah said to the angels: ‘Then bear witness.’ ”[6]

The author says: The wording of the verse is not in conflict with this explanation, although, as we have said earlier, it is not inferred from its apparent meanings.

It is written in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* concerning the verse ***“And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam ...”* (*3:85*)**:’ Ahmad and at-Tabarani (in his *al-Mu‘jam al-awsat*) have narrated from Abu Hurayrah that he said: *‘The Messenger of Allah (S) said: “The deeds shall come on the Day of Resurrection. So, the prayer will come and say, ‘O Lord, I am prayer,’ and He will say, ‘Surely you are on good.’ And the alms will come and say, ‘O Lord I am alms,’ and He will say, ‘Surely you are on good.’ Then the fast will come and say, ‘I am fast,’ and He will say, ‘Surely you are on good.’ Then the deeds will come (one after another) and Allah will go on saying, ‘Surely you are on good.; (until Islam will come and Allah will say:) ‘With thee shall I take today and with thee shall I give.’ Allah says in His Book:* “***And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers*** (*3:85*)*’.*”

As-Sadiq (‘a) said about this verse: “It (i.e., Islam) means their believing in the Oneness of Allah, the Mighty, the Great.” [7]

The author says: The belief in monotheism requires that the servant should accept, and submit to, whatever Allah wants him to do. It therefore implies the same thing which has been written in the Commentary. If on the other hand it is explained just as “not ascribing anyone or anything to Allah”, then the willingness and unwillingness (mentioned in a preceding verse) would imply voluntary and

compulsory guidance.

There are several other Traditions narrated by al-'Ayyashi and al-Qummi (in their books) and others, in explanation of the verse ***"And when Allah made a covenant with the prophets..."*** (***3:81***) . In those Traditions the words ***"you must believe in him, and you must aid him"*** (***3:81***) have been explained as follows: You must believe in the Messenger of Allah, and you must aid the Leader of the faithful - blessings and peace be on them. Obviously, these traditions refer the former pronoun, him, to the Messenger of Allah (S) and the later, him, to the Leader of the faithful ('Ali, 'a), without there being any proof or association for it in the wording of the verse.

Nevertheless, a tradition given by al-'Ayyashi may solve this problem. He narrates from Salam Ibn al-Mustanir, from Abu 'Abdillah ('a) that he said:

"They have taken for themselves a name, that Allah named no one with it except 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib - and there has not come its interpretation yet." I said: "May I be your ransom! When will its interpretation come?" He said: "When it comes, Allah shall gather before Him the prophets and the believers, so that they should help him. And it is the words of Allah ***'And when Allah made a covenant with the prophets... and I*** (***too***) ***am of the bearers of witness with you."*** (***3:81***)

This tradition solves the problem. The problem arises if we take those Traditions as an exegesis or explanation of the verse [but this tradition shows that they do not purport to give the exegesis; they aim at pointing at its interpretation]. And we have described earlier that interpretation is not meaning of the word, nor a thing related to word. For detailed discussion, please refer to discourse under the verse 3:7.8

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1. Majma' al-bayan
2. ad-Durr al-Manthur
3. Majma' al-bayan; al-Jawami.
4. Majma' al-bayan.
5. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
6. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
7. at-Tawhid; at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.
8. See al-Mizan (Engl. Transl.), vol. 5, pp. 26 - 129. (tr.).

[1] [1]
SHARES

Sura ’Aal-’Imran: Verses 86 – 91

كَيْفَ يَهْدِى ٱللَّهُ قَوْمًا كَفَرُوا۟ بَعْدَ إِيمَـٰنِهِمْ وَشَهِدُوٓا۟ أَنَّ ٱلرَّسُولَ حَقٌّ وَجَآءَهُمُ ٱلْبَيِّنَـٰتُ وَٱللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِى ٱلْقَوْمَ ٱلظَّـٰلِمِينَ

“How shall Allah guide a people who disbelieved after their believing, and they have borne witness that the Messenger was true and clear arguments had come to them? And Allah does not guide the unjust people.” (***3:86***).

أُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ جَزَآؤُهُمْ أَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةَ ٱللَّهِ وَٱلْمَلَـٰٓئِكَةِ وَٱلنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ

“(***As for***) ***these, their reward is that upon them is the curse of Allah and the angels and of men, all together.”*** (***3:87***).

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُونَ

“Abiding in it; their chastisement shall not be lightened, nor shall they be given respite.” (***3:88***).

إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ تَابُوا۟ مِنۢ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا۟ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

“Except those who repent after that and amend, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful” (***3:89***).

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ بَعْدَ إِيمَـٰنِهِمْ ثُمَّ ٱزْدَادُوا۟ كُفْرًا لَّن تُقْبَلَ تَوْبَتُهُمْ وَأُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلضَّآلُّونَ

“Surely those who disbelieve after their believing, then increase in unbelief, their repentance shall never be accepted, and these are they that have gone astray.” (***3:90***).

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ وَمَاتُوا۟ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَن يُقْبَلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِم مِّلْءُ ٱلْأَرْضِ ذَهَبًا وَلَوِ ٱفْتَدَىٰ بِهِۦٓ أُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَمَا لَهُم مِّن نَّـٰصِرِينَ

“Surely, those who disbelieve and die while they are unbelievers, the earth full of gold shall not be accepted from one of them, though he should offer to ransom himself with it; these it is who shall have a painful chastisement, and they shall have no helpers” (***3:91***).

Commentary

The verses may possibly be connected to the preceding ones dealing with the People of the Book; but apparently, they are separate and revealed in another context.

Verse 86

Qur'an: ***"How shall Allah guide a people who disbelieved after their believing, and they have borne witness that the Messenger was true and clear arguments had come to them? And Allah does not guide the unjust people"*** (***3:86***).

The question shows the improbability of the situation; that it is impossible for them to get guidance. The verse ends with the sentence, "***and Allah does not guide the unjust people"*** (***3:86***). We have explained somewhere earlier that in such sentences the adjective explains the reason, that is, Allah does not guide them because they are unjust, and as long as they persist in injustice, they will not get Divine Guidance. Of course, they could not be debarred from that guidance if they repented and returned to Allah.

The clause ***"and they have borne witness that the Messenger was true"*** (***3:86***): If the verse refers to the People of the Book, then the 'bearing of witness' would refer to their realization that the signs foretold of the awaited prophet perfectly fit the Messenger of Allah (S); and the next clause, ***"and clear argument had come to them"*** (***3:86***), would refer to that reality.

If, on the other hand, it refers to those who apostatized after professing Islam, then the "witness" refers to their affirmation of the truth of the Prophet – not only a ritual affirmation resulting from ignorance or tribal influence, but the one based on clear understanding, as the clause ***"and clear arguments had come to them"*** (***3:86***) indicates.

In any case, as the verse contains the clause "***and they have borne witness that the Messenger was true"*** (***3:86***), it shows that the disbelief refers to their rejection of Faith after the truth was made clear to them, after the proof was completed against them. They had disbelieved only because they hated the truth, because they haughtily wrangled with the believers and transgressed the limit unjustly. It is this injustice which does not let its people find their way to safety and deliverance.

There is another syntactic explanation given for the clause, ***"and they have borne witness"*** (***3:86***). It has been said that it is in conjunction with the word *'Imanihim'* (اَيْمَانِهِمْ = their belief) and it means 'who disbelieved after they had believed and after they had borne witness.' Yet another explanation: The conjunctive, "and", in the clause, "and they have borne witness", has a circumstantial connotation, and the sentence means, 'while they have borne witness'. In this case it would be a circumstantial clause.

Verses 87 – 88

Qur'an: ***"(As for) these, their reward is that upon them is the curse of Allah and the angels and of men, all together"*** **(*3:87*).**

Qur'an: ***"Abiding in it; their chastisement shall not be lightened, nor shall they be given respite"*** **(*3:88*).**

We have earlier explained how all the curse returns to such people. For detail see the Commentary of the following verse 2:159. [1]

Verse 89

Qur'an: ***"Except those who repent after that and amend, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful"*** **(*3:89*).**

"*Aslahu"* (أَصْلَحُوا = amended, changed to better); it points to sincerity of repentance; that they repent with true heart, by which the impurity of disbelief is removed and their soul is purified by true belief. This word does not refer to doing good deeds; of course, good deeds follow the sincere repentance and are inseparable from it, yet they are not a part of repentance.

The clause, ***"then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful"*** **(*3:89*),** puts the reason to point to its unspoken result. Its connotation is as follows: then Allah forgives them and has mercy on them, because Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Verses 90 – 91

Qur'an: ***"Surely those who disbelieve after their believing, then increase in unbelief, their repentance shall never be accepted, and these are they that have gone astray"*** **(*3:90*).**

Qur'an: ***"Surely, those who disbelieve and die while they are unbelievers, the earth full of gold shall not be accepted from one of them, though he should offer to ransom himself with it; these it is who shall have a painful chastisement, and they shall have no helpers"*** **(*3:91*).**

The two verses together explain the reason of the verse in the beginning, ***"How shall Allah guide a people who disbelieved after their believing."*** **(*3:86*).** It applies a general rule to a particular case. A man, who disbelieves after truth has been made manifest to him and proof completed against him, and who then does not sincerely return to Allah, belongs to either one of the two categories:

Either he is an apostate who disbelieves after believing, then increases in unbelief and goes on transgressing without ever thinking of amending his ways; Allah shall not guide such a person nor will He accept his insincere repentance, because he does not turn to God with sincerity; he is totally lost, and there is no hope at all of his returning to the right path.

Or he is an unbeliever who dies in his disbelief, in his aversion to truth, without ever repenting; Allah shall not guide him in the hereafter to the Garden, because he himself never tried to return to his Lord; and there is no substitute for this returning to Lord, for repentance. He therefore will have nothing to offer as ransom, nor will any intercessor or helper intercede on his behalf or help him.

In this context, look at the sentence:

***"And these are they that have gone astray"* (*3:90*).**

In Arabic it is a "nominal sentence", because its predicate is a *nomen agentis*, *'ad-dallun'* (اَلضَّآلُّوْنَ = lit: strayers); such a sentence indicates permanence. Then there is the demonstrative pronoun *'ula'ika'* (أُولئِكَ = lit: those) which is used for distant objects; and it shows that they are removed far from mercy of Allah. Thus there are three modes of emphasis which have been combined here: addition of a separate personal pronoun, "they", use of a noun (*nomen agentis*) for predicate; and the definite article 'al' (اَلْ = the) before the said predicate – all these together prove that they are hardened wrongdoers and transgressors for whom there is no hope of guidance.

Likewise, the last sentence, ***"and they shall have no helpers"* (*3:91*),** proves that they will not get benefit of intercession – it is the intercessors who shall be the helpers on the Day of Resurrection. We have earlier explained that the use of plural, e.g., intercessors, in the verse ***"So we have no intercessors"* (*26:101*)** proves that there shall be intercessors on the Day of Judgement, but the unbelievers shall not be able to avail themselves of their intercession.[2] The same is the import of the plural, "helpers", in this place.

The second verse says that no ransom shall be accepted from them, nor will they get any helper. It is because these things are substitutes, which are used when the original thing is not available. They lost their chance of repentance in this life and there is nothing that can be a substitute for repentance in the hereafter.

It also shows that the clause ***"and die while they are unbelievers"* (*3:91*)** implies that they died without repentance. As such, there is no conflict between this apparently exclusive statement and the following verse:

"And repentance is not for those who go on doing evil deeds, until when death comes to one of them, he says. "Surely now I repent "; nor (for) those who die while they are unbelievers. These are they for whom We have prepared a painful chastisement" (4:18).

In this verse 'when death comes' means, when the death approaches and man see the signs of the next world and his ties with this world are cut off. Obviously at this point of time the door of repentance is closed on him.

'al-Mil' ' (اَلْمِلْءُ = a quantity that fills a pot); *'mil' al-ardi dhahaban'* (مِلْءُ الْاَرْضِ ذَهَباً = a quantity of gold

that would fill the earth); in this phrase, the earth is taken for a pot that is filled by gold. It is an imaginative *'al-isti'arah bi 'l-kinayah*, (اَلْاِسْتِعَارَةُ بِالْكِنَايَةِ = extended metaphor).

Traditions

It is reported in *Majma' al-bayan* about the verses ***'How shall Allah guide a people...:'*** **(*3:86*).** It is said that the verses were revealed about a man from the Ansar, al-Harith Ibn Suwayd Ibn as-Samit by name; he had treacherously killed al-Mujadhdhar Ibn Dhiyad al-Balawi, fled (from Medina), renounced Islam and reached Mecca. Thereafter he felt remorse and sent a message to his people to ask the Messenger of Allah (S) whether he would be allowed to repent. They asked (the Messenger of Allah); so the verses were revealed: How shall Allah guide a people who disbelieved after their believing... Except those who repent after that and amend... A man from his clan took these verses to him. (Hearing them) he said: 'I surely know that you are truthful, and the Messenger of Allah is truer than you, and Allah is the most truthful of the three.' So, he returned to Medina, repented and his Islam was good. It is reported from Mujahid and as-Suddi; and the same is narrated from Abu 'Abdillah ('a)."

Ibn Ishaq and Ibn al-Mundhir have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "Verily al-Harith Ibn Suwayd killed al-Mujadhdhar Ibn Dhiyad and Qays Ibn Zayd (from Banu Dubay'ah) during the Battle of Uhud, and then went over to Quraysh, and remained at Mecca. Thereafter he sent message to his brother, al-Julas, expressing his desire of repentance, so that he could return to his people. Thereupon, Allah sent these verses about him: How shall Allah guide a people..." (Then the story continues as above.)3

The author says: This story has been narrated through other chains, and there are many differences among them: For example, 'Ikrimah says that it was revealed about Abu 'Amir ar-Rahib, al-Harith Ibn Suwayd Ibn as-Samit and Wahwah Ibn al-Aslat (among twelve persons) who had renounced Islam and went over to Quraysh. Later they wrote to their families whether their repentance would be accepted. Then these verses were revealed.

Another example is found *in Majma' al-bayan*, that the verse, Surely those who disbelieve after their believing, then increase in unbelief..., was revealed about the eleven companions of al-Harith Ibn Suwayd. When al-Harith returned (to Medina), they said: 'We shall remain in Mecca in our disbelief as long as we wished; later on, if and when we wanted to return (to Medina) we would return, and there would come for us too what had been revealed about al-Harith.' When the Messenger of Allah (S) conquered Mecca, some of them re-entered into Islam and their repentance was accepted. And it was revealed about those of them who had died in disbelief, Surely, those who disbelieve and die while they are unbelievers... (This report has been attributed to some exegetes.)

There is a third view that it was revealed about the People of the Book. Others say that the verse, Surely, those who disbelieve after their believing, then increase in unbelief..., was revealed particularly for the Jews, because at first, they believed (in Musa), then disbelieved in 'Isa, then increased in unbelief by rejecting Muhammad (blessings of Allah be on him and his progeny and the two prophets).

There are other explanations given by other people.

If you ponder on these views, explanations, and traditions, you will realize that all are based on personal opinions of the ancient exegetes – as some later ones have remarked. As for the tradition attributed to as–Sadiq (ʿa), it is *al–mursalah* and weak. Moreover, it is possible for a verse to have more than one cause for its revelation; and Allah knows better.

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1. See al–Mizan (Engl. transl.), vol. 2, pp. 254 – 261.
2. See the details in the discourse of "Intercession" under the verse 2:48. al–Mizan (Engl. transl.), vol. 1, pp. 226 – 265. (tr.).
3. ad–Durr al–Manthur.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Sura ’Aal–’Imran: Verses 92 – 95

لَن تَنَالُوا۟ ٱلْبِرَّ حَتَّىٰ تُنفِقُوا۟ مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ وَمَا تُنفِقُوا۟ مِن شَىْءٍ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ بِهِۦ عَلِيمٌ

“Never shall you attain to righteousness until you spend (benevolently) out of what you love; and whatever thing you spend, Allah surely knows it.” (3:92).

كُلُّ ٱلطَّعَامِ كَانَ حِلًّا لِّبَنِىٓ إِسْرَٰٓءِيلَ إِلَّا مَا حَرَّمَ إِسْرَٰٓءِيلُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِۦ مِن قَبْلِ أَن تُنَزَّلَ ٱلتَّوْرَىٰةُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا۟ بِٱلتَّوْرَىٰةِ فَٱتْلُوهَآ إِن كُنتُمْ صَٰدِقِينَ

“All food was lawful to the Children of Israel – except that which Israel had forbidden to himself – before the Torah was revealed. Say: “Bring then the Torah and read it, if you are truthful.” (3:93).

فَمَنِ ٱفْتَرَىٰ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ ٱلْكَذِبَ مِنۢ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلظَّٰلِمُونَ

“Then whoever fabricates a lie against Allah after this, these it is that are the unjust.” (3:94).

قُلْ صَدَقَ ٱللَّهُ فَٱتَّبِعُوا۟ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ ٱلْمُشْرِكِينَ

"Say: "Allah has spoken the truth; therefore, follow the religion of Ibrahim, the upright one; and he was not one of the polytheists." (***3:95***).

Commentary

The connection between the first verse with the preceding ones is not clear; possibly it was not revealed with the remaining verses (which are clearly connected to each other). We had encountered a similar difficulty in deciding the revelation date of the verse 3:64.

Someone has tried to show its connection to the other verses. He says: The verse like the rest of the speech is addressed to the Children of Israel. Previously they were admonished and rebuked because they loved this world, and preferred wealth and riches to the Divine Religion. Now it says to them: You tell a lie when you claim a special relationship with Allah and His prophets, and when you say that you are pious and righteous ones. See what the truth is; you love your good property and sit on it refusing to spend from it in Allah's way. You only spend from undesirable things which you do not care about. But man can never attain to righteousness unless he spends out of what he loves, that is, from good properties; and if you spend out of these Allah shall preserve it for you and give you its reward in the hereafter.

That is the gist of what he has written; but, as you see, it is stretching the point too far.

As for the rest of the verses, their connection with the preceding one is quite clear.

Verse 92

Qur'an: ***"Never shall you attain to righteousness until you spend*** (***benevolently***) ***out of what you love..."*** (***3:92***).

an-Nayl (اَلنَّيْلُ = to reach, to attain); *'al-birr'* (اَلْبِرُّ) means comprehensive good-doing. ar-Raghib says: *'al-bar-r'* (اَلْبَرُّ = land) is opposite of *'al-bahr'* (اَلْبَحْرُ = sea); it led to the idea of spaciousness, and from that is derived *'al-barr'* = spaciousness (or comprehensiveness) in good-doing."

"Good-doing" is used in an unrestricted sense. It covers the action of heart (like true belief and pure intention) as well as the action of body (like worship of Allah and spending in His way). (We have used the word "righteousness" in translation to convey this comprehensive goodness.) And it is this very sense in which this word has been used in the following verse:

"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is the one who believes in Allah and the Last Day, the angels and the Book and the prophets, and gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (***the emancipation of***) ***the captives, and keeps up prayer and pays the zakat; and the performers of their promise when they make a***

promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflicts…" (***2:177***).

Reading this verse in conjunction with the one under discussion, one may clearly understand that spending wealth out of love for Allah is an essential part of righteousness; and making righteousness dependent on this spending shows the utmost importance attached to it particularly.

It is because man by nature has too much attachment with the wealth he has accumulated; he thinks that it is a part of his being, if it goes then a portion of his life is gone. There is no such difficulty in other acts of worship and good deeds where nothing seems to be lost.

It is not difficult, in view of the above discourse, to see the weakness of an exegete's explanation that 'righteousness is spending from what you love.' Perhaps he thought that the verse is framed in the style of the sentence, 'You cannot get rid of hunger until you eat!' The verse 2:177 is enough to show inaptness of this explanation.

The same verse (2:177) also makes it clear that *'al-birr'* has been used in its literal sense, that is, comprehensiveness in good-doing, because it explains it by enumerating all-encompassing good of faith and deed. And it shows the inappropriateness of an explanation that '*al-birr'* means bounty and favour of Allah; or of someone else's interpretation that it means the Garden.

Qur'an: ***"..And whatever thing you spend, Allah surely knows it"*** (***3:92***).

It strengthens and gladdens the spenders' hearts. They should know that what they have spent from their cherished wealth and property is not wasted, has not gone unnoticed, because Allah Who has enjoined them to do so, knows their spending and what they spend.

Verse 93

Qur'an: ***"All food was lawful to the Children of Israel - except that which Israel had forbidden to himself - before the Torah was revealed …"*** (***3:93***).

at-Ta'am (اَلطَّعَامُ = whatever is eaten); the people of Hijaz [in whose language the Qur'an was revealed] use this word particularly for wheat, and it is this meaning they understand when the word is used without any association. '*al-Hill'* (اَلْحِلُّ = lawfulness) is opposite of '*al-hurmah* (اَلْحُرْمَةُ = unlawfulness, prohibition); probably it is derived from '*al-hall*' (اَلْحَلُّ = to open) which is opposite of '*al-'aqd'* or '*al-'aql'* (اَلْعَقْدُ اَلْعَقْلُ, = to tie, to bind) - thus lawfulness has a connotation of openness, unrestrictedness.

Israel was (the acquired name of) the Prophet Ya'qub; he got this name because he endeavoured hard in the way of Allah; the People of the Book say that it means 'one who vanquished God and prevailed against Him'. The Torah says that he wrestled with God in a place called Peniel and vanquished Him[1] But the Qur'an rejects this, and reason says that such thing is impossible.

The clause, ***"except that which Israel had forbidden to himself"*** (***3:93***), is exception from the above-

mentioned “food”. The next clause, ***“before the Torah was revealed”*** (***3:93***), is related to the verb “was lawful”; it means: Allah had not forbidden any food to the Children of Israel before the Torah was revealed, except that which Israel had forbidden for himself.

The following sentence, ***“Say: ‘Bring them the Torah and read it, if you are truthful,’ ”*** (***3:93***), indicates that the Jews were not admitting that every food was lawful to them before the Torah was revealed. They had to say so because they did not accept that Divine Laws could be abrogated.[2]“***Whatever signs We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it”*** (***2:106***). No wonder, they disputed the words of Allah where He says:

“Wherefore for the iniquity of those who are Jews did We disallow to them the good things which had been made lawful to them” (***4:160***).

Likewise, the last verse “***Say: ‘Allah has spoken the truth; therefore follow the religion of Ibrahim…”*** (***3:95***), indicates that they were trying to create doubts in the minds of the Muslims through these denials. They did not admit that every food was lawful to them before the revelation of the Torah; nor that many lawful things were forbidden to them because of their iniquity; and through these denials they disputed the claim of the Messenger of Allah (which was based on Divine Revelation) that his religion was that of Ibrahim, and that it was the natural religion free from excess and shortcoming. The Jews said: “How can it be true, when Ibrahim was a Jew in religion, on the *Shari‘ah* of Torah? How could religion of Ibrahim allow what was forbidden in the Torah, when abrogation is not allowed?”

It is clear now that the verse intends to answer the questions which the Jews had put about, and by which they had tried to confuse the Muslims. Obviously, they had not put these questions directly to the Messenger of Allah (S), but to the believers during their social contacts. This inference is supported by the fact that the Qur’an has not mentioned here their objection or question at all, unlike many occasions where it has quoted their sayings before replying. For example, these verses:

“And the Jews say: “The hand of Allah is tied up” (***5:64***).

“And they say: “Fire shall not touch us but for a few days” (***2:80***).

“And they say: “Our hearts are covered” (***2:88***).

There are several such verses.

Moreover, the verses 3:99 and 3:100 – coming soon after this talk – clearly show that the Jews were trying to mislead the believers through such insidious propaganda:

“Say: “O People of the Book! why do you hinder him who believes from the way of Allah?… (***3:99***).

“O you who believe! if you obey a party from among those who have been given the Book, they

will turn you back as unbelievers after you have believed" (***3:100***).

In short, the Jews objected as follows: How can your Prophet be true as he accepts validity of abrogation? He says that God had disallowed many lawful things to the Jews because of their iniquity. But it entails abrogation of a previously ordained law, which is not acceptable in case of Allah. What is unlawful will remain unlawful forever; it is not possible for a Divine Law to change.

Allah directed His Prophet to answer them as follows: The Torah says that every food was lawful to the Children of Israel before the revelation of the Torah. Therefore, bring the Torah and read it if you are truthful in your claim. (All food was lawful... if you are truthful.) But if you refuse to do so, then you must admit that you have fabricated a lie against Allah and that you are unjust. (Then whoever fabricates a lie against Allah after this, these it is that are the unjust.) It will prove to you that I am truthful in my mission. You should therefore follow my religion which is the religion of Ibrahim, the upright one; as stated in the verse:

"Say: 'Allah has spoken the truth; therefore, follow the religion of Ibrahim, the upright one; and he was not one of the polytheists" (***3:95***).

The exegetes have variously explained these verses – each in his own way. But all have said that the verses aim to refute the objection of the Jews concerning abrogation – as we have said above.

The strangest explanation (given by one of them) is as follows:

"The verse replies to a Jewish objection regarding abrogation. It appears that the Jews had said: 'O Muhammad! If you are, as you claim, on the religion of Ibrahim and the succeeding prophets, then how is it that you have allowed, for example, camel meat that was forbidden to him and them? And now that you have made lawful what was unlawful to them, you should not claim that you affirm their truth and are on their religion; nor should you especially mention Ibrahim.'

"The reply runs as follows: 'Every food was lawful to all people including the Children of Israel. But the Children of Israel had forbidden some things to themselves by indulging into sins and evils, as Allah says:

"Wherefore for the iniquity of those who are Jews did We disallow to them the good things which had been made lawful for them…' (***4:160***).

Therefore, the word, 'Israel', refers to the whole nation, to all the Children of Israel, not to Israel (Ya'qub) alone. And such usage in tribes' names is common.

The clause "***Israel had forbidden to himself"*** (***3:93***) actually means that the Children of Israel indulged in injustice and committed sins, as a result of which Allah forbade it to them. The clause, ***"before the Torah was revealed"*** (***3:93***), qualifies the preceding verb, ***"Israel had forbidden to himself"*** (***3:93***); that is, what the Israelites had forbidden to themselves before the revelation of the Torah. If we take,

‘Israel’, to mean Ya‘qub alone, then this clause (before the Torah was revealed) would be superfluous, because everybody knows that Ya‘qub had preceded the revelation of the Torah.”

This is the gist of what he has written. Someone else has given the same explanation with one difference. He writes: “The clause, “***that which Israel had forbidden to himself”*** (***3:93***), means that the Children of Israel had themselves forbidden those things to themselves, making laws of their own, without any revelation from God; in the same way as the Arabs of pre-Islamic days were doing and which Allah has mentioned in the Qur’an.”

Both exegetes have stretched the words to an intolerable limit, which no knowledgeable person would agree with. They have diverted the whole talk from its proper line. Actually, they were misled in this way because they thought that the clause ***“before the Torah was revealed***” (***3:93***) was related to the clause ***“Israel had forbidden”*** (***3:93***) – while in fact it qualifies the words in the beginning, ***“All food was lawful”*** (***3:93***); and the exception clause, ***“except that which Israel had forbidden to himself”*** (***3:93***), is just a parenthetical clause.

Consequently, there is no reason why “Israel” should be interpreted as “the Children of Israel”, as they have done, thinking that without it the verse could not be explained!

Now we come to the usage of tribes’ names. It is true that the Arabs say, Bakr, Taghlib, Nizar and ‘Adnan, when they actually mean the children of Bakr, the children of Taghlib, the children of Nizar and the children of ‘Adnan, respectively. But we have never seen them – at the time when the Qur’an was revealed – using “Israel” for “the Children of Israel”. Nor has the Qur’an used this word in that sense anywhere else; although it has mentioned “the Children of Israel” in about forty places, including this very verse: “All food was lawful to the Children of Israel – except that which Israel had forbidden to himself.”

Let us ask them one thing: What is the difference (according to their explanation) between the two clauses? The Qur’an refers to them first as “the Children of Israel” and then immediately after that as “Israel”. Why this change if both words mean the same? If their explanation is correct, then was it not necessary to use the same word in both places, lest there be any confusion? And confusion was bound to occur; because, from the point of view of these two writers, the whole lot of the exegetes was misled into thinking that Israel refers to Ya‘qub, not to his children!

The best proof to show that the name “Israel” refers to Ya‘qub alone, is the singular masculine pronoun, “to himself”, used for “Israel”. Had “Israel” stood for “the tribe of Israel” or “the Children of Israel”, it was essential to say “to itself” or “to themselves”.

Qur’an: ***“…Say: “Bring then the Torah and read it, if you are truthful”*** (***3:93***).

So that it may be seen who is right, I or you. Allah guides His Prophet to reply to them in this way.

Verse 94

Qur'an: ***"Then whoever fabricates a lie against Allah after this, these it is that are the unjust"*** (***3:94***).

Apparently, it is Allah's speech addressed to His Prophet; accordingly, the aim is to strengthen and gladden the Prophet's heart, by declaring that it is his enemies, the Jews, who are the unjust, because they fabricate lies against Allah. It is an indirect adverse allusion to the Jews.

There is another syntactical possibility: It may be a continuation of the reply given to the Jews by the Prophet, although the second person singular pronoun used in the demonstrative pronoun *'dhalika'* (ذلِكَ = this) does not fit this explanation. However, according to this explanation too, the sentence would be just veiled aside, giving the vanquished adversary a chance to save his face – because it does not clearly say that the Jews are the unjust ones. Putting the matter in general terms gives the enemy an opportunity to surrender gracefully.

It is the same style that has been used in the following verse:

"And most surely we or you are on a right way or in manifest error" (***34:24***).

The demonstrative pronoun, "this", in "after this" points to the explanation and proof offered to the Jews.

Why has this proviso, "after this", been added here? Is not he, who fabricates a lie against Allah, unjust in all circumstances? The fact is that he cannot be called unjust until proof has been clearly explained to him – as some scholars have said. However, the sentence, "these it is that are the unjust", is an exclusive one, and it implies that such fabricators cannot be but unjust.

Verse 95

Qur'an: ***"Say: "Allah has spoken the truth; therefore, follow the religion of Ibrahim…"*** (***3:95***).

As the truth is on my side (in what 1 have told you and called you to), you should follow my religion; also, you should admit that camel meat, for example, is a good thing made lawful by Allah, and that Allah had forbidden it to you as a punishment for your injustice and transgression – as He has said.

The clause, ***"therefore follow the religion of Ibrahim"*** (***3:95***), is a sort of indirect invitation to follow the Prophet's religion. It was not mentioned directly because: first, the Jews affirmed the truth of Ibrahim's religion; secondly, the present wording shows that the religion to which they are invited is the upright and natural one – after all, nature does not prevent man from eating good sustenance given by Allah, including meat.

Traditions

As-Sadiq (‘a) said: “Whenever Israel ate camel meat, he felt throbbing pain in his sides. Therefore, he forbade camel meat to himself. And it was (long) before the revelation of the Torah. When the Torah was revealed, (Musa) neither forbade it, nor ate it.”3

The author says: An almost similar tradition is narrated through the Sunni chains. The verbs in the clause, neither forbade it nor ate it, refer to Musa (‘a) whose name, although not mentioned, is clearly understood. The verb, ‘*lam ya’kulhu’* (لَمْ يَأكُلْهُ = did not eat it) may alternatively be read from the paradigm ‘*at-taf‘il’* as ‘*lam yu’akkilhu’* (لَمْ يُؤَكِّلْهُ = did not feed it, i.e., did not tell them to eat it). The dictionary, *Taj al-‘arus*, says that the verb ‘*al-akl’* (اَلْاَكْلُ = to eat) when conjugated on the paradigms of ‘*at-taf‘il* (اَلتَّفْعِيْلُ) and ‘*al-mufa*‘alah’ (اَلْمُفَاعَلَةُ), has the same meaning. It means that ‘*at-ta’kil’* (اَلتَّأْكِيْلُ = to feed) and ‘*al-mu’akalah’* (اَلْمُؤَاكَلَةُ = to eat together) have the same connotation.

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1. See Genesis 32/24 - 30. (tr.)
2. We have described it under the verse 2:106. See al-Mizan (Engl. transl.), vol. 2, pp. 42 - 52. (pub.).
3. al-Kafi; at-Tafsir, al-‘Ayyashi.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Sura ’Aal-’Imran: Verses 96 – 97

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِى بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَـٰلَمِينَ

***“Most surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bakkah, blessed and a guidance for the worlds”* (*3:96*).**

فِيهِ ءَايَـٰتٌۢ بَيِّنَـٰتٌ مَّقَامُ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ ۚ وَمَن دَخَلَهُۥ كَانَ ءَامِنًا وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى ٱلنَّاسِ حِجُّ ٱلْبَيْتِ مَنِ ٱسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا وَمَن كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَنِىٌّ عَنِ ٱلْعَـٰلَمِينَ

***“In it are clear signs, the standing place of Ibrahim; and whoever enters it shall be secure; and for the sake of Allah, pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men,* (*upon*) *everyone who can afford the journey to it, and whoever disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-sufficient* (*independent*) *of the worlds”* (*3:97*).**

Commentary

The two verses are in reply to another objection which the Jews were putting to the believers, because of the "abrogation". Their target, this time, was the change of *qiblah* from Bayt al-Maqdis to the Ka'bah. We have explained under the verse, ***"turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque..."*** (***2:144***), that the change of *qiblah* was a very important matter which had profound effect, materially as well as spiritually, on the People of the Book, especially the Jews; apart from the fact that it offended their views about abrogation. That is why they vehemently objected to it and contentions and conflicts between them, and the Muslims continued for a long time after the change of *qiblah.*

It may be inferred from the verses that they had combined two elements in their objection: their aversion to abrogation, and a denial that the new direction of *qiblah* had anything to do with Ibrahim. How could the Ka'bah be considered the *qiblah* of Ibrahim, when Allah had appointed Bayt al-Maqdis as *qiblah*? This new rule entails abrogation of Ibrahim's law – admittedly the true religion – when we know that abrogation is impossible and void.

The verse deals with it as follows: The Ka'bah was appointed as the House of worship long before other houses like Bayt al-Maqdis were built. Undoubtedly it was Ibrahim who built it and dedicated it for Divine Worship; there are many clear signs, like the standing place of Ibrahim, which prove this fact. Bayt al-Maqdis, on the other hand, was built by Sulayman[1] who came centuries after Ibrahim.

Verse 96

Qur'an: ***"Most surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bakkah, blessed and a guidance for the worlds"*** (***3:96***).

The meaning of 'house' is well-known; that the Ka'bah was appointed for men, means that it was dedicated in order that people should worship Allah in that place. It was a means of Divine Worship, helping men and making it easier for them to pray to Allah, by journey to, or facing towards it; and in various ways turning their attention to Him. All this may be inferred from the phrase ***"blessed and a guidance for the worlds"*** (***3:96***). Also, the expression, ***"one at Bakkah"*** (***3:96***), hints at it. The word "*bakkah"* (بَكَّةُ) means gathering of people, and its use here points to the fact that there is always a large gathering of people therein who are engaged in circumambulation, prayer and other rites of worship.

The wording however does not show that the Ka'bah was the first House built on the earth or appointed for the benefit of men.

Bakkah – refers to the land on which the Ka'bah stands; it has been given this name because there is always a huge gathering of people there. There are also other explanations:

(1) *Bakkah* is Mecca, the letter 'm' (م) has been changed to 'b' (ب), as it has been done in *'lazim'* (لَازِمْ) and *'lazib'* (لَازِبْ) or *'ratim'* (رَاتِمْ) and *'ratib'* (رَاتِبْ) etc.;

(2) It is a name of the Meccan Sanctuary; or

(3) of the Sacred Mosque; or

(4) of the area of circumambulation.

"al-Mubarakah" (اَلْمُبَارَكَةُ) is on the paradigm of *al-mufa'alah* (اَلْمُفَاعَلَةُ) from the root word al-*barakah* (اَلْبَرَكَةُ = abundant good); it has been translated here as 'blessed'; it means bestowal of abundant good on the House, making it blessed. Abundant good covers good of both worlds; but in this verse it has been put face to face with the phrase, ***"a guidance for the worlds"*** (***3:96***), and it indicates that the blessing refers to worldly good. The best of such blessings is the abundance of sustenance in Mecca, and deep yearning of people to go there for pilgrimage, to present themselves there and to keep it in highest regard. In other words, it would show the fulfilment of Ibrahim's prayer:

"O our Lord! surely I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley, uncultivable, near Thy Sacred House, our Lord! that they may establish prayers; therefore, make the hearts of some people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits; haply they may be grateful" (***14:37***).

The Ka'bah is a guidance, as it shows the people the way to their happiness in the hereafter, leads them to nobility and Divine Nearness; because, Allah has designated it for worship, and has prescribed various prayers, acts of worship and rituals to be performed there; also, it has remained the destination longed for by the believers and a place of worship for worshippers.

The Qur'an shows that it was in Ibrahim's time – after he had completed the construction of the Ka'bah – that pilgrimage was prescribed for the first time: Allah says:

"And We enjoined Ibrahim and Isma'il (***saying***)***: Purify*** (***you two***) ***My House for those who make circuit and those who abide*** (***in it for devotion***) ***and those who bow down*** (***and***) ***those who prostrate themselves"*** (***2:125***).

"(***And He had enjoined Ibrahim as follows:***) ***And proclaim among men the Hajj; they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every remote path"*** (***22:27***).

This verse clearly says that this call, this cry, would surely be answered with general acceptance by the people from near and afar, from various clans and tribes.

Also the Qur'an proves that this divinely-initiated "symbol" was firmly established and quite well-known in the days of Shu'ayb ('a). Allah quotes him as saying to Musa ('a):

"I desire to marry one of these two daughters of mine to you on condition that you should serve me for eight years (***lit.: pilgrimages***)***; but if you complete ten, it will be of your own free will"*** (***28:27***).

He used the word “pilgrimages” for “years”. There can be only one explanation for it: the years were counted in terms of pilgrimage, as it happened every year.

Also, there are many points in Ibrahim’s invocation which show that the House all the time served as a worship centre and was a symbol of guidance. (For detail see chapter 14 – Ibrahim).

The Arabs, even in the days of ignorance, held the House in reverence and performed its pilgrimage, rightly believing it to be a part of Ibrahim’s *Shari‘ah*. History says that other nations too accorded respect to it. This, in itself, is a sort of guidance because it fixes man’s mind on remembrance of Allah. So far as the period after the advent of Islam is concerned, the Ka‘bah’s guidance needs no elaboration. Its fame encompasses the East and the West. The Ka‘bah is always present in people’s minds and hearts. The Muslims turn to it from everywhere they are, and at all times: during worship and prayer, while standing or sitting, for slaughtering animals and in a number of other religious affairs.

In this way, the House is a guidance (with all stages of guiding), be it just attention of mind or complete surrender to Allah – the stage which may be attained only by the purified servants of Allah – from among those who are free of sin and error.

Moreover, it guides the Muslim’s world to their worldly blessings because it unifies their goal, unites the *ummah* and opens for them avenues of benefit and profit. Also, it is a guidance for the others because it makes them appreciate the fruits of this unity and they realize how beneficial it is to unite all separate forces together.

It appears from the above that:

First: The Ka‘bah is a guidance to the happiness of this world and the next; and it encompasses all the stages of guidance. In short, the guidance is general and unconditional.

Second: It is a guidance for the whole world, not for a particular world or special group like the progeny of Ibrahim, or the Arabs, or the Muslims. It is because of unrestrictedness of the guidance.

Verse 97

Qur’an: ***“In it are clear signs, the standing place of Ibrahim…”*** (***3:97***).

The “signs” are qualified by the adjective “clear”. It particularizes the signs to a certain extent. Yet the ambiguity, the vagueness remains. But the context demands that the distinctions and special qualities of the House be clearly shown, in order that the audience may know why it has got precedence over all other houses of worship.

It requires definitive description of its distinctions, free from ambiguous expression or vague depiction. Looking from this angle it becomes clear that the next phrases and clauses have been put there as classifications of the “clear signs”. What are the clear signs? They are the standing place of Ibrahim, its

being a sanctuary and place of safety, and obligatoriness of its pilgrimage for those who can afford.

But it does not mean that the three clauses are in *"'atf al-bayan"* (عَطْفُ الْبَيَانْ = explicative apposition) to the phrase "clear signs" or serve as its "*al-badal*" (اَلْبَدَلُ = substitute). Otherwise, it would require reconstruction of all the sentences. For example, it will have to be rewritten as follows: "These signs are the standing place of Ibrahim, and safety for those who enter it, and its pilgrimage for him who may afford the journey."

Thus we will have to reduce a whole sentence (whoever enters it shall be secure) to a single word "security" (it makes no difference whether we take that sentence as an imperative or a declarative one), and to change the imperative sentence (and for the sake of Allah, pilgrimage to the House is incumbent...) into a declarative one and then setting it in conjunction with the preceding sentence; and this too will have to be reduced to a single word. Alternatively we will have to add 'an' (اَنْ) of *masdar* before both sentences. But the context does not agree with all these alterations.

The fact is that the three sentences are independent; each has a certain connotation – either declarative or imperative – and all three together describe the clear signs. It is as we say: Zayd is a noble man; he is the son of a great father; his house is always open to guests; and we should follow in his footsteps. [Thus, the three independent sentences explain the nobility of Zayd.]

***"The standing place of Ibrahim"* (*3:97*),** is a subject with its predicate omitted; the complete sentence would be, "There is in it the standing place of Ibrahim." It is the stone that has the imprint of the feet of Ibrahim. It is reported that the stone is fixed in the place now called *"Maqamu Ibrahim"* (مَقَامُ اِبْرَاهِيْمُ = standing place of Ibrahim) on the periphery of the circumambulation area,2 facing "*al-Multazam*" (اَلْمُلْتَزَمُ = the Ka'bah's wall between its door and the Black Stone). It is this stone that Abu Talib, the uncle of the Prophet, refers to in his well-known poem:

And the footprints of Ibrahim in the stone identify,

With his (i.e., Muhammad's) feet – when they are bare.

Sometimes this phrase gives the idea that there is in the House – or the House itself – the place where Ibrahim stood or stayed for Divine Worship.

Another syntactical possibility: We may say that the implied sentence is as follows, 'In it are clear signs, and they are the standing place of Ibrahim, and security and pilgrimage'; but the last words (i.e. 'and security and pilgrimage') have been omitted for brevity because the next sentences allude to them. The next sentences, "***and whoever enters it..., and for the sake of Allah pilgrimage..."* (*3:97*),** give imperative connotation but are constructed as declarative ones.

This verse, therefore, shows one of the wonderful Qur'anic styles: It uses a speech (which has its own theme) – to serve another purpose – it is placed in such a way as to point to the other meaning too.

Thus, one sentence serves two purposes without sacrificing either connotation. For example, sometimes it puts direct quotation in an indirect narration:

"…Every one of them believes in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers: We make no difference between any of His messengers" (***2:285***).

Two examples are found in verses:

"Did you not see him who disputed with Ibrahim about his Lord…" (***2:258***).

"Or like him who passed by a town, and it had fallen down upon its roofs…" (***2:259***).

and we have pointed to this in the Commentary of the second verse. Other examples are seen in verses:

"The day on which neither property will avail, nor sons" (***26:88***).

"… Except him who comes to Allah with a heart submissive" (***26:89***).

And also in this verse:

"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces…, but righteousness is the one who…" (***2:177***).

Wherein righteousness has been used for "righteous"; the same modality is seen in:

"And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who calls out to that which hears not more than a call and a cry" (***2:171***).

This modality is used in most of the Qur'anic parables.

The modality used in this verse, ***"In it are clear signs… independent of the worlds"*** (***3:97***), which frequently switches from declarative to imperative mood and back, is the same as that employed in the verses:

"And remember Our servants Ayyub, when he called upon his Lord: The Satan has afflicted me with weariness and torment" (***38:41***).

"Stamp your foot, here is a cool washing place and a drink." (***38:42***).

"And We gave him his family and the like of them with them, as a mercy from Us, and as a reminder to those possessed of understanding" (***38:43***).

"And take in your hand a bundle of rushes and beat her with it and do not break your oath; surely We found him patient; most excellent the servant! Surely, he was frequent in returning (***to Allah***)***"*** (***38:44***).

However, the explanation given above is totally different from that given by some people who speak in term of explicative apposition, and which we have rejected earlier. If one thinks it necessary to treat it as an explicative apposition, then it is far better to treat only one phrase ***"the Standing Place of Ibrahim"*** (***3:97***)***,*** in this way; and treat the next two sentences as independent ones, which by their meanings point to other two explicative appositions which are deleted for brevity – as we have done. The completed sentence then would be as follows: In it are clear signs, the Standing Place of Ibrahim, and the security of the visitor, and the pilgrimage of one who can afford it.

There is no doubt whatsoever that each of the above-mentioned things is a clear sign that leads to Allah and reminds one of His majesty. What is a sign? It is a thing that points to something else. And there is no sign that may lead to Allah, may remind His servants of His majesty, greater and clearer in people's eyes than the Standing Place of Ibrahim, the sanctuary that provides security to the one who enters it, and the worship and rites which are performed by millions of people year after year and which the alternations of days and nights cannot set aside.

It should be made clear that it is not necessary for a "sign" to be a super-natural thing that should contradict the normal system of nature; neither is 'miraculousness' part of this word's meaning, nor is its use in the Qur'an confined to this sense. Allah says:

"Whatever signs We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it…" (***2:106***)***.***

No doubt, abrogated laws of the *Shari'ah* are included in the meaning of the word, "signs", here.

Also, He says:

"Do you build on every height a monument (***lit. sign***)***? Vain is it that you do"*** (***26:128***)***.***

There are many such verses in the Qur'an.

Now you may see how untenable is the position of those who say that only the Standing Place of Ibrahim is a "clear sign", and that the security and the pilgrimage are not related in any way to the "clear signs".

The same is the position of those who insist that the phrase "clear signs" refers to various special characteristics of the Ka'bah. (We do not think it necessary to quote them here; whoever so desires, should refer to some detailed books of exegesis.) Such an explanation takes it for granted that "signs" means miraculous and super-natural things; but as we have explained just now, there is no evidence to prove it.

The fact is that the sentence, ***"Whoever enters it shall be secure"*** (***3:97***), points to a legislative law, not to any creative characteristic. Apparently, it is a declarative sentence which refers to a law that was in force since long and had made the House a place of security. This may be inferred from the invocation

of Ibrahim quoted in the chapter 14 (Ibrahim) and chapter 2 (The Cow). This right of sanctuary was recognized even by the Arabs of pre-Islamic era, and its origin may be traced to Ibrahim's days.

Some exegetes have said: The sentence declares that violence and upheaval, turmoil and turbulence cannot happen in, or reach, the sanctuary. But experience refutes this explanation; we know how many battles and wars were fought in that area; how much distance and violence had occurred there - and especially before this verse was revealed.

Also, the verse

"Do they not see that We have made a sacred territory secure, while men are carried off by force from around them?" (***29:67***).

Does not show any creative security inherent in the nature of Ka'bah. It only points to the fact that safety and security surrounded the sacred area, because people respected the sanctity of the House and accorded it full honour as it was established by the *Shari'ah* of Ibrahim; thus, ultimately it depends on Divine Legislation, on the law ordained by Allah.

This view is further supported by the invocations of Ibrahim as he implored Allah:

"...My Lord! make this city secure..." (***14:35***).

"...My Lord! make it a secure town..." (***2:126***).

He prayed to Allah to make Mecca a secure town, and Allah answered his prayer by promulgating a law to that effect and implanting acceptance of this law in people's hearts so that they could continue respecting this sanctuary generation after generation.

Qur'an: ***"...And for the sake of Allah, pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men,*** (***upon***) ***every one who can afford the journey to it..."*** (***3:97***).

"*al-Hijj*" (اَلْحِجُّ), which has also been recited '*al-hajj'* (اَلْحَجُّ), literally means, to intend, to aim; then it was reserved for intention of, or repairing to, the House in a particular manner laid down by the *Shari'ah;* '*sabilan*' (سَبِيْلاً = lit.: way; translated here as, the journey) is '*at-tamyiz'* (اَلتَّمْيِيْزُ = accusative of specification) related to the verb "can afford".

The verse approvingly describes the institution of *'hajj'* as a law that was ordained for the *Shari'ah* of Ibrahim; as Allah describes in the verse 22:27, where He mentions His order to Ibrahim:

"And proclaim among men the hall; they will come to you..." (***22:27***).

It appears from the above, that the modality of the sentence "***and for the sake of Allah..."*** (***3:97***) is the same as that of the preceding one "***and whoever enters it shall be secure"*** (***3:97***). Each is a declarative sentence which approvingly describes a previously ordained law. Alternatively, it is possible

to treat both as imperative sentences meant to reconfirm the two Ibrahimic laws. But the context obviously supports the first explanation.

Qur'an: ***"…And whoever disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-sufficient*** (***independent***) ***of the worlds"*** (***3:97***).

Disbelief, in this verse, means disbelieving in a law, in a branch of religion; like the disbelief resulting from neglect of prayer or *zakat.* The word in this context means neglecting the important law of *hajj*. In this clause, the effect has been used to describe the reason; in other words, it says, 'Whoever neglects *hajj* becomes a disbeliever.' On the other hand, the clause, "***Allah is Self-sufficient"*** (***3:97***)**,** puts the reason in place of effect; that is, he will not cause any harm to Allah because Allah is Self-sufficient. The full sentence, therefore, means as follows: Whoever neglects *hajj* becomes a disbeliever, but he, by his disbelief, cannot harm Allah in any way because Allah is Self-sufficient and independent of the worlds.

Traditions

Ibn Shahrashub narrates from the Leader of the Faithful ('Ali, 'a) about the words of Allah, ***"Most surely the first house appointed for men…"*** (***3:96***)**,** as follows: "A man asked him whether it was the first house (built). He said: 'No. Surely there were houses (built) before it, but it is the first House appointed for men, blessed, in which there is guidance, mercy and blessing. And it was Ibrahim who first built it; then an Arabian group from the (tribe of) Jurhum built it, then it was demolished, so the al-'Amaliqah rebuilt it; again it fell down and then the Quraysh rebuilt it.' "

Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abi Hatim have narrated through the chain of ash-Sha'bi, from 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, that he said, explaining this verse: "There were houses before that; but it was the first House made for the worship of Allah."[3]

The author says: as-Suyuti has also narrated a similar tradition through Ibn Jarir from Matar (Ibn Tuhman). And there are numerous Traditions of the same theme.

as-Sadiq ('a) said: "The land on which the House stands is Bakkah; and the town is Mecca."[4]

The same book quotes the same Imam as saying: "Bakkah was named Bakkah because people are crowded therein."

The author says: *"Yabakkun"* (يَبَكُّونَ = they are crowded).

al-Baqir ('a) said: "Mecca is called Bakkah because men and women are crowded therein; a woman prays in front of you, and on your right, and on your left, and with you, and there is no harm in it (at that place); but surely it is disliked in all other towns."[5]

The same Imam said: "When Allah intended to create the earth, He ordered the winds, and they agitated

the face of water until it produced waves (and) then brought up foam (and froth); so (all of) it became one foam. Then Allah gathered it in the place of the House (i.e., where the House now stands) and made it a mountain of foam; thereafter He spread out the earth from beneath it. And this is the (meaning of the) words of Allah: Most surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bakkah, blessed. Thus the first plot created of the earth is the Ka'bah; then the earth was expanded from it."[6]

The author says: There are numerous Traditions saying that the earth was expanded and extended from beneath the Ka'bah. There is nothing against the Qur'an in these Traditions. Nor is there any rational reason to refute it – except the ancient philosophers' theory that the earth was an eternal indivisible element; but that theory has so manifestly been proved wrong that it needs no further exposition.

This narrative explains how and why the Ka'bah was the first House (i.e., piece of land) of the earth – from Traditions' point of view. But so far as the obvious meaning of the verse is concerned, it supports the first two Traditions.

as-Sadiq ('a) was asked what the 'clear signs' mentioned in the verse, ***"In it are clear signs"* (*3:97*),** were: He said: "The Standing Place of Ibrahim – where he stood upon the stone and his feet left their prints in it, and the Black Stone, and the House of Isma'il."[7]

The author says: There are other Traditions of the same meaning. Perhaps the Imam ('a) mentioned them as examples, although some of them are not mentioned in the verse.

'Abdu 's-Samad said: "Abu Ja'far [al-Mansur] wanted to buy from (some) Meccans their houses in order to extend the (Sacred) Mosque; but they refused. Then he induced them; they still resisted. So, he was frustrated. Then he came to Abu 'Abdillah ('a) and said to him: 'I requested these people (to sell to us) some of their houses and compounds, so that we could extend the Mosque; but they have refused; and it has put me into utmost grief.' Abu 'Abdillah ('a) said: 'Why does it grieve you and your proof against them is (very) clear?' He said: 'And what should I argue against them with?' (The Imam) said: 'With the Book of Allah.' He said: 'In which place (is it explained)?'

(The Imam) said: 'The words of Allah: "***Most surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bakkah"* (*3:96*).** And Allah has informed you (in this verse) that the first House appointed for the men is the one that is at Bakkah. Now if they had taken the possession (of the land) before the House (was built) then their plots would belong to them; but if the House was there before them, then it (the Ka'bah) owns its plot.' Abu Ja'far then called them and argued with them accordingly. Thereupon they said: 'Do whatever you want.' "[8]

al-Hasan Ibn 'Ali Ibn an-Nu'man says: "When al-Mahdi built (i.e., extended) the Sacred Mosque, there remained there one house (because of which) the Mosque could not be made square. He asked for it from its owners; but they refused. He asked jurists about it, and all of them told him that he should not include in the Sacred Mosque anything taken by force. Then 'Ali Ibn Yaqtin said: 'O leader of the faithful!

I am writing (a letter) to Musa Ibn Ja'far (peace be on them both), so that I may tell you what the proper ruling is in this matter.' So he wrote to the Governor of Medina to ask Musa Ibn Ja'far (peace be on them both) about the house which we wanted to include in the Sacred Mosque but its owners refused (to sell it) – how this problem could be solved? (The Governor) told Abu al-Hasan (Musa Ibn Ja'far – peace be on them both) about it. Abu al-Hasan ('a) said: 'Is it necessary to give its reply?'

He said: '(Yes), it is a matter that is necessary.' Then (the Imam) said to him: 'Write down: "In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful, if the Ka'bah had settled down with the people, then the people have more rights on its courtyard; but if the people have settled down around the Ka'bah, then the Ka'bah has more right over its courtyard." ' When the letter reached al-Mahdi, he took it and kissed it, then he ordered to demolish the (said) house. The house owners then came to Ab al-Hasan ('a) and requested him to write a letter to al-Mahdi regarding the price of the house. He wrote to him to give them something, so he made them happy."[9]

The author says: The two Traditions contain a very fine point of argument. It was Abu Ja'far al-Mansur who began the extension of the Sacred Mosque which was completed during al-Mahdi's reign.

as-Sadiq ('a) said about the words of Allah, and for the sake of Allah, pilgrimage to the House is incumbent...: "(Allah) means by it the *hajj* and the *'umrah* both, because both are obligatory."[10]

The author says: al-'Ayyashi too has narrated it in his *at-Tafsir*. This tradition takes the word *'hijj'* in its literal sense, i.e., to proceed to.

as-Sadiq ('a) has explained the word, and whoever disbelieves, as "whoever neglects".[11]

The author says: ash-Shaykh has narrated this tradition in *at-Tahdhib.* We have explained it earlier that disbelief, like belief, has many grades; and that the word, as used in this verse, means disbelieving in – i.e., not complying with – a commandment of the *Shari'ah.*

'Ali Ibn Ja'far narrates from his brother Musa ('a), a tradition in which he, inter alia, says: "I said: 'Then whoever among us does not go for hajj, is an unbeliever?' (The Imam) said: 'No. But whoever says that it is not so (i.e., it is not obligatory) becomes an unbeliever.' " [12]

The author says: There are many Traditions of the same theme. 'Disbelief', as explained in this tradition, means rejection and refutation, and the verse could mean it. Thus, 'disbelief' has been used here in its literal meaning, i.e., hiding the truth; and it may refer to various grades of disbelief according to various situations.

A Short History Of The Ka'bah

It is *mutawatir* and definitely known that it was Ibrahim al-Khalil ('a) who built the Ka'bah. The residents around it at that time were his son, Isma'il, and the tribe of Jurhum (originally from Yemen). It is an

almost square building whose sides face the cardinal points of the compass; the winds, no matter how strong, lose their force when they strike it – without doing it any harm.

The construction of Ibrahim stood intact, until it was rebuilt by al–'Amaliqah, and later by the tribe of Jurhum (or vice versa), as has been described in the earlier narrated tradition of the Leader of the Faithful ('Ali, 'a).

When the management of the Ka'bah came into the hands of Qusayy Ibn Kilab – an ancestor of the Prophet – in the second century before *hijrah,* he demolished and rebuilt it on firm foundation, putting a roof of doom palm timber and date–palm trunk on it. He also built the *'Dar an–Nadwah'* (دَارُالنَّدْوَةُ = Council House) on one side. It was the place from where he ruled and where he held counsel with his colleagues. Then he divided various sides of the Ka'bah among different clans of the Quraysh and each clan built their houses at the side allotted to them; and they opened their doors towards the Ka'bah.

Five years before the. start of the Prophet's mission, there came a flood that destroyed the Ka'bah's building. The Quraysh divided among themselves the various responsibilities connected with its reconstruction. They hired a Roman mason to build it and an Egyptian carpenter to help him with the woodwork. When the time came to fix the Black Stone, a dispute erupted as to which clan should be accorded the honour of putting the Black Stone in its place. Then they agreed to leave the decision to Muhammad (S), who at that time was thirty–five years old – because they had full faith in his deep wisdom and sound judgment. He got his robe, and putting the Stone on it, told all the clans to hold the sides of the robe and raise it together. When the Stone reached the required height (on the eastern corner), he took it in his hands and fixed it in its proper place.

But the Quraysh found their funds exhausted. So they reduced the size on one side – as it is today; thus a part of the original foundation was left out, and that is the portion known as 'Hijr Isma'il' (حِجْرُ اِسْمَاعِيْلُ = the Enclosure of Isma'il).

The building remained in that condition until 'Abdullah Ibn az–Zubayr established his rule over Hijaz during the reign of Yazid Ibn Mu'awiyah. Husayn Ibn Numayr, the commander of Yazid's army, besieged him at Mecca and struck the Ka'bah with catapult. The Ka'bah was demolished, the *'al–Kiswah'* (اَلْكِسْوَةُ = covering of the Ka'bah) and some roof timbers were burnt down. The siege was lifted when news came of Yazid's death.

Ibn az–Zubayr decided to demolish the Ka'bah completely and rebuild it on its original foundation. He got good mortar from Yemen and constructed the new building. Hijr Isma'il was re–included in the Ka'bah; the door was fixed at the level of the ground; another door was fixed on the opposite side, so that people might enter from one door and go out from the other. He fixed the height of the House at twenty–seven arms. When the building was ready, he covered the whole building with musk and perfume inside out and put silken *Kiswah* on it. The construction was completed on 17th Rajab, 64 A.H.

When 'Abd al–Malik Ibn Marwan came to power in Damascus, he sent his commander, Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf,

who defeated Ibn az-Zubayr and killed him. Entering the Sacred Mosque, he saw what Ibn az-Zubayr had done regarding the Ka'bah. He wrote to 'Abd al-Malik about it who ordered him to return it to its previous shape. Hajjaj, therefore, demolished six and a half arms from the northern side and rebuilt it according to the plan of the Quraysh; he raised the eastern door and closed the western one; he also filled the inside with the stones that could not be re-used (thus raising the inside floor to the new level of the door).

When the Ottoman Sultan Sulayman ascended the throne in 960 A.H., he changed the roof of the Ka'bah. Sultan Ahmad (who came to power in 1021 A.H.) made some other repairs and alterations. Then came the great flood of 1039 A.H. which demolished parts of its northern, eastern, and western walls. Therefore, the Ottoman Sultan Murad IV got it repaired. And the same building continues till this day, and it is the year 1375 by lunar *Hijri* calendar and 1338 according to the solar one.

The Shape of the Ka'bah: The Ka'bah is nearly square in shape, built with hard dark bluish-grey stones. It now rises to sixteen metres; but was much lower at the time of the Prophet (S) as may be inferred from the fact that, on the day of conquest of Mecca, the Prophet raised 'Ali ('a) on his shoulders so that 'Ali could remove and break the idols that were placed on the roof of the Ka'bah.

The wall [the northern] one that faces the Enclosure of Isma'il and] over which is placed the water trough and the one on its opposite side [the southern one] are ten metres and ten centimetres long; while the [eastern] wall which has the door and the one opposite to it are twelve metres long. The door is placed at a height of two metres from the ground level. The Black Stone is fixed in the [east-south] corner, so that if one wants to enter the door, the Stone would be on his left. This Stone is one and a half metres above the ground level, that is, above the level of the circumambulation area. The Black Stone is a hard rock of irregular oval shape, black with some reddish tint; it has red dots and yellow wavy lines which appeared when some broken pieces were soldered and joined. It has a diameter of about thirty centimetres.

The corners of Ka'bah's, since ancient days, are called *"al-arkan"* (اَلْاَرْكَانُ; pl. of "*ar-rukn"* اَلرُّكْنُ = pillar); the northern one is called, the Iraqi *rukn*; the western, the Syrian; the southern, the Yemenite; and the eastern (wherein the Black Stone is fixed), is named the Black. The area between the door and the Black Stone is called "*al-Multazam*" (اَلْمُلْتَزَمُ = lit.: the place where one clings to) because when one circumambulates one adheres to it for invocation and prayer.

The trough fixed over the northern wall, which is called the Trough of Mercy, was an innovation of al-Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf; in 954 A.H. Sultan Sulayman changed that with a silver one; that too was replaced by Sultan Ahmad in 1021 A.H. with another one of enamelled silver with golden designs. In 1273 A.H. Sultan 'Abd al-Majid replaced it with another one made of gold, and it is the present one.

Facing the northern wall is a wall - half circle in shape. It is called, *al-Hatim*. It is like a bow whose two ends face the northern [Iraqi] and the western [Syrian] *rukns*; there is a gap of two metres and three

centimetres between the ends of the bow and the said *rukns*. The wall, al-Hatim, is one metre high and one and a half metres wide. It is panelled with carved marble. The distance between the centre of al-Hatim and the centre of the northern wall of the Ka'bah is eight metres and forty-four centimetres. The area covered by al-Hatim and the northern wall is known as Hijr Isma'il [Enclosure of Isma'il]. About three metres of this space was included in the Ka'bah built by Ibrahim ('a); and the remaining area was the pen for sheep of Hajirah and her son. It is said that Hajirah and Isma'il are buried in the same Enclosure.

The changes and alterations that were done inside the Ka'bah, and the rituals and sunnah rites connected with the House are not so necessary to be described here.

The Covering of the Ka'bah: We have described, in the chapter of 'The Cow', in the Traditions relating the story of Hajirah and Isma'i1 and their settlement at Mecca, that Hajirah hang her mantle as a curtain on the door of the Ka'bah when its construction was completed.

As for the covering of the House itself, it is said that the first to cover it was the Tubba'[13] Abu Bakr As'ad, who hang on it the sheets embroidered with silver threads. His successors followed this custom. Then people started covering it with sheets of various kinds - putting one upon the other. Whenever a covering looked old, a new one was put over it. This continued until Qusayy came on the scene. He imposed a tax on the Arabs for putting a new covering every year. This system continued in his descendants. Abu Rabi'ah Ibn al-Mughirah used to put a covering one year and all the clans of Quraysh did so the next year.

The Prophet covered the House with Yemenite sheets. This custom continued. When the 'Abbaside caliph al-Mahdi went for pilgrimage, the attendants of the House complained to him about the coverings that had accumulated on the roof of the Ka'bah. They said there was a danger of the roof collapsing down because of that load. The King ordered that all the old coverings should be removed and that every year a new covering should replace the old one - and that custom is followed till now.

The Ka'bah is draped from inside too. The first to do so was the mother of 'Abbas, son of 'Abd al-Muttalib - she had done so because of a vow she had taken regarding her son - 'Abbas.

Prestige of the Ka'bah: The Ka'bah was held in high esteem by various nations. The Hindus respected it, believing that the spirit of Siva - the third person of their Trimurty - entered into the Black Stone, when he was accompanied by his wife visiting Hijaz.

The Sabaeans of Persia and Chaledonia counted it as one of their seven holy sanctuaries.[14] Many of them said that it was the House of the Saturn - because it was the most ancient, and the longest in existence.

The Persians too respected the Ka'bah, believing that the spirit of Hormoz was present therein; they sometimes went for its pilgrimage.

The Jews honoured it and worshipped God there according to the religion of Ibrahim. There were many pictures and images in the Ka'bah, including those of Ibrahim and Isma'il which had divining arrows in their hands. Also, there were pictures of the virgin Mary and Christ – which indicates that the Christians too respected the Ka'bah like the Jews.

The Arabs held it in the highest esteem; they believed that it was the House of Allah and came to its pilgrimage from every place. They believed the Ka'bah was built by Ibrahim and the hajj was a part of his religion which had come to them as his legacy.

Trusteeship of the Ka'bah: The trusteeship was in the hands of Isma'il; and after him it remained in his descendants. Then the Jurhumites became more powerful and took over the trusteeship. They in their turn were vanquished after several wars by the 'Amaliqah, who were a part of Banu Karkar. The 'Amaliqah resided at the lower section of Mecca while the Jurhumites had settled in its upper section. They had their own Kings.

Later, the Jurhumites defeated the 'Amaliqah and regained the trusteeship, which remained with them for about three hundred years. They extended the area of the House and increased its height.

Gradually the Isma'ilites grew in number and gained power; and they found the place too congested and over-populated. Then they fought the Jurhumites, defeated and expelled them from Mecca. The leader of the Isma'ilites at that time was 'Amr Ibn Lahiyy, the chief of the clan of Khuza'ah. He became overlord of Mecca and took over the trusteeship of the Ka'bah. It was he who put idols in the Ka'bah and called people to worship them. The first idol he put there was Hubal which he had brought from Syria; then he brought others. Gradually there were a lot of idols, and idol-worship spread among the Arabs; the upright religion of Ibrahim was discarded.

Shahnah Ibn Khalaf al-Jurhumi refers to this episode, when he addresses 'Amr Ibn Lahiyy in the following ode:

O 'Amr! you have invented various gods;

At Mecca – idols around the House.

And there was for the House One Lord from ever;

But you have made for it several lords (*which are now worshipped*) *by the people.*

Surely you should know that Allah is in no hurry;

Soon He will choose for (*His*) *House stewards other than you.*

The trusteeship remained in the clan of Khuza'ah up to the time of Halil al-Khuza'i. He nominated his daughter (who was married to Qusayy Ibn Kilab) to succeed him, and gave the right of opening and

closing the door to a man from his clan, Abu Ghabshan al-Khuza'i by name. Abu Ghabshan sold his right to Qusayy Ibn Kilab for a camel and a skinful of liquor. The proverb, "More loss incurring than the deal of Abu Ghabshan", alludes to this sale.

The trusteeship was thus transferred to the Quraysh. Qusayy rebuilt the House, as we have mentioned above. The things continued as they were, until the Prophet conquered Mecca, and entering the Ka'bah ordered the pictures to be effaced, and the idols to be thrown down and broken.

The Standing Place of Ibrahim – the stone with the imprints of Ibrahim's feet – was at first put in a kneading trough near the Ka'bah; then it was buried in the place where it is at present. It has a dome on four pillars where the people offer their prayers after the circumambulation.

There are a lot of details of various aspects of the Ka'bah and other religious buildings attached to it. We have described here only the things which are necessary for understanding the verses of hajj and the Ka'bah.

One of the specialities of this House – which Allah has blessed and made a guidance – is that no Muslim group has ever disagreed about it or its prestige, honour, and respect.

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1. It was founded by Dawud and completed by Sulayman. (tr.).
2. Now it is enclosed in a hemispherical glass through which the imprints may be seen. (tr.).
3. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
4. 'Ilalu 'sh-sharayi'.
5. 'Ilalu 'sh-sharayi'.
6. Ilalu 'sh-sharayi'.
7. al-Kafi; at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.
8. at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.
9. at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.
10. al-Kafi.
11. at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.
12. al-Kafi.
13. Tubba' – was the title of the Kings of Yemen. (tr.).
14. The seven sanctuaries were: (1) The Ka'bah; (2) Mars – on the summit of a mountain in Isfahan; (3) "Mandusan"? (مندوسان) in India; (4) Naw Bahar in Balkh; (5) House of Ghamdan in San'a; (6) Kawsan in Farghana, Khurasan; and (7) a House in Upper China. (Author's Note).

[1] [1]

SHARES

Sura ’Aal-’Imran: Verses 98 – 101

قُلْ يَـٰٓأَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَـٰبِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِـَٔايَـٰتِ ٱللَّهِ وَٱللَّهُ شَهِيدٌ عَلَىٰ مَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“Say: “O People of the Book! why do you disbelieve in the communications of Allah? and Allah is a witness of what you do” (***3:98***).

قُلْ يَـٰٓأَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَـٰبِ لِمَ تَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ مَنْ ءَامَنَ تَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا وَأَنتُمْ شُهَدَآءُ وَمَا ٱللَّهُ بِغَـٰفِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

“Say: “O People of the Book! why do you hinder him who believes from the way of Allah? You seek (***to make***) ***it crooked, while you are witnesses, and Allah is not heedless of what you do”*** (***3:99***).

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِن تُطِيعُوا۟ فَرِيقًا مِّنَ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ يَرُدُّوكُم بَعْدَ إِيمَـٰنِكُمْ كَـٰفِرِينَ

“O you who believe! if you obey a party from among those who were given the Book, they will turn you back as unbelievers after you have believed” (***3:100***).

وَكَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ وَأَنتُمْ تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ ءَايَـٰتُ ٱللَّهِ وَفِيكُمْ رَسُولُهُۥ ۗ وَمَن يَعْتَصِم بِٱللَّهِ فَقَدْ هُدِىَ إِلَىٰ صِرَٰطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ

“But how can you disbelieve while it is you to whom the communications of Allah are recited, and among you is His Messenger? And whoever holds fast to Allah, he indeed is guided to the straight path (***3:101***).

Commentary

The verses – as is evident from thematic continuity – indicate that the People of the Book (a group of them – i. e., the Jews – or a group of the Jews) disbelieved in the Divine Revelation, and hindered the believers from the way of Allah by trying to show that it was a crooked and untrue way, and presenting to them the actually crooked misleading way as the way of Allah. They did so by creating doubts in the believers’ minds, in order that the believers would see the truth as falsehood and the falsehood (to which they invited them) as truth.

The preceding verses had pointed to the Jews’ deviations, for example, their denial of the fact that all food was lawful to them before the revelation of the Torah, and their rejection of the abrogation of the

previous *qiblah*, that is, Bayt al-Maqdis.

These verses therefore put the finishing touches to the preceding ones which had described the lawfulness of all food before the Torah and declared that the Ka'bah was the first House appointed for the men. Now these verses admonish the Jews because they were constantly trying to create doubts and mislead the believers; also the verses warn the believers against following the advice of those unbelievers, because if they listened to their call, they would themselves become unbelievers; then they exhort and encourage them to hold fast to Allah so that they would be guided to the path of true faith and their guidance would continue for ever.

It has been narrated by Zayd Ibn Aslam (as as-Suyuti has reportedly[1] written in *Lubab an-nuqul*) as follows:

"Shash Ibn Qays, a Jew, saw some people of the tribes of Aws and Khazraj engaged in (friendly) talk, and he was incensed by what he saw of their friendship and unity after their (hereditary) enmity. Therefore, he ordered a young Jew (who was with him) to sit with them and remind them of the Battle of Bu'ath. He did and they started boasting and quarelling with each other. The argument continued until two men - Aws Ibn Qurazi from the Aws and Jabbar Ibn Sakhr from the Khazraj - jumped up and abused each other; the two groups were enraged and stood against each other for fighting. The news reached the Messenger of Allah (S); he came and admonished them and established peace between them. They heeded his call and obeyed. Then Allah revealed about Aws and Jabbar:

"O you who believe! if you obey a party from among those who were given the Book..." **(*3:100*).**

And about Shash Ibn Qays:

"Say: "O People of the Book! why do you hinder him who believes from the way of Allah?"" **(*3:99*).**

This tradition is abridged from the one narrated (by as-Suyuti) in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* in detailed form from Zayd Ibn Aslam; he has narrated nearly similar Traditions from Ibn 'Abbas and others.

However, these verses obviously fit more properly on the explanation given by us than on this tradition. Moreover, they speak about disbelief and belief, and also about testimony of the Jews, recitation of the revealed verses to the believers, and things like that; and all these matters are more relevant to the explanation given by us. It is also supported by the words of Allah:

"Many of the People of the Book wish that they could turn you back into unbelievers after your faith, out of envy on their part,* (*even*) *after the truth has become manifest to them..." **(*2:109*).**

Therefore, the fact is, as we have said, that these verses are a sort of prologue to the preceding ones.

Verse 98

Qur'an: ***"Say: "O People of the Book! why do you disbelieve in the communications of Allah? and Allah is a witness of what you do"*** (***3:98***).

The continuation of the context indicates that "the communications" refers to the lawfulness of food before the revelation of the Torah and to the Ka'bah being the *qiblah* in Islam.

Verse 99

Qur'an: ***"Say: "O People of the Book! why do you hinder him who believes from the way of Allah? You seek*** (***to make***) ***it crooked"*** (***3:99***).

as-Sadd (اَلصَّدُّ = to hinder; to divert); "you seek it," that is, you want this way to be crooked; " *'iwajan* (عِوَجاً = crooked, perverted); it refers to the fact that they wanted the way of Allah to be deviated, not straight.

Qur'an: ***"…While you are witnesses, and…"*** (***3:99***).

You know very well that all food was lawful before the revelation of the Torah, and that one of the signs of the promised prophet was that he would change the *qiblah* to the Ka'bah. The Jews have been counted as witnesses in this verse, while the preceding verse declared Allah to be a witness of their activities and disbelief.

The implication of this fine juxtaposition cannot be lost on a man of literary taste. They are witnesses of the truth of what they deny; and Allah is a witness of their denial and disbelief. As "witnessing" was ascribe to them in this verse, the ending clause of the preceding verse (And Allah is a witness of what you do) was changed here to: ***"and Allah is not heedless of what you do"*** (***3:99***). The implication is that they are witnesses for the truth of the Prophet's claim while Allah is a witness for everyone and everything.

Verses 100 – 101

Qur'an: ***"O you who believe! if you obey a party from among those who were given the Book, they will turn you back as unbelievers after you have believed*** (***3:100***).

Qur'an: ***"But how can you disbelieve while it is you to whom the communications of Allah are recited, and among you is His Messenger? And whoever holds fast to Allah, he indeed is guided to the straight path*** (***3:101***).

As mentioned earlier, "a party", refers to the Jews or a Jewish group.

"While it is you to whom the communications of Allah are recited, and among you is His

Messenger" (***3: 101***).

It is possible and easy for you to hold fast to the truth (which has been sent and explained to you) if you just listen to the verses recited to you and then meditate on them; then if you encounter any difficulty because of faulty meditation, you may refer to the Messenger of Allah (S) for clarification; you may refer to the Messenger even before meditating on the verses to explain it to you: he is present among you, it is not difficult for you to approach him because he is neither hidden nor far away from you; you may easily find the reality by referring to him, then you may clear the doubts which the Jews try to create in your minds. To hold fast to the Messenger of Allah (S) and the Divine Communications is to hold fast to Allah.

"...And whoever holds fast to Allah, he indeed is guided to the straight path" (***3: 101***).

The disbelief, mentioned in the clause ***"But how can you disbelieve"*** (***3: 101***) refers to disbelieving after believing; the clause ***"while it is you to whom the communications of Allah are recited"*** (***3: 101***) points to the possibility of holding fast to the communications of Allah and the Messenger of Allah (S) in order to protect oneself from disbelief; the clause ***"And whoever holds fast to Allah,"*** (***3: 101***) is a sort of the major premise of a syllogism [the full form of which has been given above].

The guidance to the straight path means being guided to the firmly rooted true belief; it is the path that does not deviate, nor does it fail to reach the destination; it keeps all those who proceed on it in proper line without letting them deviate hither or thither lest they go astray.

The Arabic word translated here as, "is guided", is a past tense in passive voice; it implies that they have been guided without realizing who has guided them.

The verse shows that the Book of Allah and the verbal and practical guidance given by the Messenger of Allah (S) are sufficient to guide a man to every truth and reality in which he could possibly go astray.

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1. Vide Tafsir al-Manar, vol. 4, Commentary of this verse. (Author's Note).

[1] [1]
SHARES

Sura 'Aal-'Imran: Verses 102 – 110

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ ٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِۦ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ

"O you who believe! fear Allah with the fear, which is due to Him, and do not die unless you are Muslims" (***3: 102***).

وَٱعْتَصِمُوا۟ بِحَبْلِ ٱللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا۟ ۚ وَٱذْكُرُوا۟ نِعْمَتَ ٱللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنتُمْ أَعْدَآءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُم
بِنِعْمَتِهِۦٓ إِخْوَٰنًا وَكُنتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ ٱلنَّارِ فَأَنقَذَكُم مِّنْهَا كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمْ ءَايَٰتِهِۦ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

"And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together and be not divided and remember the bounty of Allah on you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts so by His favour you became brethren; and you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He delivered you from it; thus does Allah make clear to you His signs that you may follow the right way" (***3: 103***).

وَلْتَكُن مِّنكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى ٱلْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِ وَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْمُفْلِحُونَ

"And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong, and these it is that shall be successful" (***3: 104***).

وَلَا تَكُونُوا۟ كَٱلَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا۟ وَٱخْتَلَفُوا۟ مِنۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ ٱلْبَيِّنَٰتُ ۚ وَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

"And be not like those who became divided and disagreed after clear evidences had come to them, and these it is that shall have a grievous chastisement" (***3: 105***).

يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوهٌ وَتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوهٌ فَأَمَّا ٱلَّذِينَ ٱسْوَدَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ أَكَفَرْتُم بَعْدَ إِيمَٰنِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا۟ ٱلْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ

"On the day when (***some***) ***faces shall become bright and*** (***some***) ***faces shall turn black; then as to those whose faces will have turned black: Did you disbelieve after your believing? Taste therefore the chastisement for what you were disbelieving"*** (***3: 106***).

وَأَمَّا ٱلَّذِينَ ٱبْيَضَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فَفِى رَحْمَةِ ٱللَّهِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَٰلِدُونَ

"And as to those whose faces shall have become bright, they shall be in Allah's mercy; in it they shall abid." (***3: 107***).

تِلْكَ ءَايَٰتُ ٱللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِٱلْحَقِّ وَمَا ٱللَّهُ يُرِيدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعَٰلَمِينَ

"These are communications of Allah which We recite to you with truth, and Allah does not desire

any injustice to the creatures" (***3: 108***).

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمَـٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَإِلَى ٱللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ ٱلْأُمُورُ

"And whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's; and to Allah all things are returned" (***3: 109***).

كُنتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَلَوْ ءَامَنَ أَهْلُ ٱلْكِتَـٰبِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُم مِّنْهُمُ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ ٱلْفَـٰسِقُونَ

"You are the best nation raised up for the (***benefit of***) ***men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and you believe in Allah; and if the People of the Book had believed it would have been better for them; of them*** (***some***) ***are believers and most of them are transgressors."*** (***3: 110***).

Commentary

The verses conclude the speech addressed to the believers, warning them of the People of the Book and their machinations. It reminds them that they have a lifeline which if they hold fast to they shall not perish, shall not go astray and shall not fall into pits of perdition. It is a speech branching from the preceding talk. However, the previous context, that is, exposition of the behaviour of the People of the Book, has not been concluded yet, as may be seen from the verses coming after these: They shall by no means harm you but with a slight distress.

Verse 102

Qur'an: ***"O you who believe! fear Allah with the fear which is due to Him..."*** (***3: 102***).

We have explained that *"at-taqwa"* (اَلتَّقْوي = to be on guard; fear; piety) when related to Allah, means to be on guard against His punishment, to fear His chastisement. Allah says:

"...Then be on guard against the fire of which men and stones are the fuel" (***2:24***).

One may guard oneself from the Divine Wrath by behaving in manners that Allah is pleased. In other words, it is doing what He has enjoined one to do and abstaining from what He has forbidden; being grateful for His favours and being patient when He puts one in adverse conditions. The last two attributes are actually two facets of gratefulness – because gratefulness is to put a thing in its proper place. In short, fear of Allah means that man should obey (and not disobey) Him and should submit to Him in all that He bestows or withholds.

But the verse talks of *at-taqwa* as it rightfully should be done, that is, a piety that is not tainted by the

least wrong. Such piety is the pure servitude which is never marred by an iota of obliviousness or heedlessness; it is obedience without disobedience, gratitude without ingratitude, remembrance without forgetting; it is the true Islam, that is, the highest grade of Islam. Accordingly, the words, and do not die unless you are Muslims, would mean: Continue on this condition of ideal *at-taqwa* until you die.

This verse gives a different ideal than the words:

"Therefore, fear Allah as much as you can" (***64:16***).

This command enjoins man not to leave the fear of Allah in anything as much as he can. But the ability to do so differs from man to man according to the person's strength, understanding, and will. There is no doubt that the ideal piety is not easily within reach for the majority of men. There are, in this spiritual journey, many stations, locations and danger points that cannot be spotted except by those who know. Also, there are many delicate points and subtle differences which cannot be recognized except by those who have been purified. There is many a stage of piety which a common man would say, was beyond human ability; he really believes it to be far above the human strength – while the truly pious people have long been past that stage and are now progressing towards even more difficult goal, through much more harder terrains.

The verse ***"Therefore fear Allah as much as you can"*** (***64:16***) has been so worded that different minds would interpret it in different ways, according to one's perceived strength and ability. This will provide a means to proceed to the real goal which is given in the verse under discussion:

"Fear Allah with the fear which is due to Him, and do not die unless you are Muslims" (***3:102***)

They will then understand that the main purpose is for them to take to the path of the ideal piety and to progress towards that lofty station. In this respect, it is not different from being guided to the Straight Path: Although all men are invited to it, only the true believers, the pure monotheists, get to that path.

The two verses, "***fear Allah with the fear which is due to Him"*** (***3:102***) and ***"fear Allah as much as you can"*** (***64:16***) then give the following connotation: All people are called and invited to the ideal piety; then they are told to proceed towards that goal as much as they can, everyone according to his own ability and strength. In this way, all will come on the path of piety; but they will be in different stages and various stations according to their own understanding and ambition, coupled with the Divine help and support, that is, bestowed on deserving servants. (This is what one understands after pondering on the two verses.)

It is clear from the above explanation that the two verses are neither different from each other in meaning nor identical; rather, the first verse ***"fear Allah with the fear which is due to Him"*** (***3:102***) points to the ultimate goal, while the second ***"fear Allah as much as you can"*** (***64:16***) shows the way.

Qur'an: ***"…And do not die unless you are Muslims"*** (***3:102***).

Death is a creative affair that is beyond the circle of our will and power. An order or a prohibition concerning this, or similar things shall be a creative order or prohibition, as Allah says:

"…Then Allah said to them, Die!…" (***2:243***).

"…Is only that He says to it, 'Be', and it is." (***36:82***).

But sometimes an affair beyond our control is joined to one within our control, and then the combined phrase comes within our power, control and authority. At this stage, it may become a subject of legislative order or prohibition, as Allah says:

"…Therefore, you should not be of the doubters" (***2:147***).

"…And be not with the unbelievers" (***11:42***).

"…And be with the true ones" (***9:119***).

and many similar verses. Obviously, "to be" is an intransitive creative affair upon which man has no control or power; but when it is joined with an action within his power, like doubting, disbelieving, and holding fast to the true ones, it comes within our power; and then it may become subject of legislative order and prohibition.

In short, the prohibition that they should not die unless they are Muslims is a legislative one because the said proviso has made it a voluntary action; and it implies that man should hold fast to Islam in all conditions and at all times until death comes to him in one of those conditions. Thus, he would die on Islam.

Verse 103

Qur'an: ***"And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together and be not divided…."*** (***3:103***).

Allah has said before to the believers:

"But how can you disbelieve while it is you to whom the communications of Allah are recited and among you is His Messenger; and whoever holds fast to Allah, he indeed is guided to the straight path" (***3:101***).

It had shown that holding fast to the communications of Allah and to His Messenger (the Book of Allah and the sunnah of the Prophet) is to hold fast to Allah; and whoever holds fast to Allah is safe and secure and his guidance is guaranteed; also holding fast to the Prophet is holding fast to the Book, because it is the Book itself that enjoins us to do so:

"..And whatever the Messenger gives you, take it, and from whatever he forbids you, keep it back" (***59:7***).

Now the verse under discussion has changed the phraseology; instead of telling us to hold fast to Allah, it enjoins to hold fast to the cord of Allah. It shows that the cord of Allah is the Book revealed by Allah; it is the cord that joins the creature to his Lord, that connects the heavens to the earth. You may also say that the Divine Cord is the Qur'an and the Prophet because the end result of all is the same.

The Qur'an invites only to the ideal piety and firm Islam. Yet the aim of this verse is different from the preceding verse that had enjoined ideal piety and the death on Islam, inasmuch as that verse was concerned with guidance of the individual, while this looks at the good of the society. The words "all together" and "be not divided" point to this fact. The verse therefore orders the Muslim society to hold fast to the Book and the *sunnah*, as they had earlier enjoined the individual to do so.

Qur'an: ***"…And remember the bounty of Allah on you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts so by His favour you became brethren…"*** (***3:103***).

The clause ***"when you were enemies"*** (***3:103***) explains the bounty of Allah, and the next clause, and you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He delivered you from it, is in conjunction with it.

The order to remember this Divine bounty and favour is based on the established Qur'anic system: it builds its education on explanation of its reasons and causes; and invites to the good and the guidance through proper door; it does not demand blind following from its adherents. Far be it from the Divine Teaching to guide the people to eternal happiness – that is useful knowledge and good deed – and then to tell them to wander in the darkness of ignorance and blind following.

But the reader is warned here not to confuse the subject matter. Allah teaches men the reality of their happiness and then shows them its proper way and reason, in order that they would understand the mutual relationship between the realities and know that all emanate from the fountainhead of monotheism. It continues side by side with men's obligation to totally submit to Allah because He is Allah, the Lord of the universe, and to hold fast to His cord because it is the cord of Allah Who is the Lord of the universe. The last two verses "***These are communications of Allah which we recite to you…"*** (***3:108***) point to this fact.

In short, Allah has ordered them not to accept any word, nor to obey any order, except after knowing its reason. At the same time He has told them to surrender totally to Him, giving for its reason the fact that He is Allah Who owns them totally and unconditionally, they have got nothing except that which Allah has willed for them and done for them; also He has ordered them to unconditionally obey what His Messenger has brought to them, giving for its reason the fact that he is His Messenger who conveys to them only that which he has been entrusted by Allah to do; then Allah explains to them the realities of knowledge and describes the ways of happiness, giving them a comprehensive reason in order that they could understand the inter-relation of the spiritual knowledge and the ways of happiness, and thus arrive at the root of monotheistic belief; it provides them with a Divine Training which enables them to think what is correct and speak what is true.

Thus, they would be alive with knowledge, free from blind following. Result: If they would understand the reason of any established religious reality (or any related thing) they would accept it; and if they did not understand they would not reject it outright; instead, they would try to understand it by research and meditation without rejecting, or objecting to, it – because it is an established reality.

But it does not mean that one should not accept anything – even from Allah and His Messenger – without asking for its reason. Such a proposition would be the height of folly, as it would imply that Allah wants His creatures to demand for proof after the proof is given to them: His lordship and His ownership is the basic reason and argument that makes it incumbent on everyone to submit to Him and obey His command. Likewise, the messengership of His Messenger is the solid reason and proof to prove that whatever he says has come from Allah. Otherwise, we would have to say that Allah has no authority in that which He manages by His authority. Is it but a contradiction in terms? In short, the Islamic way and the prophetic method calls only to knowledge, and not to blind following as these so-called critics – who are nothing if not blind followers themselves – claim.

Perhaps that is why Allah has called it a favour ***"the bounty of Allah on you"*** (***3:103***). It indicates the reason as to why We enjoin you to unite together: you have already experienced the bitterness of enmity and sweet taste of love and brotherhood; you have seen that you were on the brink of the pit of fire and Allah has saved you; We point this reason to you not because We have to support our sayings with some proof (obviously, Our saying is true whether We point to its reason or not), but only to let you know that it is a favour of Us on you, in order that you may appreciate that in this unity – like everything else We enjoin on you – lies your felicity, comfort and success.

Allah has given here two proofs, one is the sentence ***"… you were enemies…"*** (***3:103***) is obviously based on their experience, while the other ***"…you were on the brink of a pit of fire…"*** (***3:103***) is based on rational explanation.

The clause ***"so by His favour you became brethren"*** (***3:103***) reminds the Muslims a second time of the Divine Favour mentioned in the preceding clause ***"and remember the bounty of Allah on you"*** (***3:103***). The bounty and favour refer to their unity; hence the brotherhood too (which results from this bounty) refers to the same love and unitedness. The brotherhood, as used here, is therefore a claimed reality.

Also, possibly it may be a reference to the brotherhood that has been legislated as between the believers, vide the verse:

"The believers are but brethren" (***49:10***).

This legislated brotherhood creates very important mutual rights and duties between one believer and the other.

Qur'an: ***"…And you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He delivered you from it…"*** (***3:103***).

"Shafa hufratin" (شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ = brink or edge of a pit where one is in danger of falling down); "fire" may be of the hereafter or of this world. If the former, then it would refer to the fact that previously they were unbelievers and about to fall in the hell the moment they died – and death is nearer to man than is the iris of eye from its white – then Allah saved them from it through the true faith. And if the aim is to point to their evil society which they were living in before they accepted Islam and became brethren, and the fire refers to their wars and conflicts – and it is a commonly used metaphor – then the meaning would be as follows:

A society built on disunited hearts and divergent minds cannot proceed under one leader or in one direction; it is bound to turn into a disorientated and deranged collection of people – each one pulling it to his side, as it suits his own wishes and desires. Such a society would be a cauldron of dissension and strife, always pushing its members to ever–new conflicts, embroiling them in wars and fights, and threatening them with decline and extinction. It is the fire that neither allows one to endure nor does it leave one alone, raging in the pit of ignorance from which no inmate could hope to escape.

The immediate audience of this verse were the Muslims who – before the verse was revealed – had accepted Islam after their disbelief. They had spent all their pre–Islamic lives in constant threat of battle and war. There was no security, no peace, no law, and order. They did not understand what constituted public safety – the concept that covers the society in all its aspects like property, honour, and life, etc.

When they joined hands to hold fast to the cord of Allah, perceived the signs of happiness and felicity, and tasted the sweetness of Divine Bounties, they understood by this experience the truth and reality of what Allah reminds them of His pleasant favours and the resulting wholesome felicity. In this background, this speech was bound to win their hearts – as well as of the others – most effectively and in all totality.

That is why the call to unite has been based on their own experience and observation instead of just philosophical presumptions. One picture is worth a thousand words. And it is because of the same reason that the next warning ***"And be not like those who became divided and disagreed after clear evidence had come to them…"*** (***3:105***) points to the condition of those who had preceded them.

The believers have seen and heard what happened to those nations – how they declined and fell – because of their disunity and internal strife; the believers should learn lessons from them; they should not walk on the same path, should not proceed in the same direction.

Then Allah draws their attention to the special nature of this speech and says:

"…Thus does Allah make clear to you His signs that you may follow the right way" (***3:103***).

Verse 104

Qur'an: ***"And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right***

and forbid the wrong, and these it is that shall be successful" (***3:104***).

Experience shows that the knowledge a man acquires in his life (and he acquires and preserves for himself only that which may be of some use to him) is soon forgotten if not repeatedly remembered, if not frequently put in practice and acted upon – it makes no difference how that knowledge was acquired and preserved. Also, there is no doubt that action, in all its aspects, turns on the pivot of knowledge; its strength or weakness, its efficiency or deficiency all depends on the strength or weakness, efficiency or deficiency of knowledge. Allah has given a likeness of knowledge and action in the following verse:

"And as for the good land, its vegetation springs forth (***abundantly***) ***by the permission of its Lord, and*** (***as for***) ***that which is bad*** (***its herbage***) ***comes forth but scantily; thus, do We repeat the communications for a people who give thanks"*** (***7:58***).

Undoubtedly, there is an interaction between knowledge and action. Knowledge is the strongest motive of action, and action is the greatest teacher that imparts knowledge.

This reality binds a good society (that which has useful knowledge and virtuous action) to preserve and keep intact their knowledge and culture; and obliges them to bring a deviating person back to the right path, to make sure that nobody goes astray leaving the known way of righteousness for the unforgiving desert of evil – they must protect him from falling into the pit of sin and error by forbidding him to go near it.

This is the call to educate the society members; the obligation of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. It is this important obligation to which Allah refers when He says: ***"… who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong"*** (***3:104***).

The Arabic words translated here as "right" and "wrong" (enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong) are *'al-ma'ruf'* (اَلْمَعْرُوْفُ) and *'al-munkar'* (اَلْمُنْكَرُ) which literally mean "known" and "unknown" respectively. Ponder on the explanation given above and you will understand why Allah has used these expressions. The verse under discussion is based on the preceding one

"And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together and be not divides…" (***3:103***).

A society which follows this guidance must be the ideal society. It would only be the right and the good which they would recognize, which would be "known" to them; and only the wrong and the evil which they would not recognize, which would be "unknown" to them. If this fine point is not kept in mind, then the only possible explanation would be that the right and the wrong were respectively known and unknown in the eyes of religion – but not in actual practice of the society.

The clause ***"And from among you there should be a party"*** (***3:104***): It has been said that "from among" indicates portion, obliging only a party among the Muslim ummah to enjoin the good and forbid the evil and call to the truth. Others have said that the particle 'min' (مِنْ = from among) has here an

explanatory connotation; that the sentence means as follows: If you unite together, you will become a party who invites to good, enjoins the right and forbids the evil. In other words, it is as we say: 'I should find in you a friend', which actually means: 'Be my friend'. Apparently, the said explanation of "from among" means that the whole Muslim ummah is obligated to call to the good.

Actually, the controversy whether "from among" is for division or explanation is quite irrelevant. Calling to good, enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong are things which, even when obligatory, cannot be obligatory except on a few; because once the goal is achieved it would not be necessary for others to do so. Even if we were to say that the whole *ummah* invited to good, enjoined the right and forbade the wrong, it would only mean that there were some people in the *ummah* who did so.

Thus, the responsibility lies on only a selected group in any case. If the verse is addressed to a group of the *ummah*, the matter is clear; but if it is addressed to the whole nation, that is because of that particular group. In other words, initially the responsibility lies on everybody's shoulders, but when some perform the duty, they get its reward, and the others are then exempted from the obligation. That is why the verse ends with the clause "and these [i.e., those who perform this duty] it is that shall be successful"

It appears from the above that "from among" indicates here a portion; it is this meaning that is generally understood from such combinations in common conversation, and it is not right to go for another meaning without a good reason.

The three – inviting to good, enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong – are profoundly extensive subjects which require deep exegetic discourse, and we shall write about it, Allah willing, in proper places; also, we shall deal there with its academic psychological and social aspects.

Verse 105

Qur'an: ***"And be not like those who became divided and disagreed after clear evidences had come to them, and these it is that shall have a grievous chastisement"*** (***3: 105***).

Probably the clause, ***"after clear evidence had come to them"*** (***3: 105***), is an adverbial phrase related to the verb, "disagreed", only. If so, then the "disagreement" would refer to difference in belief while the "division" to their physical separation and dissociation. Division has been mentioned first, because it is the prelude to divergence of belief. As long as the members of a community remain in contact with each other, there continues a harmony in their ideas and ideals, and their constant meetings – and the inevitable interaction – welds their beliefs into a single entity, protecting them from ideological differences.

If on the other hand, they lose contact and become separated the process of mutual action and reaction comes to a standstill; their views and ideas start developing independently, each going his own way, and it does not take each group very long to develop its own views, ideals, theories, and beliefs. It is in this

way that ideological disagreements are born, and unity of nations is shattered. It is as though Allah was warning the Muslims not to be like those who began their journey to disaster by separating from each other, losing mutual contacts, and remaining aloof from the community, and ended by having different beliefs and divergent ideas.

Allah has mentioned in various places that this disagreement and difference springs from revolt and envy, for example:

"And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves" (***2:213***).

Of course, it is inevitable for ideas and opinions to differ, because knowledge and understandings differ from an individual to another; but at the same time, it is essential for a society to remove that difference and bring back the deviating individuals to the fold of unity. It is possible to remove the differences through various means; and if the *ummah* neglected this duty, it would in itself be a revolt which would throw them into perdition.

The Qur'an has given utmost importance to unity and forcefully warned the Muslims against disunity. Why? Because it knew which path this *ummah* would take; they would differ, disagree, and disunite not only as the previous people did, but even more. A peculiarity of the Qur'anic style has already been mentioned in several places: When it emphatically warns against some pitfall, it serves as a prophecy that the Muslim ummah was going to fall into it, nevertheless; the more forceful the admonition, the more likely the people were to violate it.

This difference and disunity were foretold by the Prophet as well as by the Qur'an; he said that difference would creep into his *ummah*, then it would raise its head in the form of divergent sects; also, he prophesied that the ummah would become divided as the Jews and the Christians were before. Some of those prophecies will be given under "Traditions".

History testifies to the truth of this prophesy. No sooner was the Prophet gone than the people scattered in all directions; they were divided into several sects, each accusing others of apostasy. This has been going on since the days of the Companions to this time of ours. Every attempt at uniting two sects, results in the creation of a third.

Experience and analytical study of Islamic literature and history prove that the fountainhead of this difference were the hypocrites. Read the Qur'an and you will see how forcefully it speaks against them and condemns them; how seriously it denounces their schemes; and how dangerous it portrays their plans to be. Ponder on what Allah has said about them in the Chapters of: The Cow, The Repentance, The Confederates, and The Hypocrites, etc., and you will be stunned. This was their condition and behaviour during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah (S), when the revelations were regularly coming from Allah. But as soon as the Prophet departed, the issue of hypocrites were immediately 'forgotten'; we find no mention of them in the Muslim literature; it was as though they vanished the moment the

Prophet died!

(*It was*) *as though there never was any intimate friend between al-Hujun and as-Safa,*

Or there never conversed at night any talker at Mecca.

Soon the people found themselves scattered to the four winds and sectarian differences cut them asunder. Despotic and tyrannical governments succeeded in subjugating them, and their felicity of life was transformed into infelicity of error and straying. And we seek help from Allah. We hope, by the grace of Allah, to write on this subject in detail in the Chapter of The Repentance.

Verses 106 - 107

Qur'an: ***"On the day when (some) faces shall become bright and (some) faces shall turn black; then as to those whose faces will have turned black: Did you disbelieve after your believing? Taste therefore the chastisement for what you were disbelieving"*** **(*3:106*).**

Qur'an: ***"And as to those whose faces shall have become bright, they shall be in Allah's mercy; in it they shall abide"*** **(*3:107*).**

As the talk centres around ungratefulness which, like treachery and breach of trust, causes shame and bashfulness, Allah has selected here a chastisement of the hereafter that is analogous to it, that is, blackness of face which metaphorically denotes shamefacedness, abashment, and disgrace. It is implied, or rather clearly shown, by the words of Allah:

"Then as for those whose faces will have turned black: Did you disbelieve after your believing?" **(*3:106*).**

For the same reason, those who are grateful for this Divine Favour, shall be given a reward that will be appropriate for thankfulness, and that is brightness of face, which is metaphorically used for contentment and delight.

Verse 108

Qur'an: ***"These are communications of Allah which We recite to you with truth, and Allah does not desire any injustice to the creatures"*** **(*3:108*).**

The clause, "with truth" is related to the verb, "We recite", that is, the recitation is the recital of truth, it is not false, nor is it form Satanic whisperings. Alternatively, it may be related to "communications" giving it an adjectival meaning, that is, true communications. Or it may be related to a deleted word. In any case, the verse means as follows: These verses which describe what Allah will do with two groups - the ungrateful and the grateful - are accompanied by and based on truth, there is no falsehood or injustice in them. This meaning is more appropriate because the verse ends on the words:

"And Allah does not desire any injustice…" (***3: 108***).

The word "injustice", is a common noun used in a negative context, implies comprehensiveness, that is, every type of injustice is negated. Likewise, "the creatures" being a plural with definite article "the" denotes comprehensiveness. Therefore, the meaning will be as follows: Allah does not desire any injustice – of whatever type it may be – to any of His creatures or a group of creatures.

It is a fact that difference and conflict among the people is such a bad thing that its evil consequences adversely affect all the creatures, the whole mankind.

Verse 109

Qur'an: ***"And whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's; and to Allah all things are returned"*** (***3: 109***).

After the declaration that Allah desires no injustice whatsoever, this verse gives its reason to remove any possible misunderstanding to the contrary. Allah owns everything in all its aspects; He has right and authority to manage it in any way He likes. There is nothing outside His ownership. Had there been anything outside His ownership, only then He would do any injustice or exceed the limit by managing or usurping that "unowned" thing.

Moreover, man is inclined to injustice when he has a need which cannot be fulfilled except by manipulation of something he does not own. But Allah is Self-sufficient to Whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. (This argument has been given by an exegete, but it is not in conformity with apparent meaning of the verse. This reply is based on the Self-sufficiency of Allah, and not on His ownership, while the verse mentions the latter, not the former.) However, the Divine Ownership offers irrefutable proof that Allah is not unjust.

Then comes another proof: Everything and every affair, whatsoever it may be, returns to Allah. If anyone other than Allah would have had any authority on anything or any affair, only then Allah would have been committing injustice if He would have removed it from that other's authority and manipulated it according to His own will. This proof is pointed at in the concluding statement: ***"and to Allah all things are returned."*** (***3: 109***)

The two proofs, as you see, are complementary. One is based on the premise that everything belongs to Allah, and the other on the principle that no affair belongs to anyone other than Allah.

Verse 110

Qur'an: ***"You are the best nation raised up for the*** (***benefit of***) ***men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and you believe in Allah; and if the People of the Book had believed it would have been better for them; of them*** (***some***) ***are believers and most of them are transgressors"***

(***3: 110***).

The word translated as "raised up" is *"ukhrijat"* (أُخْرِجَتْ = lit. taken out); it has a connotation of introduction. Taking out also implies incidence, bringing forth and creation. Allah says:

"And Who brought forth herbage" (***87:4***).

The verse is addressed to the believers; therefore, the word "men" should mean general public, the humanity at large. Someone has said that the verb *'kuntum'* (كُنْتُمْ = lit.: you were) is here devoid of time factor and means 'you are'. The word *'ummah'* (أُمَّة = nation, group), is used for a party as well as for individual – when they have the same goal which they aim to reach; it is derived from *'al–amm'* (اَلْاَمُّ = to intend, to aim). The clause ***"and you believe in Allah"*** (***3: 110***) has been placed after mentioning the enjoining the right and forbidding the evil; it is like mentioning the whole thing or the root after describing some components or branches.

According to the above explanation, the verse means as follows: O Muslims! you are the best group which Allah has brought out for mankind by guiding it; because you are united, you believe in Allah, and perform the twin duties of enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong. Obviously, this honoured title has been given to the whole *ummah* only because some of them have attained to the true belief and do fulfil the obligations of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. This is in short what some exegetes have written about it.

But obviously the word *'kuntum'* (كُنْتُمْ = you were) is not devoid of time factor; it is a past tense and refers to the believer's condition in the early days of Islam. It speaks about those who were foremost among the Emigrants and the Helpers; the belief here refers to their positive response to the call of holding fast to the cord of Allah without being divided; this belief is opposite of the disbelief in that call – the disbelief that is mentioned in the words:

"Did you disbelieve after your believing?" (***3: 106***).

The same is the import of the belief as related to the People of the Book in this verse, ***"and if the People of the Book had believed."*** (***3: 110***) In short, the meaning will be as follows:

O Muslims! you were – when you were brought forth first of all and appeared for the people – the best group that was ever formed, because at that time you enjoined good and forbade evil, and holding fast by the cord of Allah you became united and unified like one body and one soul; and if the People of the Book too were like that it would have been better for them, but they are divided and disunited – some of them are believers while most of them are transgressors.

Many times, in these verses the talk switches from third to the second person, and from plural to the singular number, and vice versa. Also, there are clauses where noun has been used instead of pronoun, for example, the Divine Name "Allah" has been repeated several times. The reasons for these changes

are not difficult to find after meditation.

Traditions

Abu Basir says: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah ('a) about the words of Allah ***"fear Allah with the fear which is due to Him"*** (***3: 102***) and he said: 'He should be obeyed, and not disobeyed; remembered, and not forgotten; and thanked, and not shown ingratitude.' "[1]

al-Hakim and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated through another chain from Ibn Mas'ud that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) said: 'Fear Allah as He should be feared; (it means) that He should be obeyed and not disobeyed, and remembered, and not forgotten.' "[2]

al-Khatib narrates from Anas that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) said: 'No servant fears Allah with the fear which is due to Him until he knows that what has befallen him could not miss him, and what has missed him could not reach him.' "[3]

The author says: We have explained in the Commentary how the meaning given in the first two traditions could be inferred from the verse. As for the third one, it gives a concomitant of the Qur'anic meaning, and it is clear.

Ibn Shahrashub quotes from *at-Tafsir* of Waki' that 'Abd Khayr said: "I asked 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib ('a) about the words of Allah: "***O you who believe! fear Allah with the fear which is due to Him"*** (***3: 102***), (and) he said: 'By Allah, no one acted upon it except the House of the Messenger of Allah; we remembered Him, so we do not forget Him; and we thanked Him, so we are never ungrateful to Him; and we obeyed Him, so we never disobeyed Him. When this verse was revealed, the Companions said: "We are unable to do it." Then Allah revealed, ***"Therefore fear Allah as much as you can."*** (***64: 16***) ' " Waki' said: "that is, as much as you are able to do."[4]

Abu Basir said: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah ('a) about the words of Allah, ***"fear Allah with the fear which is due to Him."*** (***3: 102***). He said: '(It is) abrogated.' I said: 'And which (verse) abrogated it? He said: 'The words of Allah, ***"Therefore, fear Allah as much as you can."*** (***64: 16***)'"[5]

The author says: It may be inferred from the tradition of Waki' that "abrogation" (as mentioned in the tradition of al-'Ayyashi) refers to various stages of piety and fear of Allah. But it does not mean abrogation in the sense of cancellation (as some exegetes have said) because it is against the apparent meaning of the Qur'an.

As-Sadiq ('a) explained the clause, unless you are Muslims, in these words: ***"unless you are in submission."*** (***3: 102***)" [6]

As-Suyuti writes under the words of Allah: ***"And hold fast by the cord of Allah..."*** (***3: 103***), Ibn Abi Shaybah and Ibn Jarir have narrated from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri that he said: 'The Messenger of Allah (S)

said: “The Book of Allah, it is the cord of Allah (which is) outstretched from the heaven to the earth.” ’ ”7

Ibn Abi Shaybah narrates from Abu Shurayh al-Khuza‘i that he said: “The Messenger of Allah (S) said: ‘Surely this Qur’an is a rope, one end of which is in the hand of Allah, and the other end is in your hands; therefore hold fast to it; because you shall never slip nor will you ever go astray after (holding fast to) it.’ 8

As-Sajjad (‘a) said, inter alia, in a hadith: “And the cord of Allah - it is the Qur’an.”9

The author says: There are other Traditions on this theme, narrated by both sects.

Al-Baqir (‘a) said: “The progeny of Muhammad, they are the cord of Allah which He has ordered (the believers) to hold fast to; so He has said: And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together and be not divided.”10

The author says: There are other traditions of the same meaning; they are supported by what has been written in the Commentary; also, other Traditions given below, support it.

At-Tabarani has narrated from Zayd Ibn Arqam that he said: “The Messenger of Allah (S), said: ‘Surely, I am to depart from you; and surely you are to come to me near the *‘hawd’* (اَلْحَوْضُ = reservoir, i.e., of ‘al-Kawthar’ = اَلْكَوْثَرُ). Therefore, be careful how you follow me about the two weighty things.’ He was asked: ‘And what are the two weighty things? O Messenger of Allah!’ He said: ‘The greater one is the Book of Allah, the Mighty, the Great, (it is) a rope one end of which is in the hand of Allah and (another) end is in your hands; therefore, hold fast to it, you shall never slip up nor will you ever go astray. And the smaller one is my progeny. And surely, they will never separate from each other until they reach me near the water reservoir; and I have asked for them this (privilege) from my Lord; therefore do not precede them lest you be destroyed; and do not (try to) teach them because they are more knowledgeable than you.’” 11

The author says: The tradition of the “Two Weighty Things” is among the *mutawatir* ones, which has been narrated unanimously by both the Sunnis and the Shi‘ahs. We have mentioned in the beginning of the chapter that some scholars of Traditions have narrated it from thirty-five different narrators - male and female - and a multitude of narrators and scholars have narrated it from those original narrators.

Ibn Majah, Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim have narrated from Anas that he said: “The Messenger of Allah (S) said: ‘The Children of Israel became divided into seventy-one sects, and surely my ummah will soon be divided into seventy-three sects - all of them shall be in the fire except one.’ They said: ‘O Messenger of Allah! and who is this one?’ He said: ‘The party.’ Then he recited: And hold fast to the cord of Allah all together.’12

The author says: This too is one of the famous Traditions. The Shi‘ahs have narrated it in a different way, as may be seen in *al-Khisal, Ma‘ani ’l-akhbar, al-Ihtijaj, al-Amali*, *the Kitab of Sulaym Ibn Qays*

and *at-Tafsir of al-'Ayyashi*. We quote it here from the first-named book. as-Saduq narrates through his chains from Sulayman Ibn Mihran who narrates from Ja'far Ibn Muhammad (peace be on them both) who narrates, through his forefathers, from the Leader of the Faithful (peace be on them all) that he said: "I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) saying: 'Verily, the ummah of Musa became divided after him, into seventy-one sects, one of them (was) saved, and seventy (were thrown) into the fire. And the ummah of 'Isa became divided after him, into seventy-two sects, one of them (was) saved, while seventy-one (were thrown) into the fire. And surely my ummah will soon.be divided after me, into seventy-three sects, one of them (will be) saved, and seventy-two (will be thrown) into the fire."

The author says: It conforms with the next tradition.

Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and al-Hakim (who has confirmed correctness of this hadith) have all narrated from Abu Hurayrah that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) said: 'The Jews were divided into seventy-one sects; and the Christians were divided into seventy-two sects; and my ummah will be divided into seventy-three sects.' "[13]

The author says: This theme is found in other Traditions narrated through other chains from Mu'awiyah and others.

al-Hakim has narrated from Ibn 'Umar that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) said: *"There will happen in any ummah all that happened in the Children of Israel in a completely identical manner, so much so that if there were among them someone who had openly had incestuous relation with his mother, there would be someone like that in my ummah too. Verily the Children of Israel were divided into seventy-one sects, and my ummah will become divided into seventy-three sects - all of them* (*will go*) *into the fire except one.'* He was asked: 'Which one?' He said: '*That on which are I and my Companions today.*' " [14]

The author says: A similar tradition has been narrated in *Jami' al-usul* (by Ibn al-Athir) from at-Tirmidhi, on the authority of the son of 'Amr Ibn al-'As from the Prophet.

As-Saduq has narrated through his chains from Ghiyath Ibn Ibrahim, from as-Sadiq ('a) (through his forefathers, peace be on them all) that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) said: *'All that happened in the previous nations will surely happen in this ummah in a completely identical manner and exactly alike way."* [15]

The Prophet said: *"Most surely you will follow the customs of those who were before you, in a completely identical manner and exactly alike way; you will not deviate from their path; you will imitate them faithfully* (*in every conceivable manner*)*, span to span, hand to hand and arm to arm; so much so that if someone in previous nations had entered an iguana's den, you will surely enter it."* They said: "Do you mean the Jews and the Christians? O Messenger of Allah!" He said: *"Who* (*else*) *do I mean? Surely you will unravel the rope of Islam strand by strand; the first thing you will destroy of your religion shall be trustworthiness, and the last of it* (*to go, shall be*) *the prayer."*[16]

The author of *Jami' al-usul* has narrated on the authority of the correct books - also at-Tirmidhi has narrated it - from the Prophet that he said: "By Him in Whose hand my soul is, most surely you will follow the custom of those who were before you." And Razin has added the words: "in a completely identical manner and exactly similar way; so much so that if there were among them one who had cohabited with his mother, someone among you too would do so. But I do not know whether you would worship calf or not."

The author says: This too is a famous tradition. The Sunnis have narrated it in their *sahih* and other books, while the Shi'ahs have recorded it in their collections of Traditions.

Anas said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) said: '*Surely there will arrive at the Reservoir a group of my Companions, until when they shall be removed* (*from there*) *they shall tremble before me. So, I shall say: O Lord! my Companions.' Then it will be said: 'You do not know what they did do after you.'* "[17]

Abu Hurayrah said that the Messenger of Allah (S) said. *"There will arrive near me on the Day of Resurrection a group of my Companions* (*or according to another report: of my ummah*)*, and they will be evicted from the Reservoir. Then I will say: 'O Lord! my Companions.' And* (*Allah*) *will say: 'You have no knowledge of what they did do after you; they became apostates, going backwards* (*to their previous disbelief*)*.' Then they will be evicted*."[18]

The author says: This tradition also is very well-known; both the Sunnis and the Shi'ahs have recorded it in their *sahih* books and collections, on the authority of many Companions, like Ibn Mas'ud, Anas, Sahl Ibn Sa'id, Abu Hurayrah, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, 'A'ishah, Umm Salmah, Asma' bint Abi Bakr, and others, and also from some Imams of the Ahl Al-Bayt('a).

These Traditions, numerous and varied as they are, confirm what we have inferred from the verses; and the historical events and strife confirm these Traditions.

al-Hakim has narrated (and confirmed its correctness) that Ibn 'Umar said: "Verily the Messenger of Allah (S) said: *'Whoever went out of the community about a hand-span, he surely removed the collar of Islam from his neck - until he returns. And whoever died without having a leader of community over him, then surely his death shall be a death of ignorance* (*i.e., disbelief*)*.'* "[19]

The author says: The theme of this hadith too is well-known. Both the Sunnis and the Shi'ahs have narrated from the Prophet that he said: "Whoever died without knowing the Imam of his time, he died the death of ignorance (i.e., disbelief)."

It is recorded in the *Sunans* of at-Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud that the Prophet said: "*There shall always be a group of my ummah on truth.*"[20]

The Leader of the Faithful ('Ali, 'a) said about the words of Allah "***Did you disbelieve after your believing?"*** (***3: 106***): They are the people of innovations and heretic tendencies and wrong views from

this ummah." 21

Abu 'Amr az-Zubayri narrates from as-Sadiq ('a) about the words of Allah: "***You are the best nation raised up for the (benefit of) men...," (3:110),*** that he said: "(Allah) means the *ummah* (group, nation) for which the prayer of Ibrahim ('a) was granted; and they are the people Allah raised (His Messenger) among them, and from them and to them; and they are the medium nation, and they are the best nation that has been raised up for the people."22

The author says: We have explained this tradition under the Commentary of the following verse 2:128.

Ibn Abi Hatim has narrated from Abu Ja'far ('a) that he said about the verse: "***You are the best nation raised up for the (benefit of) men..." (3:110),*** the People of the House of the Prophet." 23

Ahmad has narrated through good chains from 'Ali ('a) that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) said: '*I have been given that which no prophet was given: I have been helped with awe, and I have been given keys of the earth, and I have been named Ahmad, and the earth has been made a means of cleansing for me, and my ummah has been made the best nation."*24

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1. Ma'ani 'l-akhbar; at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.
2. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
3. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
4. al-Burhan [fi tafsir al-Qur'an], al-Bahrani.
5. at-Tafsir, al-Ayyashi.
6. Majma' al-bayan.
7. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
8. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
9. Ma'ani al-akhbar.
10. at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.
11. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
12. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
13. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
14. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
15. Kamal ad-din.
16. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
17. as-Sahih, al-Bukhari; as-Sahih, Muslim.
18. as-Sahih, al-Bukhari; as-Sahih, Muslim.
19. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
20. Jami' al-usul.
21. Majma' al-bayan
22. Majma' al-bayan; at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi
23. ad-Durr al-Manthur
24. ad-Durr al-Manthur

[1] [1]
SHARES

Sura ’Aal-’Imran: Verses 111 – 120

لَن يَضُرُّوكُمْ إِلَّآ أَذًى ۗ وَإِن يُقَـٰتِلُوكُمْ يُوَلُّوكُمُ ٱلْأَدْبَارَ ثُمَّ لَا يُنصَرُونَ

***“They shall by no means harm you but with a slight distress; and if they fight you they shall turn (their) backs to you, then they shall not be helped”* (*3:111*).**

ضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ ٱلذِّلَّةُ أَيْنَ مَا ثُقِفُوٓا۟ إِلَّا بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِّنَ ٱلنَّاسِ وَبَآءُو بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ ٱلْمَسْكَنَةُ
ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا۟ يَكْفُرُونَ بِـَٔايَـٰتِ ٱللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ ٱلْأَنۢبِيَآءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوا۟ وَّكَانُوا۟ يَعْتَدُونَ

“Abasement is brought down upon them wherever they are found, except under a protection from Allah and a protection from men, and they have become settled in wrath from Allah, and humiliation is stamped upon them; this is because they used to disbelieve in the signs of Allah and slew the prophets unjustly; this is because they disobeyed and used to exceed the limits” (*3:112*).

لَيْسُوا۟ سَوَآءً مِّنْ أَهْلِ ٱلْكِتَـٰبِ أُمَّةٌ قَآئِمَةٌ يَتْلُونَ ءَايَـٰتِ ٱللَّهِ ءَانَآءَ ٱلَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ

“They are not all alike; of the People of the Book there is an upright party; they recite Allah’s communications in the night-time and they prostrate (to Him)” (*3:113*).

يُؤْمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلْيَوْمِ ٱلْـَٔاخِرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِ وَيُسَـٰرِعُونَ فِى ٱلْخَيْرَٰتِ وَأُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ مِنَ ٱلصَّـٰلِحِينَ

“They believe in Allah and the last day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong, and they strive with one another in hastening to good deeds, and those are among the good” (*3:114*).

وَمَا يَفْعَلُوا۟ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَن يُكْفَرُوهُ وَٱللَّهُ عَلِيمٌۢ بِٱلْمُتَّقِينَ

“And whatever good they do, they shall not be denied it, and Allah knows the pious ones” (*3:115*).

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ لَن تُغْنِىَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَٰلُهُمْ وَلَآ أَوْلَـٰدُهُم مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ شَيْـًٔا ۖ وَأُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ أَصْحَـٰبُ ٱلنَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَـٰلِدُونَ

“(As for) those who disbelieve, surely neither their wealth nor their children shall avail them in the least against Allah; and these are the inmates of the fire; therein they shall abide” (3:116).

مَثَلُ مَا يُنفِقُونَ فِى هَٰذِهِ ٱلْحَيَوٰةِ ٱلدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رِيحٍ فِيهَا صِرٌّ أَصَابَتْ حَرْثَ قَوْمٍ ظَلَمُوٓا۟ أَنفُسَهُمْ فَأَهْلَكَتْهُ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ ٱللَّهُ وَلَـٰكِنْ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

“The likeness of what they spend in this life of the world is as the likeness of a wind in which is intense cold (that) smites the tilth of a people who have done injustice to their souls and destroys it; and Allah does no injustice to them, but they are doing injustice to themselves” (3:117).

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ لَا تَتَّخِذُوا۟ بِطَانَةً مِّن دُونِكُمْ لَا يَأْلُونَكُمْ خَبَالًا وَدُّوا۟ مَا عَنِتُّمْ قَدْ بَدَتِ ٱلْبَغْضَآءُ مِنْ أَفْوَٰهِهِمْ وَمَا تُخْفِى صُدُورُهُمْ أَكْبَرُ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ ٱلْـَٔايَـٰتِ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

“O you who believe! do not take for intimate friends from among others than your own people; they do not fall short of inflicting loss upon you; they love what distresses you; vehement hatred has already appeared from out of their mouths, and what their breasts conceal is greater still; indeed, We have made the signs clear to you, if you would understand” (3:118).

هَـٰٓأَنتُمْ أُو۟لَآءِ تُحِبُّونَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِبُّونَكُمْ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِٱلْكِتَـٰبِ كُلِّهِۦ وَإِذَا لَقُوكُمْ قَالُوٓا۟ ءَامَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْا۟ عَضُّوا۟ عَلَيْكُمُ ٱلْأَنَامِلَ مِنَ ٱلْغَيْظِ قُلْ مُوتُوا۟ بِغَيْظِكُمْ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلِيمٌۢ بِذَاتِ ٱلصُّدُورِ

“Lo! you are they who will love them while they do not love you, and you believe in the Book (in) the whole of it; and when they meet you they say: “We believe,” and when they are alone, they bite the ends of their fingers in rage against you. Say: “Die in your rage;” surely Allah knows what is in the breasts” (3:119).

إِن تَمْسَسْكُمْ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ وَإِن تُصِبْكُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَفْرَحُوا۟ بِهَا وَإِن تَصْبِرُوا۟ وَتَتَّقُوا۟ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْـًٔا إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ

“If a good befall you, it grieves them, and if an evil afflicts you, they rejoice at it; and if you are patient and guard yourselves, their scheme will not injure you in any way; surely Allah comprehends what they do” (3:120).

Commentary

The verses, as you see, now revert to the original theme, describing the behaviour of the People of the Book – and particularly the Jews – exposing their disbelief in the Divine Revelation, their going astray and their hindering the believers from the way of Allah; the preceding ten verses were a talk within talk, a parenthetical speech. The verses are thus connected with the foregoing discourse.

Verse 111

Qur'an: ***"They shall by no means harm you but with a slight distress; and if they fight you they shall turn (their) backs to you, then they shall not be helped"*** **(*3:111*).**

"al–Adha" (اَلْأَذي = slight distress) denotes a harm suffered by a creature, either to his soul or body or to those related to him, be it of this world or of the hereafter – as ar–Raghib has said in *Mufradat al–Qur'an.*

Verse 112

Qur'an: ***"Abasement is brought down upon them wherever they are found, except under a protection from Allah and a protection from men…"*** **(*3:112*).**

"adh–Dhillah" (اَلذِّلَّةُ = abasement) denotes here species of abasement; *'adh–dhull'* (اَلذُّلُّ) is the humiliation imposed by someone else; *'adh–dhill'* (اَلذِّلُّ) is that which results from one's own obstinacy – as ar–Raghib has written. However, its general import is the condition of humiliation and degradation. Its opposite *'al–'izz'* (اَلْعِزُّ) means honour, strength and pride.

The word *'thuqifu'* (ثُقِفُوا) means "are found"; *'al–habl'* (اَلْحَبْلُ) literally means rope or cord which provides protection to one who holds fast to it; it is metaphorically used for everything that provides a kind of safety, security and protection, e.g., a covenant, guarantee or amnesty. The meaning is as follows – and Allah knows better: Abasement is stamped on them as a design is stamped on a coin, or it encompasses them as a tent encompasses a man. Anyhow, they are either branded with, or overwhelmed by abasement and humiliation – except when they get a protection or guarantee from Allah and a protection or guarantee from men.

The word "protection" is repeated when referring to Allah and then to men, because the connotation differs from one place to the other. Protection given by Allah is His decree and command, either creative or legislative; and that provided by men is their decision and action.

Abasement is stamped on them; it means that Allah has ordained a law affirming their abasement. This meaning is supported by the proviso "wherever they are found". Obviously, it means that wherever the believers find them and subjugate them; this proviso is obviously more appropriate to legislative abasement, one of whose effects is the imposition of *jizyah.*

The meaning of the verse therefore is as follows:

They are abased and humiliated, according to the law of Islamic *Shari'ah*, except when they come under the protection of an Islamic State, or somehow get protection from people.

One of the exegetes has said that the clause, ***"Abasement is brought down upon them"*** (***3:112***), is not a legislative order; it is rather a statement of fact describing what they had suffered by the Divine decree and measure – because when Islam came, the Jews were paying *jizyah* to the fire-worshippers of Persia, and some of them were subjects of the Christians.

Comment: This meaning could be correct; and the end portion of the verse might even support this view because it apparently explains the reason of their being branded with abasement and humiliation in terms of their misdeeds, e.g., their disbelief in the signs of Allah, their slaying the prophets and their continuous transgression. But then we would have to apply this verse exclusively to the Jews – and there is apparently nothing in the verse to suggest such exclusiveness. We shall write some more on this subject under the commentary for verse 5:64

Qur'an: ***"…And they have become settled in wrath from Allah, and humiliation is stamped upon them…."*** (***3:112***).

"Ba'u" (بَاءُوْا = they settled in; they returned with); *'al-maskanah'* (اَلْمَسْكَنَةُ) translated here as humiliation, literally means extreme poverty. Apparently, it is used when a man finds no way of escape from a threatening poverty or need. Accordingly, the end of the verse conforms with its beginning.

Qur'an: ***"this is because they disobeyed and used to exceed the limits"*** (***3:112***).

They disobeyed, and, even before that, they were habitually and continuously transgressing the limits.

Verse 113

Qur'an: ***"They are not all alike… and Allah knows the pious ones"*** (***3:113***).

"as-Sawa' " (اَلسَّوَآءُ = literally, to be equal) is a *masdar* which is used in the meaning of adjective, that is, equal, alike. Not all the People of the Book are alike in their behaviour, nor in the rules applying to them; there is among them an upright group whose attributes the verse describes. Obviously, the phrase, ***"of the People of the Book there is…"*** (***3:113***), shows the reason as to why not all the People of the Book are alike.

Various meanings have been given for the word *'qa'imah'* (قَآئِمَةٌ = literally, standing; translated here as upright): It is said that it means 'firm in obeying the command of Allah', or 'just', or 'proceeding on straight path'. The fact is that the word is of a general nature which could be interpreted in any of the above meanings. But the mention of the Book and of their good deeds makes it certain that it has been used here in the meaning of being standing or firm in belief and obedience.

'Ana' ' (اَنَآء) is plural of *'inan'* (اِنًي) or *'anan'* (اَنًي) or reportedly *'anu'* (اَنُو), all of which mean "time".

'al-Musara'ah' (اَلْمُسَارَعَةُ = to vie with one another in hastening); it is on paradigm of *'al-mufa'alah'* (اَلْمُفَاعَلَةُ) from the root verb *'as-sur'ah'* (اَلسُّرْعَةُ = to be fast, to make haste). It is explained in *Majma' al-bayan* as follows: "The difference between *as-sur'ah* and *'al-'ajalah'* (اَلْعَجَلَةُ) is as follows: *as-Sur'ah* is to go ahead in a matter in which going ahead is allowed; it is a praiseworthy trait, and its opposite is *'al-ibta'* (اَلْاِبْطَآءُ = to be late) which is a disliked action. And *al-'ajalah* is to be ahead in a matter in which one should not be ahead; it is a disliked trend, and its opposite is *'al-anah'* (اَلْاَنَاةُ = deliberateness) which is a good trait.

Apparently, *as-sur'ah* is an attribute of movement, while *al-'ajalah* shows an attribute of the one who moves.

'al-Khayrat' (اَلْخَيْرَاتُ) means good deeds in general – be it worship, or spending in the way of Allah, or justice or looking after the needs of needy persons. It is a plural with prefix 'al' (اَلْ) which denotes comprehensiveness. It is mostly used for monetary good deeds, as its singular *'al-khayr'* (اَلْخَيْرُ = good) is mostly used for wealth and property.

In these verses, Allah has enumerated most of the basic good attributes, i.e., faith, enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, and hastening towards good deeds; then He has praised them that they are among the good people. It means that they are the people of the straight path, and among the companions of the prophets, the truthful ones, and the martyrs. Read, for proof, the following verses:

***"Guide us to the straight path"* (*1:6*).**

***"The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours, not of those inflicted with Thy wrath, nor of those gone astray"* (*1:7*).**

In conjunction with:

***"And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger, these are with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favours from among the prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the good ones; and excellent are these as companions"* (*4:69*).**

It has been said that the verses under discussion refer to 'Abdullah Ibn Salam and his companions.

Verse 115

Qur'an: *"And whatever good they do, they shall not be denied it, and Allah knows the pious ones"* (*3:115*).

"Lan yukfaruh" (لَنْ يُكْفَرُوهُ = they shall never be denied it); the root word is *'al-kufran'* (اَلْكُفْرَانُ = ungratefulness) which is opposite of *'ash-shukr'* (اَلشُّكْرُ = gratefulness). Allah will reward them for

whatever good they do, they will receive its recompense from Allah, He will not let it be lost; He says:

"And whoever on his own accord does good, then surely Allah is Grateful, Knowing" (***2:158***).

Also, He says:

"And whatever good thing you spend, it is to your own good;… and whatever good thing you spend shall be paid back to you in full, and you shall not be wronged" (***2:272***).

Verse 116

Qur'an: ***"(As for) those who disbelieve, surely neither their wealth nor their children shall avail them…"*** (***3:116***).

The continuation of context apparently shows that the phrase "those who disbelieve" refers to the other groups of the People of the Book which did not respond to the call of the Prophet; those were the people who used to hatch conspiracies against Islam and had left no stone unturned in extinguishing the light of the truth.

Some people have said that this verse refers to the idol-worshippers; according to them, it paves the way for the story of the Battle of Uhud which comes after a few verses. But this explanation does not take into account the next statements, that is,

"And you believe in the Book (in) the whole of it, and when they meet you they say: "We believe"…" (***3:119***).

Obviously, it describes the Jews' behaviour with the Muslims, not that of the idol-worshippers. It proves that the context is the same; it has not changed yet.

An exegete has tried to combine both explanations by applying the verse under discussion to the idolaters and the next one to the Jews. But it is a mistake.

Verse 117

Qur'an: ***"The likeness of what they spend in this life of the world is as the likeness of a wind in which is intense cold (that) smites the tilth of a people who have done injustice to their souls and destroys it; and Allah does no injustice to them, but they are doing injustice to themselves"*** (***3:117***).

"as-Sirr" (اَلصِّرُّ = intense cold). What they spend has been qualified with the proviso ***"in this life of the world"*** (***3:117***) to indicate that they are completely cut off from the life of the hereafter; whatever they spend is related only to this life. The smitten tilth is qualified by the phrase ***"of a people who have done injustice to their souls"*** (***3:117***). This proviso perfectly meshes with the coming statement, ***"and Allah***

does no injustice to them" (***3:117***).

The verse means that whatever they spend in this life (in order to better their conditions and achieve their evil goals) brings nothing to them except infelicity and unhappiness; it destroys what they ardently desire and which they think would bring happiness to them. It is like an intensely cold wind that smites the farm produce of an unjust people; it is because they had done injustice to their own selves – after all, an evil deed can bring only evil results.

Verse 118

Qur'an: ***"O you who believe! do not take for intimate friends from among others than your own people; they do not fall short of inflicting loss upon you; they love what distresses you; vehement hatred has already appeared from out of their mouths, and what their breasts conceal is greater still; indeed, We have made the signs clear to you, if you would understand"*** (***3:118***).

"O you who believe! do not take for intimate friends from among others than your own people" (***3:118***).

Intimate friend has been called ***'al-bitanah'*** (اَلْبِطَانَةُ = inner lining of a garment) – i.e., opposite of ***'az-ziharah'*** (اَلظِّهَارَةُ = outer side of a garment) – because such a friend knows the inner thoughts and secrets of man.

"They do not fall short" (***3:118***), i.e., they leave no stone unturned; *'khabalan'* (خَبَالاً = harm, mischief); insanity is called '*al-khabl'* (اَلْخَبْلُ) because it harms or destroys understanding.

"They love what distresses you" (***3:118***), "what" in this sentence is for *masdar*, and it means: they love your distress, your grievous harm***;***

"Vehement hatred has already appeared from out of their mouths" (***3:118***), it means that their enmity and hatred is very obvious from their way of talking, from slips of their tongues; it is a fine metaphor; the verse does not describe what they have kept hidden in their hearts, it just says: ***"and what their breasts conceal is greater still"*** (***3:118***)***;*** this apparent vagueness indicates that the hatred hidden in their hearts is so varied and so great that it is beyond description – this vagueness puts even greater stress on the word "greater".

Verse 119

Qur'an: ***"Lo! you are they who will love them while they do not love you,... Allah knows what is in the breasts..."*** (***3:119***).

Apparently *'ula'i'* (اؤُلآءِ = they, these) is demonstrative pronoun, and *'ha'* (هَا = lo!) is exclamatory particle, and between the two has been inserted the pronoun "you"; the meaning thus will be, 'you these', as we say 'Zayd this did so', or 'Hindah this did so'.

The article *'al'* (اَلْ = the) in "the Book" denotes genes, i.e., you believe in all the Books which have been revealed by Allah – your Book as well as their Books – while they do not believe in your Book.

The clause ***"and when they meet you they say: 'We believe,' "*** (***3: 119***), shows that they are hypocrites.

"And when they are alone, they bite the ends of their fingers in rage against you" (***3: 119***).

'*al–'add'* (اَلْعَضُّ = to bite forcefully); '*al–anamil'* (اَلْاَنَامِلُ) is plural of '*al–unmulah,* (اَلْاُنْمُلَة = fingertip); '*al–ghayz*' (اَلْغَيْظُ = rage, wrath, anger); to bite fingertips against something proverbially expresses one's anger or sorrow on that thing.

The clause "Say: ***'Die in your rage'"*** (***3: 119***) is a curse against them in the form of command. It connects the foregoing sentences to the next one ***"surely Allah knows what is in the breasts***" (***3: 119***).

The meaning together will be as follows: "O Allah! Cause them to die in their rage; surely Thou knowest what is in the breasts, that is, what is in their hearts or souls."

Verse 120

Qur'an: ***"If a good befalls you, it grieves them…"*** (***3: 120***).

"al–Masa'ah" (اَلْمَسَآئَةُ = to grieve) is opposite of *'as–surur'* (اَلسُّرُوْرُ = to make happy; happiness). The verse shows that the believers may protect themselves only if they have patience and piety.

[1] [1]
SHARES

Appendix A: A Chronological List of The Fourteen Infallibles ('A)

The Holy Prophet, His Daughter And The Twelve Holy Imams

Note: Where there are differences of opinion on the dates of birth or death, the most popular view has been quoted.

SL. No.	Designation	Agnomen (*Kunya*)	Name	Father's name	Title (*Laqab*)	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Martyred by means of	Place of burial
1.	The Last Prophet of Allah	Abu 'l Qasim	Muhammad (Ahmad) (Al-Mustafa)	'Abdullah	Rasulu'llah, Nabiyyu'llah, An-Nabiyy, Khatamu'n- Nabiyyin	17th Rabi' I, in the year of the Elephant. (25.8.570 AD)	28th Safar, 11 AH (25.5.632 AD)	Natural	Holy Medina, al-Munawwa-rah, Saudi Arabia
2.	One of the Fourteen Infallibles	Umm Abiha	Fatimah	Muhammad	az-Zahra', as-Siddiqah, al-Batul, Sayyidatu'n- Nisa'.	20th Jumada II, in the fifth Year after the declaration of the Prophet-hood. (2.1.615 AD)	3rd Jumada II, 11 AH (26.8.632)	Injured	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
3.	1st Imam	Abu al-Hasan, Abu al-Hasanayn, Abu Turab.	'Ali	Abu Talib	Amir al-Mu'minin, al-Wasiyy, al-Murtada, (Haydar).	13th Rajab, 10 Years before the declaration of the Prophethood. (25.5.600 AD)	Struck on 19th Ramadan (25th January); Died on 21st Ramadan 40AH (27.1.661 AD)	Sword – while he was engaged in prayers.	Holy an-Najaf al-Ashraf, Iraq. (al-Ghariyy)
4.	2nd Imam	Abu Muhammad	al-Hasan	'Ali	Al-Mujtaba, as-Sibt (al-Akbar).	15th Ramadan, 3AH (1.3.625 AD)	7th Safar, 50 AH (6.3.670 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
5.	3rd Imam	Abu 'Abdillah	al-Husayn	'Ali	Sayyidu'sh-Shuhada, as-Sibt (al-Asghar).	3rd Sha'ban, 4 AH (8.1.626 AD)	10th Muharram, 61 AH (10.10.680 AD)	Sword – in the Battle of 'Ashura	Holy Karbala' (at-Taff), Iraq.
6.	4th Imam	Abu Muhammad	'Ali	al-Husayn	Zaynu'l-Abidin, Sayyidu's-Sajidin, as-Sajjad.	5th Sha'ban, 38 AH (6.1.659 AD)	25th Muharram, 94/95 AH (31.10.712 / 20.10.713 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
7.	5th Imam	Abu Ja'far	Muhammad	'Ali	al-Baqir.	3rd Safar, 57 AH (16.12.676 AD)	7th Dhi'l-hijjah, 114 AH (28.1.733 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
8.	6th Imam	Abu 'Abdillah, Abu Musa.	Ja'far	Muhammad	as-Sadiq.	17th Rabi' I, 83 AH (20.4.702 AD)	25th Shawwal, 148 AH (14.12.765 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia

SL. No.	Designation	Agnomen (*Kunya*)	Name	Father's name	Title (*Laqab*)	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Martyred by means of	Place of burial
9.	7th Imam	Abu al-Hasan (al-Awwal - The First), Abu Ibrahim	Musa	Ja'far	al-Kazim, al-'Abd as-Salih, al-'Alim.	7th Safar, 129 AH (28.10.746 AD)	25th Rajab, 183 AH (1.9.799 AD)	Poison	Holy al-Kazimiyyah, Iraq.
10.	8th Imam	Abu al-Hasan (al-Thani - The Second),	'Ali	Musa	Ar-Ridha'.	11th Dhi al-qi'dah, 148 AH (29.12.765 AD)	17th Safar, 203 AH (24.8.818 AD)	Poison	Holy Mashhad, (Tus – Kurasan), Iran.
11.	9th Imam	Abu Ja'far (ath-Thani – The Second)	Muhammad	'Ali	at-Taqi, al-Jawad.	10th Rajab, 195 AH (8.4.811 AD)	30th Dhi al-qi'dah, 220 AH (25.11.835 AD)	Poison	Holy al-Kazimiyyah, Iraq.
12.	10th Imam	Abu al-Hasan (ath-Thalith – The Third)	'Ali	Muhammad	an-Naqi, al-Hadi.	2nd Rajab, 212 AH (27.9.827 AD)	3rd Rajab, 254 AH (28.6.868 AD)	Poison	Holy Samarra' (Surra-man-ra'a), Iraq.
13.	11th Imam	Abu Muhammad	al-Hasan	'Ali	al-'Askari.	8th Rabi 'II, 232 AH (3.12.846 AD)	8th Rabi 'II, 260 AH (1.1.874 AD)	Poison	Holy Samarra' Iraq.
14.	12th Imam	Abu 'l Qasim	Muhammad	al-Hasan	al-Mahdi, al-Qa'im, al-Hujjah, al-Gha'ib, Sahibu 'z-Zaman, Sahibu al-Amr, al-Muntazar.	15th Sha'ban, 255 AH (29.7.869)	Still alive, but in occultation.	----	----

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Appendix B: List Of Names and Numbers of The Surahs of The Holy Qur'an

In this book the references of the Qur'anic verses have been given by writing serial number of the relevant chapter, followed by a colon (:) that is followed by the number/s of the Verse/s. The names of the chapters have been omitted for the sake of brevity.

The names of the chapters with their serial numbers are given here for the guidance of the readers.

To find, for instance, the verse 5:67 in the Qur'an, the reader should open the fifth chapter, that its, *al-Ma'idah,* The Table, and then find the 67th verse.

S. No.	Arabic Names of the Chapters	Transliteration	Meaning
1.	فاتِحَةُ الكِتاب	***Fatihatu al-kitab***	**The Opening of The Book**
2.	البَقَرة	***al-Baqarah***	**The Cow**
3.	آل عِمران	***Al 'Imran***	**The House of Imran**
4.	النِّسـاء	***an-Nisa'***	**Women**
5.	المَـائِدة	***Al-Ma'idah***	**The Table**
6.	الأنْعـام	***Al -An'am***	**Cattle**
7.	الأعراف	***al-A'raf***	**The Battlements**
8.	الأنْفـال	***al-Anfal***	**The Spoils**
9.	التَّوْبَة	***At-Tawbah***	**Repentance**
10.	يُونُس	***Yunus***	**Jonah**
11.	هُود	***Hud***	**Hood**
12.	يُوسُف	***Yusuf***	**Joseph**
13.	الرَّعد	***ar-Ra'd***	**Thunder**
14.	إبراهيم	***Ibrahim***	**Abraham**
15.	الحِجْر	***Al-Hijr***	**El-Hijr**
16.	النَّحل	***An-Nahl***	**The Bee**
17.	الإِسْرآء	***al-Isra'***	**The Night Journey**
18.	الكَهْف	***al-Kahf***	**The Cave**

19.	مَريَم	***Maryam***	**Mary**
20.	طه	***Ta Ha***	**Ta Ha**
21.	الأنْبيآء	***al-Anbiya'***	**Prophets**
22.	الحَجّ	***al-Hajj***	**The Pilgrimage**
23.	المؤمِنون	***al-Mu'minun***	**The Believers**
24.	النّور	***an-Nur***	**Light**
25.	الفُرقان	***al-Furqan***	**Discrimination (Salvation)**
26.	الشُّعَراء	***ash-Shu'ara'***	**The Poets**
27.	النَّمْل	***an-Naml***	**The Ant**
28.	القَصَص	***al-Qasas***	**The Stories**
29.	العَنْكَبُوت	***al-'Ankabut***	**The Spider**
30.	الرُّوم	***Ar-Rum***	**The Greeks**
31.	لُقْمان	***Luqman***	**Lokman**
32.	السَّجْدة	***as-Sajdah***	**Prostration**
33.	الأحزاب	***al-Ahzab***	**The Confederates**
34.	سَبَأ	***Saba'***	**Sheba**
35.	فاطِر (المَلائِكة)	***Fatir* (*or, al-Mala'ikah*)**	**The Originator (or The Angels)**
36.	يس	***Ya Sin***	**Ya Sin**
37.	الصّافّات	***as-Saffat***	**The Rangers**
38.	ص	***Sad***	**Sad**

39.	الزُّمَر	***az-Zumar***	**The Companies**
40.	المُؤْمِن	***al-Mu'min***	**The Believer**
41.	فُصِّلَت	***Fussilat***	**Distinguished**
42.	الشُّورى	***ash-Shura***	**Counsel**
43.	الزُّخْرُف	***az-Zukhruf***	**Ornaments**
44.	الدُّخان	***ad-Dukhan***	**Smoke**
45.	الجاثِية	***al-Jathiyah***	**Hobbling**
46.	الأحقاف	***al-Ahqaf***	**The Sand-Dunes**
47.	(مُحَمّد (ص	***Muhammad***	**Muhammad**
48.	الفَتْح	***al-Fath***	**Victory**
49.	الحُجُرات	***al Hujurat***	**Apartments**
50.	ق	***Qaf***	**Qaf**
51.	الذّارِيات	***adh-Dhariyat***	**The Scatterers**
52.	الطُّور	***at-Tur***	**The Mount**
53.	النَّجْم	***an-Najm***	**The Star**
54.	القَمَر	***al-Qamar***	**The Moon**
55.	الرَّحمن	***ar-Rahman***	**The All-merciful**
56.	الواقِعَة	***al-Waqi'ah***	**The Terror**
57.	الحَديد	***al-Hadid***	**Iron**
58.	المُجادَلة	***Al-Mujadalah***	**The Disputer**

59.	الحَشْر	***al-Hashr***	**The Mustering**
60.	المُمتَحَنة	***al-Mumtahanah***	**The Woman Tested**
61.	الصَّف	***as-Saff***	**The Ranks**
62.	الجُمُعة	***al-Jumu'ah***	**Congregation**
63.	المُنافِقُون	***al-Munafiqun***	**The Hypocrites**
64.	التَّغابُن	***at-Taghabun***	**Mutual Fraud**
65.	الطَّلاق	***at-Talaq***	**Divorce**
66.	التَّحْريم	***at-Tahrim***	**The Forbidding**
67.	المُلْك	***al-Mulk***	**The Kingdom**
68.	القَلَم	***al-Qalam***	**The Pen**
69.	الحَاقّة	***al-Haqqah***	**The Indubitable**
70.	المَعارِج	***al-Ma'arij***	**The Stairways**
71.	نُوح	***Nuh***	**Noah**
72.	الجِنّ	***Al-Jinn***	**The Jinn**
73.	المُزَّمِّل	***al-Muzzammil***	**Enwrapped**
74.	المُدَّثِّر	***al-Muddaththir***	**Shrouded**
75.	القِيامَة	***al-Qiyamah***	**The Resurrection**
76.	الدَّهر (الإنسان)	***ad-Dahr*** (***or, al-Insan***)	**The Time (or, Man)**
77.	المُرسَلات	***al-Mursalat***	**The Loosed Ones**
78.	النَّبأ	***an-Naba'***	**The Tiding**

79.	النّازِعات	***an-Nazi'at***	**The Pluckers**
80.	عَبَس	***'Abas***	**He Frowned**
81.	التَّكْوير	***at-Takwir***	**The Darkening**
82.	الإنفِطار	***al-Infitar***	**The Splitting**
83.	المُطَفِّفين	***al-Mutaffifin***	**The Stinters**
84.	الإنشِقاق	***al-Inshiqaq***	**The Rending**
85.	البُروج	***al-Buruj***	**The Constellations**
86.	الطّارق	***at-Tariq***	**The Night-star**
87.	الأعلى	***Al-A'la***	**The Most High**
88.	الغاشِيَة	***al-Ghashiyah***	**The Enveloper**
89.	الفَجْر	***Al-Fajr***	**The Dawn**
90.	البَلَد	***Al-Balad***	**The Land**
91.	الشَّمْس	***ash-Shams***	**The Sun**
92.	اللَّيل	***Al-Layl***	**The Night**
93.	الضُّحى	***ad-Duha***	**The Forenoon**
94.	الإنشِراح	***al-Inshirah***	**The Expanding**
95.	التِّين	***At-Tin***	**The Fig**
96.	العَلَق	***al-A'laq***	**The Blood-clot**
97.	القَدر	***al-Qadr***	**Power**
98.	البَيِّنَة	***al-Bayyinah***	**The Clear Sign**

99.	الزِّلزال	***Az-Zilzal***	**The Earthquake**
100.	العَاديات	***al-'Adiyat***	**The Chargers**
101.	القارِعَة	***al-Qari'ah***	**The Clatterer**
102.	التَكاثُر	***at-Takathur***	**Rivalry**
103.	العَصْر	***Al-'Asr***	**Afternoon**
104.	الهُمَزَة	***al-Humazah***	**The Backbiter**
109.	الفيل	***Al-Fil***	**The Elephant**
106.	قُرَيْش	***Quraysh***	**Quraish**
107.	الماعُون	***al-Ma'un***	**Charity**
108.	الكَوْثَر	***al-Kawthar***	**Abundance**
109.	الكافِرون	***al-Kafirun***	**The Unbelievers**
110.	النَّصر	***An-Nasr***	**Help**
111.	تَبَّت	***Tabbat*** (***or, Lahab***)	**Perish** (**or, The Flame**)
112.	الإخْلاص (التَّوحيد)	***al Ikhlas*** (***or, at-Tawhid***)	**Sincere Religion** (**or, Divine Unity**)
113.	الفَلَق	***al-Falaq***	**Daybreak**
114.	النَّاس	***an-Nas***	**Men**

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