



ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ



*This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah.*

## Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

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### Al Baqarah

البقرة

#### Introduction and Summary

As the Opening Surah sums up in seven beautiful verses the essence of the Quran, so this Surah sums up in 286 verses the whole teaching of the Quran. It is closely reasoned argument.

**Summary-** It begins (verses 1-29) by classifying men into three broad categories, depending on how they receive Allah's message.

This leads to the story of the creation of man, the high destiny intended for him, his fall, and the hope held out to him (2:30-39).

Israel's story is then told according to their own records and traditions-what privileges they received and how they abused them (2:40-86), thus illustrating again as by a parable the general story of man.

In particular, reference is made to Moses and Jesus and their struggles with an unruly people: how people of the Book played false their own lights and in their pride rejected Muhammad, who came in the true line of Prophets (2:87-121).

They falsely laid claim to the virtues of Father Abraham; he was indeed a righteous Imam, but he was the progenitor of Ismail's line (Arabs) as well as of Israel's line, and he with Ismail built the Ka'bah (the House of Allah in Makkah) and purified it, thus establishing a common religion, of which Islam is the universal exponent (2:122-141).

The Ka'bah was now to be the center of universal worship and the symbol of Islamic unity (2:142-167).

The Islamic Ummah (brotherhood) having thus been established with its definite centre and symbol, ordinances are laid down for the social life of the community, with the proviso (2:177) that righteousness does not consist in formalities, but in faith, kindness, prayer, charity, probity, and patience under suffering. The ordinances relate to food and drink, bequests, fasts, jihad, wine and gambling, treatment of orphans and women, etc, (2:168-242).

Lest the subject of jihad should be misunderstood, it is taken up again in the story of Saul, Goliath and David, in contrast to the story of Jesus (2:243-253).

And so the lesson is enforced that true virtues lies in practical deeds of manliness, kindness, and good faith (2:254-283), and Allah's nature is called to mind in the sublime Ayah al Kursi, the Verse of the Throne (2:255).

The Surah ends with an exhortation to Faith, Obedience, a sense of Personal Responsibility, and Prayer (2:284-286).

This is the longest Surah of the Quran, and in it occurs the longest verse (2:282). The name of the Surah is from the Parable of the Heifer in 2:67-71, which illustrates the insufficiency of carping obedience.

When faith is lost, people put off obedience with various excuses; even when at last they obey in the letter, they fail in the spirit, which means that they get fossilized, and their self-sufficiency prevents them from seeing that spiritually they are not alive but dead. For life is movement, activity, striving, fighting against baser things. And this is the burden of the Surah.

This is in the main an early Madinah.

#### **C.44 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)**

**(2:1-29)**

*The Message of Allah, is a guide that is sure  
To those who seek His light, but those  
Who reject faith are blind: their hearts  
Are sealed. Woe to the hypocrites,  
Self-deceived and deceiving others,  
With mockery on their lips, and mischief  
In their hearts, and fear; the clouds  
That bring fertilizing rain to others,  
To them bring out deafening thunder-peals  
And lightning flashes blinding to their eyes.*

الم (۱)

1. A.L.M.

**C25.** These are abbreviated letters, the Maqatta'at, on which a general discussion will be found in [Appendix I](#).

The particular letters, Alif, Lam, Mim, are found prefixed to this Surah, and Surahs 3, 29, 30, 31 and 32 (six in all).

- In Surah 2 and Surah 3 the argument is about the rise and fall of nations, their past, and their future in history, with ordinances for the new universal people of Islam.
- In Surah 29 a similar argument about nations leads off to the mystery of Life and Death, Failure and Triumph, Past and Future, in the history of individual souls.
- The burden of Surah 30 is that Allah is the source of all things and all things return to Him.
- In Surah 31 and Surah 32 the same lesson is enforced: Allah is the Creator and He will be the Judge on the Last Day. There is therefore a common thread, the mystery of Life and Death, Beginning and End.

Much has been written about the meaning of these letters, but of it is pure conjecture. Some commentators are content to recognize them as some mystic symbols of which it is unprofitable to discuss the meaning by more verbal logic. (R).

ذٰلِكَ الْكِتٰبُ لَا رَيْبَ فِیْهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِیْنَ (۲)

2. This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah.

**C26. Taqwa** and the verbs and nouns connected with the root, signify:

1. the fear of Allah which according to the writer of Proverbs (1:7) in the Old Testament is the beginning of Wisdom;
2. restraint, or guarding one's tongue, hand, and heart from evil;
3. hence righteousness, piety good conduct.

All these ideas are implied; in the translation, only one or other of these ideas can be indicated according to the context.

See also 47:17; and 74:56, n.5808.

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ ...

3. Who believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in prayer,

... وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ (٣)

and spend out of what We have provided for them.

**C27.** All bounties proceed from Allah.

- They may be physical gifts, e.g., food, clothing, houses, gardens, wealth, etc. or
- intangible gifts, e.g., influence, power, birth and the opportunities flowing from it, health talents, etc. or
- spiritual gifts, e.g., insight into good and evil, understanding of men, the capacity for love, etc.

We are to use all in humility and moderation. But we are also to give out of every one of them something that contributes to the well-being of others.

We are to be neither ascetics nor luxurious sybarites, neither selfish misers nor thoughtless prodigals.

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ...

4. And who believe in the Revelation sent to thee, and sent before thy time,

... وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ (٤)

and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the Hereafter.

**C28.** Righteousness comes from a secure faith, from sincere devotion to Allah, and from unselfish service to Man.

أُولَئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (٥)

5. They are on (true) guidance, from their Lord, and it is these who will prosper.

**C29.** Prosperity must be taken as referring to all the kinds of bounty which we discussed in the [note 2:3](#) above.

The right use of one kind leads to an increase in that and other kinds, and that is prosperity.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ...

6. As to those who reject Faith,

**C30. Kafara kufr, kafr,** and derivative forms of the word, imply a deliberate rejection of Faith as opposed to a mistaken idea of Allah or faith, which is not inconsistent with an earnest desire to see the truth. Where there is such desire, the grace and mercy of Allah gives guidance.

But that guidance is not efficacious when it is deliberately rejected and the possibility of rejection follows from the grant of free will.

The consequence of the rejection is that the spiritual faculties become dead or impervious to better influences.

See also [n. 93 to 2:88](#).

... سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أُنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٦)

it is the same to them whether thou warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe.

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِمْ ...

7. Allah hath set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing,

**C31.** All actions are referred to Allah. Therefore, when we get the penalty of our deliberate sin, and our senses become impervious to good, the penalty is referred to the justice of Allah.

... وَعَلَىٰ أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ...

and on their eyes is a veil;

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (٧)

great is the penalty they (incur).

**C32.** The penalty here is the opposite of the prosperity referred to in 2:5. As we go down the path of sin, our penalty gathers momentum, just as goodness brings its own capacity for greater goodness.

## Section 2

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ...

8. Of the people there are some who say:  
"We believe in Allah and the Last Day,"

**C33.** We now come to a third class of people, the hypocrites.

They are untrue to themselves, and therefore their hearts, they soon pass into the category of those who deliberately reject light.

... وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ (٨)

but they do not (really) believe.

يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

9. Fain would they deceive Allah and those who believe,

... وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٩)

but they only deceive themselves and realize (it) not!

فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا...

10. In their hearts is a disease; and Allah has increased their disease,

**C34.** The insincere man who thinks he can get the best of both worlds by compromising with good and evil only increased the disease of his heart, because he is not true to himself.

Even the good which comes to him he can pervert to evil. So the rain which fills out the ear of corn or lends fragrance to the rose also lends strength to the thorn or adds strength to the poison of the deadly nightshade.

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ (١٠)

and grievous is the penalty they (incur), because they are false (to themselves).

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ ...

11. When it is said to them: "Make not mischief on the earth,"

... قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ (١١)

they say: "Why, we only want to make peace!"

أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِن لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ (١٢)

12. Of a surety, they are the ones who make mischief, but they realize (it) not.

**C35.** Much mischief is caused (sometimes unwittingly) by people who think that they have a mission of peace, when they have not even a true perception of right and wrong.

By their blind arrogance they depress the good and encourage the evil.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا كَمَا آمَنَ النَّاسُ ...

13. When it is said to them: "Believe as the others believe"



... قَالُوا أَنْوْمِنُ كَمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ ...

they say: "Shall we believe as the fools believe?" --

... أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (١٣)

say,

of a surety they are the fools but they do not know.

**C36.** This is another phase of the hypocrite and the cynic.

"Faith" he says, "is good enough to fools."

But his cynicism may be the greatest folly in the eyes of Allah.

وَإِذَا لَفُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا...

14. When they meet those who believe, they say: "We believe,"

**C37.** A deeper phase of insincerity is actual duplicity. But it never pays in the end. If we compare such a man to a trader, he loses in the bargain.

... وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيَاطِينِهِمْ قَالُوا ...

but when they are alone with their evil ones, they say:

... إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِؤُونَ (١٤)

"We are really with you, we (were) only jesting."

... اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ ...

15. Allah will throw back their mockery on them,

... وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ (١٥)

and give them rope in their trespasses; so they will wander like blind ones (to and fro).

... أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ...

16. These are they who have bartered guidance for error:

... فَمَا رَبِحَتْ تَجَارُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ (١٦)

but their traffic is profitless, and they have lost true direction.

... مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْفَدَ نَارًا ...

17. Their similitude is that of a man who kindled a fire;

**C38.** The man wanted light; he only kindled a fire. It produced a blaze, and won the applause of all around. But it did not last long. When the flame when out as was inevitable, the darkness was worse than before. And they all lost their way.

So hypocrisy, deception, arrogant compromise with evil, cynicism, or duplicity may win temporary applause. But the true light of faith and sincerity is wanting, and therefore it must mislead and ruin all concerned. In the consternation they cannot speak or hear each other, and of course they cannot see; so they end like the deliberate rejecters of Faith (2:7), wildly groping about, dumb, deaf and blind.

... فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ...

when it lighted all around him, Allah took away their light

... وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ (١٧)

and left them in utter darkness, so they could not see.

صُمُّ بَعْضِكُمْ عَمِّي فُهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ (١٨)

18. Deaf, dumb, and blind, they will not return (to the path).

أَوْ كَصَيِّبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ...

19. Or (another similitude) is that of a rain-laden cloud from the sky; in it are zones of darkness, and thunder and lightning,

**C39.** A wonderfully graphic and powerful simile applying to those who reject Faith. In their self-sufficiency they are undisturbed normally.

But what happens when a great storm breaks over them?

They cover their ears against thunder-clasps and the lightning nearly blinds them. They are in mortal fear, but Allah encompasses them around - even them, for He at all times encompasses all.

He give them rope. In the intervals of deafening noise and blinding flashes, there are moments of steady light and these creatures take advantage of them, but again they are plunged into darkness.

Perhaps they curse; perhaps they think that the few moments of effective light are due to their own intelligence!

How much wiser would they be if they humbled themselves and sought the light of Allah!

... يَجْعَلُونَ أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ مِّنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ حُدُورَ الْمَوْتِ ...

they press their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunder-clap, the while they are in terror of death.

... وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ (١٩)

But Allah is ever round the rejecters of Faith!

يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَارَهُمْ ...

20. The lightning all but snatches away their sight;

... كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَّشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا ...

every time the light (helps) them, they walk therein, and when the darkness grows on them, they stand still.

... وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ ...

And if Allah willed, He could take away their faculty of hearing and seeing;

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٢٠)

for Allah hath power over all things.

### Section 3

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ...

21. O ye people!

... اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (٢١)

adore your Guardian-Lord, who created you and those who came before you, that ye may become igtheous.

**C40.** For **Taqwa** see [2:2 n. 26](#).

I connect this dependent clause with "adore, etc." above, though it could be connected with "created".

According to my construction the argument will be as follows.

Adoration is the act of the highest and humblest reverence and worship. When you get into that relationship with Allah, Who is your Creator and Guardian, your faith produces works of righteousness.

It is a chance given you: will you exercise your free will and take it? If you do, your whole nature will be transformed.

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ الْأَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً...

22. Who has made the earth your couch, and the heaven your canopy; and sent down rain from the heavens;

... فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ...

and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance;

... فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أُندَادًا وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٢٢)

then set not up rivals unto Allah when ye know (the truth).

**C41.** Further proofs of Allah's goodness to you are given in this verse. Your whole life, physical and spiritual, depends upon Him. The spiritual is figured by the Canopy of Heaven.

The truth has been brought plainly before you. Will you still resist it and go after false gods, the creation of your own fancy?

The false gods may be idols, superstitions, Self, or even great or glorious things like Poetry, Art, or Science, when set up as rivals to Allah. They may be pride of race, pride of birth, pride of wealth or position, pride of power, pride of learning, or even spiritual pride.

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ...

23. And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Surah like thereunto;

... وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٢٣)

and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides Allah, if your (doubts) are true.

**C42.** How do we know that there is revelation, and that is from Allah?

Here is a concrete test.

The Teacher of Allah's Truth has placed before you many Surahs. Can you produce one like it?

If there is any one besides Allah, who can inspire spiritual truth in such noble language, produce your evidence.

Or is it that your doubts are merely argumentative, refractory, against your own inner light, or conscience?

All true revelation is itself a miracle, and stands on its own merits.

فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْتُوا نَارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ ...

24. But if ye cannot,- and of a surety ye cannot,- then fear the fire whose fuel is Men and Stones-

**C43.** According to commentators the "Stones" mentioned in this verse refer to the idols which the polytheists worshipped. Thus, far from coming to the aid of their worshippers, the false gods would be means of aggravating their torment. [Eds].

... أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ (٢٤)

which is prepared for those who reject Faith.

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ...

25. But give glad tidings to those who believe and work righteousness,

... أَنْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ...

that their portion is Gardens, beneath which rivers flow.

... كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا ...

Every time they are fed with fruits therefrom, they say:

... هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ ...

"Why, this is what we were fed with before,"

... وَأَنْوَأَ بِهِ مِمَّنَّابِهَأ ...

for they are given things in similitude;

... وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ ...

and they have therein companions (pure and holy);

**C44.** What can be more delightful than a Garden where you observe from a picturesque height a beautiful landscape round you, - rivers flowing with crystal water, and fruit tree of which the choicest fruit is before you.

The fruit of goodness is goodness, similar, but choicer in every degree of ascent. You think it is the same, but it is because of your past experiences and associations of memory. (R).

... وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٢٥)

and they abide therein (for ever).

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا...

26. Allah disdains not to use the similitude of things, lowest as well as highest.

**C45.** The word for "the lowest" in the original Arabic means a gnat, a byword in the Arabic language for the weakest of creatures.

In 29:41, which was revealed before this Surah, the similitude of the Spider was used, and similarly in 22:73,

there is the similitude of the Fly. For similitudes taken from magnificent forces of nature, expressed in exalted language, see [2:19 above](#).

To Allah all His creation has some special meaning appropriate to itself, and some of what we consider the lowest creatures have wonderful aptitudes, e.g., the spider or the fly.

Parables like these may be an occasion of stumbling to those "who forsake the path"; in other words those who deliberately shut their eyes to Allah's Signs, and their Penalty is attributed to Allah, the Cause of all causes.

But lest there should be misunderstanding, it is immediately added that the stumbling and offence only occur as the result of the sinner's own choice of the wrong course. Verses 26 and 27 form one sentence and should be read together.

"Forsaking the path" is defined in [2:27](#), viz.,

breaking solemn covenants which the sinner's own soul had ratified, causing division among mankind, who were meant to be one brotherhood, and doing as much mischief as possible in the life on this earth, for the life beyond will be on another plane, where no rope will be given to evil.

The mention of Covenant ([2:27](#)) has a particular and a general signification.

The particular one has reference to the Jewish tradition that a Covenant was entered into with "Father Abraham" that in return for Allah's favours the seed of Abraham would serve Allah faithfully. But as a matter of fact a great part of Abraham's progeny were in constant spiritual rebellion against Allah, as is testified by their own Prophets and Preachers and by Muhammad Mustafa.

The general signification is that a similar Covenant is entered into by every creature of Allah: for Allah's loving care, we at least owe Him the fullest gratitude and willing obedience.

The sinner, before the darkness his own conscience, knows this, and yet he not only "forsakes the path" but

resists the Grace of Allah which comes to save him. That is why his case becomes hopeless. But the loss is his own. He cannot spoil Allah's design.

The good man is glad to retrace his steps from any lapses of which may have been guilty, and in his case Allah's Message reclaims him with complete understanding. (R).

... فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ...

Those who believe know that it is truth from their Lord;

... وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَذَا مَثَلًا...

but those who reject Faith say: "What means Allah by this similitude?"

... يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا...

By it He causes many to stray, and many He leads into the right path,

... وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ (٢٦)

but He causes not to stray, except those who forsake (the path).

الَّذِينَ يَنْفُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ  
يُوصَلَ...

27. Those who break Allah's Covenant after it is ratified, and who sunder what Allah has ordered to be joined,

... وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٢٧)

and do mischief on earth: These cause loss (only) to themselves.

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ ...

28. How can ye reject the faith in Allah?

**C46.** In the preceding verses Allah has used various arguments.

- He has recalled His goodness (2:21-22);
- resolved doubts (2:23);
- plainly set forth the penalty of wrong-doing (2:24);



- given glad tidings (2:25);
- shown how misunderstandings arise from a deliberate rejection of the light and breach of the Covenant (2:26-27).

Now (2:28-29) He pleads with His creatures and appeals to their own subjective feelings.

- He brought you into being.
- The mysteries of life and death are in His hands.
- When you die on this earth, that is not the end. You were of Him, and you must return to Him.
- Look around you and realize your own dignity; it is from Him.

The immeasurable depths of space above and around you may stagger you. They are part of His plan. What you have imagined as the seven firmaments (and any other scheme you may construct) bears witness to His design of order and perfection, for His knowledge (unlike yours) is all- comprehending.

And yet will you deliberately reject or obscure or deaden the faculty of Faith which has been put into you?

... وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ...

Seeing that ye were without life, and He gave you life;

... ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٢٨)

then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will ye return.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا...

29. It is He who hath created for you all things that are on earth;

... ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ...

moreover His design comprehended the heavens, for He gave order and perfection to the seven firmaments;

... وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٢٩)

and of all things he hath perfect knowledge.

## C.45 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(2:30-39)

*Yet man! What wonderful destiny  
Is thine! Created to be  
al' viceregent on earth!  
Yet beguiled by evil! Set for a season  
On this earth on probation  
To purge thy stain, with the promise  
Of guidance and hope from on high,  
From the Oft-Returning, Merciful!  
Wilt thou choose right and regain  
Thy spiritual home with Allah?*

### Section 4

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ...

30. Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth."

... قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ ...

They said, "Wilt thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?"

... وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ...

Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?"

... قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٣٠)

He said: "I know what ye know not."

**C47.** It would seem that the angels, though holy and pure, and endued with power from Allah, yet represented only one side of Creation. We may imagine them without passion or emotion, of which the highest flower is love.

If man was to be endued with emotions, those emotions would lead him to the highest and drag him to the lowest.

The power of will or choosing would have to go with them, in order that man might steer his own bark. This power of will (when used aright) gave him to some extent a mastery over his own fortunes and over nature, thus bringing him nearer to the God-like nature which has supreme mastery and will.

We may suppose the angels had no independent wills of their own; their perfection in other ways reflected Allah's perfection but could not raise them to the dignity of vicegerency.

The perfect vicegerent is he who has the power of initiative himself, but whose independent action always reflects perfectly the will of his Principal.

The distinction is expressed by Shakespeare (Sonnet 94) in those fine lines:

"They are the lords and owners of their faces.

Others but stewards of their excellence."

The angels in their one-sidedness saw only the mischief consequent on the misuse of the emotional nature by man; perhaps they also, being without emotions, did not understand the whole of Allah's nature, which gives and asks for love. In humility and true devotion to Allah, they remonstrate; we must not imagine the least tinge of jealousy, as they are without emotion.

This mystery of love being above them, they are told that they do not know and they acknowledge ([in 2:32 below](#)) not their fault (for there is no question of fault) but their imperfection of knowledge. At the same time, the matter is brought home to them when the actual capacities of man are shown to them ([2:31, 33](#)).

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ...

31. And He taught Adam the names of all things;

**C48. "The names of things":** according to commentators means the inner nature and qualities of things, and things here would include feelings.

The particular qualities or feelings which were outside the nature of angels were put by Allah into the nature of man. Man was thus able to love and understand love, and thus plan and initiate, as becomes the office of vicegerent.

The angels acknowledged this. These things they could only know from the outside, but they had faith, or belief in the Unseen. And they knew that Allah saw all - what others see, what others do not see, what others may even wish to conceal.

Man has many qualities which are latent or which he may wish to suppress or conceal, to his own detriment. (R).

... ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ...

then He placed them before the angels,

... فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٣١)

and said: "Tell Me the nature of these if ye are right."

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ (٣٢)

32. They said:

"Glory to Thee, of knowledge we have none, save that Thou hast taught us:

in truth it is Thou who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom."

قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ ...

33. He said: "O Adam! tell them their natures."

فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ ...

When he had told them, Allah said:

... أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

"Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth,

... وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ (٣٣)

and I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal?"

وإذ قلنا للملائكة اسجدوا لآدم ...

34. And behold, We said to the angels: "Bow down to Adam;"

... فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ ...

and they bowed down, not so Iblis,

**C49.** The Arabic may also be translated: "They bowed down, except Iblis."

In that case Iblis (Satan) would be one of the angels.

But the theory of fallen angels is not usually accepted in Muslim theology. In 18:50 Iblis is spoken of as a Jinn.

We shall discuss later the meaning of this word. (R).

.... أَبِي وَاسْتَكْبَرَ ...

he refused and was haughty,

... وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٣٤)

he was of those who reject Faith.

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ ...

35. We said:

"O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden,

**C50.** Was the Garden of Eden a place on this earth?

Obviously not. For, in [verse 36 below](#), it was after the Fall that the sentence was pronounced: "On earth will be your dwelling."

Before the Fall, we must suppose Man to be on another plane altogether - of felicity, innocence, trust, a spiritual existence, with the negation of enmity, want of faith, and all evil. (R).

... وَكُلًّا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا ...

and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will,

... وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٣٥)

but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression."

**C51. "Zulm"** in Arabic implies harm, wrong, injustice, or transgression, and may have reference to oneself;

when the wrong is done to others it implies tyranny and oppression;

the idea of wrong naturally connects itself with darkness, which is another shade of meaning carried with the root word.

فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ...

36. Then did Satan make them slip from the (garden), and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been.

**C52.** The word "Iblis" in the verse 34 above is derived from the root idea of desperateness or rebellion whereas "Satan" conveys the idea of perversity or enmity.

Note the appropriateness of the term on each occasion.

Also, "slipping" from the Garden denotes the idea of Evil gradually tempting man from a higher to a lower state. (R).

... وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ...

We said:

"Get ye down, all (ye people), with enmity between yourselves.

**C53.** Allah's decree is the result of man's action.

Note the transition in Arabic from the singular number in 2:33, to the dual in 2:35, and the plural here, which I have indicated in English by "All ye people."

Evidently Adam is the type of all mankind, and the sexes go together in all spiritual matters. Moreover, the expulsion applied to Adam, Eve, and Satan, and the Arabic plural is appropriate for any number greater for any number greater than two.

... وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ (٣٦)

On earth will be your dwelling place and your means of livelihood for a time."

**C54.** Man's sojourn in this lower state, where he is partly an animal of this earth, is for a time.

But he must fulfil his lower duties also, for they too are a part of his spiritual training.

فَتَلَقَّى آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ...

37. Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of inspiration, and his Lord turned toward him;

**C55.** As "names" in verse 31 above is used for the "nature of things", so "**words**" here mean "inspiration" "spiritual knowledge".

The Arabic word used for "**learn**" here implies some effort on his part to which Allah's Grace responded.

The Arabic word for "Repentance" (Tawbah) means "turning" and the intensive word (tawwwab) for Allah's forgiveness (Oft-Returning" or "Ever-Returning") is from the same root.

For repentance, three things are necessary:

- the sinner must acknowledge his wrong;
- he must give it up; and
- he must resolve to eschew it for the future.

Man's nature is weak, and he may have to return again and again for mercy. So long as he does it sincerely, Allah is Oft-returning, Most Merciful. For His grace helps out the sinner's shortcomings.

... إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ (٣٧)

for He is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا...

38. We said:

"Get ye down all from here;

... فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى ...

and if, as is sure, there comes to you guidance from Me,

**C56.** Note the transition from the plural "We" at the beginning of the verse to the singular "Me" later in the same verse.

Allah speaks of Himself usually in the first person plural "We"; it is the plural of respect and honour and is used in human language in Royal proclamations and decrees. But where a special personal relationship is expressed the singular, "I" or "Me" is used. Cf. 26:52, etc.

In spite of Man's fall, and in consequence of it, assurance of guidance is given. In case man follows the guidance he is free from any fear for the present or the future, and any grief or sorrow for the past. The soul thus freed grows nearer to Allah.

...فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٣٨)

whosoever follows My guidance on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ...

39. "But those who reject Faith and belie Our Signs, they shall be Companions of the Fire;

... هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٣٩)

they shall abide therein."

**C57.** As their rejection of faith was deliberate and definite, so the consequences must be of an abiding character. (R).



## C.46 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(2:40-86)

*Amongst men what nation had higher chances  
In the realm of the Spirit than the Children of Israel?  
But again and again did they fail in the Spirit.  
They rebelled against Moses and murmured  
In the wilderness; the Prophets they slew  
And the Signs they rejected; they falsified  
Scripture and turned their back on righteousness.*

### Section 5

... يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ...

40. O children of Israel!

... اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِي الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ ...

call to mind the (special) favor which I bestowed upon you,

... وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِي أُوفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُون (٤٠)

and fulfil your Covenant with Me as I fulfil My Covenant with you  
and fear none but Me.

**C58.** The appeal is made to Israel subjectively in terms  
of their own tradition.

You claim to be a favoured nation; have you forgotten  
My favours?

You claim a special **Covenant** with Me: I have fulfilled My  
part of the **Covenant** by bringing you out of the land of  
bondage and giving you Canaan, the land "flowing with  
milk and honey" how have you fulfilled your part of the  
Covenant?

Do you fear for your national existence?

If you fear Me, nothing else will matter.

وَأْمِنُوا بِمَا أُنزِلَتْ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَكُمْ ...

41. And believe in what I reveal, confirming the revelation which is with you,

**C59.** You receive revelations before: now comes one confirming it: its first appeal should be to you: are you to be the first to reject it?

And reject it for what?

Allah's Signs are worth more than all your paltry considerations. And the standard of duty and righteousness is to be taken from Allah, and not from priests and customs.

... وَلَا تَكُونُوا أُولَٰ كَافِرٍ بِهِ...

and be not the first to reject faith therein,

... وَلَا تَسْتُرُوا بِآيَاتِي تَمَنَّا قَلِيلًا وَإِيَّايَ فَاتَّقُونَ (٤١)

nor sell My Signs for a small price: and fear Me, and Me alone.

وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٤٢)

42. And cover not Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth when ye know (what it is).

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ (٤٣)

43. And be steadfast in prayer; practice regular charity; and bow down your heads with those who bow down (in worship).

**C60.** The argument is still primarily addressed to the Jews, but is of universal application, as in all the teachings of the Quran.

The chief feature of Jewish worship was and is the bowing of the head.

... أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ نَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ ...

44. Do ye enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (to practice it) yourselves, and yet ye study the Scripture?

... أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (٤٤)

Will ye not understand?

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ...

45. Nay, seek (Allah's) help with patient perseverance and prayer:

**C61.** The Arabic word **Sabr** implies many shades of meaning, which it is impossible to comprehend in one English word.

It implies;

1. patience in the sense of being thorough, not hasty;
2. patient perseverance, constancy, steadfastness, firmness of purpose;
3. systematic as opposed to spasmodic or chance action;
4. a cheerful attitude of resignation and understanding in sorrow, defeat, or suffering, as opposed to murmuring or rebellion, but saved from mere passivity or listlessness, by the element of constancy or steadfastness.

... وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ (٤٥)

it is indeed hard, except to those who bring a lowly spirit.

الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ (٤٦)

46. Who bear in mind the certainty that they are to meet their Lord, and that they are to return to Him.

## Section 6

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ...

47. O children of Israel!

... اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ ...

call to mind the (special) favor which I bestowed upon You,

**C62.** These words are recapitulated from 2:40, which introduced a general account of Allah's favours to Israel; now we are introduced to a particular account of incidents in Israel's history.

Each incident is introduced by the Arabic word "Iah", which is indicated in the translation by "Remember".

... وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (٤٧)

and that I preferred you to all others (for My message).

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَّا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا...

48. Then guard yourselves against a day when one soul shall not avail another

... وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ ...

nor shall intercession be accepted for her,

... وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ ...

nor shall compensation be taken from her,

... وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ (٤٨)

nor shall anyone be helped (from outside).

**C63.** Before passing to particular incidents, the conclusions is stated.

Be on your guard; do not think that special favours exempt you from the personal responsibility of each soul.

وَأِذْ نَجَّيْنَاكُمْ مِّنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ ...

49. And remember, We delivered you from the people of Pharaoh:

... يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ ...

they set you hard tasks and punishments,

... يُدَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ ...

slaughtered your sons and let your womenfolk live;

**C64.** The bondage of Egypt was indeed a tremendous trial. Even the Egyptians' wish to spare the lives of Israel's females when the males were slaughtered, added to the bitterness of Israel. Their hatred was cruel, but their "love" was still more cruel.

About the hard tasks, see Exod, 1:14:

"They made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field; all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour."

Pharaoh's taskmasters gave no straw, yet ordered the Israelites to make bricks without straw: Exod. 5:5-19.

Pharaoh's decree was:

"Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive": Exod. 1:22.

It was in consequence of this decree that Moses was hidden three months after he was born, and when he could be hidden no longer, he was put into an ark of bulrushes and cast into the Nile, where he was found by Pharaoh's daughter and wife (28:9), and adopted into the family: Exod. 2:2-10.

Cf. 20:37-40.

Thus Moses was brought up by the enemies of his people. He was chosen by Allah to deliver his people, and Allah's wisdom made the learning and experience and even cruelties of the Egyptian enemies themselves to contribute to the salvation of his people.

... وَفِي ذَلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ (٤٩)

therein was a tremendous trial from your Lord.

وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمُ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ...

50. And remember We divided the sea for you and saved you and drowned Pharaoh's people

... وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ (٥٠)

within your very sight.

**C65.** When the Israelites at last escaped from Egypt, they were pursued by Pharaoh and his host. By a miracle the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, but the host of Pharaoh was drowned: Exod. 14:5-31.

وَأَدَّبْنَا مُوسَىٰ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ..

51. And remember We appointed forty nights for Moses,

**C66.** This was after the Ten Commandments and the Laws and Ordinances had been given on Mount Sinai:

Moses was asked up into the Mount, and he was there forty days and forty nights: Exod. 24:18.

But the people got impatient of the delay, made a calf of melted gold, and offered worship and sacrifice to it: Exod. 32:1-8.

... ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ...

and in his absence you took the calf (for worship),

... وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ (٥١)

and ye did grievous wrong.

ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنْكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ...

52. Even then We did forgive you;

**C67.** Moses prayed for his people, and Allah forgave them. This is the language of the Quran.

The Old Testament version is rougher:

"The Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people": Exod. 32:14.

The Muslim position has always been that the Jewish (and Christian) scriptures as they stand cannot be traced direct to Moses or Jesus, but are later compilations. Modern scholarship and Higher Criticism has left no doubt on the subject. But the stories in these traditional books may be used in an appeal to those who use them: only they should be spiritualized, as they are here, and especially in [2:54](#) below.

... ذَلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (٥٢)

there was a chance for you to be grateful.

وَأَذِ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ ...

53. And remember We gave Moses the Scripture and the criterion (between right and wrong),

**C68.** Allah's revelation, the expression of Allah's Will, is the true standard of right and wrong. It may be in a Book or in Allah's dealings in history. All these may be called His Signs or Miracles.

In this passage some commentators take the Scripture and the Criterion (Furqan) to be identical.

Others take them to be two distinct things:

- Scripture being the written Book and
- the Criterion being other Signs.

I agree with the latter view.

The word Furqan also occurs in 21:48 in connection with Moses and Aaron and in the first verse of Surah 25, as well as in its title, in connection with Muhammad.

As Aaron received no Book, Furqan must mean the other Signs.

Mustafa had both the Book and the other Signs: perhaps here too we take the other Signs as supplementing the Book.

Cf. Words worth's "Arbiter undisturbed of right and wrong." (Prelude, Book 4)

... لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ (٥٣)

there was a chance for you to be guided aright.

وَأَذِ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ ...

54. And remember Moses said to his people:

... يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّمَا ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعِجْلِ ...

"O my people! Ye have indeed wronged yourselves by your worship of the calf,

... فَتَوْبُوا إِلَىٰ بَارِيكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ...

so turn (in repentance) to your Maker, and slay yourselves (the wrongdoers);

**C69.** Moses' speech may be construed literally, as translated, in which case it reproduces Exod. 32:27-28 but in a much softened form, for the Old Testament says:

"Go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor... and there fell of the people that day 3,000 men." (R).

... ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ عِنْدَ بَارِيكُمْ ...

that will be better for you in the sight of your Maker."

the word here translated Maker (Bari) has also in it a touch of the root-meaning of "liberator"-an apt word as referring to the Israelites, who had just been liberated from bondage in Egypt.

... فَتَّابَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ (٥٤)

Then He turned toward you (in forgiveness);

for He is Oft-returning, Most Merciful.

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ ...

55. And remember ye said:

**C70.** We have hitherto had instances from the Jewish traditional Tawrah (or Pentateuch). Now we have some instances from Jewish traditions in the Talmud, or body of exposition in the Jewish theological schools.

They are based on the Jewish scriptures, but add many marvelous details and homilies.

As to seeing Allah, we have in Exod. 33:20:

"And He said "Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me and live."

The punishment for insisting on seeing Allah was therefore death; but those who rejected faith were forgiven, and yet they were ungrateful.



... يَا مُوسَىٰ لِنُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ نَرَىٰ اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً...

"O Moses! we shall never believe in thee until we see Allah manifestly,"

... فَأَخَذْتُمْ الصَّاعِقَةَ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ (٥٥)

but ye were dazed with thunder and lightning even as ye looked on.

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكُم مِّن بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (٥٦)

56. Then We raised you up after your death; ye had the chance to be grateful.

وَوَضَعْنَا عَيْنَيْكُمُ الْعِمَامَ وَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّاءَ وَالسَّلْوَىٰ...

57. And We gave you the shade of clouds and sent down to you manna and quails,

**C71. Manna:** Hebrew, Manhu: Arabic Mahuwa? -

What is it?

In Exod. 16:14 it is described as

"a small round thing as small as the hoar frost on the ground."

It usually rotted if left over till next day; it melted in the hot sun; the amount necessary for each man was about an Omer, a Hebrew measure of capacity equal to about 2 quarts. This is the Hebrew account, probably distorted by traditional exaggeration.

The actual Manna found to this day in the Sinai region is a gummy saccharine secretion found on a species of Tamarisk. It is produced by the puncture of a species of insect like the cochineal, just as lac is produced by the puncture of the lac insect on certain trees in India.

As to **quails**, large flights of them are driven by winds in the Eastern Mediterranean in certain seasons of the year, as was witnessed during the Great War of 1914-1918. (R).

... كَلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ...

saying: "Eat of the good things We have provided for you;"

... وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ (٥٧)

(but they rebelled); to Us they did no harm, but they harmed their own souls.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ ...

58. And remember We said:

"Enter this town,

**C72.** This probably refers to Shittim.

It was the "town of acacias," just east of the Jordan, where the Israelites were guilty of debauchery and the worship of and sacrifice to false gods (Num. 25:1-2, also 8-9); a terrible punishment ensued, including the plague of which 24,000 died.

The word which the transgressors changed may have been a pass-word. In the Arabic text it is "Hittatun" which implies humility and a prayer of forgiveness, a fitting emblem to distinguish them from their enemies.

From this particular incident a more general lesson may be drawn;

- in the hour of triumph we are to behave humbly as in Allah's sight, and our conduct should be exemplary according to Allah's word; otherwise our arrogance will draw its own punishment.

These verses 58-59, may be compared with 7:161-162. There are two verbal differences.

Here (2:58) we have "enter the town" and in 7:161 we have "dwell in this town."

Again in 2:2:59 here we have "infringed (Our command)," and in 7:162, we have "transgressed."

The verbal differences make no difference to the sense.

... فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا ...

and eat of the plenty therein as ye wish;

... وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا حِطَّةً نَعْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطَايَاكُمْ ...

but enter the gate with humility, in posture and in words, and We shall forgive you your faults

... وَسَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٥٨)

and increase (the portion of) those who do good."

... فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ ...

59. But the transgressors changed the word from that which had been given them;

... فَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ (٥٩)

so We sent on the transgressors a plague from heaven, for that they infringed (our command) repeatedly.

## Section 7

وَإِذِ اسْتَسْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ ...

60. And remember Moses prayed for water for his people;

... فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ ...

We said: "Strike the rock with thy staff."

... فَأَنْفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَا عَشَرَ عَيْنًا ...

Then gushed forth therefrom twelve springs.

... فَدَّ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ ...

Each group knew its own place for water.

**C73.** Here we have a reference to the tribal organization of the Jews, which played a great part in their forty years' march through the Arabian deserts (Num. 1 and 2) and their subsequent settlement in the land of Canaan (Josh 13 and 14).

The twelve tribes were derived from the sons of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel (soldier of Allah) after he had wrestled, says Jewish tradition, with Allah (Genesis 32:28).

Israel had twelve sons (Gen. 35:22-26), including Levi and Joseph. The descendants of these twelve sons were the "Children of Israel."

Levi's family got the priesthood and the care of the Tabernacle; they were exempted from military duties for which the census was taken (Num. 1:47-53), and therefore from the distribution of Land in Canaan (Josh. 14:3); they were distributed among all the Tribes, and were really a privileged caste and not numbered among the Tribes;

Moses and Aaron belonged to the house of Levi. On the other hand Joseph, on account of the high position to which he rose in Egypt as the Pharaoh's minister, was the progenitor of two tribes, one in the name of each of his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh. Thus there were twelve Tribes in all, as Levi was cut out and Joseph represented two tribes.

Their having fixed stations and watering places in camp and fixed territorial areas later in the Promised Land prevented confusion and mutual jealousies and is pointed to as an evidence of the Providence of Allah acting through His prophet Moses. Cf. also 7:160.

The gushing of twelve springs from a rock evidently refers to a local tradition well known to Jews and Arabs in Al Mustafa's time. Near Horeb close to Mount Sinai, where the Law was given to Moses, is a huge mass of red granite, twelve-feet high and about fifty feet in circumference, where European travelers (e.g. Breydenbach in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century after Christ saw abundant springs of water twelve in number (see Sale's notes on this passage). It existed in Al Mustafa's time and may still exist to the present day. For anything we know to the contrary. The Jewish tradition would be based on Exod, 17:6:

Thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it that the people may drink.

The story is used as a parable, as is clear from the latter part of the verse. In the desolation and among the rocks of this life people grumble. But they will not be left starving or thirsts of spiritual life. Allah's Messenger can provide abundant spiritual sustenance even from such unpromising things as the hard rocks of life. And all the nations can be grouped round it, each different, yet each in perfect order and discipline.

We are to use with gratitude all spiritual food and drink provided by Allah, and He sometimes provides from unexpected places. We must restrain ourselves from mischief, pride and every kind of evil, for our higher life is based on our probation on this very earth.

... كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا مِنْ رِزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ (٦٠)

So eat and drink of the sustenance provided by Allah and do no evil nor mischief on the (face of the) earth.

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ ...

61. And remember ye said:

... يَا مُوسَىٰ لِنَاصِبٍ عَلَيَّ طَعَامٍ وَاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ ...

"O Moses!

we cannot endure one kind of food (always); so beseech thy Lord for us

... يُخْرِجُ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَآئِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِيهَا وَبَصَلِهَا ...

to produce for us of what the earth groweth, its pot-herbs, and cucumbers, its garlic, lentils, and onions."

... قَالَ أَتَسْتَبْدِلُونَ الَّذِي هُوَ أَدْنَىٰ بِالَّذِي هُوَ خَيْرٌ ...

He said: "Will ye exchange the better for the worse?"

... اهبطوا مصرأ قَيْنَ لَكُمْ مَا سَأَلْتُمْ ...

Go ye down to any town, and ye shall find what ye want!"

**C74.** The declension of the word **Misr** in the Arabic text here shows that it is treated as a common noun meaning any town, but this is not conclusive, and the reference may be to the Egypt of Pharaoh.

The *Tanwin* expressing indefiniteness may mean "any Egypt", i.e., any country as fertile as Egypt. There is here a subtle reminiscence as well as a severe reproach.

The rebellious children of Israel murmured at the sameness of the food they got in the desert. They were evidently hankering after the delicacies of the Egypt which they had left, although they should have known that the only thing certain for them in Egypt was their bondage and harsh treatment.

Moses' reproach to them was twofold:

1. Such variety of foods you can get in any town;  
would you, for their sake, sell your freedom?

Is not freedom better than delicate food?

2. In front is the rich Promised Land, which you are reluctant to march to; behind is Egypt, the land of bondage.

Which is better?

Would you exchange the better for the worse?

... وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلَّةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَآؤُوا بِغَضَبِ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ...

They were covered with humiliation and misery; they drew on themselves the wrath of Allah.

**C75.** From here the argument becomes more general.

They got the Promised Land. But they continued to rebel against Allah. And their humiliation and misery became a national disaster. They were carried in captivity to Assyria. They were restored under the Persians, but still remained under the Persian yoke, and they were under the yoke of the Greeks, the Romans, and Arabs. They

were scattered all over the earth, and have been a wandering people ever since, because they rejected faith, slew Allah's messengers and went on transgressing.

The slaying of the Prophets begins with the murder of Abel, who was in the ancestry of Israel. The elder sons of Jacob attempted the murder of Joseph when they dropped him into the well, and if he was afterwards rescued by strangers, their blood guilt was none the less. In later history they attempted to slay Jesus, in as much as they got the Roman Governor to crucify one in his likeness, and they attempted to take the life of Mustafa.

But the moral goes wider than the Children of Israel. It applies to all nations and all individuals. If they are stiff-necked, if they set a greater value on perishable goods than on freedom and eternal salvation, if they break the law of Allah and resist His grace, their portion must be humiliation and misery in the spiritual world and probably even on this earth if a long view is taken.

... ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّينَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ...

This because they went on rejecting the signs of Allah and slaying His messengers without just cause.

... ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ (٦١)

This because they rebelled and went on transgressing.

## Section 8

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ ...

62. Those who believe (in the Qur'án) and those who follow the Jewish (Scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians,

**C76.** Latest researches have revealed a small remnant of a religious community numbering about 2,000 souls in Lower Iraq, near Basra.

In Arabic they are called Subbi (plural Subba). They are also called Sabians and Nasoraean; or Mandaean, or Christians of St. John.

They claim to be Gnostics, of Knowers of the Great Life. They dress in white, and believe in frequent immersions in water. Their Book Ginza is in a dialect of Aramaic. They have theories of Darkness and Light as in Zoroastrianism. They use the name Yordan (Jordan) for any river. They live in peace and harmony among their Muslim neighbors. They resemble the Sabi'un mentioned in the Quran but are not probably identical with them.

The pseudo-Sabians of Harran, who attracted the attention of Khalifah Ma'mun al Rashid in 830 A.C. by their long hair and peculiar dress probably adopted the name as it was mentioned in the Quran, in order to claim the privileges of the People of the Book. They were Syrian Star-worshippers with Hellenistic tendencies, like the Jews contemporary with Jesus.

There was another people called the Sabaens, who played an important part in the history of early Arabia, and are known through their inscriptions in an alphabet allied to the Phoenician and Babylonian. They had a flourishing kingdom in the Yemen tract in South Arabia about 800-700 B.C., though their origin may have been in North Arabia. They worshipped the planets and stars (Moon, Sun, Venus). Probably the Queen of Sheba is connected with them. They succumbed to Abyssinia about 350 A.C. and to Persia about 579 A.C. Their capital was near San'a. They had beautiful stone buildings, in which the pointed arch is noticeable.

Cf. 5:69 and n. 779.

(See Encyclopedia Britannica, on Sabaeans). (R).

... مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ...

and who believe in Allah and the last day, and work righteous, shall have their reward with their Lord;

... وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٦٢)

on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

**C77.** Cf. 2:38, where the same phrase occurs. And it recurs again and again afterwards.



The point of the verse is that Islam does not teach an exclusive doctrine, and is not meant exclusively for one people. The Jews claimed this for themselves, and the Christians in their own origin were a sect of the Jews.

Even the modern organized Christian churches, though they have been, consciously or unconsciously, influenced by the Time-spirit, including the historical fact of Islam, yet cling to the idea of Vicarious Atonement, which means that all who do not believe in it or who lived previously to the death of Christ are at a disadvantage spiritually before the Throne of Allah.

The attitude of Islam is entirely different. Islam existed before the preaching of Muhammad on this earth: the Quran expressly calls Abraham a Muslim (3:67). Its teaching (submission to Allah's will) has been and will be the teaching of Religion for all time and for all peoples.

وَأَذِّنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ ...

63. And remember We took your Covenant and We raised above you (the towering height) of Mount (Sinai)

**C78.** The Mountain of Sinai (Tur al Sinin) a prominent mountain in the Arabian desert, in the peninsula between the two arms of the Red Sea.

Here the Ten Commandments and the Law were given to Moses. Hence it is now called the Mountain of Moses (Jabal Musa).

The Israelites encamped at the foot of it for nearly a year. The Covenant was taken from them under many portents (Exod. 19:5,8,16,18), which are described in Jewish tradition in great detail.

Under thunder and lightening the mountain must indeed have appeared an awe-inspiring sight above to the Camp at its foot. And the people solemnly entered into the Covenant: all the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."

... خُدُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (٦٣)

(saying): "Hold firmly to what We have given you and bring (ever) to remembrance what is therein, perchance ye may fear Allah."

ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ...

64. But ye turned back thereafter,

... فَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَكُنْتُمْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٦٤)

had it not been for the Grace and Mercy of Allah to you, ye had surely been among the lost.

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَوْا مِنكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ ...

65. And well ye knew those amongst you who transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath;

... فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ (٦٥)

We said to them: "Be ye apes, despised and rejected."

**C79.** The punishment for breach of the Sabbath under the Mosaic law was death.

"Every one that defieth it (the Sabbath) shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people." (Exod. 31:14).

There must have been a Jewish tradition about a whole fishing community in a seaside town, which persisted in breaking the Sabbath and were turned into apes;

Cf. 7:163-166.

فَجَعَلْنَاهَا نَكَالًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا وَمَا خَلْفَهَا وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ (٦٦)

66. So We made it an example to their own time, and to their posterity, and a lesson to those who fear Allah.

وَاذْكَرُوا مَوْسَىٰ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُوا بَقْرَةً ...

67. And remember Moses said to his people: "Allah commands that ye sacrifice a heifer."

**C80.** This story or parable of the heifer in [2:67-71](#) should be read with the parable of the dead man brought to life in [2:72-73](#).

The stories were accepted in Jewish traditions, which are themselves based on certain sacrificial directions in the Old Testament. The heifer story of Jewish tradition is based on Num. 19:1-10, in which Moses and Aaron ordered the Israelites to sacrifice a red heifer without spot or blemish; her body was to be burnt and the ashes were to be kept for the purification of the congregation from sin.

The parable of the dead man we shall refer to later.

The lesson of the heifer parable is plain. Moses announced the sacrifice to the Israelites, and they treated it as jest. When Moses continued solemnly to ask for the sacrifice, they put him off on one pretext and another, asking a number of questions which they could have answered themselves if they had listened to Moses' directions.

Their questions were carping criticisms rather than the result of a desire for information. It was a mere thin presence that they were genuinely seeking for guidance. When at last they were driven into a corner, they made the sacrifice, but the will was wanting, which would have made the sacrifice efficacious for purification from sin.

The real reason for their prevarications was their guilty conscience, as we see in the parable of the dead man ([2:72-73](#)).

... قَالُوا أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُوًا ...

They said: "Makest thou a laughing-stock of us?"

... قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ (٦٧)

He said: "Allah save me from being an ignorant (fool)!"

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ ...

68. They said: "Beseech on our behalf thy Lord to make plain to us what (heifer) it is!

... قَالَ إِنَّهُ يُقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ لَّا قَارِضٌ وَلَا بَكْرٌ عَوَانٌ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ...

He said: "He says: The heifer should be neither too old nor too young, but of middling age;

... فَافْعَلُوا مَا تُؤْمَرُونَ (٦٨)

now do what ye are commanded!

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا لَوْنُهَا...

69. They said: "Beseech on our behalf thy Lord to make plain to us her color."

... قَالَ إِنَّهُ يُقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ صَفْرَاءُ فَاقِيعٌ لَوْنُهَا تَسْرُ النَّاطِرِينَ (٦٩)

He said: "He says, a fawn-colored heifer, pure and rich in tone, the admiration of beholders!"

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ إِنَّ الْبَقَرَ تَشَابَهَ عَلَيْنَا...

70. They said, "Beseech on our behalf thy Lord to make plain to us what she is, to us are all heifers alike;

... وَإِنَّا إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَمُهْتَدُونَ (٧٠)

we wish indeed for guidance, if Allah wills."

قَالَ إِنَّهُ يُقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ لَّا دَلُولٌ تُثِيرُ الْأَرْضَ وَلَا تَسْقِي الْحَرْثَ...

71. He said: "He says, a heifer not trained to till the soil or water the fields;

... مُسَلَّمَةٌ لَّا شِيَةَ فِيهَا...

sound and without blemish."

... قَالُوا الْآنَ حِجَّتَ بِالْحَقِّ ...

They said: "Now hast thou brought the truth."

... فَذَبَحُوهَا وَمَا كَادُوا يَفْعَلُونَ (٧١)

Then they offered her in sacrifice, but not with goodwill.

## Section 9

وَأَذِّنْكُمْ نَفْسًا فَاذَّارَ أَنْتُمْ فِيهَا ...

72. Remember ye slew a man and fell into a dispute among yourselves as to the crime,

**C81.** In Deut. 21:1-9 it is ordained that if the body of a slain man be found in field and the slayer is not known, a heifer shall be beheaded, and the elders of the city next to the slain man's domicile shall wash their hands over the heifer and say that they neither did the deed nor saw it done, thus clearing themselves from the blood-guilt.

The Jewish story based on this was that in a certain case of this kind, every one tried to clear himself of guilt and lay the blame at the door of others. In the first place they tried to prevaricate and prevent a heifer being slain as in the last parable. When she was slain, Allah by a miracle disclosed the real person. A portion of the sacrificed heifer was ordered to be placed on the corpse, which came to life and disclosed the whole story of the crime.

The lesson of this parable is that men may try to hide their crimes individually or collectively, but Allah will bring them to light in unexpected ways.

Applying this further to Jewish national history, the argument is developed in the following verses that the Children of Israel played fast and loose with their rites and tradition, but they could thus evade the consequences of their own sin.

... وَاللَّهُ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ (٧٢)

but Allah was to bring forth what ye did hide.

فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوهُ بِيَعْضِهَا ...

73. So We said: "Strike the (body) with a piece of the (heifer)."

... كَذَلِكَ يُحْيِي اللَّهُ الْمَوْتَى وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (٧٣)

Thus Allah bringeth the dead to life and showeth you His Signs, perchance ye may understand.

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً...

74. Thenceforth were your hearts hardened; they became like a rock and even worse in hardness.

... وَإِنَّ مِنَْ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ...

For among rocks there are some from which rivers gush forth;

... وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَتَشَقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ...

others there are which when split asunder send forth water;

... وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ...

and others which sink for fear of Allah.

... وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (٧٤)

And Allah is not unmindful of what ye do.

**C82.** The sinner's heart gets harder and harder. It is even harder than rocks, of which a beautiful poetical allegory is placed before us.

In nature we think there is nothing harder than rocks. But there are rocks that weep voluntarily, like repentant hearts that come to Allah of their own accord; such are the rocks from which rivers and springs flow spontaneously, sometimes in small trickles, sometimes in big volumes.

Then there are rocks which have to be split or dug into or blown up with dynamite, and underneath we find abundant waters, as in wells beneath rocky soil. Such are the hearts of a less degree of fineness, which yet melt into tears when some great blow or calamity calls the mind to higher things. (R).

أَفَتَطْمَعُونَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ...

75. Can ye (O ye men of Faith) entertain the hope that they will believe in you?

Seeing that a party of them heard the word of Allah,

... ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُونَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ (٧٥)

and perverted it knowingly after they understood it.

وَإِذَا لُفُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا...

76. Behold! when they meet the men of Faith, they say: "We believe,"

**C83.** The immediate argument applies to the Jews of Madinah, but the more general argument applies to the people of Faith and the people without Faith, as we shall see below.

If the Muslims of Madinah ever entertained the hope that the Jews in their city would as a body welcome Muhammad Mustafa as the Prophet prophesied in their own books, they were mistaken. In Deut. 18:18, they read:

"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee." (i.e., like unto Moses) which was interpreted by some of their doctors as referring to Muhammad, and they came into Islam.

The Arabs are a kindred branch of the Semitic family, and are correctly described in relation to the Jews as "their brethren"; and there is no question that there was not another Prophet "like unto Moses" until Muhammad came; in fact the PostScript of Deuteronomy, which was written many centuries after Moses, says:

"There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."

But the Jews as a body were jealous of Muhammad, and played a double part. When the Muslim community began to grow stronger they pretended to be of them, but really tried to keep back any knowledge of their own Scriptures from them, lest they should be beaten by their own arguments.

The more general interpretation holds good in all ages. Faith and Unfaith are pitted against each other.

Faith has to struggle against power, position, organization, and privilege. When it gains ground, Unfaith comes forward insincerely and claims fellowship.

But in its own mind it is jealous of armory of science, and knowledge which Faith brings into the service of Allah. But Allah knows all, and if the people of Faith will only seek knowledge sincerely wherever they can find it—even as far afield as China, as Muhammad said, they can defeat Unfaith on its own ground.

[Even though the directive that Muslims should derive knowledge regardless of its location is an acceptable proposition from the Islamic viewpoint, the tradition to which the author refers here is not authentic. (Eds).].

... وَإِذَا خَلَا بِعَعْضُهُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ قَالُوا أَتُحَدِّثُونَهُمْ بِمَا فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ...

but when they meet each other in private, they say: "Shall you tell them what Allah hath revealed to you,

... لِيُحَاجُّوكُمْ بِهِ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (٧٦)

that they may engage you in argument about it before your Lord?" Do ye not understand (their aim)?

أَوَلَا يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ (٧٧)

77. Know they not that Allah knoweth what they conceal and what they reveal?

... وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُونَ ...

78. And there are among them illiterates,

**C84.** The argument of [2:76](#) is continued. The Jews wanted to keep back knowledge, but what knowledge had they?

Many of them, even if they could read, were no better than illiterates, for they knew not their own true Scriptures, but read into them what they wanted, or at best their own conjectures.

They planned off their own writings for the Message of Allah. Perhaps it brought them profit for the time being; but it was a miserable profit if they "gained the whole world and lost their own souls" (Matt. 16:26).

"Writing with their own hands" means inventing books themselves, which had no divine authority.



... لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا أَمَانِيَّ ...

who know not the Book but (see therein their own) desires,

... وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ (٧٨)

and they do nothing but conjecture.

فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ...

79. Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands

... ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لَيْسَ شَرُّوهُ بِهِ تَمَنَّا قَلِيلًا ...

and then say: "This is from Allah," to traffic with it for a miserable price!

فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ (٧٩)

Woe to them for what their hands do write, and for the gain they make thereby.

وَقَالُوا لَنْ نَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَةً ...

80. And they say: "The fire shall not touch us but for a few numbered days;"

**C85.** The Jews in their arrogance might say:

Whatever the terror of Hell may be for other people, our sins will be forgiven, because we are the children of Abraham; at worst, we shall suffer a short definite punishment and then be restored to the "bosom of Abraham".

This bubble is pricked here.

Read this verse with [2:81-82](#).

The general application is also clear. If Unfaith claims some special prerogative, such as race, "civilization," political power, historical experience, and so on, these will not avail in Allah's sight. His promise is sure, but His promise is for those who seek Allah in Faith, and show it in their conduct.

... قُلْ أَتَّخَذْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَنْ يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ عَهْدَهُ ...

Say: "Have ye taken a promise from Allah for He never breaks His promise?"

... أَمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٨٠)

Or is it that ye say of Allah what ye do not know?"

بَلَىٰ مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ...

81. Nay, those who seek gain in Evil, and are girt round by their sins, they are Companions of the Fire,

**C86.** This is many degrees worse than merely falling into evil: it is going out to "earn evil" as the Arabic text has it, i.e., to seek gain in evil.

Such a perverse attitude means that the moral and spiritual fortress erected around us by the Grace of Allah is voluntarily surrendered by us and demolished by Evil, which erects its own fortress, so that access to Good may be more and more difficult.

... هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٨١)

therein shall they abide (for ever).

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ ...

82. But those who have faith and work righteousness, they are Companions of the Garden,

... هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٨٢)

therein shall they abide (for ever).

## Section 10

وَأَذِّنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ...

83. And remember We took a Covenant from the children of Israel (to this effect): worship none but Allah;

**C87.** So far from the Covenant being of the kind you suggest in [2:80](#) the real Covenant is about the moral law, which is set out in [2:83](#).

This moral law is universal and if you break it no privileges will lighten your punishment or help you in any way ([2:86](#)).

"Speak fair to the people" not only means outward courtesy from the leaders to the meanest among the people, but the protection of the people from being exploited, deceived, defrauded, or doped with things to lull their intelligence.

... وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ ...

treat with kindness your parents and kindred, and orphans and those in need;

... وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ...

speak fair to the people; be steadfast in prayer; and practice regular charity.

... ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ (٨٣)

Then did ye turn back, except a few among you, and ye backslide (even now).

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لَا تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَلَا تُخْرِجُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ ...

84. And remember We took your Covenant (to this effect): shed no blood amongst you, nor turn out your own people from your homes;

**C88.** Verse 83 referred to the universal moral law.

This verse 84 refers to its application under a special Covenant entered into with the Jews of Madinah by the new-born Muslim Commonwealth under its Guide and teacher Muhammad.

This Covenant is given in Ibn Hisham's Sirat-ur-Rasul, and comments on it will be found in Ameer Ali's Spirit of Islam (London 1922), pp. 57-61.

It was entered into in the second year of the Hijrah, and was treacherously broken by the Jews almost immediately afterwards.

... ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تُشَاهِدُونَ (٨٤)

and this ye solemnly ratified, and to this ye can bear witness.

ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتُخْرِجُونَ فَرِيقًا مِّنْكُمْ مِّن دِيَارِهِمْ ...

85. After this it is ye, the same people, who slay among yourselves, and banish a party of you from their homes;

... تَظَاهَرُونَ عَلَيْهِم بِالْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ...

assist (their enemies) against them, in guilt and rancor;

... وَإِن يَأْتَوْكُمْ أَسَارَىٰ تَفَادَوْهُمْ وَهُوَ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ إِخْرَاجُهُمْ ...

and if they come to you as captives, ye ransom them, though it was not lawful for you to banish them.

**C89.** I understand "**ransom them**" here to mean "take ransom for them" though most of the Commentators take it to mean "give ransom for them".

Mustafa had made a Pact which, if it had been faithfully observed by all parties, would have brought a reign of law and order for Madinah. But some of the treacherous Jews never intended to observe its terms. They fought and slew each other and not only banished those who were obnoxious to them but intrigued with their enemies. If by chance they came back into their hands as captives, they demanded ransom for them to return to their homes although they had no right to banish them at all.

If we understand by "**ransom them**" pay "ransom for them to release them from the hands of their enemies," it would mean that they did this pious act for show, although they were themselves the authors of their unlawful banishment.

I think the former makes better sense.

... أَفَنُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ ...

Then is it only a part of the Book that ye believe in, and do ye reject the rest?

... فَمَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ...

But what is the reward for those among you who behave like this but disgrace in this life?

... وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ ...

and on the Day of Judgment they shall be consigned to the most grievous penalty.

... وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (٨٥)

For Allah is not unmindful of what ye do.

... أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ ...

86. These are the people who buy the life of this world at the price of the Hereafter;

... فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ (٨٦)

their penalty shall not be lightened, nor shall they be helped.

### C.47 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose) (2:87-121)

*The people of Moses and the people of Jesus  
Were given revelation, but alas!  
They played false, with their own lights  
And, in their selfishness, made narrow  
Allah's universal message. To them  
It seemed incredible that His light  
Should illumine Arabia and reform  
The world. But His ways are wondrous,  
And they are clear to those who have Faith*

## Section 11

... وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ بِالرُّسُلِ ...

87. We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of Messengers;

... وَأَتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ...

We gave Jesus the son of Mary clear (Signs) and strengthened him with the holy spirit.

**C90.** As to the birth of Jesus, cf. 19:16-34.

Why is he called the "Son of Mary"?

What are his "clear signs"?

What is the "holy spirit" by which he was strengthened?

We reserve to a later state a discussion of the Quranic teaching on these questions.

See 3:62, n. 401.

... أَفَكُلَّمَا جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوَى أَنْفُسُكُمْ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ ...

Is it that whenever there comes to you a Messenger with what ye yourselves desire not, ye are puffed up with pride?

... فَفَرِيقًا كَذَّبْتُمْ وَقَرِيقًا تَقْتُلُونَ (٨٧)

Some ye called impostors, and others ye slay!

**C91.** Notice the sudden transition from the past tense in "some ye called impostors" to the present tense in "others ye slay."

There is a double significance.

- First, reviewing the long course of Jewish history, we have come to the time of Jesus; they have often given the lie to Allah's Prophets, and even now they are trying to slay Jesus.
- Secondly, extending the review of that history to the time of Muhammad, they are even now trying to take the life of that holy Prophet.

This would be literally true at the time the words were promulgated to the people. And this transition leads on naturally to the next verse, which refers to the actual conditions before Muhammad in Medina in the second year of the Hijrah.

Section 11-13 (2:87-121) refer to the people of Book generally, Jews and Christians. Even where Moses and

the Law of Sinai are referred to, those traditions are common to both Jews and Christians.

The argument is about the people who ought to have learnt from previous Revelations and welcomed Muhammad's teaching, and yet they both took up an attitude of arrogant rejection.

وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ ...

88. They say, "Our hearts are the wrappings (which preserve Allah's word, we need no more)."

**C92.** The Jews in their arrogance claimed that all wisdom and all knowledge of Allah were enclosed in their hearts. But there were more things in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in their philosophy. Their claim was not only arrogance but blasphemy. In reality they were men without Faith.

I take **Ghulfun** here to be the plural of **Ghilafun** the wrapping or cover of a book, in which the book is preserved.

As usual, there is much wider meaning. How many people at all times and among all nations close their hearts to any extension of knowledge or spiritual influence because of some little fragment which they have got and which they think is the whole of Allah's Truth?

Such an attitude shows really want of faith and is a blasphemous limitation of Allah's unlimited spiritual gifts to His creatures.

[According to another view the verse refers to the Jewish claim that a covering had been placed over their hearts which prevented them from grasping the message of the Prophet (peace be on him)].

See Ibn Kathir's commentary on the verse.

See also verse 4:155. [Eds].

... بَلْ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيلًا مَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٨٨)

Nay, Allah's curse is on them for their blasphemy; little is it they believe.

**C93.** The root **kafara** has many shades of meaning:

1. to deny Allah's goodness, to be ungrateful,
2. to reject Faith, deny His revelation,
3. to blaspheme, to ascribe some limitation or attribute to Allah which is derogatory to His nature.

In a translation, one shade or another must be put forward according to the context, but all are implied.

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ ...

89. And when there comes to them a Book from Allah, confirming what is with them-

**C94.** The Jews, who pretended to be so superior to the people without Faith - the Gentiles - should have been the first to recognize the new Truth - or the Truth renewed - which it was Muhammad's mission to bring because it was so similar in form and language to what they had already received.

But they had more arrogance than faith. It is this want of faith that brings on the curse, i.e., deprives us (if we adopt such an attitude) of the blessings of Allah.

Again the lesson applies to a much wider circle than the Jews. We are all apt, in our perverseness, to reject an appeal from our brother even more summarily than one from an outsider. If we have a glimmering of the truth, we are apt to make ourselves impervious to further truth, and thus lose the benefit of Allah's Grace.

... وَكَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ...

although from of old they had prayed for victory against those without faith,

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ ...

when there comes to them that which they (should) have recognized, they refused to believe in it;

... فَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٨٩)

but the curse of Allah is on those without Faith.



بِنَسَمًا اشْتَرَوْا بِهِ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ ...

90. Miserable is the price for which they have sold their souls, in that they deny (the revelation) which Allah has sent down,

... بَعِيًّا أَنْ يُنَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ...

in insolent envy that Allah of His Grace should send it to any of His servants He pleases;

**C95.** Racial arrogance made the Jews averse to the reception of Truth when it came through a servant of Allah, not of their own race.

Again the lesson is wider.

Is that averseness unknown in our own times, and among other races?

Yet how can a race or a people set bounds to Allah's choice?

Allah is the Creator and Cherisher of all races and all worlds.

... فَبَاؤُوا بَعْضَ عَلَى غَضَبٍ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ (٩٠)

thus have they drawn on themselves wrath upon wrath. And humiliating is the punishment of those who reject Faith.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ ...

91. When it is said to them: "Believe in what Allah hath sent down,"

... قَالُوا نُؤْمِنُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْنَا ...

they say, "We believe in what was sent down to us;"

... وَيَكْفُرُونَ بِمَا وَرَاءَهُ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَهُمْ ...

yet they reject all besides, even if it be truth confirming what is with them.

قُلْ فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْبِيَاءَ اللَّهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (٩١)

Say: "Why then have ye slain the prophets of Allah in times gone by, if ye did indeed believe?"

**C96.** Even the race argument is often flimsy and hollow pretext.

Did not the Jews reject Prophets of their own race who told them unpleasant truths?

And do not other nations do likewise?

The real trouble is selfishness, narrowness, a mean dislike of anything which runs counter to habits, customs or inclinations.

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِهِ...

92. There came to you Moses with clear (Signs); yet ye worshipped the Calf (even) after that,

... وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ (٩٢)

and ye did behave wrongfully.

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ ...

93. And remember We took your Covenant and We raised above you (the towering height) of Mount (Sinai), (saying):

... خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَأَسْمَعُوا ...

"Hold firmly to what We have given you and hearken (to the Law);"

**C97.** Cf. the introductory words of [2:63](#) which are the same as the introductory words here but the argument is developed in a different direction in the two places.

In [2:63](#), after they are reminded of the solemn Covenant under the towering height of Mount Sinai they are told how they broke the Covenant in after ages.

Here, after they are reminded of the same solemn Covenant, they are told that even then they never meant to observe it. Their thought is expressed in biting words of sarcasm.

They said in words:

"All that the Lord hath spoken we will do"

But they said in their hearts "We shall disobey".

... قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا ...

they said: "We hear, and we disobey;"

**C98.** What they should have said was: "We hear and we obey" this is the attitude of the true men of Faith (2:285).

... وَأَشْرَبُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِهِمْ ...

and they had to **drink** into their hearts (of the taint) of the calf because of their faithlessness.

**C99.** After the Commandments and the Law had been given at Mount Sinai, and the people had solemnly given their Covenant, Moses went up to the Mount, and in his absence, the people made the golden calf.

[The word **ushribu** which occurs in the verse seems to suggest, as noted Tabi'i Qatadaqh is reported to have said, that their hearts were saturated with the love for the calf.

See Ibn Kathir's Commentary on the verse. (Eds.)]

... قُلْ بِئْسَمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِهِ إِيمَانُكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (٩٣)

Say: "Vile indeed are the behests of your faith if ye have any faith!"

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَالِصَةً مِّنْ دُونِ النَّاسِ...

94. Say: "If the last Home, with Allah, be for you specially, and not for anyone else,

... فَتَمَنَّوْا الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٩٤)

then seek ye for death, if ye are sincere."

وَلَنْ يَتَمَنَّوْهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ...

95. But they will never seek for death, on account of the (sins) which their hands have sent on before them.

**C100.** The phrase "What their hands have sent on before them" frequently occurs in the Quran.

Here, and in many places, it refers to sins.

In such passages as 78:40, or 81:14, it is implied that both good and bad deeds go before us to the Judgement seat of Allah before we do ourselves.

In 2:110, it is the good that goes before us.

Our deeds are personified. They are witnesses for or against us, and they always go before us. Their good or bad influence to operate before we even know it.

This is more general than the New Testament idea in the First Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy, 5:24: "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after."

... وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ (٩٥)

And Allah is well acquainted with the wrongdoers.

وَلَتَجِدَنَّهُمْ أَحْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلَى حَيَاةٍ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا ...

96. Thou wilt indeed find them, of all people, most greedy of life, even more than the idolaters;

... يَوَدُّ أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعْمَرُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُرْزُقٍ مِنْهُ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ أَنْ يُعْمَرَ ...

each one of them wishes he could be given a life of a thousand years; but the grant of such life will not save him from (due) punishment,

... وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ (٩٦)

for Allah sees well all that they do.

## Section 12

فَلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِجِبْرِيْلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ...

97. Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel, for he brings down the (revelation) to thy heart by Allah's will,

**C101.** A party of the Jews in the time of Muhammad ridiculed the Muslim believe that Gabriel brought down revelations to Muhammad Mustafa.

Michael was called in their books "the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people": (Daniel 12:1). The vision of Gabriel inspired fear (Daniel, 8:16-17).

But this pretence - that Michael was their friend and Gabriel their enemy - was merely a manifestation of their unbelief in angels, apostles, and Allah Himself; and such unbelief could not win the love of Allah.

In any case it was disingenuous to say that they believed in one angel and not in another.

Muhammad's inspiration was through visions of Gabriel. Muhammad had been helped to the highest spiritual light, and the message which he delivered and his spotless integrity and exemplary life were manifest Signs which every one could understand except those who were obstinate and perverse. Besides, the verses of the Quran were in themselves reasonable and clear.

... مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٩٧)

a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe.

مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِلَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَالَ ...

98. Whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and apostles, to Gabriel and Michael,

... فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ (٩٨)

Lo! Allah is an enemy to those who reject faith.

وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَا إِلَّا الْفَاسِقُونَ (٩٩)

99. We have sent down to thee manifest signs (Ayat); and none reject them but those who are perverse.

أَوْ كَلَّمَا عَاهَدُوا عَهْدًا نَّبَذَهُ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ ...

100. Is it not (the case) that every time they make a Covenant, some party among them throw it aside?-

... بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (١٠٠)

Nay, most of them are faithless.

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ...

101. And when came to them a Messenger from Allah, confirming what was with them,

نَبَذَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ ...

a party of the People of the Book threw away the Book of Allah behind their backs,

**C102.** I think that by "**the Book of Allah**" here is meant, not the Quran, but the Book which the People of the Book had been given, viz., the previous Revelations.

The argument is that Muhammad's Message was similar to Revelations which they had already received, and if they had looked into their own Books honestly and sincerely, they would have found proofs in them to show that the new Message was true and from Allah. But they ignored their own Books or twisted or distorted them according to their own fancies. Worse, they followed somethings which was actually false and mischievous and inspired by the evil one. Such was the belief in magic and sorcery.

These are described in the next verse in terms referring to the beliefs and practices of the "People of the Book."

... كَانَتْهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (١٠١)

as if (it had been something) they did not know!

وَاتَّبَعُوا مَا تَتْلُوا الشَّيَاطِينُ عَلَىٰ مُلْكِ سُلَيْمَانَ...

102. They followed what the evil ones gave out (falsely) against the power of Solomon;

**C103.** This is a continuation of the argument in 2:101.

The People of the Book, instead of sticking to the plain Books of Revelations, and seeking to do the will of Allah ran after all sorts of occult knowledge, most of which was false and evil.

Many wonderful tales of occult power attributed the power of Solomon to magic. But Solomon dealt in not arts of evil. It was the powers of evil that pretended to force the laws of nature and the will of Allah; such a pretense is plainly blasphemy.

... وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ كَفَرُوا يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ...

the blasphemers were, not Solomon, but the evil ones, teaching men magic,

... وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكِينَ بَيَابِلَ هَارُوتَ وَمَارُوتَ ...

and such things as came down at Babylon to the angels Harut and Marut.

**C104. Harut and Marut** lived in Babylon, a very ancient seat of science, especially the science of astronomy. The period may be supposed to anywhere about the time when the ancient Eastern Monarchies were strong and enlightened: probably even earlier, as Ma-ru-tu or Mandruk was a deified hero afterwards worshipped as a god of magic in Babylon.

Being good men, **Harut and Marut** of course dabbled in nothing evil, and their evil hands were certainly clean of fraud. But knowledge and the arts, if learned by evil men, can be applied to evil uses. The evil ones, besides their fraudulent magic, also learnt a little of this true science and applied it to evil uses.

**Harut and Marut** did not withhold knowledge, yet never taught anyone without plainly warning them of the trial and temptation of knowledge in the hands of evil men. Being men of insight, they also saw the blasphemy that might rise to the lips of the evil ones puffed up with science and warned them against it.

Knowledge is indeed a trial or temptation: if we are warned, we know its dangers: if Allah has endowed us with free will, we must be free to choose between the benefit and the danger.

Among the Jewish traditions in the Midrash (Jewish Tafsir) was a story of two angels who asked Allah's permission to come down to earth but succumbed to temptation, and were hung up by their feet at Babylon for punishment.

Such stories about sinning angels who were cast down to punishment were believed in by the early Christians also. (See the Second Epistle of Peter, 2:4, and the Epistle of Jude, verse 6). (R).

... وَمَا يُعَلِّمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّى يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ ...

But neither of these taught anyone (such things) without saying: "We are only for trial, so do not blaspheme."

... فَيَعْلَمُونَ مِنْهُمَا مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ...

They learned from them the means to sow discord between man and wife.

**C105.** What the evil ones learnt from Harut and Marut (see last note) they turned to evil. When mixed with fraud and deception, it appeared as charms and spells of love potions. They did nothing but cause discord between the sexes. But of course their power was limited to the extent to which Allah permitted the evil to work, for His grace protected all who sought His guidance and repented and returned to Him.

But apart from the harm that these false pretenders might do to others, the chief harm which they did was to their own souls. They sold themselves into slavery to the Evil One, as is shown in the allegory of Goethe's Faust.

That allegory dealt with the individual soul. Here the tragedy is shown to occur not only to individuals but to whole groups of people, for example, the People of the Book.

Indeed the story might be extended indefinitely.

... وَمَا هُمْ بِضَارِّينَ بِهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ...

But they could not thus harm anyone except by Allah's permission.

... وَيَعْلَمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ ...

And they learned what harmed them, not what profited them.

... وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوا لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَقٍ ...

And they knew that the buyers of (magic) would have no share in the happiness of the Hereafter.

... وَالْبَيْسَ مَا شَرَوْا بِهِ أَنْفُسَهُمْ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (١٠٢)

And vile was the price for which they did sell their souls, if they but knew!

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَمَثُوبَةٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَّو كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (١٠٣)

103. If they had kept their faith and guarded themselves from evil, far better had been the reward from their Lord, if they but knew!



## Section 13

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقُولُوا رَاعِنَا وَقُولُوا انظُرْنَا وَاسْمَعُوا...

104. O ye of Faith! say not (to the Prophet) words of ambiguous import, but words of respect; and hearken (to him);

**C106.** The word disapproved is **Raina**, which is used by the Muslims meant "Please look at us, attend to us."

But it was ridiculed by enemies by a little twist to suggest some insulting meaning. So an unambiguous word "**Unzurna**," with the same meaning is suggested.

The general lesson is that we must guard ourselves against the cynical trick of using words which should complimentary to the ear but have a hidden barb in them. Not only must we be plain and honest in our words. We must respectfully hearken to the words of a Teacher whom we have addressed. Thoughtless people use vain words or put foolish questions, and straightaway turn their minds to something else.

... وَاللَّكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٠٤)

to those without faith is a grievous punishment.

مَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَلَا الْمُشْرِكِينَ...

105. It is never the wish of those without faith among the People of the Book, nor of the Pagans,

... أَنْ يُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ...

that anything good should come down to you from your Lord. But Allah will choose for His special Mercy whom He will,

... وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (١٠٥)

for Allah is Lord of grace abounding.

مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِّمَّا أَوْ مِثْلِهَا...

106. None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar;

**C107.** The word which I have translated by the word "revelations" is **Ayat**. See C.41 and n. 15.

It is not only used for verses of the Quran, but in a general sense for Allah's revelations, as in [2:39](#) and for other Signs of Allah in history or nature, or miracles, as in [2:61](#).

It has even been used for human signs and tokens of wonder, as, for example, monuments or landmarks built by the ancient people of 'Ad (26:128).

What is the meaning here?

If we take it in a general sense, it means that Allah's Message from age to age is always the same, but that its form may differ according to the needs and exigencies of the time. That form was different as given to Moses and then to Jesus and then to Muhammad.

Some commentators apply it also to The Ayat of the Quran. There is nothing derogatory in this if we believe in progressive revelation. In 3:7 we are told distinctly about the Quran, that some of its verses are clear (and of established meaning), and others are not entirely clear, and it is mischievous to treat the verses that are not entirely clear and to follow them (literally). On the other hand, it is absurd to treat such a verse as [2:115](#) as if it were abrogated by [2:144](#) about the Qiblah.

There may be express abrogation, or there may be "causing or permitting to forget."

How many good and wise institutions gradually become obsolete by afflux of time?

Then there is gradual process of disuse or forgetting in evolution. This does not mean that eternal principles change. It is only a sign of Allah's infinite Power that His creation should take so many forms and shapes not only in the material world but in the world of man's thought and expression.

... أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١٠٦)

knowest thou not that Allah hath power over all things?

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

107. Knowest thou not that to Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth!

... وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ (١٠٧)

And besides Him ye have neither patron nor helper.

أَمْ تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَسْأَلُوا رَسُولَكُمْ كَمَا سُئِلَ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ...

108. Would ye question your Messenger as Moses was questioned of old?

**C108.** Moses was constantly harassed with foolish, impertinent, or disingenuous questions by his own people. We must not follow that bad example.

In spiritual matters, posers to no good: questions should be asked only for real instruction.

... وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْ الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ (١٠٨)

But whoever changeth from faith to unbelief, hath strayed without doubt from the even way.

**C109. "Even way":** the Arabic word **sawaa** signifies;

- smoothness as opposed to roughness;
- symmetry as opposed to want of plan;
- equality or proportion as opposed to want of design;
- rectitude as opposed to crookedness;
- a mean as opposed to extremes; and
- fitness for the object held in view as opposed to faultiness.

وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّوكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا...

109. Quite a number of the People of the Book wish they could turn you (people) back to infidelity after ye have believed,

... حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِهِمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ ...

from selfish envy, after the truth hath become manifest unto them;

... فَأَعْفُوا وَاصْفَحُوا ...

but forgive and overlook,

**C110.** Three words are used in the Quran, with a meaning akin to "forgive" but each with a different shade of meaning.

- **Afa** (here translated "forgive") means to forget, to obliterate from one's mind.
- **Safaha** (here translated "overlook") means to turn away from, to ignore, to treat a matter as if it did not affect one.
- **Gafara** (which does not occur in this verse) means to cover up something as Allah does to our sins with His grace;

this word is particularly appropriate in Allah's attribute of **Gaffar**, the One who forgives again and again.

... حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ اللَّهَ بِأَمْرِهِ ...

till Allah accomplish His purpose;

**C111.** The word **Amr** is comprehensive and includes;

- an order or command as in 96:12; or
- a purpose, design, will as in 18:82; or
- affairs, working doing, carrying out or execution of a design, as in 79:5.

In many cases some of these meanings run together.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١٠٩)

for Allah hath power over all things.

**C112.** Not how this phrase, seemingly repeated from [2:106](#), and occurring in many other places, has an appropriate signification in each place.

In [2:106](#) we were told about progressive revelation, how the same thing may take different forms and seeming

human infirmity contribute to the fulfillment of Allah's design, for Allah's power is unlimited.

Here we are told to be patient and forgiving against envy and injustice: this too may be fulfilling Allah's purpose, for His power is infinite.

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ...

110. And be steadfast in prayer and regular in charity:

... وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ...

and whatever good ye send forth for your souls before you, ye shall find it with Allah;

**C113.** Cf. [2:95](#), [n.100](#).

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (١١٠)

for Allah sees well all that ye do.

وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى...

111. And they say: "None shall enter paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian."

... تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ ...

Those are their (vain) desires.

... قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١١١)

Say: "Produce your proof if ye are truthful."

بَلَى مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ ...

112. Nay, whoever submits his whole self to Allah and is a doer of good, he will get his reward with his Lord;

**C114.** The word translated "self" is **Wajh**, a comprehensive Arabic word. It means;

1. literally "face" but it may imply;
2. countenance or favour, as in 92:20;

3. honour, glory, Presence as applied to Allah, as in [2:115](#) and perhaps also in 55:27;
4. cause, sake ("for the sake of") as in 76:9;
5. the first part, the beginning as in 3:72;
6. nature, inner being, essence, self, as in 28:88, and perhaps also in 55:27.

Here I understand meaning 6; the face expresses the personality or the whole inner self of man. (R).

... وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (١١٢)

on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

**C115.** This phrase comes in aptly in its own context many times.

In this Surah it occurs in [11](#), [38](#), [62](#), [112](#), [262](#), [274](#), and [277](#). (R).

## Section 14

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتِ النَّصَارَىٰ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ...

113. The Jews say: "The Christians have naught (to stand) upon;"

... وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَىٰ لَيْسَتِ الْيَهُودُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ...

and the Christians say: "The Jews have naught (to stand) upon." Yet they (profess to) study the (same) Book.

... كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ...

Like unto their word is what those say who know not,

**C116.** It is a sure sign of ignorance and prejudice when you study the same book as another or a similar one and yet are absolutely intolerant of the meaning which the other draws from it.

You should know better, but you speak like the ignorant. In this case the primary reference in the word "ignorant" may be to the Pagan Arabs.

... قَالَ اللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ (١١٣)

but Allah will judge between them in their quarrel on the Day of Judgment.

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ مَنَعَ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُذَكَّرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ ...

114. And who is more unjust than he who forbids that in places for the worship of Allah, Allah's name should be celebrated? -

**C117.** There were actually Pagans in Makkah who tried to shut out the Muslim Arabs from the Ka'bah, the universal place of Arab worship.

The Pagans themselves called it the House of Allah. With what face could they exclude the Muslims, who wanted to worship the true Allah instead of worshipping idols?

If these Pagans had succeeded, they would only have caused violent divisions among the Arabs and destroyed the sanctity and the very existence of the Ka'bah.

This verse taken in a general sense, establishes the principle of freedom of worship in a public mosque or place dedicated to the worship of Allah. This is recognised in Muslim law. (R).

... وَسَعَى فِي خَرَابِهِمَا ...

Whose zeal is (in fact) to ruin them?

أُولَئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ أَنْ يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلَّا خَائِفِينَ ...

It was not fitting that such should themselves enter them except in fear.

... لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (١١٤)

For them there is nothing but disgrace in this world, and in the world to come, an exceeding torment.

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَتَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ ...

115. To Allah belong the East and the West; whithersoever ye turn, there is Allah's countenance.

**C118.** That is, you will face Allah whichever direction you turn your face.

See [note to 2:112 above](#). (R)

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (١١٥)

For Allah is All-Embracing,, All-Knowing.

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ ...

116. They say: "Allah hath begotten a son;" Glory be to Him.

... بَلْ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلٌّ لَهُ قَانِثُونَ (١١٦)

Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth; everything renders worship to Him.

**C119.** It is a derogation from the glory of Allah - in fact it is blasphemy - to say that Allah begets sons, like a man or an animal.

The Christian doctrine is here emphatically repudiated. If words have any meaning, it would mean an attribution of Allah of a material nature, and of the lower animal functions of sex. (R)

بَدِيعُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

117. To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth;

**C120.** The previous verse told us that everything in heaven and earth celebrates the glory of Allah. Lest anyone should think that the heavens and the earth were themselves primeval and eternal, we are now told that they themselves are creatures of Allah's will and design.

Cf. 6:101, where the word **bada'a** is used as here for the creation of the heavens and the earth, and **khalafa** is used for the creation of all things.

**Bada'a** goes back to the very primal beginning, as far as we can conceive it.

The materialists might say that primeval matter was eternal; other things, i.e., the forms and shapes as we see them now, were called into being at some time or other, and will perish. When they perish, they dissolve into primeval matter again, which stands as the base of all existence.



We go further back. We say that if we postulate such primeval matter, it owes its origin itself to Allah Who is the final basis of existence, the Cause of all Causes. If this is conceded, we proceed to argue that the process of Creation is not then completed.

"All things in the heavens and on the earth" are created by gradual processes. In "things" we include abstract as well as material things. We see the abstract things and ideas actually growing before us.

But that also is Allah's creation, to which we can apply the word **khalāqa**, for in it is involved the idea of measuring, fitting it into a scheme of other things. Cf. 54:49; also 25:59.

Here comes in what we know as the process of evolution. On the other hand, the "**amr**" (Command, Direction, Design) is a single thing, unrelated to Time, "like the twinkling of an eye" (54:50).

Another word to note in this connection is **ja'ala** "making" which seems to imply new shapes and forms, new dispositions, as the making of the Signs of the Zodiac in the heavens, or the setting out of the sun and moon for light, or the establishment of the succession of day and night (25:61-62).

A further process with regard to the soul is described in the word **sawwa**, bringing it to perfection (91:7) but this we shall discuss in its place.

**Fatara** (42:11) implies, like **bada'a**, the creating of a thing out of nothing and after no preexisting similitude, but perhaps **fatara** implies the creation of primeval matter to which further processes have to be applied later, as when one prepares dough but leaves the leavening to be done after.

**Badaa** (without the 'ain), 30:27, implies beginning the process of creation; this is made further clear in 32:7 where the beginning of the creation of pristine man from clay refers to his physical body, leaving the further processes of reproduction and the breathing in of the soul to be described in subsequent verses.

Lastly, **bara'a** is creation implying liberation from pre-existing matter or circumstance, e.g., man's body from clay (59:24) or a calamity from previously existing circumstances (57:22).

See also 6:94, n. 916; 6:98, n. 923; 59:24, notes. 5405-6.

... وَإِذَا قُضِيَٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ (١١٧)

when He decreeth a matter He saith to it: "Be;"  
and it is.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللَّهُ ...

118. Say those without knowledge:

"Why speaketh not Allah unto Us?

... أَوْ تَأْتِينَا آيَةً ...

Or why cometh not unto us a sign?"

... كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِم مِّثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ تَشَابَهَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ...

So said the people before them, words of similar import. Their hearts are alike.

... قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ (١١٨)

We have indeed made clear the signs unto any people who hold firmly to faith (in their hearts).

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَا تُسْأَلُ عَنْ أَصْحَابِ الْجَحِيمِ (١١٩)

119. Verily, We have sent thee in truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner.

But of thee no question shall be asked of Companions of the blazing fire.

وَلَنْ تَرْضَىٰ عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ...

120. Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion.

قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ...

Say: "The guidance of Allah, that is the (only) guidance."

... وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ...

Wert thou to follow their desires after the knowledge which hath reached thee,

... مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ (١٢٠)

then wouldst thou find neither protector nor helper against Allah.

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ أُولَئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ...

121. Those to whom We have sent the book study it as it should be studied; they are the ones that believe therein;

... وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (١٢١)

those who reject faith therein, the loss is their own.

### C.48 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(2:122-141)

*If the people of the Book rely  
Upon Abraham, let them study  
His history. His posterity included  
Both Israel and Ismail. Abraham  
Was a righteous man of Allah,  
A Muslim, and so were his children.  
Abraham and Ismail built  
The Ka'bah as the house of Allah,  
And purified it, to be a centre  
Of worship for all the world;  
For Allah is the God of all peoples.*

**C 121.** The argument now proceeds on another line. Ye People of the Book who go back to Abraham! not only is your claim to exclusive knowledge of Allah false and derogatory to the Lord of All the Worlds. If you must appeal to Abraham, he was also the progenitor of the

Arab race through Ismail. Indeed Abraham and Ismail together built the House of Allah in Makkah (long before the Temple of Jerusalem was built). They purified it and laid the foundation of the universal religion, which is summed up in word Islam, or complete submission to the Will of Allah. Abraham and Ismail were thus true Muslims. Whence then your rancour against Islam?

Historically the House of Allah at Makkah must have been far more ancient place of worship than the Temple of Jerusalem. Arab tradition connects various places in and around Makkah with the name of Abraham and identifies the well of Zamzam with the well in the story of the child Ismail.

Arab tradition also refers the story of the Sacrifice to Ismail and not to Isaac, therein differing from the Jewish tradition in Gen, 22:1-19. (R).

## Section 15

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ ...

122. O Children of Israel!

call to mind the special favor which I bestowed upon you,

... وَأَنْتِي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (١٢٢)

and that I preferred you to all others (for my message).

وَأَنْفُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا ...

123. Then guard yourselves against a day when one soul shall not avail another,

... وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا تَنْفَعُهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ (١٢٣)

nor shall compensation be accepted from her,

nor shall intercession profit her,

nor shall anyone be helped (from outside).

**C122.** Verses 122-123 repeat verses 47-48 (except for a slight verbal variation in ii. 123 which does not affect the sense).

The argument about the favours to Israel is thus beautifully rounded off, and we now proceed to the argument in favour of the Arabs as succeeding to the spiritual inheritance of Abraham.

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ ...

124. And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord, with certain commands, which he fulfilled;

**C123. Kalimat:** literally "words" here used in the mystic sense of Allah's Will or Decree or Purpose.

This verse may be taken to be the sum of the verses following. In everything Abraham fulfilled Allah's wish:

- he purified Allah's house;
- he built the sacred refuge of the Ka'bah;
- he submitted his will to Allah's, and thus became the type of Islam.

He was promised the leadership of the world; he pleaded for his progeny, and his prayer was granted, with the limitation that if his progeny was false to Allah, Allah's promise did not reach the people who proved themselves false.

... قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا ...

He said: "I will make thee an Imam to the nations."

**C124. Imam;** the primary sense is that of being foremost: hence it may mean:

1. leader in religion;
2. leader in congregational prayer;
3. model, pattern, example;
4. a book of guidance and instruction (11:17);
5. a book of evidence or record (36:12).

Here, meaning 1 and 3 are implied.

In 9:12 the word is applied to leaders of Unbelief or Blasphemy.

... قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ...

He pleaded: "And also (Imams) from my offspring!"

... قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ (١٢٤)

He answered: "But my promise is not within the reach of evildoers."

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنًا ...

125. Remember We made the house a place of assembly for men and a place of safety;

**C125.** The Ka'bah, the House of Allah. Its foundation goes back by Arab tradition to Abraham. Its fourfold character is here referred to:

1. It was the centre to which all the Arab tribes resorted for trade, for poetic contests, and for worship,
2. It was sacred territory and was respected by friend and foe alike. At certain seasons, all fighting was and is forbidden within its limits, and even arms are not allowed to be carried and no game or other thing is allowed to be killed.

Like the Cities of Refuge under the Mosaic Dispensation to which manslayers could flee (Num. 35:6) or the Sanctuaries in Mediaeval Europe, to which criminals could not be pursued. Makkah was recognized by Arab custom as inviolable for the pursuit of revenge or violence.

3. it was a place of prayer;

even today there is a Station of Abraham within the enclosure. Where Abraham was supposed to have prayed.

4. It must be held pure and sacred for all purposes.

Though the verse as a whole is expressed in the First Person Plural, the House is called "My House" to emphasize the personal relation of Allah, the One True God, to it, and repudiate the Polytheism which defiled it before it was purified again by Muhammad. (R).

... وَاتَّخِذُوا مِنْ مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى ...

and take ye the station of Abraham as a place of prayer;

... وَعَاهِدْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَنْ طَهِّرَا ...

and We covenanted with Abraham and Isma'il, that they should sanctify

... بَيْتِي لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ (١٢٥)

My House for those who compass it round, or use it as a retreat, or bow, or prostrate themselves (therein in prayer).

**C126.** Four rites are here enumerated, which have now acquired a technical meaning.

1. Compassing the sacred territory, or going round the Ka'bah: **Tawaf**.

There are special guides who take pilgrims and visitors round.

2. Retiring to the place as a spiritual retreat, for contemplation and prayer: **Itikat**.

3. The posture of bending the back in prayer: **Ruku**.

4. The posture of prostrating oneself on the ground in prayer: **Sujud**.

The protection of the holy territory is for all, but special cleanliness and purity is required for the sake of the devotees who undertake these rites. (R).

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا...

126. And remember Abraham said:

"My Lord, make this a City of Peace,

**C127.** The root **salama** in the word Islam implies (among other ideas) the idea of Peace, and therefore when Makkah is the city of Islam, it is also the City of Peace.

The same root occurs in the latter part of the name Jerusalem, the Jewish City of Peace. When the day of Jerusalem passed (see [verse 134](#) or [141](#) below).

Makkah became the "New Jerusalem" - or rather the old and original "City of Peace" restored and made universal.

... وَأَرْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ...

and feed its people with fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day."

**C128.** The territory of Makkah is barren and rocky, compared with, say Taif, a city 70-75 miles east of Makkah . A prayer for the prosperity of Makkah therefore includes a prayer for the good things of material life. (R).

... قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلًا ...

He said: "(Yea), and such as reject faith, for a while will I grant them their pleasure,

... ثُمَّ اضْطُرُّهُ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَيَسَّ الْمَصِيرُ (١٢٦)

but will soon drive them to the torment of fire, an evil destination (indeed)!"

وإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا...

127. And remember Abraham and Isma'il raised the foundations of the House (with this prayer):

"Our Lord!

accept (this service) from us,

... إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (١٢٧)

for thou art the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ...

128. "Our Lord!

make of us Muslims, bowing to Thy (Will), and of our progeny a people Muslim, bowing to Thy (Will),

... وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا...

and show us our places for the celebration of (due) rites; and turn unto us (in mercy);



... إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ النَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٢٨)

for Thou art the Oft-Returning, Most-Merciful.

رَبَّنَا وَأَبْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ ...

129. "Our Lord! send amongst them a Messenger of their own,

... يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ...

who shall rehearse Thy Signs to them and instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom, and sanctify them;

... إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١٢٩)

for Thou art the Exalted in Might, the Wise."

**C129.** How beautiful this prayer is, and how aptly it comes in here in the argument!

Such Paganism or star-worship or planet-worship as there was in Abraham's time was first cleared out of Makkah by Abraham. This is the chief meaning of "sanctification" or purification in [2:125](#), although of course physical cleanliness is (in physical conditions) a necessary element of purification in the higher sense.

Abraham and his elder son Ismail then built the Ka'bah and established the rites and usages of the sacred city. He was thus the founder of the original Islam (which is as old as mankind) in Arabia.

As becomes a devout man, he offers and dedicates the work to Allah in humble supplication, addressing Him as the All-Hearing and the All-Knowing. He then asks for a blessing on himself and his progeny generally, both the children of his eldest-born Ismail and his younger son Isaac.

With prophetic vision he foresees that there will be corruption and backsliding in both branches of his family: Makkah will house 360 idols, and Jerusalem will become a harlot city ([Ezekiel 16:15](#)), a city of abomination.

But the light of Islam will shine, and reclaim the lost people in both branches and indeed in all the world. So he prays for Allah's mercy, addressing Him as the Oft-Returning Most Merciful.

And finally he foresees in Makkah a Prophet teaching the people as one "of their own", and in their own beautiful Arabic language; he asks for a blessing on Muhammad's ministry, appealing to the Power and Wisdom of Allah.

## Section 16

وَمَنْ يَرْغَبُ عَنِ مِلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ...

130. And who turns away from the religion of Abraham but such as debase their souls with folly?

... وَلَقَدْ اصْطَفَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا ...

Him We chose and rendered pure in this world:

**C130. Istafa: chose;** chose because of purity; chose and purified. It is the same root from which Mustafa is derived, one of the titles of Muhammad.

... وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١٣٠)

and he will be in the Hereafter in the ranks of the righteous.

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمُ ...

131. Behold! his Lord said to him: "Bow (thy will to me)"

... قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٣١)

He said: "I bow (my will) to the Lord and Cherisher of the universe."

وَوَصَّىٰ بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ...

132. And this was the legacy that Abraham left to his sons, and so did Jacob;

يَا بَنِيَّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ لَكُمُ الدِّينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ (١٣٢)

"O my sons! Allah hath chosen the faith for you; then die not except in the faith of Islam."

أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ ...

133. Were ye witnesses when death appeared before Jacob?

**C131.** The whole of the Children of Israel are called to witness one of their slogans, that they worshipped "the God of their fathers." The idea in their minds got narrowed down to that of a tribal God. But they are reminded that their ancestors had the principle of Islam in them - the worship of the One True and Universal God.

The death-bed scene is described in Jewish tradition.

... إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن بَعْدِي...

Behold, he said to his sons: "What will ye worship after me?"

... قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلَهَكَ وَإِلَهَ آبَائِكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ...

They said: "We shall worship thy God and the God of thy fathers, of Abraham, Isma'il, and Isaac,

**C132. "Fathers"** means ancestors, and include uncles, grand-uncles, as well as direct ascendants.

... إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ (١٣٣)

the one (true) God, to Him we bow (in Islam)."

... تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ ...

134. That was a People that hath passed away.

They shall reap the fruit of what they did, and ye of what ye do!

... وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٣٤)

of their merits there is no question in your case!

**C133.** I have made a free paraphrase of what would read literally:

"Ye shall not be asked about what they used to do."

On the Day of Judgment each soul would have to answer for its own deeds: it cannot claim merit from others, nor be answerable for the crimes or sins of others.

Here the argument is:

if the Jews or Christians claim the merits of Father Abraham and the Patriarchs or of Jesus, we cannot follow

them. Because there were righteous men in the past, it cannot help us unless we are ourselves righteous.

The doctrine of personal responsibility is a cardinal feature of Islam.

وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُوا...

135. They say: "Become Jews or Christians if ye would be guided (to salvation)."

... قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ...

Say thou:

"Nay!

(I would rather) the religion of Abraham the true,

**C134. Hanif:** inclined to right opinion, orthodox (in the literal meaning of the Greek words), firm in faith, sound and well-balanced, true.

Perhaps the last word, True, sums up most of the other shades.

The Jews, though taught Unity, went after false gods, and the Christians invented the Trinity or borrowed it from Paganism. We go back to pure, *Hanif* doctrine of Abraham, to live and die in faith in the One True God.

... وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (١٣٥)

and he joined not gods with Allah."

فُولُوا آمَنًا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا...

136. Say ye:

"We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us,

... وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ ...

and to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes,

... وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ ...

and that given to Moses and Jesus and that given to (all) Prophets from their Lord,

... لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ (١٣٦)

we make no difference between one and another of them, and we bow to Allah (in Islam)."

**C135.** Here we have the Creed of Islam: to believe in:

1. the One Universal God.,
2. the Message to us through Muhammad and the Signs (Ayat) as interpreted on the basis of personal responsibility,
3. the Message delivered by other Teachers in the past.

These are mentioned in three groups:

- Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes: of these Abraham had apparently a Book (87:19) and others followed his tradition:
  - Moses and Jesus, who each left a scripture; these scriptures are still extant though not in their pristine form; and
  - other scriptures, Prophets, or Messengers of Allah, not specifically mentioned in the Quran.
- We make no difference between any of these. Their Message (in essentials) was one, and that is the basis of Islam.

فَإِنْ آمَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ...

137. So if they believe as ye believe, they are indeed on the right path; but if they turn back, it is they who are in schism;

... فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ ...

but Allah will suffice thee as against them,

**C136.** We are thus in the true line of those who follow the one and indivisible Message of the One Allah, wherever delivered.

If others narrow it or corrupt it, it is they who have left the faith and created a division or schism. But Allah sees and knows all. And He will protect His own, and His support will be infinitely more precious than the support which men can give.

... وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (١٣٧)

and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ ...

138. (Our religion is) the baptism of Allah;

**C137. Sibghah:** baptism: the root-meaning implies a dye or colour;

apparently the Arab Christians mixed a dye or colour in the baptismal water, signifying that the baptized person got a new colour in life.

We do not believe that it is necessary to be baptized to be saved. (Eds).

... وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً ...

and who can baptize better than Allah?

... وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدُونَ (١٣٨)

and it is He whom we worship.

قُلْ أَتُحَاجُّونَنَا فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ...

139. Say:

Will ye dispute with us about Allah, seeing that He is our Lord and your Lord;

... وَلَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ ...

that we are responsible for our doings and ye for yours;

... وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُخْلِصُونَ (١٣٩)

and that we are sincere (in our faith) in Him?

أَمْ تَقُولُونَ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ...

140. Or do ye say that Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob

... وَالْأَسْبَاطُ كَانُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى ...

and the Tribes were Jews or Christians?

**C138.** The alternative is with the question in the last verse.

Do you dispute with us although we worship the same God as you and claim that ours is the same religion as that of your ancestors?

Or do you really assert that Abraham and his son and his sons' sons, who founded the Tribes long before Moses, followed your Jewish religion as you know it?

History of course proves that claim absurd. If the Christians claim that these Patriarchs knew of and followed the teaching of Jesus, the claim is still more absurd, - except in the sense of Islam that Allah's teaching is one in all ages.

... قُلْ أأنْتُمْ أَعْلَمُ أم اللّهُ ...

Say: Do ye know better than Allah?

... وَمَنْ أظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً عِنْدَهُ مِنَ اللّهِ ...

Ah! who is more unjust than those who conceal the testimony they have from Allah?

... وَمَا اللّهُ بِعَاقِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٤٠)

But Allah is not unmindful of what ye do!

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ...

141. That was a people that hath passed away.

They shall reap the fruit of what they did, and ye of what ye do!

... وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٤١)

Of their merits there is no question in your case.

**C139.** Verse 134 began a certain argument, which is now rounded off in the same words in this verse. To use a musical term, the motif is now completed.

The argument is that it is wrong to claim a monopoly for Allah's Message: it is the same for all peoples and in all ages: if it undergoes local variations or variations according to times and seasons those variations pass away.

This leads to the argument in the remainder of the Surah that with the renewal of the Message and the birth of a new People, a new symbolism and new ordinances become appropriate, and they are now expounded.

### C.49 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(2:142-167)

*But those people have passed away,  
Who promised to uphold the Law of Allah.  
Their progeny having been found  
Unworthy, their place was taken  
By a new people looking towards Makkah-  
A new people, with a new Messenger,  
To bear witness to Allah's Law,  
To proclaim the truth, maintain  
His Symbols, and strive and fight  
For Unity in Allah's Way.*

### Section 17

سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ ...

142. The fools among the people will say:

**C140. Nas:** People, the unthinking multitude that sway to and fro, instead of being firm in Allah's Way.

The reference here is to the idolaters, the Hypocrites, and the party of Jews who were constantly seeking to "entangle in their talk" Mustafa and his disciples in Madinah even as the Pharisees and the Sadducees of Jesus' day tried to entangle Jesus (Matt. 22:15, 23)

... مَا وَلَاهُمْ عَن قِبَلَتِهِمُ الَّتِي كَانُوا عَلَيْهَا ...

"What hath turned them from the Qiblah to which they were used?"



**C141. Qiblah:** The direction to which Muslims turn in prayer.

Islam lays great stress on social prayer in order to emphasize our universal Brotherhood and mutual cooperation. For such prayer, order, punctuality, precision, symbolical postures, and a common direction are essential, so that the Imam (leader) and all his congregation may face one way and offer their supplications to Allah.

In the early days, before they were organized as a people, they followed as a symbol for their Qiblah the sacred city of Jerusalem, sacred both to the Jews and the Christians, the people of the Book. This symbolized their allegiance to the continuity of Allah's revelation.

When, despised and persecuted, they were turned out of Makkah and arrived in Madinah. Al Mustafa under divine direction began to organize its people as an Ummah, an independent people, with laws and rituals of their own. At that stage the Ka'bah was established as Qiblah, thus going back to the earliest centre, with which the name of Abraham was connected, and traditionally also the name of Adam.

Jerusalem still remained (and remains) sacred in the eyes of Islam on account of its past, but Islam is progressive religion, and its new symbolism enabled it to shake off the tradition of a dead past and usher in the era of untrammelled freedom dear to the spirit of Arabia. The change took place about 16 1/2 months after Hijrah.

... قُلْ لِلّٰهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ...

Say: to Allah belong both East and West;

... يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ (١٤٢)

He guideth whom He will to a Way that is straight.

... وَكَذٰلِكَ

143. Thus

**C142. Thus:** By giving you a Qiblah of your own, most ancient in history, and most modern as a symbol of your organisation as a new nation (Ummah).

... جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا ...

have We made of you an Ummah justly balanced,

**C143. Justly balanced:** The essence of Islam is to avoid all extravagances on either side. It is a sober, practical religion.

But the Arabic word (*wasat*) also implies a touch of the literal meaning of Intermediacy. Geographically Arabia is in an intermediate position in the Old World, as was proved in history by the rapid expansion of Islam, north, south, west and east.

... لَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ ...

that ye might be witnesses over the nations,

**C144. Witnesses:** When two persons dispute, they advance extravagant claims. A just witness comes between them, and brings the light of reason to bear on them, pruning all their selfish extravagances. So the mission of Islam is to curb, for instance, the extreme formalism of the Mosaic law and the extreme "other-worldliness" professed by Christianity.

The witness must be unselfish, equipped with first-hand knowledge, and ready to intervene in the cause of justice. Such is the position claimed by Islam among rival systems. Similarly, within Islam itself, the position of witness to whom disputants can appeal is held by Muhammad Al Mustafa.

... وَيَكُونُ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا ...

and the Messenger a witness over yourselves;

... وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعُ الرَّسُولَ ...

and We appointed the Qiblah to which thou wast used, only to test those who followed the Messenger

... مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ ...

from those who would turn on their heels (from the faith).

**C145.** The Qiblah of Jerusalem might itself have seemed strange to the Arabs, and the change from it to the

Ka'bah might have seemed strange after they had become used to the other.

In reality one direction or another, or east or west, in itself did no matter, as Allah is in all places, and is independent of Time and Place. What mattered was the sense of discipline, on which Islam lays so much stress: which of us is willing to follow the directions of the chosen Prophet of Allah? Mere quibblers about non-essential matters are tested by this. (R).

... وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ ...

Indeed it was (a change) momentous, except to those guided by Allah.

... وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ ...

And never would Allah make your faith of no effect.

**C146.** What became of prayer with the Jerusalem Qiblah?

It was equally efficacious before the new Qiblah was ordained. Allah regards our faith: every act of true and genuine faith is efficacious with Him, even if formalists pick holes in such acts.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرؤُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ (١٤٣)

For Allah is to all people most surely full of kindness, Most Merciful.

قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ ...

144. We see the turning of thy face (for guidance) to the heavens;

**C147.** This shows the sincere desire of Mustafa to seek light from above in the matter of the Qiblah.

Until the organisation of his own People into a well-knit community, with its distinctive laws and ordinances, he followed a practice based on the fact that the Jews and Christians looked upon Jerusalem as a sacred city. But there was no universal Qiblah among them. Some Jews turned towards Jerusalem as a sacred city. But there was

no universal Qiblah among them. Some Jews turned towards Jerusalem, especially during the Captivity, as we shall see later.

At the time of our Prophet, Jerusalem was in the hands of the Byzantine Empire, which was Christian. But the Christians oriented their churches to the East (hence the word "orientation") which is a point of the compass, and not the direction of any sacred place. The fact of the altar being in the East does not mean that every worshipper has his face to the east; for, according at least to modern practice, the seats in a church are so placed that different worshippers may face in different directions.

The Preacher of Unity naturally wanted, in this as in other matters, a symbol of complete unity, and his heart was naturally delighted when the Qiblah towards the Ka'bah was settled. Its connection with Abraham gave it great antiquity; its character of being an Arab centre made it appropriate when the Message came in Arabic, and was preached through the union of the Arabs; at the time it was adopted, the little Muslim community was shut out of it, being exiles in Madinah, but it became a symbol of bore and eventual triumph, of which Muhammad lived to see the fulfilment; and it also became the centre and gathering ground of all peoples in the universal pilgrimage, which was instituted with it.

... فَلْنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا ...

now shall We turn thee to a Qiblah that shall please thee.

... قَوْلٌ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ  
شَطْرَهُ ...

Turn then thy face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque; wherever ye are, turn your faces in that direction.

**C148. The sacred Mosque:** i.e. the mosque wherein the Ka'bah is located, in the sacred city of Makkah.

It is not correct to suggest that the command making the Ka'bah the Qiblah abrogates [2:115](#), where it is stated that East and West belong to Allah, and He is everywhere.

This is perfectly true at all times, before and after the institution of the Qiblah. As if to emphasize this, the same words about East and West are repeated in this very passage; see [2:142](#) above. Where the *Itqan* mentions *mansukh* in this connection, I am sorry I cannot follow that opinion, unless *mansukh* is defined in a special way, as some of the commentators do. (R).

... وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ...

The people of the Book know well that that is the truth from their Lord,

**C149.** Glimmerings of such a Qiblah were already foreshadowed in Jewish and Christian practice but its universality was only perfected in Islam.

... وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٤٤)

nor is Allah unmindful of what they do.

... وَلَئِنْ أَنْتِيتَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ بِكُلِّ آيَةٍ مَّا تَبْعُوا قِبْلَتَكَ ...

145. Even if thou wert to bring to the People of the Book all the signs (together), they would not follow thy Qiblah;

... وَمَا أَنْتَ بِتَّابِعٍ قِبْلَتَهُمْ ...

nor art thou going to follow their Qiblah;

... وَمَا بَعْضُهُمْ بِتَّابِعٍ قِبْلَةَ بَعْضٍ ...

nor indeed will they follow each other's Qiblah.

**C150.** See [n. 147 to 2:144](#) above.

The Jews and Christians had a glimmering of the Qiblah idea, but in their attitude of self-sufficiency they were not likely to welcome the Qiblah idea as perfected in Islam.

Nor is Islam, after the fuller knowledge which it has received, likely to revert to the uncertain, imperfect, and varying ideas of orientation held previously.

A very clear glimpse of the old Jewish practice in the matter of the Qiblah and the importance attached to it is found in the book of Daniel, [6:10](#).

Daniel was a righteous man of princely lineage and lived about 506-538 B.C. He was carried off to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, the Assyrian, but was still living when Assyria was overthrown by the Medes and Persians. In spite of the "captivity" of the Jews, Daniel enjoyed the highest offices of state at Babylon, but he was ever true to Jerusalem. His enemies (under the Persian monarch) got a penal law passed against any one who "asked a petition of any god or man for 30 days" except the Persian King.

But Daniel continued true to Jerusalem. "His windows being open in his chambers towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."

... وَلَئِن اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ مِّن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ...

If thou, after the knowledge hath reached thee, wert to follow their (vain) desires,

... إِنَّكَ إِذَا لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٤٥)

then wert thou indeed (clearly) in the wrong.

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ ...

146. The People of the Book know this as they know their own sons;

**C151.** The People of the Book should have known all this as well as "they knew their own sons", as their past traditions and teaching should have made them receptive of the new message.

Some commentators construe the demonstrative pronoun "**this**" to refer to the Prophet. In that case the interpretation would be:

The People of the Book know Muhammad as well as they know their own sons;

they know him to be true and upright;

they know him to be in the line of Abraham; they know him to correspond to the description of the prophet foretold among themselves; but

selfishness induces some of them to act against their own knowledge and conceal the truth.

... وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ (١٤٦)

but some of them conceal the truth which they themselves know.

الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ (١٤٧)

147. The truth is from thy Lord, so be not at all in doubt.

**C152. Truth** only comes from Allah, and it remains truth, however men might try to conceal it or throw doubts on it.

## Section 18

وَلِكُلِّ وُجْهَةً هُوَ مُوَلَّىٰهَا فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ ...

148. To each is a goal to which Allah turns him; then strive together (as in a race) toward all that is good.

**C153.** The question is how we are to construe the pronoun, **huwa**, in the original. The alternative translation would be;

"To each is a goal to which he turns."

The simile of life being a race in which we all zealously run forward to the one goal of good, may be applied individually and nationally. This supplies another argument of the Ka'bah Qiblah, viz., the unity of goal, with diversity of races, traditions and temperaments.

... أَيْنَ مَا تَكُونُوا يَأْتِ بِكُمْ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا ...

Wheresoever ye are, Allah will bring you together.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١٤٨)

For Allah hath power over all things.

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ...

149. From whencesoever thou startest forth, turn thy face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque;

**C154.** The simile of a race is continued, and so the Qiblah command is repeated from that point of view.

In 2:144 it was mentioned as the new symbol of the new nation (Muslim): now it is shown as the symbol of Good, at which we should all aim, from whichever point we started, e.g., as Jews or Christians, or our individual point of view; the Qiblah will unite us as a symbol of the Goal of the Future.

In 2:150 below, it is repeated:

- First for the individual, on the ground of uniformity and the removal of all occasions of dispute and argument; and
- secondly for the Muslim people, on the same ground, as a matter of discipline.

There is another little harmony in the matter of the repetitions.

Note that the race and starting point argument begins at 2:149 and is rounded off in the latter part of 2:150. The latter argument includes the former, and is more widely worded:

"wheresoever ye are": which in the Arabic expression would imply three things;

- in whatever circumstances ye are, or
- at whatever time ye are, or
- in whatever place ye are.

I have spoken before of a sort of musical harmony in verbal repetitions: here there is a sort of pictorial harmony, as of a larger circle symmetrically including a smaller concentric circle.

... وَإِنَّهُ لِلْحَقِّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٤٩)

that is indeed the truth from thy Lord. And Allah is not unmindful of what ye do.

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ...

150. So from whencesoever thou startest forth, turn thy face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque;



... وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ ...

among wheresoever ye are turn your face thither, that there be no ground of dispute against you among the people,

... إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي ...

except those of them that are bent on wickedness; so fear them not, but fear Me;

... وَلَا تَمَّ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ (١٥٠)

and that I may complete My favors on you, and ye may (consent to) be guided.

كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا مِنْكُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ ...

151. A similar (favor have ye already received) in that We have sent among you a Messenger of your own, rehearsing to you Our signs, and purifying you,

**C155.** This verse should be read with 2:150, of which the sentence is here completed.

The argument is that in the grant of the Ka'bah Qiblah, Allah was perfecting religion and fulfilling the prayer for the future made by Abraham. That prayer was threefold:

1. That Makkah should be made a sacred Sanctuary (2:126);
2. that a truly believing (Muslim) nation should be raised, with places of devotion there (2:128); and
3. that an Apostle should be sent among the Arabs with certain qualities (2:129), which are set out there and again repeated here to complete the argument.

... وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ (١٥١)

and instructing you in Scripture and wisdom, and in new Knowledge.

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكَرْكُمْ ...

152. Then do ye remember Me; I will remember you.

**C156.** The word "**remember**" is too pale a word for **dhikr**, which has now acquired a large number of associations in our religious literature.

In its verbal signification it implies:

- to remember;
- to praise by frequently mentioning;
- to rehearse;
- to celebrate or commemorate;
- to make much of;
- to cherish the memory of as a precious possession. (R).

... وَأَشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونَ (١٥٢)

Be grateful to Me, and reject not faith.

## Section 19

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ ...

153. O ye who believe! seek help with patient perseverance and prayer:

**C157.** See [2:45](#) and [n. 61](#).

An additional meaning implied in **sabr** is self-restraint.

Haqqani defines it in his Tafsir as following Reason and restraining Fear, Anger, and Desire.

What can be a higher reward for patience, perseverance, self-restraint and constancy than that Allah should be with us?

For this promise opens the door to every kind of spiritual well-being.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ (١٥٣)

for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.

... وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتٌ ...

154. And say not of those who are slain in the way of Allah: "They are dead."

**C158.** The "patient perseverance and prayer" mentioned in the last verse is not mere passivity. It is active striving in the way of Truth, which is the way of Allah.

Such striving is the spending of one's self in Allah's way,

- either through our property or through our own lives,
- or the lives of those nearest and dearest to us,
- or it may be the loss of all the fruits of a lifetime's labour not only in material goods but in some intellectual
- or moral gain, some position which seemed in our eyes to be eminently desirable in itself, but which we must cheerfully sacrifice if necessary for the Cause.

With such sacrifice, our apparent loss may be our real gain: he that loses his life may really gain it; and the rewards or "fruits" that seem lost were mere impediments on our path to real inward progress. (R).

... بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ (١٥٤)

Nay, they are living, though ye perceive (it) not.

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ...

155. Be sure We shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil),

... وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ (١٥٥)

but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere.

**C159.** The glad tidings are the blessings of Allah in [2:157](#) or (which is the same thing) the promise in [2:153](#) that Allah will be with them.

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ (١٥٦)

156. Who say, when afflicted with calamity:

"To Allah we belong, and to Him is our return."

أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ ...

157. They are those on whom (descend) blessings from Allah, and Mercy,

... وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ (١٥٧)

and they are the ones that receive guidance.

إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِن شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ ...

158. Behold!

Safa and Marwa are among the Symbols of Allah.

**C160.** The virtue of patient perseverance in faith leads to the mention of two symbolic monuments of that virtue.

These are the two little hills of Safa and Marwa now absorbed in the city of Makkah, and close to the well of Zamzam. Here, according to tradition, the lady Hajar, mother of the infant Ismail, prayed for water in the parched desert, and in her eager quest round these hills, she found her prayer answered and saw the Zamzam spring.

Unfortunately the Pagan Arabs had placed a male and a female idol here, and their gross and superstitious rites caused offence to the early Muslims. They felt some hesitation in going round these places during the Pilgrimage. As a matter of fact they should have known that the Ka'bah (the House of Allah) had been itself defiled with idols, and was sanctified again by the purity of Muhammad's life and teaching.

The lesson is that the most sacred things may be turned to the basest uses; that we are not therefore necessarily to ban a thing misused; that if our intentions and life are pure, Allah will recognise them even if the world cast stones at us because of some evil associations which they join with what we do, or with the people we associate with, or with the places which claim our reverence.

... فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوْ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا ...

So if those who visit the house in the season or at other times, should compass them round, it is no sin in them.

**C161. The House:** the Sacred Mosque, the Ka'bah.

The Season of regular Hajj culminates in the visit to Arafat on the ninth day of the month of Dhu al Hijjah, followed by the circumambulation of the Ka'bah.

A visit to the Sacred Mosque and the performance of the rites of pilgrimage at any other time is called an Umrah. The symbolic rites are the same in either case, except that the Arafat rites are omitted in the Umrah.

The **Safa** and **Marwa** are included among the Monuments, as pointing to one of the highest of Muslim virtues.

... وَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلِيمٌ (١٥٨)

And if anyone obeyeth his own impulse to good, be sure that Allah is He Who recogniseth and knoweth.

**C162.** The impulse should be to Good; if once we are sure of this, we must obey it without hesitation, whatever people may say.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ ...

159. Those who conceal the clear (Signs) We have sent down, and the guidance,

... مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ ...

after We have made it clear for the people in the book,

أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّاعِنُونَ (١٥٩)

on them shall be Allah's curse, and the curse of those entitled to curse.

**C163. Those entitled to curse:** i.e., angels and mankind (see [2:161](#) below): the cursed ones will deprive themselves of the protection of Allah and of the angels, who are the Powers of Allah, and of the good wishes of mankind, because by contumaciously rejecting Faith, they not only sin against Allah but are false to their own manhood, which Allah created in the "best of moulds" (95:4).

The terrible curses denounced in the Old Testament are set out in Deut. 28:15-68.

There is one difference.

Here it is for the deliberate rejection of Faith, a theological term for the denying of our higher nature.

There it is for a breach of the lease part of the ceremonial Law. (R).

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنُّوا فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

160. Except those who repent and make amends and openly declare (the truth), to them I turn;

... وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٦٠)

for I am Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ...

161. Those who reject faith, and die rejecting, on them is Allah's curse,

... وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ (١٦١)

and the curse of angels, and of all mankind.

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ...

162. They will abide therein:

**C164. Therein:** in the curse.

A curse is not a matter of words: it is a terrible spiritual state, opposite to the state of Grace.

Can man curse?

Not of course in the same sense in which we speak of the curse of Allah. A mere verbal curse is of no effect. Hence the English saying:

"A causeless curse will not come."

But if men are oppressed or unjustly treated, their cries can ascend to Allah in prayer, and then it becomes Allah's "wrath" or curse, the deprivation of Allah's Grace as regards the wrongdoer.

... لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ (١٦٢)

Their penalty will not be lightened, nor will respite be their (lot).

وَاللَّهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٦٣)

163. And your Allah is one Allah;

there is no god but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

**C165.** Where the terrible consequences of Evil, i.e., the rejection of Allah, are mentioned, there is always stress laid on Allah's attributes of Grace and Mercy.

In this case Unity is also stressed, because we have just been told about the Qiblah symbol of unity and are about to pass the theme of unity in diversity, in Nature and in the social laws of human society.

## Section 20

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ...

164. Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day;

... وَالْفَلَكَ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ ...

in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind;

... وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ...

in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead;

... وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ ...

in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth;

... وَتَصْرِيْفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ ...

in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth;

... لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (١٦٤)

(here) indeed are signs for a people that are wise.

**C166.** This magnificent Nature passage stands out like a hill in a landscape, enhancing the beauty of our view, and preparing us for the every-day laws and ordinances which follow.

Note its literary architecture. Allah is One and among His wondrous Signs is the unity of design in the widest diversity of Nature. The Signs are taken from the features of beauty, power, ad utility to man himself, and lead up to an appeal to Man's own intelligence ad wisdom.

We begin with the glory of the heavens ad the earth, the wide spaces covered by man's imagination, remote and yet so near to his own life. The most striking everyday phenomenon resulting from the interrelations of the heavens ad the earth is the alternation of day ad night, regular and yet changing in duration with the seasons ad the latitudes of our globe.

The night for rest, and the day for work; and we can think of the work in terms of nature's beauty; the stately ships "flowing" (as the original text has it) across the seas, for communications ad merchandise as between men ad men. The seas thus serve us no less than land, and the give-and-take as between sea, sky, ad land, is further exemplified by the rain.

The rain leads to the fertility of the land, and here we are reminded of the contrast between Winter's death of Nature ad her revivification in the Spring. Here we are reminded of agriculture ad the use we make of cattle ad all kinds of living creatures.

The word translated "beasts" has a wide meaning, including crawling creatures, insects, etc. - all contributing to the round of Nature's operations.

This leads us on to the wonderful winds, the region of the air, which man is just beginning to explore ad navigate. The personified winds drive the clouds in the sky like "slaves."

Here is another aspect of clouds besides that of giving rain. The fleecy clouds are things of sunset beauty; at midday they temper the glare of the sun; at all times they affect radiation ad other processes going on in the sky. So we come back to the sky, rounding off the argument, and correlating our life with the Will ad Power of Allah, if we had the wisdom to see!.



وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَندَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ...

165. Yet there are men who take (for worship) others besides Allah as equal (with Allah); they love them as they should love Allah.

... وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ...

But those of faith are overflowing in their love for Allah.

... وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِذْ يَرَوْنَ الْعَذَابَ أَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا...

If only the unrighteous could see, behold, they would see the penalty, that to Allah belongs all power,

... وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ (١٦٥)

and Allah will strongly enforce the Punishment.

**C167.** Everything around and within us points to unity of purpose and design, - points to Allah. Yet there are foolish persons (unrighteous - those who deliberately use the choice given them to go wrong). They think something else is equal to Allah. Perhaps they even do lip service to Allah.

If only the unrighteous could see the consequences, they would see the terrible Penalty, and that all Power is in Allah's hands, not in that of any one else.

Who are these others who are used as fetishes by the misguided?

It may be:

- creatures of their own imagination, or of their faculties misused; the idea lying behind Idols is akin to this, for no intelligent idol-worshipper owns to worshipping stocks and stones; or
- good leaders whose names have been misused out of perversity to erect them to a position of equality with Allah; or
- Powers of evil that deliberately mislead.

When it comes to the inevitable consequences of blasphemy and the rejection of Allah, the eyes of all are opened and these false and artificial, relations dissolve.

The idea which was created into a fetish disowns its follower, i.e. is seen to have no reasonable basis in the life of the follower, and the follower is forced to renounce it as false. The good ones would take an unholy delight in exposing the facts. The Reality is now irresistible but alas! at what cost?

إِذْ تَبَرَّأَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا وَرَأَوْا الْعَذَابَ...

166. Then would those who are followed clear themselves of those who follow (them); they would see the penalty,

... وَتَقَطَّعَتْ بِهِمُ الْأَسْبَابُ (١٦٦)

and all relations between them would be cut off.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا لَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَتَّبَرَأَ مِنْهُمُ كَمَا تَبَرَّؤُوا مِنَّا...

167. And those who followed would say:

"If only we had one more chance, we would clear ourselves of them, as they have cleared themselves of us."

... كَذَلِكَ يُرِيهِمُ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ حَسَرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

Thus will Allah show them (the fruits of) their deeds as (nothing but) regrets,

**C168.** Cf. 3:156, 7:36, 19:39, 25:23, 69:50, [Eds]

... وَمَا هُمْ بِخَارِجِينَ مِنَ النَّارِ (١٦٧)

nor will there be a way for them out of the Fire.

## **C.50 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)**

**(2:168-242)**

*The Society thus organized*

*Must live under laws*

*That would guide their everyday life-*

*Based on eternal principles*

*Of righteousness and fair dealing*

*Cleanliness and sobriety,  
Honesty and helpfulness,  
One to another-yet shaped  
Into concrete forms, to suit  
Times and circumstances  
And the varying needs  
Of average men and women;  
The food to be clean and wholesome;  
Blood feuds to be abolished;  
The rights and duties of heirs  
To be recognized after death,  
Not in a spirit of Formalism,  
But to help the weak and the needy  
And check all selfish wrongdoings;  
Self-denial to be learnt by fasting;  
The courage to fight in defence  
Of right, to be defined;  
The Pilgrimage to be sanctified  
As a symbol of unity;  
Charity and help to the poor  
To be organized; unseemly riot  
And drink and gambling  
To be banished; orphans to be protected;  
Marriage, divorce, and widowhood  
To be regulated; and the rights of women,  
Apt to be trampled under foot,  
Now clearly affirmed.*

## Section 21

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ...

168. O ye people!

... كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا ...

eat of what is on earth, lawful and good;

**C169.** We now come to the regulations about food.

- First (2:168-71) we have an appeal to all people, Muslims, Pagans, as well as the People of the Book;
- then (2:172-73) to the Muslims specially;
- then (2:174-76) to the sort of men who then (as some do now) either believe in too much formalism or believe in no restrictions at all.

Islam follows the Golden Mean. All well-regulated societies lay down reasonable limitations. These become incumbent on all loyal members of any given society, and show what is "lawful" in that society. But if the limitations are reasonable, as they should be, the "lawful" will also coincide more and more with what is "good".

**Good: Tayyub:** Pure, Clean, wholesome, pleasing to the taste.

The general principle then would be:

- what is lawful and what is good, should be followed, not what is evil, or shameful, or foisted on by false ascription to divine injections, or
- what rests merely on the usage of ancestors, even though the ancestors were ignorant or foolish.

An example of a shameful custom would be that among the Pagan Arabs of taking congealed blood and eating it fried.

... وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ (١٦٨)

and do not follow the footsteps of the Evil One, for he is to you an avowed enemy.

إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالسُّوءِ وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (١٦٩)

169. For he commands you what is evil and shameful, and that ye should say of Allah that of which ye have no knowledge.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ ...

170. When it is said to them: "Follow what Allah hath revealed,"

... قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا ...

they say: "Nay! we shall follow the ways of our fathers."

... أُولَئِكَ كَانَ أَبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ (١٧٠)

What! even though their fathers were void of wisdom and guidance?

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي يَنْعِقُ بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءَ وَنِدَاءَ ...

171. The parable of those who reject faith is as if one were to shout like a goat-herd, to things that listen to nothing but calls and cries;

**C170.** If you reject all faith, the highest wisdom and the most salutary regulations are lost on you. You are like "dumb driven cattle" who can merely hear calls, but cannot distinguish intelligently between shades of meaning or subtle differences of values.

... صُمٌّ بُكْمٌ عُمِيٌّ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (١٧١)

deaf, dumb, and blind, they are void of wisdom.

**C171.** Cf. 2:18, where we are told that the rejecters of faith are "deaf, dumb and blind: they will not return to the path."

Here the consequence of their not using their senses is that they have no wisdom. In each context there is just the appropriate deduction.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ ...

172. O ye who believe! eat of the good things that We have provided for you,

... وَأَشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ تَعْبُدُونَ (١٧٢)

and be grateful to Allah, if it is Him ye worship.

**C172.** Gratitude for Allah's gifts is one form of worship.

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنْزِيرِ ...

173. He hath only forbidden you dead meat, and blood, and the flesh of swine,

**C173. Dead meat: maitat:** carrion; animal that dies of itself; the original Arabic has a slightly wider meaning given to it in Fiqah (Religious Law); anything that dies of itself and is not expressly killed for food with the Takbir duly pronounced on it.

But there are exceptions, e.g., fish and locusts are lawful, though they have not been made specially *Halal* with the Takbir. But even fish or locusts as carrion would be obviously ruled out.

... وَمَا أَهْلًا بِهِ لغيرِ اللَّهِ ...

and that on which any other name hath been invoked besides that of Allah,

**C174.** For prohibited foods, Cf. also 5:4-5; 6:121, 138-146; etc.

The teachers of Fiqah (Religious Law) work out the details with great elaboration. My purpose is to present general principles, not technical details.

Carrion or dead meat and blood as articles of food would obviously cause disgust to any refined person. So would swine's flesh where the swine live on offal. Where swine are fed artificially on clean food, the objections remain:

1. that they are filthy animals in other respects, and the flesh of filthy animals taken as food affects the eaten;
2. that swine's flesh has more fat than muscle-building material; and
3. that it is more liable to disease than other kinds of meat; e.g., trichinosis, characterized by hair-like worms in the muscular tissue.

As to food dedicated to idols or false gods, it is obviously unseemly for the Children of Unity to partake of it.

... فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ...

but if one is forced by necessity, without willful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits, then is he guiltless.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (١٧٣)

For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

... إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَسْتُرُونَ بِهِ نَمًّا قَلِيلًا ...

174. Those who conceal Allah's revelations in the Book, and purchase for them a miserable profit,

... أُولَئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا النَّارَ ...

they swallow into themselves naught but fire;

**C175.** "They eat nothing but fire into their bellies" is a literal translation that produces an effect of rude inelegance which is not in the Arabic words.

Even in the matter of food and drinks, the mission of Islam is to avoid the extremes of lawlessness on the one hand and extreme formalism on the other. It has laid down a few simply and very reasonable rules. Their infraction causes loss of health or physical powers in any case.

But if there is further a spirit of subjective rebellion or fraud - passing off in the name of religion something which is far from the purpose - the consequences become also moral and spiritual. Then it becomes a sin against Faith and Spirit.

Continuing the physical simile, we actually swallow fire into ourselves. Imagine the torments which we should have if we swallowed fire into our physical body! They would be infinitely worse in our spiritual state, and they would go on to the Day of Resurrection, when we shall be deprived even of the words which the Judge speaks to a reasonable culprit, and we shall certainly not win His Grace and Mercy.

... وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ ...

Allah will not address them on the Day of Resurrection, nor purify them;

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٧٤)

grievous will be their penalty.

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالََةَ بِالْهُدَى وَالْعَذَابَ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ...

175. They are the ones who buy error in place of guidance and torment in place of forgiveness.

... فَمَا أَصْبَرَهُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ (١٧٥)

Ah! what boldness (they show) for the Fire!

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ نَزَلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ...

176. (Their doom is) because Allah sent down the Book in truth

... وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِي الْكِتَابِ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ (١٧٦)

but those who seek causes of dispute in the Book are in a schism far (from the purpose).

**C176.** From the mere physical regulation we are at once lifted up into the sphere of morals and faith. For the one acts and reacts on the other. If we are constantly carping at wholesome regulations, we shall do nothing but cause division and schisms among the people, and ordered society would tend to break up.

## Section 22

لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ ...

177. It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces toward East or West;

... وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ ...

but it is righteousness

**C177.** As if to emphasize again a warning against deadening formalism, we are given a beautiful description of the righteous and God-fearing man. He



should obey salutary regulation, but he should fix his gaze on the love of Allah and the love of his fellow-men.

We are given four heads:

1. our faith should be true and sincere;
2. we must be prepared to show it in deeds of charity to our fellowmen;
3. we must be good citizens, supporting social organisation; and
4. our own individual soul must be firm and unshaken in all circumstances. They are interconnected, and yet can be viewed separately.

... مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ ...

to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers;

**C178.** Faith is not merely a matter of words. We must realise the presence and goodness of Allah. When we do so, the scales fall from our eyes: all the falsities and fleeting nature of the Present cease to enslave us, for we see the Last Day as if it were today.

We also see Allah's working in His world and in us; His Powers (angels), His Messengers and His Message are no longer remote from us, but come within our experience. (R).

... وَأَتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَى ...

to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin,

**C179.** Practical deeds of charity are of value when they proceed from love, and from no other motive. In this respect, also, our duties take various forms, which are shown in reasonable gradation:

- our kith and kin;
- orphans (including any persons who are without support or help);
- people who are in real need but who never ask (it is our duty to find them out, and they come before those who ask);

- the stranger, who is entitled to laws of hospitality;
- the people who ask and are entitled to ask, i.e., not merely lazy beggars, but those who seek our assistance in some form or another (it is our duty to respond to them);
- and the slaves (we must do all we can to give or buy their freedom). Slavery has many insidious forms, and all are included.

... وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ ...

for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves;

... وَأَقَامِ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا ...

to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfil the contracts which ye have made;

**C180.** Charity and piety in individual cases do not complete our duties. In prayer and charity, we must also look to our organized efforts: where there is a Muslim State, these are made through the State, in facilities for public prayer, and public assistance, and for the maintenance of contracts and fair dealing in all matters.

... وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ ...

and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic.

**C181.** Then come the Muslim virtues of firmness and patience. They are to "preserve the dignity of man, with soul erect" (Burns).

Three sets of circumstances are specially mentioned for the exercise of this virtue:

1. bodily pain or suffering,
2. adversities or injuries of all kinds, deserved and underserved and
3. periods of public panic, such as war, violence, pestilence, etc.

... أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ (١٧٧)

Such are the people of truth, the Allah-fearing.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ ...

178. O ye who believe!

the law of equality is prescribed to you

**C182.** Note first that this verse and the next make it clear that Islam has much mitigated the horrors of the pre-Islamic custom of retaliation. In order to meet the strict claims of justice, **equality** is prescribed, with a strong recommendation for mercy and forgiveness.

To translate **qisas**, therefore, by retaliation, is I think incorrect. The Latin legal term Lex Talionis may come near it, but even that is modified here. In any case it is best to avoid technical terms for things that are very different.

"Retaliation" in English has a wider meaning, equivalent almost to returning evil for evil, and would more fitly apply to the blood-feuds of the Days of Ignorance.

Islam says:

if you must take a life for a life, at least there should be some measure of equality in it; the killing of the salve of a tribe should not involve a blood feud where many free men would be killed; but the law of mercy, where it can be obtained by consent, with reasonable compensation, would be better.

Our law of equality only takes account of three conditions in civil society,

- free for free,
- slave for slave,
- woman for woman.

Among free men or women, all are equal: you cannot ask that because a wealthy, or high-born, or influential man is killed, his life is equal to two or three lives among the poor or the lowly. Nor, in cases of murder, can you go into the value or abilities of a slave.

A woman is mentioned separately because her position as a mother or an economic worker is different. She does not form a third class, but a division in the other two classes.

One life having been lost, do not waste many lives in retaliation: at most, let the Law take one life under strictly prescribed conditions, and shut the door to private vengeance or tribal retaliation. But if the aggrieved party consents (and this condition of consent is laid down to prevent worse evils), forgiveness and brotherly love is better, and the door of Mercy is kept open. In Western law, no felony can be compounded.

... الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلِ ...

in cases of murder;

**C183.** The jurists have carefully laid down that the law of **qisas** refers to murder only. **Qisas** is not applicable to manslaughter, due to a mistake or an accident. There, there would be no capital punishment.

... الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرِّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْأَنْثَى بِالْأَنْثَى ...

the free for the free, the slave for the slave, the woman for the woman.

... فَمَنْ عَفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أُخِيهِ ...

But if any remission is made by the brother of the slain,

**C184. The brother:** the term is perfectly general; all men are brothers in Islam. In this, and in all questions of inheritance, females have similar rights to males, and therefore the masculine gender imports both sexes.

Here we are considering the rights of the heirs in the light of the larger brotherhood.

- In 2:178-79 we have the rights of the heirs to life (as it were):
- in 2:180-82 we proceed to the heirs to property.

... شَيْءٌ فَاتَّبَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدَاءٌ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ ...

then grant any reasonable demand, and compensate him with handsome gratitude;

**C185.** The **demand** should be such as can be met by the party concerned, i.e., within his means, and reasonable according to justice and good conscience.

For example, a demand could not be made affecting the honour of a woman or a man. The whole penalty can be remitted if the aggrieved party agrees, out of brotherly love. In meeting that demand the culprit or his friends should equally be generous and recognise the good-will of the other side. There should be no subterfuges, no bribes, no unseemly bye-play; otherwise the whole intention of mercy and peace is lost.

... ذَلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ...

this is a concession and a Mercy from your Lord.

... فَمَن اَعْتَدَىٰ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَاِنَّهُ عَدَابٌ اَلِيمٌ (١٧٨)

After this whoever exceeds the limits shall be in grave penalty.

وَلَكُمْ فِي التَّوَصُّلِ حَيَاةٌ يَا اُولِي الالْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (١٧٩)

179. In the law of equality there is (saving of) life to you, O ye men of understanding! that ye may restrain yourselves.

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ إِنْ تَرَكَ خَيْرًا...

180. It is prescribed, when death approaches any of you, if he leave any goods,

... الوَصِيَّةَ لِلْوَٰلِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ (١٨٠)

that he make a bequest to parents and next of kin, according to reasonable usage; this is due from the Allah-fearing.

**C186.** There are rules of course for the disposal of interstate property. But it is a good thing that a dying man or woman should, of his own free-will, think of his parents and his next of kin, not in a spirit of injustice to other, but in a spirit of love and reverence for those who have cherished him.

He must, however, do it "according to reasonable usage": the limitations will be seen further on.

فَمَنْ بَدَّلَهُ بَعْدَمَا سَمِعَهُ فَإِنَّمَا إِثْمُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يُبَدِّلُونَهُ...

181. If anyone changes the bequest after hearing it, the guilt shall be on those who make the change.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (١٨١)

For Allah hears and knows all things.

فَمَنْ خَافَ مِنْ مُوسٍ جَنَفًا أَوْ إِتْمًا فَأَصْلَحَ بَيْنَهُمْ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ...

182. But if anyone fears partiality or wrongdoing on the part of the testator, and makes peace between (the parties concerned), there is no wrong in him;

**C187.** A verbal will is allowed, but it is expected that the testator will be just to his heirs and not depart from what is considered equitable. For this reason definite shares were laid down for heirs later (see 4:11, etc.).

These define or limit the testamentary power, but do not abrogate it. For example, amongst kin there are persons, e.g., an orphan grandson in the presence of surviving sons who would not inherit under the interstate scheme, and the testator might like to provide for them. Again, there may be outsiders for whom he may wish to provide, and jurists have held that he has powers of disposition up to one-third of his property. But he must not be partial to one heir at the expense of another, or attempt to defeat lawful creditors.

If he tries to do this, those who are witnesses to his oral disposition may interfere in two ways.

- One way would be to persuade the testator to change his bequest before he dies.
- The other way would be after death, to get the interested parties together and ask them to agree to a more equitable arrangement.

In such a case they are acting in good faith, and there is no fraud. They are doing nothing wrong. Islam approves of every lawful device for keeping brethren at peace, without litigation and quarrels. Except for this, the changing of the provisions of a Will is a crime, as it is under all Law.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (١٨٢)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

## Section 23

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

183. O ye who believe!

... كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (١٨٣)

fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint.

**C188. As it was prescribed:** this does not mean that the Muslim fast is like the other fasts previously observed, in the number of days, in the time or manner of the fast, or in other incidents; it only means that the principle of self-denial by fasting is not a new one.

أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ...

184. (Fasting) for a fixed number of days;

**C189.** This verse should be read with the following verses, 185-88, in order that the incidents of the physical fast may be fully understood with reference to its spiritual meaning.

The Muslim fast is not meant for self-torture. Although it is stricter than other fasts, it also provides alleviations for special circumstances. If it were merely a temporary abstention from food and drink, it would be salutary, to many people, who habitually eat and drink to excess.

The instincts for food, drink, and sex are strong in the animal nature, and temporary restraints from all these enables the attention to be directed to higher things. This is necessary through prayer, contemplation and acts of charity, not of the showy kind, but by seeking out those really in need.

Certain standards are prescribed, but much higher standards are recommended.

... فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ...

but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed number (should be made up) from days later.

**C190.** For journeys, a minimum standard of three marches is prescribed by some Commentators: others make it more precise by naming a distance of 16 farsakhs, equivalent to 48 miles. A journey of 8 or 9 miles on foot is more tiring than a similar one by bullock cart. There are various degrees of fatigue in riding a given distance on horseback or by camel or in a comfortable train or by motor car or by steamer, aeroplane, or airship.

In my opinion the standard must depend on the means of locomotion and on the relative resources of the traveler. It is better to determine it in each case according to circumstances. (R).

... وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيفُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ ...

For those who can do it (with hardship), is a ransom, the feeding of one that is indigent. But he that will give more, of his own free will, it is better for him,

**C191.** Those who can do it with hardship: such as aged people, or persons specially circumstanced.

The Shafi'is would include a woman expecting a child, or one who is nursing a baby, but on this point opinion is not unanimous, some holding that they ought to put in the fasts later, when they can.

... وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (١٨٤)

and it is better for you, that ye fast, if ye only knew.

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَى  
وَالْفُرْقَانِ ...

185. Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong).

**C192. Judgment** (between right and wrong):

**Furqan:** the criterion or standard by which we judge between right and wrong. See 2:53 n. 68.



... فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ...

So everyone of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting,

... وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ...

but if anyone is ill or on a journey, the prescribed period, (should be made up) by days later.

... يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ ...

Allah intends every facility for you, He does not want to put you to difficulties.

... وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا هَدَاكُمْ ...

(He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you;

**C193.** The regulations are again and again coupled with an insistence on two things:

- the facilities and concessions given, and
- the spiritual significance of the fast, without which it is like an empty shell without a kernel.

If we realise this, we shall look upon Ramadhan, not as a burden, but as a blessing, and shall be duly grateful for the lead given to us in this matter.

... وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (١٨٥)

and perchance ye shall be grateful.

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ...

186. When my servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them);

... أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ...

I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calleth on Me;

... فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ (١٨٦)

let them also, with a will, listen to My call, and believe in Me; that they may walk in the right way.

**C194.** These verses 186 and 188 are not foreign to the subject of Ramadhan, but emphasize its spiritual aspect.

- Here we are told of Prayer and the nearness of Allah, and
- in 188 we are asked not to "eat up" other people's substance.

أَجَلٌ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصَّيَّامِ الرَّفَقْتُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ...

187. Permitted to you, on the night of the fasts, is the approach to your wives.

... هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ ...

They are your garments. And ye are their garments.

**C195.** Men and women are each other's **garments**: i.e., they are for mutual support, mutual comfort, and mutual protection, fitting into each other as a garment fits the body.

A garment also is both for show and concealment.

The question of sex is always delicate to handle: here we are told that even in such matters a clear, open, and honest course is better than fraud or self-deception. The sex instinct is classed with eating and drinking, an animal thing to be restrained, but not to be ashamed of. The three things are prohibited during the fast by day, but permitted after the fast is broken at night till the next fast commences.

... عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنْكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ...

Allah knoweth what ye used to do secretly among yourselves; but He turned to you and forgave you;

... قَالَ أَنْ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ...

so now associate with them, and seek what Allah hath ordained for you,

**C196.** There is difference of opinion as to the exact meaning of this. I would connect this as a parallel clause

with the clause "eat and drink", which follows, all three being governed by "until the white thread", etc.

That is, all three things must stop when the fast begins again in the early morning.

Or it may mean: What is permitted is well enough, but seek the higher things ordained for you.

... وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَبْيُنَّ لَكُمْ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ...

and eat and drink, until the white thread of dawn appear to you distinct from its black thread;

**C197.** Those in touch with Nature know the beautiful effects of early dawn.

First appear thin white indefinable streaks of light in the east; then a dark zone supervenes; followed by a beautiful pinkish white zone clearly defined from the dark. This is the true dawn; after that the fast begins.

... ثُمَّ أَمَمُوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ ...

then complete your fast till the night appears;

**C198. Till the night appears:** From the actual practice of the Holy Prophet, this is rightly interpreted to mean: "Till sunset."

... وَلَا تَبَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ ...

but do not associate with your wives while you are in retreat in the mosques.

**C199.** This verse refers to the known Islamic practice called i'tikaf which means retreating to Mosques for devotion and worship. The Prophet (peace be on him) used to retreat to the mosque during the last ten days of Ramadan. [Eds].

... تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرُبُوهَا ...

Those are limits (set by) Allah; approach not nigh thereto.

**C200.** I construe these limits as applying to the whole of the regulations about fasts.

... كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ (١٨٧)

Thus doth Allah make clear His signs to men, that they may learn self-restraint.

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتُدْخُلُوا بِهَا إِلَى الْحُكَّامِ...

188. And do not eat up your property among yourselves for vanities, nor use it as bait for the judges,

... لِتَأْكُلُوا فَرِيقًا مِّنْ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْإِثْمِ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (١٨٨)

with intent that ye may eat up wrongfully and knowingly a little of (other) people's property.

**C201.** Besides the three primal physical needs of man, which are apt to make him greedy, there is a fourth greed in society, the greed of wealth and property. The purpose of fasts is not completed until this fourth greed is also restrained.

Ordinarily honest men are content if they refrain from robbery, theft, or embezzlement. Two more subtle forms of the greed are mentioned here. One is where one uses one's own property for corrupting others - judges or those in authority - so as to obtain some material gain even under the cover and protection of the law.

The words translated "other people's property" may also mean "public property". A still more subtle form is where we use our own property or property under our own control - "among yourselves" in the Text - for vain or frivolous uses. Under the Islamic standard this is also greed. Property carries with it its own responsibilities.

If we fail to understand or fulfil them, we have not learnt the full lesson of self-denial by fasts.

## Section 24

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَهْلِةِ...

189. They ask thee concerning the new moons.

**C202.** There were many superstitions connected with the New Moon, as there are to the present day. We are told to disregard such superstitions.

As a measure of time, where the lunar calendar is used, the New Moon is one great sign, for which people watch with eagerness. Muslim festivals, including the Pilgrimage, are fixed by the appearance of the New Moon.

The Arabs, among other superstitions, had one which made them enter their houses by the back door during or after the Pilgrimage. This is disapproved, for there is no virtue in any such artificial restrictions. All virtue proceeds from the love and fear of Allah.

... فُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ ...

Say: they are but signs to mark fixed periods of time in (the affairs of) men, and for pilgrimage.

... وَلَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِأَنْ تَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهَا وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنِ اتَّقَى ...

It is no virtue if ye enter your houses from the back; it is virtue if ye fear Allah.

... وَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (١٨٩)

Enter houses through the proper doors, and fear Allah, that ye may prosper.

**C203.** This is a Muslim proverb now, and much might be written about its manifold meanings. A few may be noted here.

- If you enter a society, respect its manners and customs.
- If you want to achieve an object honorably, go about it openly and not "by a backdoor".
- Do not beat about the bush. If you wish success in an undertaking, provide all the necessary instruments for it.

The subject of the **New Moon** provides a good transition between the Ramadan fast, which begins and ends with the New Moon, the Pilgrimage, whose ten days commence with the New Moon, and the War which Islam had to wage in self-defence against the Pagans, who wanted to exclude them from the Pilgrimage after they had driven them out of the house and home.

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعَدُّوا ...

190. Fight in the Cause of Allah, those who fight you, but do not transgress limits;

**C204.** War is only permissible in self-defence, and under well-defined limits. When undertaken, it must be pushed with vigour, but not relentlessly, but only to restore peace and freedom for the worship of Allah.

In any case strict limits must not be transgressed: women, children, old and infirm men should not be molested, nor trees and crops cut down, nor peace withheld when the enemy comes to terms. (R).

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ (١٩٠)

for Allah loveth not transgressors.

وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَأَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجَكُم ...

191. And slay them wherever ye catch them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out;

... وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ ...

for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter;

... وَلَا تَقَاتِلُوهُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتَّى يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِيهِ ...

but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they (first) fight you there;

**C205.** This passage is illustrated by the events that happened at Hudaibiyah in the sixth year of the Hijrah, though it is not clear that it was revealed on that occasion.

The Muslims were by this time a strong and influential community. many of them were exiles from Mecca, where the Pagans had established an intolerant autocracy, persecuting Muslims, preventing them from visiting their homes, and even keeping them out by force from performing the Pilgrimage during the universally recognised period of truce.

This was intolerance, oppression, and autocracy to the last degree, and the mere readiness of the Muslims to

enforce their rights as Arab citizens resulted without bloodshed in an agreement which the Muslims faithfully observed.

The Pagans, however, had no scruples in breaking faith, and it is unnecessary here to go into subsequent events.

In general, it may be said that Islam is the religion of peace, good will, mutual understanding, and good faith. But it will acquiesce in wrongdoing, and its men will hold their lives cheap in defence of honour, justice, and the religion which they hold sacred. Their ideal is that of heroic virtue combined with unselfish gentleness and tenderness, such as is exemplified in the life of the Prophet.

They believe in courage, obedience, discipline, duty, and a constant striving by all the means in their power, physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual, for the establishment of truth and righteousness.

They know that war is an evil, but they will not flinch from them if their honour demands it and a righteous Imam (such as Muhammad was *par excellences*) commands it, for then they know they are not serving carnal ends. In other cases, war has nothing to do with their faith, except that it will always be regulated by its humane precepts. (R).

... فَإِن قَاتَلْتُمُ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ كَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ (١٩١)

but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith.

**C206. Suppress faith:** in the narrower as well as the larger sense.

If they want forcibly to prevent you from exercising your sacred rites, they have declared war on your religion, and it would be cowardice to ignore the challenge or to fail in rooting out the tyranny.

فَإِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٩٢)

192. But if they cease, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِئْتَةً وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ...

193. And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah;

**C207. Justice and faith:** The Arabic word is Din, which is comprehensive. It implies the ideas of indebtedness, duty, obedience, judgment, justice, faith, religion, customary rites, etc.

The clause means: "until there is Din for Allah."

... فَإِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ (١٩٣)

but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression.

**C208.** If the opposite party cease to persecute you, your hostility ends with them as a party, but it does not mean, that you become friends to oppression. Your fight is against wrong; there should be no rancour against men.

الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمَاتُ قِصَاصٌ...

194. The prohibited month for the prohibited month, and so for all things prohibited, there is the law of equality.

**C209. Haram:** prohibited, sacred.

The month of Pilgrimage (Dhu al Hajja) was a sacred month, in which warfare was prohibited by Arab custom. The month preceding (Dhu al Qadah) and the month following (Muharram) were included in the prohibition, and Muharram was specially called al-Haram.

Possibly Muharram is meant in the first line, and the other months and other prohibited things in "all things prohibited".

In Rajab, also, war was prohibited.

If the pagan enemies of Islam broke that custom and made war in the prohibited months, the Muslims were free also to break that custom but only to the same extent as the other broke it.



Similarly the territory of Makkah was sacred, in which war was prohibited. If the enemies of Islam broke that custom, the Muslims were free to do so to that extent. Any convention is useless if one party does not respect it.

There must be a law of equality. Or perhaps the word reciprocity may express it better.

... فَمَنْ اَعْتَدَىٰ عَلَيَّكُمْ فَاَعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اَعْتَدَىٰ عَلَيَّكُمْ ...

If then anyone transgresses the prohibition against you, transgress ye likewise against him.

... وَانْفُوا اللَّهَ وَاَعْلَمُوا اَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ (١٩٤)

But fear Allah, and know that Allah is with those who restrain themselves.

**C210.** At the same time the Muslims are commanded to exercise self-restraint as much as possible.

Force is a dangerous weapon. It may have to be used for self-defence or self-preservation, but we must always remember that self-restraint is pleasing in the eyes of Allah. Even when we are fighting, it should be for a principle, not out of passion.

... وَاَنْفُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُؤْفُوا بِاَيْدِيكُمْ اِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ ...

195. And spend of your substance in the Cause of Allah, and make not your own hands contribute to your destruction,

**C211.** Every fight requires the wherewithals for the fight, the "sinews of war".

- If the war is just and in the cause of Allah, all who have wealth must spend it freely. That may be their contribution to the Cause, in addition to their personal effort, or if for any reason they are unable to fight.
- If they hug their wealth, perhaps their own hands are helping in their own self destruction. Or

- if their wealth is being spent, not in the Cause of Allah, but in something which pleases their fancy, it may be that the advantage goes to the enemy, and they are by their action helping their own destruction.

In all things, their standard should be, not selfishness, but the good of their brethren, for such good is pleasing to Allah.

... وَأَحْسِنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٩٥)

but do good; for Allah loveth those who do good.

وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ ...

196. And complete the Hajj or 'Umrah in the service of Allah.

**C212.** See [2:158](#), [n. 161](#).

The **Hajj** is the complete pilgrimage, of which the chief rites are during the first ten days of the month of Dhu al Hajja.

The **Umrah** is a less formal pilgrimage at any time of the year.

In either case, the intending pilgrim commences by putting on a simply garment of unsewn cloth in two pieces when he is some distance yet from Makkah.

The putting on of the pilgrim garb (ihram) is symbolical of his renouncing the vanities of the world.

After this and until the end of the pilgrimage he must not wear other clothes, or ornaments, anoint his hair, use perfumes, hunt, or do other prohibited acts. The completion of the pilgrimage is symbolized by the shaving of the head for men, and the cutting off of a few locks of the hair of the head for women, the putting off of the ihram and the resumption of the ordinary dress.

Here we are told:

1. That having once undertaken the pilgrimage, we must complete it;

2. that we must do it not for worldly ends, but as a symbol of our service and worship to Allah;
3. that if we are prevented for any reason, from completing the rites, a symbolical completion can be made by sending an offering for sacrifice; sacrifice would have been offered if we had been present personally; here we would send the sacrifice vicariously, and when it is likely to reach the place of sacrifice, we could then shave our heads and resume our ordinary dress and avocations. (R).

... فَإِنْ أَحْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ ...

But if ye are prevented (from completing it), send an offering for sacrifice, such as ye may find,

... وَلَا تَحْلِفُوا رُؤُوسَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحَلَّهُ ...

and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches the place of sacrifice.

... فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ بِهِ أَذًى مِّن رَّأْسِهِ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِّن صِيَامٍ أَوْ  
صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسُكٍ ...

And if any of you is ill, or has an ailment in his scalp, (necessitating shaving), (he should) in compensation either fast, or feed the poor, or offer sacrifice;

**C213.** If any one is taken ill after putting on the ihram, so that he has to put on other clothes, or if he has trouble or skin disease in his head or insects in his hair, and he has to shave his head before completion, he should fast (three days, say the Commentators), or feed the poor, or offer sacrifice.

... فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ ...

and, when ye are in peaceful conditions (again),

**C214.** When this was revealed, the city of Makkah was in the hands of the enemies of Islam, and the regulations about the fighting and the pilgrimage came together and were interconnected. But the revelation provides, as always, for the particular occasion, and also for normal conditions.

Makkah soon passed out of the hands of the enemies of Islam. People sometimes came long distances to Makkah before the pilgrimage season began. Having performed the Umrah, they stayed on for the formal Hajj.

In case the pilgrim had spent his money, he is shown what he can do, rich or poor, and yet hold his head high among his fellows, as having performed all rites as prescribed.

... فَمَنْ تَمَتَّعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ إِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ...

if anyone wishes to continue the 'Umrah on to the Hajj, he must make an offering, such as he can afford it,

... فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامًا ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجِّ وَسَبْعَةَ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ تِلْكَ عَشْرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ...

he should fast three days during the Hajj and seven days on his return, making ten days in all.

... ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلُهُ حَاضِرِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ...

This is for those whose household is not in (the precincts of) the Sacred Mosque.

**C215.** There is disagreement among Jurists wheter residents of Makkah are allowed to make *tamattu'* or not. However, the four schools of law are agreed that sacrificial offering is not obligatory for the residents of Makkah. [Eds].

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (١٩٦)

And fear Allah, and know that Allah is strict in punishment.

**C216.** This closes the section about the duties of fighting and introduces the connected question of pilgrimage in a sort of transition.

Fighting is connected with fear, and while it is meritorious to obey Allah, we are warned that we must not allow our selfish passions to carry us away, because it is in such times of stress that our spirit is tested.

Verse 195 ended with a benediction for those who do good.

This verse ends with a warning to those who take advantage of Allah's cause to transgress the limits, for the punishment is equally sure.

The next verse shows us the pitfalls we must avoid in a large concourse of people.

## Section 25

### الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُومَاتٌ...

197. For Hajj are the months well known.

**C217. The months well known:** the months of Shawwal, Dhu al Qadah, and Dhu al Hijjah (up to the 10th or the 13th) are set apart for the rites of Hajj. That is to say, the first rites may begin as early as the beginning of Shawwal, with a definite approach to Makkah, but the chief rites are concentrated on the first ten days of Dhu al Hijjah, and specially on the 8th, 9th and 10th of that month, when the concourse of pilgrims reaches its height.

The chief rites may be briefly enumerated:

1. the wearing of the pilgrim garment (ihram) from certain points definitely fixed on all the roads to Makkah; after this the pilgrimage prohibitions come into operation and the pilgrim is dedicated to worship and prayer and the denial of vanities;
2. the going round the Ka'bah seven times (tawaf), typifying activity, with the kissing of the little Black Stone built into the wall, the symbol of concentration in the love of God;
3. After a short prayer at the Station of Abraham ([2:125](#)), the pilgrim goes to the hills Safa and Marwa ([2:158](#)), the symbols of patience and perseverance;
4. the great Sermon (Khutbah) on the 7th of Dhu al Hijjah, when the whole assembly listens to an exposition of the meaning of Hajj;

5. the visit on the eighth, of the whole body of pilgrims to the Valley of Mina (about six miles north of Makkah), where the pilgrims halt and stay the night, proceeding on the ninth to the plain and hill of Arafat, about five miles further north, which commemorates the reunion of Adam and Eve after their wanderings, and is also called the Mount of Mercy;
6. the tenth day, the Id Day, the day of Sacrifice, when the sacrifice is offered in the Valley of Mina, and the symbolic ceremony of casting seven stones at the Evil One is performed on the first occasion; it is continued on subsequent days;

both rites are connected with the story of Abraham; this is the Id al Adha;

note that the ceremony is symbolically connected with the rejection of evil in thought, word, and deed. This closes the Pilgrimage, but a stay of two or three days after this is recommended, and these days are called Tashriq days. (R).

... فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ الْحَجَّ فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِي الْحَجِّ ...

If anyone undertakes that duty therein, let there be no obscenity nor wickedness, nor wrangling in the Hajj.

... وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَعْلَمُهُ اللَّهُ ...

And whatever good ye do, (be sure) Allah knoweth it.

... وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَى...

And take a provision (with you) for the journey, but the best of provisions is right conduct.

**C218.** It is recommended that pilgrims should come with provisions, so that they should not be compelled to resort to begging.

But, as usual, our thought is directed at once from the physical to the spiritual. If provisions are required for a journey on earth, how much more important to provide for the final journey into the future world?

The best of such provisions is right conduct, which is the same as the fear of Allah.

... وَأَتَّقُونَ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ (١٩٧)

So fear Me, o ye that are wise!

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ...

198. It is no crime in you if ye seek of the bounty of your Lord (during Pilgrimage).

**C219.** Legitimate trade is allowed, in the interests both of the honest trader, who can thus meet his own expenses, and of the generality of pilgrims, who would otherwise be greatly inconvenienced for the necessities of life.

But the profit must be sought as from the "bounty of Allah". There should be no profiteering, or trade "tricks".

Good honest trade is a form of service to the community, and therefore to Allah.

... فَإِذَا أَفَضْتُمْ مِّنْ عَرَفَاتٍ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ عِنْدَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ...

Then when ye pour down from (Mount) Arafat, celebrate the praises of Allah at the Sacred Monument,

**C220.** About midway between Arafat and Mina (see n. 217 to 2:197) is a place called Muzdalifah where the Holy Prophet offered up a long prayer. It has thus become a Sacred Monument and pilgrims are directed to follow that example on their return. A special reason for this is given in the note following.

... وَادْكُرُوهُ كَمَا هَدَاكُمْ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِّن قَبْلِهِ لَمِن الضَّالِّينَ (١٩٨)

and celebrate His praises as He has directed you, even though, before this, ye went astray.

**C221.** Certain arrogant tribes living in Makkah used not to go to Arafat with the crown but to stop short at Muzdalifah. They are rebuked for their arrogance and told that they must perform all the rites like the rest of the pilgrims. There is equality in Islam.

ثُمَّ أَفِيضُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَقَاضَ النَّاسُ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ...

199. Then pass on at a quick pace from the place whence it is usual for the multitude so to do, and ask for Allah's forgiveness.

**C222.** See [the last note](#).

Towards the end of the Pilgrimage the crowd is very great, and if any people loitered after Arafat, it would cause great confusion and inconvenience. The pace has therefore to be quick for every one, a very salutary regulation.

Every member of the crown must think of the comfort and convenience of the whole mass.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (١٩٩)

For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمْ مَنَاسِكَكُمْ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَذِكْرِكُمْ آبَاءَكُمْ أَوْ أُشَدَّ ذِكْرًا...

200. So when ye have accomplished your holy rites, celebrate the praises of Allah, as ye used to celebrate the praises of your fathers, yea, with far more heart and soul.

**C223.** After the Pilgrimage, in Pagan times, the pilgrims used to gather in assemblies in which the praises of ancestors were sung.

As the whole of the pilgrimage rites were spiritualised in Islam, so this aftermath of the pilgrimage was also spiritualised. It was recommended for pilgrims to stay on two or three days after the pilgrimage, but they must use them in prayer and praise to Allah.

See [2:203 below](#). (R).

... فَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَقٍ (٢٠٠)

There are men who say: "Our Lord! give us (thy bounties) in this world!" but they will have no portion in the Hereafter.

**C224.** If you hasten to get all the good things of the world, and only think of them and pray for them, you would lose the higher things of the future.



The proper Muslim attitude is neither to renounce this world nor to be so engrossed in it as to forget the spiritual future.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَقُولُ...

201. And there are men who say:

202.

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ  
حَسَنَةً

"Our Lord!

give us good in this world and good in  
the Hereafter,

وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

and defend us from the torment on the  
fire!"

أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ (٢٠٢)

202. To these will be allotted what they have earned, and Allah is quick in account.

**C225.** Our spiritual account is counting up, both on the debit and credit side. In worldly accounts, both our profits and our losses may be delayed. But in Allah's books there is no delay. Our actions go before us.

(See [2:95](#), [n. 100](#)).

وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْدُودَاتٍ...

203. Celebrate the praises of Allah during the Appointed Days,

**C226. The Appointed Days:** the three days after the tenth, when the pilgrims stay on in the Valley of Mina for prayer and praise.

They are the days of Tashriq (see 2:200, n. 223). It is optional for pilgrims to leave on the second or third day.

... فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ تَأَخَّرَ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ لِمَنِ اتَّقَى ...

but if anyone hastens to leave in two days, there is no blame on him, and if anyone stays on, there is no blame on him, if his aim is to do right.

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ (٢٠٣)

Then fear Allah, and know that ye will surely be gathered unto Him.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

204. There is the type of man whose speech about this world's life may dazzle thee,

**C227.** The two contrasted types of men mentioned in 2:200 and 201 are here further particularized:

the glib hypocrite who appears worldly-wise but plans harm, contrasted with the sincere believer who is prepared to suffer martyrdom for his faith.

The Commentators give names of people who exemplified these types.

- The mischief maker has a smooth tongue and indulges in plausible talk with many oaths. He appears to be worldly-wise, and though you may despise him for his worldliness, you may not realise his frauds. Behind your back he is an implacable enemy. He stirs up quarrels, and causes all sorts of mischief to you or your friends. He can never win Allah's love, and we are warned against his tricks.

... وَيَشْهَدُ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ وَهُوَ أَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ (٢٠٤)

and he calls Allah to witness about what is in his heart; yet is he the most contentious of enemies.

وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ...

205. When he turns his back, his aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle.

... وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ (٢٠٥)

But Allah loveth not mischief.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْإِثْمِ...

206. When it is said to him, "Fear Allah," he is led by arrogance to (more) crime.

... فَحَسْبُ لَهُ جَهَنَّمُ وَالْبَيْسَ الْمِهَادُ (٢٠٦)

Enough for him is Hell; an evil bed indeed (to lie on)!

**C228.** According to the English saying,

"As you have made your bed, so you must lie in it."

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ...

207. And there is the type of man who gives his life to earn the pleasure of Allah;

... وَاللَّهُ رَؤُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ (٢٠٧)

and Allah is full of kindness to (His) devotees.

**C229.** This second type of man,

- firm, sincere, devoted, willing to give his life for the faith that is in him - was common in early Islam.

Such men were its pillars. Through persecution, obloquy, torture, threat to their own lives or the lives of those dear to them, they stood by their leader, and many of them gave their lives. That is what established Islam.

We are asked in the next verse to follow this type and shun the other or evil type. If we do that, our Cause is safe.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطَوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ...

208. O ye who believe! enter into Islam whole-heartedly; and follow not the footsteps of the Evil One;

... إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ (٢٠٨)

for he is to you an avowed enemy.

فَإِنْ زَلَلْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْكُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ فَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٠٩)

209. If ye backslide after the clear (signs) have come to you, then know that Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

**C230.** If you backslide after the conviction has been brought home to you, you may cause some inconvenience to the Cause, or to those who counted upon you, but do not be so arrogant as to suppose that you will defeat Allah's Power and Wisdom. The loss will be your own.

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِّنَ الْعَمَامِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ...

210. Will they wait until Allah comes to them in canopies of clouds, with angels (in His train) and the question is (thus) settled?

... وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ (٢١٠)

But to Allah do all questions go back (for decision).

**C231.** If faith is wanting, all sorts of excuses are made to resist the appeal of Allah. They might and do say:

"Oh yes! we shall believe if Allah appears to us with His angels in His glory!"

In other words they want to settle the question in their way, and not in Allah's way.

That will not do. The decision in all questions belongs to Allah. If we are true to Him, we wait for His times and seasons, and do not expect Him to wait on ours.

## Section 26

سَلِّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ كَمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ مِنْ آيَةٍ بَيِّنَةٍ ...

211. Ask the Children of Israel how many Clear (Signs) We have sent them.

**C232.** The Israelites under Moses were shown Allah's glory and many clear Signs and yet they went after their own ways, and preferred their own whims and fancies. So do people in all ages.

But let them not deceive themselves. Allah's justice is sure, and when it comes, it will be strict and unmistakable to those who reject His grace.

... وَمَنْ يُبَدِّلْ نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٢١١)

But if anyone, after Allah's favor has come to him, substitutes (something else), Allah is strict in punishment.

**C233.** Cf. [2:196 \(end\)](#) where the question was of those who do not fear Allah.

Here the question is of those who reject Allah's Signs.

زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

212. The life of this world is alluring to those who reject faith, and they scoff at those who believe.

... وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

But the righteous will be above them on the Day of Resurrection;

... وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (٢١٢)

for Allah bestows His abundance without measures on whom He will.

**C234.** Allah's gifts in this world seem unequal, and sometimes those get them who seem to deserve them least.

Allah's bounty is unlimited to the just as well as the unjust. In His wisdom He may give to whomsoever He pleases. The account is not taken now, but will be taken in the end, when the balance will be redressed.

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ...

213. Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings;

... وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ...

and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed;

... وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ ...

but the People of the Book, after the clear Signs came to them, did not differ among themselves, except through selfish contumacy.

... فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ...

Allah by His Grace guided the believers to the truth, concerning that wherein they differed.

... وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ (٢١٣)

For Allah guides whom He will to a path that is straight.

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخَلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ ...

214. Or do ye think that ye shall enter the Garden (of Bliss) without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you?

... مَسَّتْهُمْ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَّاءُ وَزُلْزَلُوا...

They encountered suffering and adversity, and were so shaken in spirit

... حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَى نَصْرُ اللَّهِ ...

that even the Messenger and those of faith who were with him cried: "When (will come) the help of Allah?"

... أَلَا إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ (٢١٤)

Ah! verily, the help of Allah is (always) near!

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ ...

215. They ask thee what they should spend (in charity).

... قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلَّوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينِ  
وَأَبْنِ السَّبِيلِ...

Say:

Whatever ye spend that is good,

- is for parents and
- kindred and
- orphans and
- those in want and for wayfarers.

**C235.** Three questions arise in charity:

- What shall we give?
- to whom shall we give? and
- how shall we give?

The answer is here.

Give anything that is good, useful, helpful, valuable. It may be property or money; it may be a helping hand; it may be advice; it may be a kind word; "whatever ye do that is good" is charity.

On the other hand, if you throw away what is useless, there is no charity in it.

Or if you give something with a harmful intent, e.g., a sword to a madman, or a drug or sweets or even money to someone whom you want to entrap or corrupt, it is no charity but a gift of damnation.

To whom should you give?

It may be tempting to earn the world's praise by a gift that will be talked about, but are you meeting the needs of those who have the first claim on you?

If you are not, you are like a person who defrauds creditors: it is no charity.

Every gift is judged by its unselfish character: the degree of need or claim is a factor which you should consider; if you disregard it, there is something selfish behind it.

How should it be given?

As in the sight of Allah; thus shuts out all pretence, show, and insincerity.

... وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ (٢١٥)

And whatever ye do that is good, Allah knoweth it well.

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهُ لَكُمْ ...

216. Fighting is prescribed for you, and ye dislike it.

**C236.** To fight in the cause of Truth is one of the highest form of charity. What can you offer that is more precious than your own life?

But here again the limitations come in. If you are a mere brawler, or a selfish aggressive person, or a vainglorious bully, you deserve the highest censure. Allah knows the value of things better than you do. (R).

... وَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ ...

But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you

... وَعَسَى أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَكُمْ ...

and that ye love a thing which is bad for you.

... وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٢١٦)

But Allah knoweth, and ye know not.

## Section 27

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ قِتَالٍ فِيهِ ...

217. They ask thee concerning fighting in the Prohibited Month.

**C237. Prohibited Month:** See [2:194](#), [n. 209](#).

... فُلْ قِتَالٌ فِيهِ كَبِيرٌ ...

Say: "Fighting therein is a grave (offence);



... وَصَدُّ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَكُفْرٌ بِهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِخْرَاجُ أَهْلِهِ مِنْهُ  
أَكْبَرُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ...

but graver is it in the sight of Allah to prevent access to the path of Allah,

to deny Him,

to prevent access to the Sacred Mosque,

and drive out its members.

**C238.** The intolerance and persecution of the Pagan clique at Makkah caused untold hardships to the holy Messenger of Islam and his early disciples. They bore all with meekness and long-suffering patience until the holy one permitted them to take up arms in self-defence. Then they were twitted with breach of the custom about Prohibited Months, though they were driven to fight during that period against their own feeling in self defence.

But their enemies not only forced them to engage in actual warfare, but interfered with their conscience, persecuted them and their families, openly insulted and denied Allah, kept out the Muslim Arabs from the Sacred Mosque, and exiled them. Such violence and intolerance are deservedly called worse than slaughter.

... وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَكْبَرُ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ...

Tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter.

**C239.** Cf. [2:191](#), [193](#), where a similar phrase occurs.

**Fitnah:** trial, temptation, as in [2:102](#); or tumult, sedition, oppression, as here;

Mawlvi Muhammad Ali, Hafiz Sarwar, and M Pickthall translate "persecution" in this passage, which is also legitimate, seeing that persecution is the suppression of some opinion by violence, force, or threats.

... وَلَا يَزَالُونَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ حَتَّى يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَنْ دِينِكُمْ إِنِ اسْتَطَاعُوا...

Nor will they cease fighting you until they turn you back from your faith if they can.

... وَمَنْ يَرْتَدِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ قَيِّمَتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ ...

And if any of you turn back from their faith and die in unbelief,

... فَأُولَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ...

their works will bear no fruit in this life and in the Hereafter;

... وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٢١٧)

they will be Companions of the Fire and will abide therein.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

218. Those who believed and those who suffered exile and fought (and strove and struggled) in the path of Allah,

... أُولَئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (٢١٨)

they have the hope of the Mercy of Allah; and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ ...

219. They ask thee concerning wine

**C240. Wine: Khamr:** literally understood to mean the fermented juice of the grape; applied by analogy to all fermented liquor, and by further analogy to any intoxicating liquor or drug.

There may possible be some benefit in it, but the harm is greater than the benefit, especially if we look at it from a social as well as an individual point of view.

... وَالْمَيْسِرِ ...

and gambling.

**C241. Gambling: maisir:** literally, a means of getting something too easily, getting a profit without working for it; hence gambling. That is the principle on which gambling is prohibited.

The form must familiar to the Arabs was gambling by casting lots by means of arrows, on the principle of a lottery: the arrows were marked, and served the same purpose as a modern lottery ticket.

Something e.g., the carcass of a slaughtered animal, was divided into unequal parts. The marked arrows were drawn from a bag. Some were blank and those who drew them got nothing. Others indicated prizes, which were big or small. Whether you got a big share or a small share, or nothing, depended on pure luck, unless that was fraud also on the part of some persons concerned.

The principle on which the objection is based is:

- that, even if there is no fraud, you gain what you have not earned, or lose on a mere chance.

Dice and wagering are rightly held to be within the definition of gambling. (R).

... قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَّفْعِهِمَا ...

Say: "In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; but the sin is greater than the profit."

... وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ ...

They ask thee how much they are to spend;

... قُلِ الْعَفْوَ ...

say: "What is beyond your needs."

**C242.** Hoarding is no use either to ourselves, or to any one else. We should use the wealth we need; any superfluities we must spend in good works or in charity.

... كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٢١٩)

Thus doth Allah make clear to you His Signs: in order that ye may consider.

... فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ...

220. (Their bearings) on this life and the Hereafter.

**C243.** Gambling and intemperance are social as well as individual sins. They may ruin us in our ordinary everyday worldly life, as well as our spiritual future.

In case it is suggested that there is no harm in a little indulgence, we are asked to think over all its aspects, social and individual, - worldly and spiritual.

... وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْيَتَامَىٰ...

They ask thee concerning orphans.

**C244.** For Orphans the best rule is to keep their property, household, and accounts separate, lest there should be any temptation to get a personal advantage to their guardian by mixing them with the guardian's property, household accounts-also to keep clear of any ideas of marriage, where this fiduciary relation exist.

Quran 6:152 may possibly suggest complete separation. But it may be an economy and an advantage to the orphan to have his property and accounts administered with guardian's property and accounts and to have him live in the guardian's household, or to marry into the guardian's family, especially where the orphan's property is small and he or she has no other friend.

The test is:

what is best in the orphan's interest?

If the guardian does fall into temptation, even if human law does not detect him, he is told he is sinning in Allah's sight and that should keep him straight.

... قُلْ إِصْلَاحٌ لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ وَإِنْ تُخَالِطُوهُمْ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ...

Say:

"The best thing to do is what is for their good; if ye mix their affairs with yours, they are your brethren;

... وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ...

but Allah knows the man who means mischief from the man who means good.

... وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَعْتَبَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٢٠)

And if Allah had wished, He could have put you into difficulties:

He is indeed Exalted in Power, Wise."

**C245.** The idea in Islam is not to make Allah's Law a burdensome fetter, but to ease a man's path in all kinds of difficult situations by putting him on his honour and trusting him.

The strictest probity is demanded of him, but if he falls short of it, he is told that he cannot escape Allah's punishment even though he may evade human punishment.

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكَاتِ حَتَّى يُؤْمِنَنَّ...

221. Do not marry unbelieving women (idolaters), until they believe;

**C245a.** Literally "Pagan".

... وَلَا امَةٌ مُؤْمِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ ...

a slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman, even though she allure you.

**C245a.** Literally "Pagan".

... وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّى يُؤْمِنُوا ...

Nor marry (your girls) to unbelievers until they believe:

**C245a.** Literally "Pagan".

... وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكُمْ ...

a man slave who believes is better than an unbeliever, even though he allure you.

**C246.** Marriage is a most intimate communion, and the mystery of sex finds its highest fulfilment when intimate spiritual harmony is combined with the physical link. If religion is at all a real influence in life to both parties or to either party, a difference in this vital matter must affect the lives of both more profoundly than differences of birth, race, language, or position in life. It is therefore only right that the parties to be married should have the same spiritual outlook. If two person love each other, their outlook in the highest things of life must be the same.

Note that religion is not here a mere label or a matter of custom or birth. The two persons may have been born in different religions, but if, by their mutual influence, they come to see the truth in the same way, they must openly accept the same rites and the same social brotherhood. Otherwise the position will become impossible individually and socially.

... أُولَئِكَ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِإِذْنِهِ...

Unbelievers do (but) beckon you to the fire. But Allah beckons by His grace to the Garden (of Bliss) and forgiveness,

... وَيُبَيِّنُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٢١)

and makes His Signs clear to mankind: that they may receive admonition..

## Section 28

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ...

222. They ask thee concerning women's courses.

... فُلْ هُوَ أَدَى ...

Say:

They are a hurt and a pollution;

**C247. Adhan:** hurt, pollution.

Both aspects must be remembered. Physical cleanliness and purity make for health, bodily and spiritual. But the matter should be looked at from the woman's point of view as well as the man's. To her there is danger of hurt, and she should have every consideration.

In the animal world, instinct is a guide which is obeyed. Man should in this respect be better: he is often worse.

... فَاعْتَرِزُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي الْمَحِيضِ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوهُنَّ حَتَّى يَطْهُرْنَ...

so keep away from women in their courses, and do not approach them until they are clean.

... فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ ...

But when they have purified themselves ye may approach them in any manner, time, or place ordained for you by Allah.

**C248. Haythu:** A comprehensive word referring to manner, time, or place.

The most delicate matters are here referred to in the most discreet and yet helpful terms.

In sex morality, manner, time, and place are all important: and the highest standards are set by social laws, by our own refined instinct of mutual consideration, and above all, by the light shed by the highest Teachers form the wisdom which they receive from our Maker, Who loves purity and cleanliness in all things.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ (٢٢٢)

For Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.

نِسَاؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَكُمْ فَأْتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّى شِئْتُمْ وَقَدِّمُوا لَأَنفُسِكُمْ ...

223. Your wives are as a tilth unto you; so approach your tilth when or how ye will. But do some good act for your souls beforehand;

**C249.** Sex is not a thing to be ashamed of, or to be treated lightly, or to be indulged to excess.

It is as solemn a fact as any in life. It is compared to a husbandman's **tilth**; it is a serious affair to him; he sows the seed in order to reap the harvest. But he chooses his own time and mode of cultivation. He does not sow out of season nor cultivate in a manner which will injure or exhaust the soul. He is wise and considerate and does not run riot.

Coming from the simile to human beings, every kind of mutual consideration is required, but above all, we must remember that even in these matters there is a spiritual aspect. We must never forget our souls, and that we are responsible to Allah.

It was carnal-minded men who invented the doctrine of original sin:

"Behold," says the Psalmist, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalms 51:5).

This is entirely repudiated by Islam, in which the office of father and mother is held in the highest veneration. Every child of pure love is born pure. Celibacy is not necessarily a virtue, and may be a vice.

... وَأَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ مُلَاقُوهُ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٢٢٣)

and fear Allah, and know that ye are to meet Him (in the Hereafter), and give (these) good tidings to those who believe.

**C250.** Our highest spiritual ambition should be the hope of meeting Allah. To uphold such a hope is to give glad tidings to people of faith. It would only be unrepentant sinners who would fear the meeting.

Note how the most sensuous matters are discussed frankly, and immediately taken up into the loftiest regions of spiritual upliftment.

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا اللَّهَ عُرْضَةً لِأَيْمَانِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَتُصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ...

224. And make not Allah's (name) an excuse in your oaths against doing good, or acting rightly, or making peace between persons;

... وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢٢٤)

for Allah is one who heareth and knoweth all things.

**C251.** The Arabs had many special kinds of oaths, for each of which they had a special name in their language. Some of them related to sex matters, and caused misunderstanding, alienation, division, or separation between husband and wife. This and the following three verses refer to them.

In [2:224](#) we are first of all told in perfectly general terms that we are not to make an oath in the name of Allah an excuse for not doing the right thing when it is pointed out to us, or for refraining from doing something which will bring people together.



If we were swayed by anger or passion or mere caprice, Allah knows our inmost hearts, and right conduct and not obstinacy or quibbling is what He demands from us.

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا كَسَبْتُمْ قُلُوبِكُمْ...

225. Allah will not call you to account for thoughtlessness in your oaths, but for the intention in your hearts;

**C252.** It has been held that thoughtless oaths, if there is no intention behind them, can be expiated by an act of charity.

... وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ (٢٢٥)

and He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Forbearing.

لَّذِينَ يُؤْلُونَ مِنْ نِسَائِهِمْ تَرَبُّصُ أَرْبَعَةِ أَشْهُرٍ ...

226. For those who take an oath for abstinence from their wives, a waiting for four months is ordained;

... فَإِنْ قَاؤُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (٢٢٦)

if then they return, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَأِنْ عَزَمُوا الطَّلَاقَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢٢٧)

227. But if their intention is firm for divorce, Allah heareth and knoweth all things.

**C253.** Verses [225-227](#) should be read together with [verse 224](#). The latter, though it is perfectly general, leads up to the other three.

The Pagans Arabs had a custom very unfair to women in wedlock, and this was suppressed by Islam. Sometimes, in a fit of anger or caprice, a husband would take an oath by Allah not to approach his wife. This deprived her of conjugal rights, but at the same time kept her tied to him indefinitely, so that she could not marry again. If the husband was remonstrated with, he would say that his oath by Allah bound him.

Islam in the first place disapproved of thoughtless oaths, but insisted on proper solemn intentional oaths being

scrupulously observed. In a serious matter like that affecting a wife, if the oath was put forward as an excuse, the man is told that is not excuse at all. Allah looks to intention, not mere thoughtless words.

Reconciliation is recommended, but if they are really determined against reconciliation, it is unfair to keep them tied indefinitely. (R)

وَالْمُطَلَّاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ...

228. Divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three monthly periods,

... وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ ...

nor is it lawful for them, to hide what Allah hath created in their wombs,

... إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ...

if they have faith in Allah and the Last Day.

... وَبِعَوْلِهِنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا ...

And their husbands have the better right to take them back in that period, if they wish for reconciliation.

**C254.** Islam tries to maintain the married state as far as possible, especially where children are concerned, but it is against the restriction of the liberty of men and women in such vitally important matters as love and family life. It will check hasty action as far as possible and leave the door to reconciliation open at many stages.

Even after divorce a suggestion of reconciliation is made, subject to certain precautions (mentioned in the following verses) against thoughtless action. A period of waiting (iddah) for three monthly courses is prescribed, in order to see if the marriage conditionally dissolved is likely to result in issue. But this is not necessary where the divorced woman is a virgin: 33:49.

It is definitely declared that women and men shall have similar rights against each other.

... وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ...

And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable;

... وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٢٨)

but men have a degree (of advantage) over them and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

**C255.** The difference in economic position between the sexes makes the man's rights and liabilities a little greater than the woman's.

Quran 4:34 refers to the duty of the man to maintain the woman, and to a certain difference in nature between the sexes. Subject to this, the sexes are on terms of equality in law, and in certain matters the weaker sex is entitled to special protection.

## Section 29

الطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتَانٍ ...

229. A divorce is only permissible twice:

**C256.** Where divorce for mutual incompatibility is allowed, there is danger that the parties might act hastily, then repent, and again wish to separate. To prevent such capricious action repeatedly, a limit is prescribed.

Two divorces (with a reconciliation between) are allowed. After that the parties must definitely make up their minds, either to dissolve their union permanently, or to live honourable lives together in mutual love and forbearance - to "hold together on equitable terms", neither party worrying the other nor grumbling or evading the duties and responsibilities of marriage.

... فَأَمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ ...

after that, the parties should either hold together on equitable terms or separate with kindness.

**C257.** If a separation is inevitable, the parties should not throw mud at each other, but recognise what is right and honourable on a consideration of all the circumstances.

In any case a man is not allowed to ask back for any gifts or property he may have given to the wife. This is for the protection of the economically weaker sex.

Lest that protective provision itself work against the woman's freedom, an exception is made in the next clause.

... وَلَا يَجِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا مِمَّا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا إِلَّا أَنْ يَخَافَا أَلَّا يُقِيمَا  
حُدُودَ اللَّهِ...

It is not lawful for you, (men), to take back any of your gifts (from your wives), except when both parties fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah.

**C258.** All other prohibitions and limits prescribed here are in the interest of good and honourable lives for both sides, and in the interests of a clean and honourable social life, without public or private scandals.

If there is any fear that in safeguarding her economic rights, her very freedom of person may suffer, the husband refusing the dissolution of marriage, and perhaps treating her with cruelty, then, in such exceptional cases, it is permissible to give some material consideration to the husband, but the need and equity of this should be submitted to the judgment of impartial judges, i.e., properly constituted courts.

A divorce of this kind is called *khula'*.

... فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهِ...

If ye (judges) do indeed fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah, there is no blame on either of them if she give something for her freedom.

... تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا...

These are the limits ordained by Allah;

... وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٢٢٩)

so do not transgress them. If any do transgress the limits ordained by Allah, such persons wrong (themselves as well as others).

**C259. Wrong** (themselves as well as others):

**Zalimun:** for the root meaning of zulm see [n. 51. 2:35](#).

فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا ...

230. So if a husband divorces his wife (irrevocably),

**C260.** This is in continuation of the first sentence of [2:229](#).

Two divorces followed by re-union are permissible; the third time the divorce becomes irrevocable, until the woman marries some other man and he divorces her. This is to set an almost impossible condition. The lesson is: if a man loves a woman he should not allow a sudden gust of temper or anger to induce him to take hasty action. What happens after two divorces, if the man takes her back?

See [n. 261 to 2:231](#).

... فَلَا تَحِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ حَتَّى تَنْكِحَ زَوْجًا غَيْرَهُ ...

he cannot, after that, remarry her until after she has married another husband

... فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يَتَرَاجَعَا إِنْ ظَنَّا أَنْ يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ

...

and he has divorced her. In that case there is no blame on either of them if they reunite, provided they feel that they can keep the limits ordained by Allah.

... وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ يُبَيِّنُهَا لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٣٠)

Such are the limits ordained by Allah, which He makes plain to those who understand.

وَإِذَا طَلَقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلِّغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأُمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ...

231. When ye divorce women, and they fulfil the term of their ('Iddah), either take them back on equitable terms or set them free on equitable terms;

**C261.** If the man takes back his wife after two divorces, he must do so only on equitable terms, i.e., he must not put pressure on the woman to prejudice her rights in any way, and they must live clean and honourable lives, respecting each other's personalities. There are here two conditional clauses:

1. when ye divorce women, and
2. when they fulfil their Iddah: followed by two consequential clauses,
3. take them back on equitable terms, or
4. set them free with kindness.

The first is connected with the third and the second with the fourth. Therefore if the husband wishes to resume the marital relations, he need not wait for Iddah.

But if he does not so wish, she is free to marry someone else after Iddah. For the meaning of *Iddah* see [n. 254 above](#).

... وَلَا تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِّتَعْتَدُوا وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ...

but do not take them back to injure them or to take undue advantage; if anyone does that, He wrongs his own soul.

**C262.** Let no one think that the liberty given to him can be used for his own selfish ends. If he uses the law for the injury of the weaker party, his own moral and spiritual nature suffers.

... وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُوعًا...

Do not treat Allah's Signs as a jest,

**C263.** These difficult questions of sex relations are often treated as a joke. But they profoundly affect our individual lives, the lives of our children, and the purity and well-being of the society in which we live.

This aspect of the question is reiterated again and again.

... وَادْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ ...  
يَعْظُمُ بِهِ ...

but solemnly rehearse Allah's favors on you, and the fact that He sent down to you the Book and Wisdom, for your instruction.

**C264. Rehearse: zikr.** Cf. [2:152](#) and [n. 156](#).

We are asked to remember in our own minds, and to proclaim and praise, and be proud of Allah's favours on us.

His favours are immeasurable; not the least are His Revelations, and the wisdom which He has given to us to enable us to judge and act up to His guidance.

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٢٣١)

And fear Allah, and know that Allah is well acquainted with all things.

### Section 30

وَإِذَا طَلَقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَّغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ أَنْ يَنْكِحْنَ أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ إِذَا تَرَاضُوا بَيْنَهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ...

232. When ye divorce women, and they fulfil the term of their ('Iddah), do not prevent them from marrying their (former) husbands, if they mutually agree on equitable terms.

**C265.** The termination of a marriage bond is a most serious matter for family and social life. And every lawful divorce is approved which can equitable bring back those who have lived together, provided only there is mutual love and they can live on honourable terms with each other. If these conditions are fulfilled, it is not right for outsiders to prevent or hinder re-union. They may be swayed by property or other considerations.

This verse was occasioned by an actual case that was referred to the holy Apostle in his lifetime.

... ذَلِكَ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ...

This instruction is for all amongst you, who believe in Allah and the Last Day.

... دَلِّكُمْ أَزْكَى لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرَ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٢٣٢)

That is (the course making for) most virtue and purity amongst you, and Allah knows, and ye know not.

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُنِمَّ  
الرِّضَاعَةَ...

233. The mothers shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires, to complete the term.

**C266.** As this comes in the midst of the regulations on divorce, it applies primarily to cases of divorce, where some definite rule is necessary, as the father and mother would not, on account of the divorce, probably be on good terms, and the interests of the children must be safeguarded.

As, however, the wording is perfectly general, it has been held that the principle applies equally to the father and mother in wedlock: each must fulfil his or her part in the fostering of the child.

On the other hand, it is provided that the child shall not be used as an excuse for driving a hard bargain on either side. By mutual consent they can agree to some source that is reasonable and equitable, both as regards the period before weaning (the maximum being two years) and the engagement of a wet-nurse, or (by analogy) for artificial feeding.

But the mother's privileges must not be curtailed simply because by mutual consent she does not nurse the baby. In a matter of this kind the ultimate appeal must be to godliness, for all legal remedies are imperfect and may be misused.

... وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ...

But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms.

**C266a.** i.e. in case of divorce. [Eds].

... لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ...

No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear.



... لَا تُضَارَّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ بِوَالِدِهِ...

No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child, nor father on account of his child.

... وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ ...

An heir shall be chargeable in the same way

... فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا...

if they both decide on weaning, by mutual consent, and after due consultation, there is no blame on them.

... وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تَسْتَرْضِعُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَا آتَيْتُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ...

If ye decide on a foster-mother for your offspring, there is no blame on you, provided ye pay (the mother) what ye offered, on equitable terms.

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٢٣٣)

But fear Allah and know that Allah sees well what ye do.

وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَعَشْرًا...

234. If any of you die and leave widows behind, they shall wait concerning themselves four months and ten days:

**C267.** The 'Iddah of widowhood (four months and ten days) is longer than the 'Iddah of divorce (three monthly courses, 2:228).

In the latter the only consideration is to ascertain if there is any unborn issues of the marriage dissolved. This is clear from 33:49, where it is laid down that there is no 'Iddah for virgin divorces.

In the former there is in addition the consideration of mourning and respect for the deceased husband.

In either case, if it is proved that there is unborn issue, there is of course no question of remarriage for the woman until it is born and for a reasonable time afterwards.

Meanwhile here maintenance on a reasonable scale is chargeable to the late husband or his estate.

... فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ  
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ...

when they have fulfilled their term, there is no blame on you if they dispose of themselves in a just and reasonable manner.

... وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (٢٣٤)

And Allah is well acquainted with what ye do.

وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا عَرَّضْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ خِطْبَةِ النِّسَاءِ أَوْ أَكْنَنْتُمْ فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ...

235. There is no blame on you if ye make an offer of betrothal or hold it in your hearts.

**C268.** A definite contract of remarriage for the woman during her period of *Iddah* of widowhood is forbidden as obviously unseemly, as also any secrecy in such matters. It would bind the woman at a time when she is not fitted to exercise her fullest judgment.

But circumstances may arise when an offer (open for future consideration but not immediately decided), may be to her interests, and this is permissible. (R).

... عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ سَتَذْكُرُونَهُنَّ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُوَاعِدُوهُنَّ سِرًّا إِلَّا أَنْ تَقُولُوا  
قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا...

Allah knows that ye cherish them in your hearts: but do not make a secret contract with them except in terms honorable,

... وَلَا تَعْرَضُوا عُقْدَةَ النِّكَاحِ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ الْكِتَابُ أَجَلَهُ...

nor resolve on the tie of marriage till the term prescribed is fulfilled.

... وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُ...

And know that Allah knoweth what is in your hearts and take heed of Him;

... وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ (٢٣٥)

and know that Allah is Oft Forgiving, Most Forbearing.

## Section 31

لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ طَلَقْتُمْ النِّسَاءَ مَا لَمْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ أَوْ تَفَرَّضُوا لَهُنَّ  
فَرِيضَةً...

236. There is no blame on you if ye divorce women before consummation or the fixation of their dower;

... وَمَتَّعُوهُنَّ ...

but bestow on them (a suitable gift),

... عَلَى الْمَوْسِعِ قَدْرُهُ وَعَلَى الْمُقْتِرِ قَدْرُهُ ...

the wealthy according to his means, and the poor according to his means;

... مَتَاعًا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٢٣٦)

a gift of a reasonable amount is due from those who wish to do the right thing.

وَإِنْ طَلَقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ وَقَدْ فَرَضْتُمْ لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً ...

237. And if ye divorce them before consummation, but after the fixation of a dower for them,

... فَنِصْفُ مَا فَرَضْتُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يَعْفُونَ أَوْ يَعْفُورَ ...

then the half of the dower (is due to them), unless they remit it. Or (the man's half) is remitted

**C269.** The law declares that in such a case half the dower fixed shall be paid by the man to the woman.

But it is open to the woman to remit the half due to her or to the man to remit the half which he is entitled to deduct, and thus pay the whole.

... الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ ...

by him in whose hands is the marriage tie;

**C270. Him in whose hands is the marriage tie:** According to Hanafi doctrine this is the husband himself, who can ordinarily by his act dissolve the marriage. It therefore behoves him to be all the more liberal to the

woman and pay her the full dower even if the marriage was not consummated.

... وَأَنْ تَعْفُوا أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَنْسُوا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ ...

and the remission (of the man's half) is the nearest to righteousness. And do not forget liberality between yourselves.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٢٣٧)

For Allah sees well all that ye do.

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَىٰ ...

238. Guard strictly your (habit of) prayers, especially the middle prayer,

**C271. The Middle Prayer: Salutulk-wusfa:** may be translated "the best or the most excellent prayer."

Authorities differ as to the exact meaning of this phrase. The weight of authorities seems to be in favour of interpreting this as the 'Asr prayer in the middle of the afternoon. This is apt to be most neglected, and yet this is the most necessary, to remind us of Allah in the midst of our worldly affairs. (R).

... وَتُؤْمُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ (٢٣٨)

and stand before Allah in a devout (frame of mind).

فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ فَرِجَالًا أَوْ رُكْبَانًا ...

239. If ye fear (an enemy), pray on foot, or riding (as may be most convenient),

**C272. Verses 238-339** are parenthetical, introducing the subject of prayer in danger.

This is more fully dealt with in 4:101-103.

... فَإِذَا أَمْنْتُمْ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَمَا عَلَّمَكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ (٢٣٩)

but when ye are in security, celebrate Allah's praises in the manner He has taught you, which ye knew not (before).

وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَقَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا...

240. Those of you who die and leave widows

... وَصِيَّةً لِّأَزْوَاجِهِمْ مَّتَاعًا إِلَى الْحَوْلِ غَيْرَ إِخْرَاجٍ...

should bequeath for their widows a year's maintenance and residence;

**C273.** Opinions differ whether the provision (of a year's maintenance, with residence) for a widow is abrogated by the share which the widow gets (one-eighth or one-fourth) as an heir (4:12).

I do not think it is.

The bequest (where made takes effect as a charge on the property, but the widow can leave the house before the year is out, and presumably the maintenance then ceases.

... فَإِنْ خَرَجْنَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي مَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ مِنْ مَّعْرُوفٍ...

but if they leave (the residence), there is no blame on you for what they do with themselves, provided it is reasonable,

... وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٤٠)

and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

وَالْمُطَلَّاتِ مَتَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ...

241. For divorced women maintenance (should be provided) on a reasonable (scale).

... حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ (٢٤١)

This is a duty on the righteous.

كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (٢٤٢)

242. Thus doth Allah make clear His Signs to you: in order that ye may understand.

## C.51 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(2:243-253)

*Fighting in defence of Truth and Right  
Is not to be undertaken lightheartedly,  
Nor to be evaded as a duty.  
Life and Death are in the hands of Allah.  
Not all can be chosen to fight  
For Allah. It requires constancy,  
Firmness, and faith. Given these,  
Large armies can be routed  
By those who battle for Allah,  
As shown by the courage of David,  
Whose prowess single-handedly  
Disposed of the Philistines.  
The mission of some of the messengers,  
Like Jesus, was different-  
Less wide in scope than that  
Of Mustafa, and He carries it out  
As He wills.*

### Section 32

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ...

243. Didst thou not turn thy vision to those who abandoned their homes, though they were thousands (in number), for fear of death?

... فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ مُوتُوا ثُمَّ أَحْيَاهُمْ...

Allah said to them: "Die." Then He restored them to life.

**C274.** We now return to the subject of Jihad, which we left at [n. 214-216](#).

We are to be under no illusion about it. If we are not prepared to fight for our faith, with our lives and all our resources, both our lives and our resources will be wiped out by our enemies.

As to life, Allah gave it, and a coward is not likely to save it. It has happened again and again in history that men who tamely submitted to be driven from their homes although they were more numerous than their enemies had the sentence of death pronounced on them for their cowardice, and they deserved it. But Allah gives further and further chances in His mercy. This is a lesson to every generation.

The Commentators differ as to the exact episode referred to, but the wording is perfectly general, and so is the lesson to be learnt from it.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لُدُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ (٢٤٣)

For Allah is full of bounty to mankind, but most of them are ungrateful.

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢٤٤)

244. Then fight in the Cause of Allah, and know that Allah heareth and knoweth all things.

**C275.** For Allah's cause we must fight, but never to satisfy our own selfish passions or greed, for the warning is repeated:

**"God heareth and knoweth all things"** all deeds, words and motives are perfectly open before Him, however we might conceal them from men or even from ourselves.

See [2:216](#), [n. 236](#).

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا ...

245. Who is he that will loan to Allah a beautiful loan,

**C276.** Spending in the cause of Allah is called metaphorically "a beautiful loan".

It is excellent in many ways:

- it shows a beautiful spirit of self-denial;
- in other loans there may be a doubt as to the safety of your capital or any return thereon; here you give in the Lord of All, in Whose hands are the keys of want or plenty;

giving you may have manifold blessings, and withholding you may even lose what you have.

If we remember that our goal is Allah, can we turn away from His cause?

... فَيُضَاعَفُهُ لَهُ أُضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً ...

which Allah will double unto his credit and multiply many times?

... وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْسُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٢٤٥)

It is Allah that giveth (you) want or plenty, and to Him shall be your return.

... أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلَإِ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَى ...

246. Hast thou not turned thy vision to the chiefs of the children of Israel after (the time of) Moses?

**C277.** The next generation after Moses and Aaron was ruled by Joshua, who crossed the Jordan and settled the tribes in Palestine. His rule lasted for 25 years, after which there was a period of 320 years when the Israelites had a chequered history. They were not united among themselves, and suffered many reverses at the hands of the Midianites, Amalekites and other tribes of Palestine.

They frequently lapsed into idolatry and deserted the worship of the true Allah. From time to time a leader appeared among them who assumed dictatorial powers. Acting under a sort of theocratic commission from Allah, he pointed out their backsliding, re-united them under His banner, and restored, from time to time and place to place, the power of Israel.



These dictators are called Judges in the English translation of the Old Testament. The last of their line was Samuel, who marks the transition towards the line of Kings on the one hand and of the later Prophets on the other. He may be dated approximately about the 11th century B.C.

... إِذْ قَالُوا لِنَبِيٍِّّ لَهُمْ ابْعَثْ لَنَا مَلِكًا نُقَاتِلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

They said to a Prophet (that was) among them: "Appoint for us a king, that we may fight in the Cause of Allah."

**C278.** This was Samuel. In his time Israel had suffered from much corruption within and many reverses without. The Philistines had made a great attack and defeated Israel with great slaughter.

The Israelites, instead of relying on Faith and their own valour and cohesion, brought out their most sacred possession, the Ark of the Covenant, to help them in the fight. But the enemy captured it, carried it away, and retained it for seven months.

The Israelites forgot that wickedness cannot screen itself behind a sacred relic. Nor can a sacred relic help the enemies of faith. The enemy found that the Ark brought nothing but misfortune for themselves, and were glad to abandon it.

It apparently remained twenty years in the village (qarya) of Yaarim (Kirjath-jeafim): I. Samuel, 7:2.

Meanwhile the people pressed Samuel to appoint them a king. They thought that a king would cure all their ills, whereas what was wanting was a spirit of union and discipline and a readiness on their part to fight in the cause of Allah.

... قَالَ هَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ أَلَّا تُقَاتِلُوا...

He said: "Is it not possible if ye were commanded to fight, that ye will not fight?"

**C279.** Samuel knew as a Prophet that the people were fickle and only wanted to cover their own want of union and true spirit by asking for a king.

They replied with spirit in words, but when it came to action, they failed. They hid themselves in caves and rocks, or ran away, and even those who remained "followed him trembling": I. Samuel, 13:6-7.

... قَالُوا وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ أُخْرِجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَأَبْنَائِنَا...

They said: "How could we refuse to fight in the Cause of Allah, seeing that we were turned out of our homes and our families?"

... فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ ...

But when they were commanded to fight, they turned back, except a small band among them.

... وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ (٢٤٦)

But Allah has full knowledge of those who do wrong.

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا ...

247. Their Prophet said to them: "Allah hath appointed Talut as king over you."

**C280.** Talut is the Arabic name for Saul, who was tall and handsome, but belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Israel. His worldly belongings were slender, and it was when he went out to search for some asses which had been lost from his father's house that he met Samuel and was anointed king by him.

The people's fickleness appeared immediately he was named. They raised all sorts of petty objections to him. The chief consideration in their minds was selfishness: each one wanted to be leader and king himself, instead of desiring sincerely the good of the people as a whole, as a leader should do.

... قَالُوا أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِّنَ الْمَالِ ...

They say: "How can he exercise authority over us when we are better fitted than he to exercise authority, and he is not even gifted with wealth in abundance?"

... قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ...

He said: "Allah hath chosen him above you, and hath gifted him abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess;

... وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مَلَكُهُ مَن يَشَاءُ...

Allah granteth His authority to whom He pleaseth.

... وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢٤٧)

Allah careth for all, and He knoweth all things."

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ التَّابُوتُ ...

248. And (further) their Prophet said to them: "A sign of his authority is that there shall come to you the Ark of the Covenant,

**C281. Ark of the Covenant: Tabut:** a chest of acacia wood covered and lined with pure gold, about 6ft x 3ft x 3ft. See Exod 25:10-22.

It was to contain the "testimony of Allah", or the Ten Commandments engraved on stone, with relics of Moses and Aaron. Its Gold lid was to be the "Mercy Seat" with two cherubims of beaten gold, with wings outstretched. This was a sacred possession to Israel. It was lost to the enemy in the early part of Samuel's ministry; see n. 278 to 2:246; when it came back, it remained in a village for twenty years and was apparently taken to the capital when kingship was instituted. It thus became a symbol of unity and authority. (R).

... فِيهِ سَكِينَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ...

with (an assurance) therein of security from your Lord,

**C282. Security sakina:** safety, tranquility, peace.

Later Jewish writings use the same word for a symbol of Allah's Glory in the Tabernacle or tent in which the Ark was kept, or in the Temple when it was built by Solomon.

... وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ آلُ مُوسَىٰ وَآلُ هَارُونَ تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ...

and the relics left by the family of Moses and the family of Aaron, carried by angels.

**C283. Carried by angels:** these words refer to the Tabut or Ark, (R).

... إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (٢٤٨)

In this is a Symbol for you if ye indeed have faith."

### Section 33

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ بِنَهَرٍ...

249. When Talut set forth with the armies, he said: "Allah will test you at the stream;

**C284.** A Commander is hampered by a large force if it is not in perfect discipline and does not whole-heartedly believe in its Commander. He must get rid of all the doubtful ones, as did Gideon before Saul, and Henry V. in Shakespeare's story long afterwards.

Saul used the same test as Gideon; he gave a certain order when crossing a stream; the greater part disobeyed, and were sent back.

Gideon's story will be found in Judges, 7:2-7.

... فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنْ اغْتَرَفَ  
عُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ...

if any drinks of its water, he goes not with my army; only those who taste not of it go with me; a mere sip out of the hand is excused."

... فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ ...

But they all drank of it, except a few.

... فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ  
وَجُنُودِهِ...

When they crossed the river, he and the faithful ones with him, they said: "This day we cannot cope with Goliath and his forces."

**C285.** Even in the small band that remained faithful, there were some who were appalled by the number of the enemy when they met him face to face, and saw the

size and strength of the enemy Commander, the giant Goliath (Jalut).

But there was a very small band who were determined to face all odds because they had perfect confidence in God and in the cause for which they were fighting. They were for making a firm stand and seeking Allah's help. Of that number was David;

see [next note](#).

... قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا اللَّهَ ...

But those who were convinced that they must meet Allah, said:

... كَمْ مِّنْ فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ...

"How oft, by Allah's will, hath a small force vanquished a big one?"

... وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ (٢٤٩)

Allah is with those who steadfastly persevere."

وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوا لِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالُوا ...

250. When they advanced to meet Goliath and his forces, they prayed:

... رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ  
الْكَافِرِينَ (٢٥٠)

"Our Lord! pour out constancy on us and make our steps firm; help us against those that reject faith."

فَهَزَمُوهُمْ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُدُ جَالُوتَ ...

251. By Allah's will they routed them: and David slew Goliath;

**C286.** Note how the whole story is compressed into a few words as regards narration, but its spiritual lessons are dwelt upon from many points of view.

The Old Testament is mainly interested in the narrative, which is full of detail, but says little about the universal truths of which every true story is a parable.

The Quran assumes the story, but tells the parable.

David was a raw youth, with no arms or armour. He was not known even in the Israelite camp, and the giant Goliath mocked him.

Even David's own elder brother chide him for deserting the sheep, for he was a poor shepherded lad to outward appearance, but his faith had made him more than a match for the Philistine hosts. When Saul offered his own armour and arms to David, the young hero declined, as he had not tried them, while his shepherd's sling and staff were his well-tried implements. He picked up five smooth pebbles on the spot from the stream, and used his sling to such effect that he knocked down Goliath. He then used Goliath's own sword to slay him. There was consternation in the Philistine army: they broke and fled, and were pursued and cut to pieces.

Apart from the main lesson that if we would preserve our national existence and our faith it is our duty to fight with courage and firmness, there are other lessons in David' story:

1. Numbers do not count, but faith, determination and the blessing of Allah;
2. size and strength are of no avail against truth, courage, and careful planning;
3. the hero tries his own weapons, and those that are available to him at the time and place, even though people may laugh at him;
4. if Allah is with us, the enemy's weapon may become an instrument of his own destruction;
5. personality conquers all dangers, and puts heart into our own wavering friends;
6. pure faith brings Allah's reward, which may take many forms; in David's case it was Power, Wisdom, and other gifts; see next note.

... وَأَتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ...

and Allah gave him power and wisdom and taught him whatever (else) He willed.

**C287.** David was not only a shepherd, a warrior, a king, a wise man, and a prophet, but was also endowed with the gifts of poetry and music. (R).

... وَلَوْلَا دَفَعُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ...

And did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief,

... وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (٢٥١)

but Allah is full of bounty to all the worlds.

**C288.** Allah's plan is universal. He loves and protects all His creatures and His bounties are for all worlds (1:2, n. 20).

To protect one He may have to check another, but we must never lose faith that His love is for all in boundless measure.

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ ...

252. These are the signs of Allah; We rehearse them to thee in truth:

... وَإِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٢٥٢)

verily thou art one of the apostles.

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ ...

253. Those apostles We endowed with gifts, some above others:

**C289.** Different gifts and different modes of procedure are prescribed to Allah's Prophets in different ages, and perhaps their degrees are different through it is not for us mortals, with our imperfect knowledge to make any difference between one and another of Allah's Prophets (2:136).

As this winds up the argument about fighting, three illustrations are given from the past, how it affected Allah's Messengers.

- To Moses Allah spoke in clouds of glory; he led his men for forty years through the wilderness, mainly fighting against the unbelief of his own people; he organized them to fight with the sword for Palestine,

but was raised to Allah's mercy before his enterprise ripened, and it fell to Joshua to carry out his plan.

- David, though a mere shepherd boy, was chosen by Allah. He overthrew the greatest warrior of his time, became a king, and waged successful wars, being also a prophet, a poet, and a musician.
- Jesus was "strengthened with the holy spirit" he was given no weapons to fight and his mission was of a more limited character.
- In Muhammad's mission these and other characters were combined. Gentler than Jesus, he organized on a vaster scale than Moses and from Madinah he ruled and gave laws and the Quran has a vaster scope than the Psalms of David.

... مِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَلَّمَ اللَّهُ ...

to one of them Allah spoke;

**C290.** Moses: [see note above](#).

... وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٍ ...

others He raised to degrees (of honor);

**C291.** There is a two-fold sense:

- they were raised to high posts of honour,
- and they rose by degrees.

I take the reference to be to David.

... وَأَتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ ...

to Jesus the son of Mary, We gave clear (Signs),

**C292.** Cf. [2:87](#). See n. 401 to 3:62.

and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit.

**C292a.** "Holy Spirit" according to commentators signifies Gabriel. [Eds]

... وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا اقْتَتَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ ...

If Allah had so willed, succeeding generations would not have fought among each other, after clear (Signs) had come to them,



... وَلَكِنْ اِخْتَلَفُوا فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ اٰمَنَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ كَفَرَ ...

but they (chose) to wrangle, some believing and others rejecting.

... وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللّٰهُ مَا اقْتَتَلُوْا وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيْدُ (٢٥٣)

If Allah had so willed, they would not have fought each other; but Allah fulfilleth His plan.

**C293.** If some power of choice was to be given to man, his selfishness inevitably caused divisions. It must not be supposed that it frustrates God's Plan. He carries it out as He will.

### **C.52 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)**

**(2:254-283)**

*Who can describe the nature of Allah?*

*The Living, the Eternal; His Throne*

*Extends over worlds and worlds*

*That no imagination can compass.*

*His truth is clear as daylight; how*

*Can compulsion advance religion?*

*The keys of Life and Death, and the mysteries*

*Of everything around us, are in His hands.*

*Our duty then is to seek path*

*Of goodness, kindness, upright*

*Conduct and Charity- to grasp*

*At no advantage from a brother's need,*

*To stand by the word that is pledged,*

*To bear true witness, and remove all cause*

*Of misunderstandings in our dealings*

*As between man and man.*

## Section 34

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

254. O ye who believe!

... أَنْفِقُوا ...

spend out of (the bounties)

**C294. Spend**, i.e., give away in charity, or employ in good works, but do not hoard.

Good works would in Islam include everything that advances the good of one that is in need whether a neighbor or a stranger or that advances the good of the community or even the good of the person himself to whom Allah has given the bounty.

But it must be real good and there should be no admixture of baser motives, such as vainglory, or false indulgence, or encouragement of idleness, or playing off one person against another.

The bounties include mental and spiritual gifts as well as wealth and material gifts.

... مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعَ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةَ وَلَا شَفَاعَةَ...

We have provided for you, before the day comes when no bargaining (will avail), nor friendship, nor intercession.

**C295.** Cf. [2:123](#) and [2:48](#).

... وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٢٥٤)

Those who reject faith, they are the wrongdoers.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ...

255. Allah! there is no god but He, the living, the Self-subsisting, **Eternal**.

**C296.** This is the *Ayah al Kursi* the "Verse of the Throne".

Who can translate its glorious meaning, or reproduce the rhythm of its well-chosen and comprehensive words. Even in the original Arabic the meaning seems to be greater than can be expressed in words.

The attributes of Allah are different from anything we know in our present world; He lives, but His life is self-subsisting and eternal: it does not depend upon other beings and is not limited to time and space.

Perhaps the attribute of **Qayyum** includes not only the idea of "Self-subsisting" but also the idea of "Keeping up and maintaining all life."

His life being the source and constant support of all derived forms of life. Perfect life is perfect activity, in contrast to the imperfect life which we see around us, which is not only subject to death but to the need for rest or slowed-down activity, (something which is between activity and sleep, for which I, in common with other translators, have used the word "slumber") and the need for full sleep itself.

But Allah has no need for rest or sleep. His activity, like His life, is perfect and self-subsisting. Contrast with this the expressions used in Psalms 78:65;

"Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine." (R).

... لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ ...

No slumber can seize him nor sleep.

... لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ...

His are all things in the heavens and on earth.

... مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ...

Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth?

... يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ...

He knoweth what (appeareth to his creatures as) before or after or behind them.

**C297.** After we realise that His life is absolute Life. His Being is absolute Being, while others are contingent and evanescent our ideas of heaven and earth vanish like shadows. What is behind that shadow is He.

Such reality as our heavens and our earth possess is a reflection of His absolute Reality.

The pantheist places the wrong accent when he says that everything is He. The truth is better expressed when we say that everything is His.

How then can any creatures stand before Him as of right, and claim to intercede for a fellow-creature? In the first place both are His, and He cares as much for one as for the other.

In the second place, they are both dependent on His will and command. But He in His Wisdom and Plan may grade his creatures and give one superiority over another. Then by His will and permission such a one may intercede or help according to the laws and duties laid on him.

Allah's knowledge is absolute, and is not conditioned by Time or Space. To us, His creatures, these conditions always apply. His knowledge and our knowledge are therefore in different categories, and our knowledge only gets some reflection of Reality when it accords with His Will and Plan.

... وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ...

Nor shall they compass aught of his knowledge except as He willeth.

... وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ...

His throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth,

**C298. Throne;** seat, power, knowledge, symbol of authority.

In our thoughts we exhaust everything when we say "the heavens and the earth".

Well, then in everything is the working of Allah's power, and will, and authority. Everything of course includes spiritual things as well as things of sense. (R).

... وَلَا يَؤُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا ...

and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them.

**C299.** A life of activity that is imperfect or relative would not only need rest for carrying on its own activities, but would be in need of double rest when it has to look after and guard, or cherish, or help other activities.

In contrast with this is the Absolute Life, which is free from any such need or contingency. For it is supreme above anything that we can conceive.

... وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ (٢٥٥)

For He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory).

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ...

256. Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error;

**C300. Compulsion** is incompatible with religion; because;

1. religion depends upon faith and will, and these would be meaningless if induced by force;
2. Truth and Error have been so clearly shown up by the mercy of Allah that there should be no doubt in the minds of any persons of goodwill as to the fundamentals of faith;
3. Allah's protection is continuous and His Plan is always to lead us from the depths of darkness into the clearest light.

... فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنِ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا  
انْفِصَامَ لَهَا ...

whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks.

**C301. Hand-bold:** something which the hands can grasp for safety in a moment of danger. It may be a loop or a handle, or anchor.

If it is without flaw, so that there is no danger of breaking, our safety is absolutely assured so long as we hold fast to it. Our safety then depends on our own will and faith; Allah's help and protection will always be unflinching if we hold firmly to Allah and trust in Him.

... وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢٥٦)

And Allah heareth and knoweth all things.

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ...

257. Allah is the Protector of those who have faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light.

... وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَائُهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُم مِّنَ النُّورِ إِلَى  
الظُّلُمَاتِ...

Of those who reject faith the patrons are the Evil Ones: from light they will lead them forth into the depths of darkness.

... أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٢٥٧)

they will be companions of the fire, to dwell therein (for ever).

## Section 35

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِي حَاجَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ ...

258. Hast thou not turned thy vision to one who disputed with Abraham about his Lord, because Allah had granted him power?

**C302.** The three verses 258-360 have been the subject of much controversy as to the exact meaning to be attached to the incidents and the precise persons alluded to, whose names are not mentioned.

Mawlvi Muhammad Ali's learned notes give some indication of the points at issue. In such matters, where the Quran has given no names and the Holy Prophet has himself given no indication, it seems to me useless to speculate, and still worse to put forward positive opinions.

In questions of learning, speculations are often interesting. But it seems to me that the meaning of the

Quran is so wide and universal that we are in danger of missing the real and eternal meaning if we go on disputing about minor points.

All three incidents are such as may happen again and again in any prophet's lifetime, and be seen in impersonal vision at any time. Here they are connected with Mustafa's vision as shown by the opening words of verse 258. (R).

... إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ...

Abraham said: "My Lord is He Who Giveth life and death."

... قَالَ أَنَا أَحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ...

He said: "I give life and death."

... قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ...

Said Abraham: "But it is Allah that causeth the sun to rise from the East, do thou then cause him to rise from the West."

... قُبْهِتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ...

Thus was he confounded who (in arrogance) rejected faith.

... وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٢٥٨)

Nor doth Allah give guidance to a people unjust.

**C303.** The first point illustrated is the pride of power, and the impotence of human power as against Allah's power.

The person who disputed with Abraham may have been Nimrod or some ruler in Babylonia, or indeed elsewhere. I name Babylonia as it was the original home of Abraham (Ur of the Chaldees), and Babylon prided herself on her arts and sciences in the ancient world.

Science can do many wonderful things; it could then; it can now. But the mystery of Life baffled science then, as it continues to baffle science now, after many centuries of progress.

Abraham had faith and referred back everything to the true Cause of Causes.

A skeptical ruler might jestingly say:

"I have the power of life and death".

A man of science might say:

"We have investigated the laws of life and death."

Different kinds of powers lie in the hands of kings and men of knowledge. The claim in both cases is true in a very limited sense. But Abraham confounded the claimer by going back to fundamentals.

"If you had the ultimate power, why could you not make the sun rise from the West?"

أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَى قَرْبَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا...

259. Or (take) the similitude of one who passed by a hamlet, all in ruins to its roofs.

**C304.** This incident is referred variously;

1. to Ezekiel's vision of dry bones (Ezekiel, 37:1-10).
2. to Nehemiah's visit to Jerusalem in ruins after the Captivity, and to its re-building (Nehemiah, 2:12-20): and
3. to Uzair, or Ezra, or Esdras, the scribe, priest, and reformer, who was sent by the Persian King after the Captivity to Jerusalem, and about whom there are many Jewish legends.

As to 1, there are only four words in this verse about bones.

As to 2 and 3, there is nothing specific to connect this verse with either.

The wording is perfectly general, and we must understand it as general. I think it does refer not only to individual, but to national, death, and resurrection.

... قَالَ أَنَّى يُحْيِي هَٰذِهِ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا...

He said: "Oh! how shall Allah bring it (ever) to life, after (this) its death?"



... فَأَمَاتَهُ اللَّهُ مِئَةً عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ قَالَ كَمْ لَبِيتَ ...

But Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him up (again). He said: "How long didst thou tarry (thus)?"

... قَالَ لَبِيتُ يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ...

He said: "(Perhaps) a day or part of a day."

... قَالَ بَلْ لَبِيتَ مِئَةً عَامٍ فَانظُرْ إِلَى طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ يَتَسَنَّهْ ...

He said: "Nay, thou hast tarried thus a hundred years; but look at thy food and thy drink; they show no signs of age;

... وَانظُرْ إِلَى حِمَارِكَ وَلِنَجْعَلَكَ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ ...

and look at thy donkey: and that We may make of thee a Sign unto the people,

... وَانظُرْ إِلَى الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ نُنشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوهَا لَحْمًا ...

look further at the bones, how We bring them together and clothe them with flesh!

**C305.** A man is in despair when he sees the destruction of a whole people, city, or civilization. But Allah can cause resurrection, as He has done many times in history, and as He will do at the final Resurrection.

Time is nothing before Allah. The doubter thinks that he has been dead or "tarried thus" a day or less when the period has been a century. On the other hand, the food and drink which he left behind is intact, and as fresh as it was when he left it. But the donkey is not only dead, but nothing but bones is left of it. And before the man's eyes, the bones are reunited, clothed with flesh and blood, and restored to life.

### **Moral:**

- Time is nothing to Allah;
- it affects different things in different ways;
- The keys of life and death are in Allah's hands;
- Man's power is nothing; his faith should be in Allah.

... فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ قَالَ أَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٢٥٩)

When this was shown clearly to him he said: "I know that Allah hath power over all things."

وَأِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ ...

260. Behold! Abraham said: "My Lord! show me how thou givest life to the dead.

**C306.** Verse 258, we saw, illustrated by Allah's power over Life and Death, contrasted with man's vain boasts or imaginings.

Verse 259 illustrated how Time is immaterial to Allah's working; things, individuals and nations are subject to laws of life and death, which are under Allah's complete control, however much we may be misled by appearances. (R).

... قَالَ أَوْلَمْ تُؤْمِنِ ...

He said: "Dost thou not then believe?"

... قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَلَكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي ...

He said: "Yea! but to satisfy my own understanding."

**C307.** Abraham had complete faith in Allah's power, but he wanted, with Allah's permission, to give an explanation of that faith to his own heart and mind.

Where I have translated "satisfy my own understanding", the literal translation would be "satisfy my own heart".

... قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ...

He said: "Take four birds; tame them to turn to thee;

... ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا ...

put a portion of them on every hill, and call to them; they will come to thee (flying) with speed.

**C308. A portion of them: Juzan.**

The Commentators understand this to mean that the birds were to be cut up and pieces of them were to be

put on the hills. The cutting up or killing is not mentioned, but they say that it is implied by an ellipsis, as the question is how Allah gives life to the dead. (R).

... وَأَعْلَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٦٠)

Then know that Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise."

## Section 36

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

261. The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of Allah

... كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنبُلَةٍ مِثَّةٌ حَبَّةٍ ...

is that of a grain of corn: it groweth seven ears, and each ear hath a hundred grains.

... وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢٦١)

Allah giveth manifold increase to whom He pleaseth; and Allah careth for all and He knoweth all things.

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

262. Those who spend their substance in the Cause of Allah,

... ثُمَّ لَا يُتَّبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَتًّا وَلَا أَدَى لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ...

and follow not up their gifts with reminders of their generosity or with injury,

for them their reward is with their Lord;

... وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٢٦٢)

on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

قَوْلٌ مَعْرُوفٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ صَدَقَةٍ يَتْبَعُهَا أَدَى...

263. Kind words and the covering of faults are better than charity followed by injury. Allah is free of all wants,

**C309.** A very high standard is set for **charity**.

1. It must be in the way of Allah.

2. It must expect no reward in this world.
3. It must not be followed by references or reminders to the act of charity.
4. Still less should any annoyance or injury be caused to the recipient; e.g. by boasting that the giver relieved the person in the hour of need.

Indeed, the kindness and the spirit which turns a blind eye to other people's faults or short-comings is the essence of charity: these things are better than charity if charity is spoilt by tricks that do harm.

At the same time, while no reward is to be expected, there is abundant reward from Allah -material, moral, and spiritual- according to His own good pleasure and plan.

If we spend in the way of Allah, it is not as if Allah was in need of our charity. On the contrary our short-comings are so great that we require His utmost forbearance before any good that we can do can merit His praise or reward. Our motives are so mixed that our best may really be very poor if judged by a very strict standard.

... وَاللَّهُ غَنِيٌّ حَلِيمٌ (٢٦٣)

and He is Most Forbearing.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَدْمَى...

264. O ye who believe!

cancel not your charity by reminders of your generosity or by injury,

... كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ...

like those who spend their substance to be seen of men, but believe neither in Allah nor in the last day.

**C310.** False charity, "to be seen of men", is really no charity. It is worse, for it betokens a disbelief in Allah and the Hereafter.

"Allah seeth well whatever ye do" (2:265).

It is compared to a hard barren rock on which by chance has fallen a little soil. Good rain, which renders fertile soil more fruitful, washes away the little soil which this rock had, and exposes its nakedness. What good can hypocrites derive even from the little wealth they may have amassed?

... فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَفَرَكَهُ صَدًّا...

They are in Parable like a hard, barren rock, on which is a little soil; on it falls heavy rain, which leaves it (just) a bare stone.

... لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا ...

They will be able to do nothing with aught they have earned.

... وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٢٦٤)

And Allah guideth not those who reject faith.

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَتَثْبِيئًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ ...

265. And the likeness of those who spend their substance, seeking to please Allah and to strengthen their souls,

... كَمَثَلِ جَنَّةٍ بِرَبْوَةٍ أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَآتَتْ أُكُلَهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ فَإِن لَّمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ...

is as a garden, high and fertile: heavy rain falls on it but makes it yield a double increase of harvest, and if it receives not heavy rain, light moisture sufficeth it.

**C311.** True charity is like a field with good soil on a high situation. It catches good showers of rain, the moisture penetrates the soil, and yet its elevated situation keeps it well-drained, and healthy favorable conditions increase its output enormously. But supposing even that the rain is not abundant, it catches dew and makes the most of any little moisture it can get, and that is sufficient for it.

So a man of true charity is spiritually healthy; he is best suited to attract the bounties of Allah, which he does not hoard selfishly but circulates freely. In lean times he still produces good works, and is content with what he has. He looks to Allah's pleasure and the strengthening of his own soul.

... وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٢٦٥)

Allah seeth well whatever ye do.

أَيُّودُ أَحَدِكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ...

266. Does any of you wish that he should have a garden with date-palms and vines

**C312.** The truly spiritual nature of charity having been explained in three parables ([2:261](#), [264](#), [265](#)) a fourth parable is now added, explaining its bearing on the whole of our life.

Suppose we had a beautiful garden well-watered and fertile, with delightful views of streams, and a haven of rest for mind and body; suppose old age were creeping in on us, and our children were either too young to look after themselves or too feeble in health; how should we feel if a sudden whirlwind came with lightning or fire in its train, and burnt it up; thus blasting the whole of our hopes for the present and for the future, and destroying the result of all our labor and savings in the past?

Well, this life of ours is a probation. We may work hard, we may save, we may have good luck. We may make ourselves a goodly pleasance, and have ample means of support for ourselves and our children. A great whirlwind charged with lightning and fire comes and burns up the whole show.

We are too old to begin again: our children are too young or feeble to help us to repair the mischief. Our chance is lost, because we did not provide against such a contingency.

The whirlwind is the "wrath to come" the provision against it is a life of true charity and righteousness, which is the only source of true and lasting happiness in this world and the next. Without it we are subject to all the vicissitudes of this uncertain life. We may even spoil our so-called "charity" by insisting on the obligation which others owe to us or by doing some harm, because our motives are not pure.

... تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ ...

and streams flowing underneath, and all kinds of fruit,

... وَأَصَابَهُ الْكِبَرُ وَلَهُ ذُرِّيَّةٌ ضُعَفَاءُ ...

while he is stricken with old age, and his children are not strong  
(enough to look after themselves)

**C313. Not strong (enough): dhu'afa-u:** literally weak, decrepit, inform, possibly referring to both health and will or character.

... فَأَصَابَهَا إِعْصَارٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ فَاحْتَرَقَتْ ...

that it should be caught in a whirlwind, with fire therein and be burnt up?

... كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٢٦٦)

thus doth Allah make clear to you (His) signs; that ye may consider.

## Section 37

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

267. O ye who believe!

... أَنْفِقُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ ...

give of the good things which ye have (honorably) earned, and of the fruits of the earth which We have produced for you,

**C314.** According to the English proverb "Charity covers a multitude of sins". Such a sentiment is strongly disapproved in Islam.

Charity has value only if;

- something good and valuable is given,
- which has been honorably earned or acquired by the giver, or
- which is produced in nature and can be referred to as a bounty of Allah.

1. may include such things as are of use and value to others though they may be of less use to us or superfluous to us on account of our having acquired something more suitable for our station in life; for example, discarded clothes, or an old horse or a used motor car;

but if the horse is vicious, or the car engine so far gone that it is dangerous to use, then the gift is worse than useless; it is positively harmful and the giver is a wrong-doer.

2. applies to fraudulent company-promoters, who earn great credit by giving away charity in some of their ill-gotten gains, or to robbers (even if they call themselves by high-sounding names) who "rob peter to pay Paul".

Islam will have nothing to do with tainted property. Its economic code requires that every gain should be honest and honorable. Even "charity" would not cover or destroy the taint.

3. lays down a test in cases of a doubtful gain.

Can we refer to it as a gift of God?

Obviously the produce of honest labour or agriculture can be so referred to.

In modern commerce and speculation there is much of quite the contrary character, and charity will not cover the taint. Some kind of art, skill, or talent are God-given: it is the highest kind of charity to teach them or share their product.

Others are the contrary: they are bad or tainted. In the same way some professions or services may be tainted, if these tend to do moral harm.

وَلَا تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُونَ ...

and do not even aim at getting anything which is bad, in order that out of it ye may give away something,

**C315.** The preceding note tries to indicate some of the things which are bad or tainted. We should not even



think of acquiring them for ourselves, soothing our conscience by the salve that we shall practice charity out of them.

... وَلَسْتُمْ بِأَخْذِيهِ إِلَّا أَنْ تُغْمِضُوا فِيهِ ...

when ye yourselves would not receive it except with closed eyes.

**C316.** Closed eyes imply disgust or connivance because of some feature which we would not openly acknowledge.

... وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَنِّي حَمِيدٌ (٢٦٧)

And know that Allah is free of all wants, and worthy of all praise.

**C317.** To dedicate tainted things to Allah is a dishonor to Allah, Who is independent of all wants, and Who is worthy of all honor and praise.

الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُم بِالْفَحْشَاءِ...

268. The Evil One threatens you with poverty and bids you to conduct unseemly.

... وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُكُم مَّغْفِرَةً مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلًا...

Allah promiseth you His forgiveness and bounties

**C318.** Good and evil draw us opposite ways and by opposite motives, and the contrast is well marked out in charity.

When we think of doing some real act of kindness or charity, we are assailed with doubts and fear of impoverishment; but Evil supports any tendency to selfishness, greed, or even to extravagant expenditure for show, or self-indulgence, or unseemly appetites.

On the other hand, Allah draws us on to all that is kind and good, for that way lies the forgiveness of our sins, and greater real prosperity and satisfaction.

No kind or generous act ever ruined anyone. It is false generosity that is sometimes shown as leading to ruin. As Allah knows all our motives and cares for all, and has everything in His power, it is obvious which course a wise man will choose.

But wisdom is rare, and it is only wisdom that can appreciate true well-being and distinguish it from the false appearance of well-being.

... وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢٦٨)

and Allah careth for all and He knoweth all things.

يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا...

269. He granteth wisdom to whom He pleaseth; and he to whom wisdom is granted receiveth indeed a benefit overflowing;

... وَمَا يَدَّكُرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ (٢٦٩)

but none will grasp the message but men of understanding.

وَمَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ نَّفَقَةٍ أَوْ نَذَرْتُمْ مِّنْ نَّذْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُهُ...

270. And whatever ye spend in charity or devotion, be sure Allah knows it all.

... وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ (٢٧٠)

But the wrongdoers have no helpers.

إِنْ تُبْدُوا الصَّدَقَاتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِيَ ...

271. If ye disclose (acts of) charity, even so it is well,

**C319.** It is better to seek no publicity in charity. But if it is known there is no harm. If it is for public purposes, it must necessarily be known, and a pedantic show of concealment may itself be a fault.

The harm of publicity lies in motives of ostentation. We can better reach the really deserving poor by quietly seeking for them. The spiritual benefit ensures to our own souls, provided our motives are pure, and we are really seeking the good pleasure of Allah.

... وَإِنْ تُخْفُوها وَتُؤْتُوها الْفُقَرَاءَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَيُكَفِّرُ عَنْكُمْ مِّنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ ...

but if ye conceal them, and make them reach those (really) in need, that is best for you: it will remove from you some of your (stains of) evil.

... وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (٢٧١)

And Allah is well acquainted with what ye do.

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ...

272. It is not required of thee (O Messenger), to set them on the right path, but Allah sets on the right path whom He pleaseth.

**C320.** In connection with charity this means that we must relieve those really in need, whether they are good or bad, on the right path or not, Muslims or otherwise. It is not for us to judge in these matters. Allah will give light according to His wisdom.

Incidentally it adds a further meaning to the command, "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (2:256). For compulsion may not only be by force, but by economic necessity.

In matters of religion we must not even compel by a bribe of charity. The chief motive in charity should be Allah's pleasure and our own spiritual good. This was addressed in the first instance to Mustafa in Madinah, but it is of universal application.

... وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَمَا تُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ...

Whatever of good ye give benefits your own souls, and ye shall only do so seeking the "Face" of Allah.

**C321.** See [note to 2:112](#).

**Wajh** means literally: face, countenance; hence, favour, glory, Self, Presence.

... وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُؤَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ (٢٧٢)

Whatever good ye give, shall be rendered back to you, and ye shall not be dealt with unjustly.

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَحْصَرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

273. (Charity is) for those in need, who, in Allah's cause, are restricted (from travel), and cannot move about in the land, seeking (for trade or work).

**C322.** Indiscriminate acts of so-called charity are condemned as they may do more harm than good (see [2:262](#)).

The real beneficiaries of charity are here indicated. They must be in want. And the want must be due to some honorable cause. For example, they may be doing some unpaid service, such as teaching, or acquiring knowledge or skill, or be in exile for their faith, or in other ways be prevented from seeking employment or doing strenuous work.

"Allah's cause" must not be narrowly interpreted. All sincere and real service to humanity comes within the definition, as well as actual devotion to religion or to the righteous Imam. Such men do not beg from door to door. It is the duty of those who are well-to-do, or of the Public Purse, to find them out. (R).

... يَحْسِبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ...

The ignorant man thinks, because of their modesty, that they are free from want. Thou shalt know them by their (unfailing) mark:

... لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِحْقَاقًا...

they beg not importunately from all and sundry.

... وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ (٢٧٣)

And whatever of good ye give, be assured Allah knoweth it well.

## Section 38

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ...

274. Those who (in charity) spend of their goods by night and by day, in secret and in public, have their reward with their Lord:

**C323.** We recapitulate the beauty of charity (i.e. unselfish giving of one's self or one's goods) before we come to its opposite, i.e. the selfish grasping greed of usury against those in need or distress.

Charity instead of impoverishing you will enrich you; you will have more happiness and less fear. Contrast it with what follows, - the degradation of the grasping usurer.

... وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٢٧٤)

on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا ...

## 275. Those who devour usury

**C324. Usury** is condemned and prohibited in the strongest possible terms. There can be no question about the prohibition.

When we come to the definition of Usury there is room for difference of opinion. 'Umar, according to Ibn Kathir, felt some difficulty in the matter, as the Prophet left this world before the details of the question were settled. This was one of the three questions on which he wished he had more light from the Prophet, the other two being Khilafah and Kalalah (see 4:12 n. 518).

Our 'Ulama, ancient and modern, have worked out a great body of literature on Usury, based mainly on economic conditions as they existed at the rise of Islam. (R).

... لَا يَفُومُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَفُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ...

will not stand except as stands one whom the Evil One by his touch hath driven to madness.

**C325.** An apt simile: whereas legitimate trade or industry increases the prosperity and stability of men and nations, a dependence on Usury would merely encourage a race of idlers, cruel blood-suckers, and worthless fellows who do not know their own good and are therefore akin to madmen.

... ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبَا وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا...

That is because they say: "Trade is like usury",  
but Allah hath permitted trade and forbidden usury.

**C326.** Owing to the fact that interest occupies a central position in modern economic life, and specially since interest is the very life blood of the existing financial institutions, a number of Muslims have been inclined to interpret it in a manner which is radically different from the understanding of Muslim scholars throughout the last fourteen centuries and is also sharply in conflict with the categorical statements of the Prophet (peace be on him).

According to Islamic teachings any excess on the capital is *riba* (interest). Islam accepts no distinction, insofar as prohibition is concerned, between reasonable and exorbitant rates of interest, and thus what came to be regarded as the difference between usury, and interest; not between returns on bonus for consumption and those for production purposes and so on. [Eds]

... فَمَنْ جَاءَهُ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَانْتَهَى فَلَهُ مَا سَلَفَ وَأَمْرُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ...

Those who, after receiving direction from their Lord, desist, shall be pardoned for the past; their case is for Allah (to judge);

... وَمَنْ عَادَ فَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٢٧٥)

but those who repeat (the offence) are companions of the fire: they will abide therein (for ever).

يَمْحَقُ اللَّهُ الرِّبَا وَيُرْبِي الصَّدَقَاتِ...

276. Allah will deprive usury of all blessing, but will give increase for deeds of charity:

... وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ أَثِيمٍ (٢٧٦)

for He loveth not creatures ungrateful and wicked.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ...

277. Those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness, and establish regular prayers and regular charity,

... لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٢٧٧)

will have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

**C327.** The contrast between charity and unlawful grasping of wealth began at [2:274](#), where this phrase

occurs as a theme. Here the theme finishes with the same phrase.

The following four verses refer to further concessions on behalf of debtors, as creditors are asked to;

- a. give up even claims arising out of the past on account of usury, and
- b. give time for payment of capital if necessary, or
- c. to write off the debt altogether as an act of charity.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَذَرُوا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبَا إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (٢٧٨)

278. O ye who believe! fear Allah, and give up what remains of your demand for usury, if ye are indeed believers.

فَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْذَنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ...

279. If ye do it not, take notice of war from Allah and His Messenger:

**C328.** This is not war for opinions, but an ultimatum of war for the liberation of debtors unjustly dealt with and oppressed.

... وَإِن تَبْنَئْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُؤُوسُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا تَظْلِمُونَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ (٢٧٩)

but if ye turn back, ye shall have your capital sums; deal not unjustly, and ye shall not be dealt with unjustly.

وَإِن كَانَ دُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ ...

280. If the debtor is in a difficulty, grant him time till it is easy for him to repay.

... وَأَن تَصَدَّقُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٢٨٠)

But if ye remit it by way of charity, that is best for you if ye only knew.

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ...

281. And fear the day when ye shall be brought back to Allah.

... ثُمَّ نُوَفَّىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٢٨١)

Then shall every soul be paid what it earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly.

## Section 39

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

282. O ye who believe!

... إِذَا تَدَايَيْتُمْ بِدَيْنٍ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوهُ ...

when ye deal with each other, in transactions involving future obligations in a fixed period of time, reduce them to writing.

**C329.** The first part of the verse deals with transactions involving future payment or future consideration, and the second part with transactions in which payment and delivery are made on the spot.

Examples of the former are if goods are bought now and payment is promised at a fixed time and place in the future, or if cash is paid now and delivery is contracted for at a fixed time and place in the future. In such cases a written document is recommended, but it is held that the words later on in this verse, that it is "juster . . . more suitable as evidence, and more convenient to prevent doubts", etc. imply that it is not obligatory in law.

Examples of the latter kind - cash payment and delivery on the spot - require no evidence in writing, but apparently oral witnesses to such transactions are recommended.

... وَلْيَكْتُب بَيْنَكُمْ كَاتِبٌ بِالْعَدْلِ ...

Let a scribe write down faithfully as between the parties:

... وَلَا يَأْبَ كَاتِبٌ أَنْ يَكْتُبَ كَمَا عَلَّمَهُ اللَّهُ ...

let not the scribe refuse to write, as Allah has taught him,

**C330.** The scribe in such matters assumes a fiduciary capacity: he should therefore remember to act as in the presence of Allah, with full justice to both parties. The art of writing he should look upon as a gift from Allah, and he should use it as in His service.

In an illiterate population the scribe's position is still more responsible.



... فَلْيَكْتُبْ وَلْيُمْلِلِ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا يَبْخَسْ مِنْهُ  
شَيْئًا...  
...

so let him write. Let him who incurs the liability dictate, but let him  
fear his Lord Allah,

and not diminish aught of what he owes.

... فَإِنْ كَانَ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ سَفِيهًا أَوْ ضَعِيفًا...  
...

If the party liable is mentally deficient, or weak,

... أَوْ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يُمْلَأَ هُوَ فَلْيُمْلِلْ وَلِيُّهُ بِالْعَدْلِ...  
...

or unable himself to dictate, let his guardian dictate faithfully.

**C331.** Possibly the person "mentally deficient, or weak, or unable to dictate", may also be incapable of making a valid contract, and the whole duty would be on his guardian, who again must act in perfect good faith, not only protecting but vigilantly promoting the interests of his ward.

... وَاسْتَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ مِنْ رَجَالِكُمْ...  
...

And get two witnesses, out of your own men,

**C332.** It is desirable that the men (or women) who are chosen as witness should be from the circle to which the parties belong, as they would best be able to understand the transaction, and be most easily available if their evidence is required in future.

... فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ...  
...

and if there are not two men, then a man and two women,

... مِمَّنْ تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَاءِ أَنْ تَضِلَّ إِحْدَاهُمَا فَتُذَكَّرَ إِحْدَاهُمَا  
الْأُخْرَى...  
...

such as ye choose, for witnesses, so that if one of them errs, the  
other can remind her.

... وَلَا يَأْبَ الشُّهَدَاءُ إِذَا مَا دُعُوا...  
...

The witnesses should not refuse when they are called on (for  
evidence).

... وَلَا تَسْأَمُوا أَنْ تَكْتُبُوهُ صَغِيرًا أَوْ كَبِيرًا إِلَىٰ أَجَلِهِ...

Disdain not to reduce to writing (your contract) for a future period, whether it be small or big:

... ذَلِكُمْ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأَقْوَمُ لِلشَّهَادَةِ وَأَدْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَرْتَابُوا...

it is juster in the sight of Allah, more suitable as evidence, and more convenient to prevent doubts among yourselves;

... إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً حَاضِرَةً تُدِيرُونَهَا بَيْنَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَلَّا تَكْتُبُوهَا...

but if it be a transaction which ye carry out on the spot among yourselves, there is no blame on you if ye reduce it not to writing.

... وَأَشْهَدُوا إِذَا تَبَايَعْتُمْ وَلَا يُضَارَّ كَاتِبٌ وَلَا شَهِيدٌ...

But take witnesses whenever ye make a commercial contract; and let neither scribe nor witness suffer harm.

... وَإِنْ تَفَعَّلُوا فإِنَّهُ فُسُوقٌ بِكُمْ...

If ye do (such harm), it would be wickedness in you.

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ يَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عَالِمٌ (٢٨٢)

So fear Allah; for it is Allah that teaches you. And Allah is well acquainted with all things.

**C333.** Commercial morality is here taught on the highest plane and yet in the most practical manner, both as regards the bargains to be made, the evidence to be provided, the doubts to be avoided, and the duties and rights of scribes and witnesses.

Probity even in worldly matters is to be, not a mere matter of convenience or policy, but a matter of conscience and religious duty. Even our every-day transactions are to be carried out as in the presence of Allah.

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ وَلَمْ تَجِدُوا كَاتِبًا فَرِهَانٌ مَّقْبُوضَةٌ...

283. If ye are on a journey, and cannot find a scribe, a pledge with possession (may serve the purpose).

**C334.** A pledge or security stands on its own independent footing, though it is a very convenient form of closing the bargain where the parties cannot trust each other, and cannot get a written agreement with proper witnesses.

... فَإِنْ أَمِنَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا فَلْيُؤَدِّ الَّذِي أُؤْتِمِنَ أَمَانَتَهُ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ ...

And if one of you deposits a thing on trust with another, let the trustee (faithfully) discharge his trust, and let him fear his Lord.

**C335.** The law of Deposit implies great trust in the Depositary on the part of the Depositor.

The Depositary becomes a trustee, and the doctrine of Trust can be further developed on that basis. The trustee's duty is to guard the interests of the person on whose behalf he holds the trust and to render back the property and accounts when required according to the terms of the trust.

This duty again is linked to the sanction of Religion, which requires a higher standard than Law.

... وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ وَمَنْ يَكْتُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ آثِمٌ قَلْبُهُ ...

Conceal not evidence; for whoever conceals it, his heart is tainted with sin.

**C336.** It sometimes happens that if some inconvenient piece of evidence is destroyed or concealed, we gain a great advantage materially. We are warned not to yield to such a temptation.

The concealment of evidence has a serious effect on our own moral and spiritual life, for it taints the very source of higher life, as typified by the heart.

The heart is also the seat of our secrets. We are told that the sin will reach our most secret being, though the sin may not be visible or open to the world. Further, the heart is in the seat of our affections, and false dealing taints all our affections.

... وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ (٢٨٣)

And Allah knoweth all that ye do.

## C.53 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(2:284-286)

*Our honesty and upright conduct  
Are not mere matters of policy  
Or convenience; all our life in this world  
Must be lived as in the presence of Allah.  
The finest example of Faith we have  
In the Prophet's life; full of faith.  
Let us render willing obedience  
To Allah's Will, Our responsibility  
Though great, is not a burden  
Greater than we can bear; let us  
Pray for Allah's assistance, and He will help.*

### Section 40

لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

284. To Allah belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth.

... وَإِنْ تُبْدُوا مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ يُحَاسِبِكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ...

Whether ye show what is in your minds or conceal it, Allah calleth you to account for it. .

... فَيَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ...

He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and punisheth whom He pleaseth. For Allah hath power over all things.

... وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٢٨٤)

For Allah hath power over all things.

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ...

285. The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith.

... كُلُّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ...

Each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His angels, His books, and His Messengers.

**C337.** This Surah started with the question of Faith (2:3-4), showed us various aspects of Faith and the denial of Faith, gave us ordinances for the new People of Islam as a community, and now rounds off the argument again with a confession of Faith and of its practical manifestation in conduct ("we hear and we obey"), and closes on a note of humility, so that we may confess our sins, ask for forgiveness, and pray for Allah's help and guidance.

... لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ ...

"We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His Messengers."

**C338.** Cf. [2:136](#) and [2:253](#), n. 289.

It is not for us to make any distinction between one and another of Allah's Prophets: we must honor them all equally, though we know that God in His wisdom sent them with different kinds of mission and gave them different degrees of rank.

... وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا ...

And they say: "We hear, and we obey:

... غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ (٢٨٥)

(we seek) Thy forgiveness, Our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys."

**C339.** When our faith and conduct are sincere, we realize how far from perfection we are, and we humbly pray to Allah for the forgiveness of our sins.

We feel that Allah imposes no burden on us that we cannot bear, and with this realization in our hearts and

in the confession of our lips, we go to Him and ask for His help and guidance.

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا...

286. On no soul doth Allah place a burden greater than it can bear.

**C340.** Cf. 2:233. In that verse the burden was in terms of material wealth: here it is in terms of spiritual duty.

Assured by Allah that He will accept from each soul just such duty as it has the ability to offer, we pray further on for the fulfillment of that promise.

... لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ ...

It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns. (Pray):

... رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا...

"Our Lord! condemn us not if we forget or fall into error;

... رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إَصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا...

our Lord! Lay not on us a burden like that which Thou didst lay on those before us;

**C341.** We must not be arrogant, and think that because Allah has granted us His favor and mercy we have no need to exert ourselves, or that we are ourselves superior to those before us.

On the contrary, knowing how much they failed, we pray that our burdens should be lightened, and we confess our realization that we have all the greater need for Allah's mercy and forgiveness.

And so we end the whole argument of the Surah with a prayer for Allah's help, not in our own selfish ends, but in our resolve to uphold God's truth against all Unbelief.

... رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ...

our Lord! lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear.

... وَأَعْفُ عَنَّا وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا...

Blot out our sins, and grant us forgiveness. Have mercy on us.

... أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ (٢٨٦)

Thou art our Protector; help us against those who stand against Faith."

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