

Tafsir
Al-Mizan
Volume 1



Allamah Muhammad Hussein Tabatabai

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Chapter 1

PREFACE OF AL-MIZAN BY THE AUTHOR

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

At-Tafsir (exegesis), that is, explaining the meanings of the Qur'anic verse, clarifying its import and finding out its significance, is one of the earliest academic activities in Islam. The interpretation of the Qur'an began with its revelation, as is clear from the words of Allah: Even as We have sent among you an Apostle from among you who recites to you Our communications and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know (2:151).

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

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

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

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

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

Thus, before the second century had proceeded very far, the Muslim society had broadly split in four groups: The theologians, the philosophers, the Sufi's and the people of tradition. There was an intellectual chaos in the ummah and the Muslims, generally speaking, had lost their bearing. The only thing to which all were committed was the word, "There is no god except Allah, and Muhammad (s.a.w.)** is the Messenger of Allah". They differed with each other in everything else. There was dispute on the meanings of the names and attributes of Allah, as well as about His actions; there was conflict about the reality of the heavens and the earth and what is in and on them; there were controversies about the decree of Allah and the divine measure; opinions differed whether man is a helpless tool in divine hands, or is a free agent; there were wranglings about various aspects of reward and punishment; arguments were kicked like ball, from one side to the other concerning the realities of death, al-barzakh (intervening period between death and the Day of Resurrection); resurrection, paradise and hell. In short, not a single subject, having any relevance to religion was left without a discord of one type or the other. And this divergence, not unexpectedly, showed itself in exegesis of the Qur'an. Every group wanted to support his views and opinions from the Qur'an; and the exegesis had to serve this purpose.

The people of tradition explained the Qur'an with the traditions ascribed to the companions and their disciples. They went ahead so long as there was a tradition to lead them on, and stopped when they could not find any such tradition (Provided the meaning was not self-evident). They thought it to be the only safe method, as Allah says: ... and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: "We believe in it, it is all from our Lord... " (3:7).

But they were mistaken. Allah has not said in His Book that rational proof had no validity. How could He say so when the authenticity of the Book itself depended on rational proof. On the other hand, He has never said that the words of the companions or their disciples had any value as religious proof. How could He say so when there were such glaring discrepancies in their opinions? In short, Allah has not called us to the sophistry which accepting and following contradictory opinions and views would entail. He has called us, instead, to meditate on the Qur'anic verses in order to remove any apparent discrepancy in them. Allah has revealed the Qur'an as a guidance, and has made it a light and an explanation of everything. Why should a light seek brightness from others' light? Why should guidance be led by others' guidance? Why should "an explanation of everything" be explained by others' words?

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

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

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

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

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

In recent times, a new method of exegesis has become fashionable. Some people, supposedly Muslims, who were deeply influenced by the natural sciences (which are based on observations and tests) and the social ones (that rely on induction), followed the materialists of Europe or the

pragmatists. Under the influence of those anti-Islamic theories, they declared that the religion's realities cannot go against scientific knowledge; one should not believe except that which is perceived by any one, of the five senses; nothing exists except the matter and its properties. What the religion claims to exist, but which the sciences reject -like The Throne, The Chair, The Tablet and The Pen - should be interpreted in a way that conforms with the science; as for those things which the science is silent about, like the resurrection etc., they should be brought within the purview of the laws of matter; the pillars upon which the divine religious laws are based - like revelation, angel, Satan, prophethood, apostleship, Imamah (Imamate) etc. - are spiritual things, and the spirit is a development of the matter, or let us say, a property of the matter; legislation of those laws is manifestation of a special social genius, who ordains them after healthy and fruitful contemplation, in order to establish a good and progressive society.

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

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

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

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

As we mentioned in the beginning, the Qur'an introduces itself as the guidance for the worlds (3:96); the manifest light (4:174), and the explanation of every thing (16:89). But these people, contrary to those Qur'anic declarations, make it to be guided by extraneous factors, to be illuminated by some outside theories, and to be explained by something other than itself. "What is that "something else"? What authority has it got? And if there is any difference in various explanations of a verse and indeed there are most serious differences - which mediator should the Qur'an refer to?

What is the root-cause of the differences in the Qur'an's explanations? It could not happen because of any difference in the meaning of a word, phrase or sentence. The Qur'an has been sent down in plain

Arabic; and no Arab (or Arabic-knowing non-Arab) can experience any difficulty in understanding it. Also, there is not a single verse (out of more than six thousand) which is enigmatic, obscure or abstruse in its import; nor is there a single sentence that keeps the mind wandering in search of its meaning. After all, the Qur'an is admittedly the most eloquent speech, and it is one of the essential ingredients of eloquence that the talk should be free from obscurity and abstruseness.

Even those verses that are counted among the "ambiguous" ones, have no ambiguity in their meanings; whatever the ambiguity, it is in identification of the particular thing or individual from among the group to which that meaning refers. This statement needs some elaboration:-

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

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

In the same way, when we hear the verses: ... and with Us is more yet (50:35), ... We would have made it from before Ourselves (21:17), ... and that which is with Allah is best... (62:11), ... and to Him you shall be brought back (2:28, etc.), we attach with the divine presence the concept of "place", because in our minds the two ideas are inseparable.

Also, on reading the verses: And when We intend to destroy a town (17:16), And We intend to bestow a favor... (28:5), and Allah intends ease for you (2:185), we think that the "intention" has the same meaning in every sentence, as is the case with our own intention and will.

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

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

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

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

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

Man, imprisoned as he is within his habitat and habit, often fails to see this reality. That is why al-Hashawiyah and those who believe that God has a body interpret the Qur'anic verses and phrases within the frame-work of the matter and the nature. But in fact they are stuck with their habit and usage, and not to the exterior of the Qur'an and the traditions. Even in the literal meanings of the Qur'an we find ample evidence that relying on the habit and usage in explanation of the divine speech would cause confusion and anomaly. For example, Allah says: nothing is like a likeness of Him (42:11); Visions comprehended Him not, and He comprehends (all) visions; and He is the Knower of subtleties, the Aware (6:73); glory be to Him above what they ascribe (to Him) (23:91; 37:159). These verses manifestly show that what we are accustomed to cannot be ascribed to Allah.

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

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

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

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

No doubt this is the only correct method of exegesis.

Allah has said: ... and We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything (16:89). Is it possible for such a book not to explain its own self? Also He has described the Qur'an in these words: a guidance for mankind and clear evidence of guidance and discrimination (between wrong) (2:185); and He has also said: and We have sent down to you a manifest light (4:174). The Qur'an is, accordingly, a guidance, an evidence, a discrimination between right and wrong and a manifest light for the people to guide them aright and help them in all their needs. Is it imaginable that it would not guide them aright in its own matter, while it is their most important need? Again Allah says: And (as

for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them on to Our ways (2 9: 69). Which striving is greater than the endeavor to understand His Book? And which way is more straight than the Qur'an?

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

Allah taught the Qur'an to His Prophet and appointed him as the teacher of the Book: The Faithful Spirit has descended with it upon your heart that you may be of the warners, in plain Arabic language (26:193 - 4); and We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them, and that haply they may reflect (16:44); ... an Apostle who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom (62:2). And the Prophet appointed his progeny to carry on this work after him. It is clear from his unanimously accepted tradition - I am leaving behind among you two precious things; as long as you hold fast to them you will never go astray after me: The Book of Allah and my progeny, my family members; and these two shall never separate from each other until they reach me (on) the reservoir.

And Allah has confirmed, in the following two verses, this declaration of the Prophet that his progeny had the real knowledge of the Book: Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House! and to purify you a (thorough) purifying (33:33); Most surely it is an honored Qur'an, in a Book that is hidden; None do touch it save the purified ones (56:77-79).

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

The Prophet has said in a sermon: "Therefore, when mischief come to confuse you like the segments of darkened night, then hold fast to the Qur'an; as it is the intercessor whose intercession shall be granted; and a credible advocate; and whoever keeps it before him, it will lead him to the Garden; and whoever keeps it behind, it will drive him to the Fire; and it is the guide that guides to the best path; and it is a book in which there is explanation, particularization and recapitulation; and it is a decisive (world), and not a joke; and there is for it a manifest (meaning) and an esoteric (one); thus its apparent (meaning) is firm, and its esoteric (one) is knowledge; its exterior is elegant and its interior deep; it has (many) boundaries, and its boundaries have (many) boundaries; its wonders shall not cease, and its (unexpected) marvels shall not be old. There are in it the lamps of guidance and the beacon of wisdom, and guide to knowledge for him who knows the attributes. Therefore, one should extend his sight; and should let his eyes reach the attribute; so that one who is in perdition may get deliverance, and one who is entangled may get free; because meditation is the life of the heart of the one who sees, as the one having a light (easily) walks in darkness; therefore, you must seek good deliverance and (that) with little waiting.

'Ali (a.s.) said, inter alia, speaking about the Qur'an in a sermon: "Its one part speaks with the other, and one portion testifies about the other."

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

We shall write, under various headings, what Allah has helped us to understand from the honored verses, by the above mentioned method. We have not based the explanations on any philosophical theory, academic idea or mystical revelation. We have not put into it any outside matter except a fine literary point on which depends the understanding of Arabic eloquence, or a self-evident or practical premises which can be understood by one and all.

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

1. The matters concerning the names of Allah, and His attributes, like His Life, Knowledge, Power, Hearing, Sight and Oneness etc. As for the Person of Allah, you will find that the Qur'an believes that He needs no description.
2. The matters concerning the divine actions, like creation, order, will, wish, guidance, leading astray, decree, measure, compulsion, delegation (of Power), pleasure, displeasure and other similar actions.
3. The matters concerned with the intermediary links between Allah and man, like the Curtain, the Tablet, the Pen, the Throne, the Chair, the Inhabited House, the Heavens, the Earth, the Angels, the Satans, and the Jinns etc.
4. The details about man before he came to this world.
5. The matters related to man in this life, like the history of mankind, knowledge of his self, the foundation of society, the prophethood and the apostleship, the revelation, the inspiration, the book and the religion and law. The high status of the prophets, shining through their stories, come under this heading.
6. The knowledge about man after he departs from this world, that is, al-Barzakh.
7. The matters about human character. Under this heading come the various stages through which the friends of Allah pass in their spiritual journey, like submission, faith, benevolence, humility, purity of intention and other virtues.

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

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

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

On going through those traditions of the Prophet and the Imams (peace be on them all!), you will

notice that this "new" method of exegesis (adopted in this book) is in reality the oldest and the original method which was used by the Teachers of the Qur'an (peace of Allah be on them all!).

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

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

Dependent on Allah,
Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i

Chapter 2

SURAH AL-FATIHA, VERSES 1-5

1:1 بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1:2 الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

1:3 الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1:4 مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

1:5 إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

1:1 In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

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

1:3 The Beneficent the Merciful.

1:4 The Master of the Day of Judgment.

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

COMMENTARY

1:1 In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

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

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

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

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

tail is severed.

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

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

... indeed, there has come to you a light and a clear Book from Allah; with it Allah guides him who follows His pleasure into the ways of safety... (5:15-16)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Accordingly, this verse, at the beginning of this chapter of "The Opening", refers also to the theme of this chapter. It appears from its semantic flow that its purpose is to praise Allah and to pledge the

believer's servitude (declaring that he worships only Allah and seeks help from Him only) and then to pray for divine guidance. This speech has been uttered by Allah, on behalf of His servant, so that the servant may learn how, by repeating these words, he may show his gratitude to, and servitude before, Allah.

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

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

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

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

There is a name that means "the person himself seen in the light of an attribute"; such a name is not separate from the named person; it is the person himself. The word *al- Alim* (The Knower), one of the divine names, points to the Person of Allah as seen in the light of His attribute of Knowledge. At the same time, it refers to Allah Who cannot be known except by one or the other of His attributes. Let us explain this matter in another way: "Name" points to the named person; likewise the personal traits and characteristics point to the holder of those traits and characteristics - in this way, we may say that the personal traits are the "names" of the person concerned. "Name", accordingly, can be of two kinds: in words, and in substance. The direct name is of the second type, that is, the personal trait that points to its own subjects - for example, the "Knowledge" that points to Allah, the holder of the knowledge. And the word "the Knower" is in reality an indirect name - it points to the direct name, that is, the attribute of knowledge, which in its turn directly points to its holder, that is, Allah. "Knowledge" is, thus, the name of Allah, and "the Knower" is "the name of the name."

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

"Allah" (the divine name) was originally *al-Ilah*; the "I"; in the middle was omitted because of frequent use. *al-Ilah* is derived from *alaha* (he worshipped) or from *aliha* or *waliha* (he was bewildered). It is on paradigm of *al-fi'al* in meaning of *al-maf'ul* (object-noun). For example, *al-Kitab* means *al-Maktub* (the written); likewise *al-Ilah* means *al-Ma'luh* that is, the One who is worshipped, or the One about whom minds are bewildered.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

... and He is Merciful to the believers (33:43)

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

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

1:2 الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ

1:2 All praise is due to Allah,...

It has been said that "*al-hamd*" is to praise someone for a good acquired by his own intention, "*al-*

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

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

Allah says:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And Allah's are the best names; therefore call on Him thereby, and leave alone those who violate the sanctity of His names. (7:180)

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

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

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

The praise means to attribute, to ascribe; and Allah has declared that He is above all that His

servants ascribe to Him. He has said:

Hallowed be Allah (for freedom) from what they ascribe, except the servants of Allah, freed(from sins). (37:159 -160)

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

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

And He quotes Ibrahim (Abraham - a.s.) as saying:

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

Also, He told His Prophet, Muhammad (s.a.w.) in several places:

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

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

... and they both said: "Praise be to Allah... (27:15)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

they do not comprehend Him in knowledge... (20:110)

In this background, if they were to praise Him it would mean that they had comprehended Him in their knowledge; in other words, Allah would be surrounded by their limited understanding, confined

within the boundary of their comprehension. Therefore, they were careful enough to first declare His glory from all the limits of their comprehension, before starting His praise. Allah says:

... surely Allah knows and you do not know. (16:74)

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

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

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

... رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ 1:2

الرَّحْمَنَ الرَّحِيمَ 1:3

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ 1:4

1:2... the Lord of the Worlds.

1:3The Beneficent the Merciful.

1:4The Master of the Day of Judgment.

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

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

"*al-'Alamin*" is the plural of *al-'alam* (the world) which literally means, "what one is known with." This paradigm is used for "instrument", like *al-qalab* (the mold, the form), *al-khatam* the seal, the instrument of sealing) and *at-taba'* (the stamp, the impress). The word *al-'alam* is used for the universe - the whole creation taken together. Also it is used for each genes or species taken separately, for example, the inorganic world, the vegetable world, the animal world, the human world. It is also used for a class of a species, like the Arab world, the African world etc. This last meaning is more appropriate in the context of these verses: The verses that enumerate the good names of Allah until they come to "the Master of the Day of Judgment." The judgment is reserved for

mankind alone or together with the jinn. Therefore, the "worlds" should refer to the worlds of the human beings and the jinn, that is, their various groups. The word *al'alamin* (the worlds) has been used in this sense in other Qur'anic verses too. Allah says:

... and has chosen you above the women of the worlds. (3:42)

... so that he may be a warner to the worlds. (25:1)

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

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

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

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

Traditions

Ar-Rida (a.s.) said in explanation of the divine words:*In the name of Allah*: "It means: 'I mark my soul with one of - the marks of Allah', and it is (His) worship." He was asked: "What is the 'mark'?" He said; "The brand." (*'Uyunu 'l-akhbar* and *Ma'ani 'l-akhbar*).

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

It is narrated in *at-Tahdhib* from as-Sadiq (a.s.), and in *'Uyunul-akhbar* and *at-Tafsir* of al-Ayyashi from ar-Rida (a.s.) that this verse "is nearer to the Greatest name of Allah than the iris of the eye is from its white."

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

Amiru'l-mu'minin (as.) said that (this verse) is from the chapter of The Opening; and verily the Apostle of Allah used to recite it and count it as one of its verses, and he used to say, "The Opening of the Book is 'the seven oft-repeated' (verses)." (*'Uyunul-akhbar*)

The author says: This matter has also been narrated by the Sunni narrators. ad-Dar-qutni narrates from Abu Hurayrah that he said: "The Apostle of Allah said: When you recite (the chapter of) The Praise (i.e., The Opening), you shall recite, *In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful,*

because it is the source of the Book and (is) the seven oft-repeated (verses), and, *In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful* is one of its verses.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "What have they done? May Allah destroy them! They proceeded to the greatest verse of the Book of Allah, and thought that it would be an innovation (unlawful act) if they recited it loudly!" (*al-Khisal*)

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

The author says: There are numerous traditions of this meaning coming from the Imams of *Ahlul-bayt*(a.s.). All of them prove that the verse (*In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*) is a part of every chapter, except the ninth ("Repentance"); and the Sunni traditions also prove it:

Anas (ibn Malik) said that the Apostle of Allah said: "Just now a chapter has been sent down to me." Then he began reciting, "*In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*." (*as-Sahih*, Muslim)

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

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

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

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

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

It is narrated in *Kashful-ghummah* that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "A mule of my father was lost. He said: if Allah brought it back to me, I would thank Him with Praises He would pleased with.' Shortly afterwards, it was brought before him with its saddle and rein (intact). When he sat on it and arrayed his clothes, he raised his head towards heaven and said: 'Praise be to Allah.' He said nothing more. Then he said: 'I did not omit nor did I leave out, anything; I have declared that all Praises are for Allah, Powerful and Great is He!; because there is no praise but it is included in this (formula)." It is narrated in *Uyunu'l-akhbar* that 'Ali (a.s.) was asked about its explanation. He said: "Verily, Allah has explained to His servants broadly some of His bounties on them, as they can not know all His bounties in detail - they are beyond enumeration and description. Therefore, He said: Say: 'All praise is for Allah on what He has bestowed upon us.'"

The author says: The Imam points to the fact mentioned earlier that the praise, in this verse, is from

the servant, and that Allah has revealed it to teach him the manners of servitude and worship.

From the Philosophical Point of View

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

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ 1:5

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

"*al-'Abd*" means slave, a human being who is owned. In its abstract sense, it is applied to other intellectual beings also, as the words of Allah show: *There is no one in the heavens and the earth but will come to the Beneficent God as (" 'abdan") a slave (19:93)*. In modern usage, it is commonly translated as 'servant'.

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

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

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

Also He says:

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

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

Servitude is effective in those affairs which are owned or controlled by the master; and not in other matters related to the slave, like his being son of his father, or having a height of so many centimeters - there is no submission or servitude in such things. But the mastership of Allah is not limited; His mastership is not shared by anyone else, nor is the servitude of the creatures divided between Allah and someone else. A master has only limited authority over his servants - he may employ them to perform certain duties, but he cannot kill them or punish them unjustly. But Allah has total and all-encompassing authority over His servants; He does whatsoever He wills with them and about them. His ownership is unconditional and unlimited; and the servitude of His creatures is likewise

unconditional and unlimited. This "ownership" is true and exclusive on both sides: The Lord has the exclusive ownership, and the slave has the exclusive servitude. The construction of the sentence, "Thee do we worship", points to this exclusiveness - the object, "Thee", has been placed before the verb, and worship is mentioned without any condition.

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

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

Is it not sufficient as regards your Lord that he is a witness over all things? Now surely they are in doubt as to the meeting of their Lord; now surely He encompasses all things. (41:53-54)

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

... therefore, Worship Allah, being sincere to Him in religion. (39:2)

Now, surely, sincere religion is for Allah (alone), and (as for) those who take guardians besides Him, (saying): We do not worship them that they may make us nearer to Allah, surely Allah will judge between them in that in which they differ. (39:3)

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

The declaration of one's servitude with the words, "Thee do we worship", is free from all defects, so far as its meaning and Purity are concerned. Yet, as the servant describes the worship as his own act, it could create an impression that he thought to be independent in existence, power and will, while in fact he is only a slave and slave owns nothing. The second sentence, "and Thee do we

beseech for help", removes this possible misunderstanding. It means: "We ascribe the worship to ourselves and make this claim only with Thy help; we are never independent of Thee. In other words, the complete-verse, "Thee do we worship and Thee do we beseech for help" gives a single meaning, and that is "worship with purity of intention." Probably, that is why both sentences have the same style; otherwise, it could be said, 'Thee do we worship; help us and guide us . The style has been changed in the next verse, "guide us .." and its reason will be explained later.

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

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

Chapter 3

SURAH AL-FATIHA, VERSES 6-7

اهدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ 1:6

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ 1:7

1:6 Guide us to the straight path.

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

Commentary

اهدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ 1:6

... وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ 1:7

1:6 Guide us to the straight path.

1:7... nor of those gone astray.

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

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

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

... and to Him is the ultimate resort. (64:3)

... now surely to Allah do all affairs eventually come. (42:53)

There are many such verses, showing that all are proceeding on a prescribed road and that their destination is Allah.

So far as the way is concerned, Allah has said that there are two ways, not one:

Did I not enjoin on you, O children of Adam! that you should not worship the Satan? Surely he is your open enemy. And that you should worship Me; this is the straight path. (30:60-61)

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

... then verily I am near; I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me, so they should answer My call and believe in Me, that they may walk in the rightway. (2:186)

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

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

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

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

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

Second difference:

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

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

... and to whomsoever My wrath descends he shall perish indeed. (20:81)

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

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

Allah uses the term "polytheism" for "going astray."*

Accordingly, people are divided into three categories: First, those who proceed to the upper heights - those who believe in the signs of Allah and are not arrogant to His worship. Second, those who fall down to the lower levels - they are those upon whom the wrath of Allah has descended. Third, those who have gone astray from the right path; they are lost, wandering hither and thither. The last verse under discussion points to these three categories: "the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favors, not of those inflicted by Thy wrath, nor of those gone astray."

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

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

This statement needs some elaboration:

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

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

The same is the theme of the verse:

Did not I enjoin on you, O children of Adam! that you should not worship the Satan? Surely he is your open enemy. And that you should worship Me; this is the straight path. And certainly he has led astray a great multitude from among you. (36:60-62)

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

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

Then it counts injustice as straying:

Those who believe and do not mix up their faith with injustice, those are they who shall have the security and they are those who shall be guided aright. (6:82)

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

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

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

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

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

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

But no! by your Lord! they do not believe (in reality) until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them, and then they do not find any straitness in their selves as to what you have decided, and submit with total submission. And if We had prescribed for them: Kill yourselves or go forth from your homes, they would not have done it except a few of them; and if they had done what they were admonished, it would have certainly been better for them and most efficacious in strengthening (them). (4:65-66)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

... and follow the way of him who turns to Me. (31:15)

... the way of the believers... (4:115)

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

Indeed, there has come to you a light and a clear Book from Allah; with it Allah guides him who follows His pleasure into the ways of safety and brings them out of utter darkness into light by His permission and guides them to the straight path. (5:15 -16)

See, how the verse refers to "the ways" (in plural), and to "the straight path" (in singular). Now, there may be two explanations for it. Either "the straight path" is the same thing as "the ways", or "the ways" on going further join together and then merge into the straight path.

There is another difference between the straight path and the way. Allah says:

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

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

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

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

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

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

from some kind of deterioration, although the straight path is immune from all defects and imperfections. You have seen how one of the ways, the belief sometimes combines with polytheism and straying, but the straight path does not do so. In short, the ways are of various grades near or distant; safe or unsafe; clean or unclean - but all are in the straight path, or, let us say, are one with the straight path.

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

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

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

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

From the above analysis it may be seen that the straight path is a sort of controller of all the ways leading to Allah. We may say that a way leading to Allah leads a man to Him as long as it remains one with the straight path; but the straight path leads to Allah unconditionally, without any if or but. That is why Allah has named it "*as-siratul-mustaqim*" (the straight path). *as-Sirat* means a clear path, and is derived from "*sarattu sartan*" (I swallowed it completely); in other words, this clear path swallows its walkers; without letting them go out. "*al-Mustaqim*" (straight)

literally means the one who stands on his legs, and has full control of himself as well as of the things attached to him. In other words, it is a thing, which is not subjected to change or variation. Thus "*as-siratu'l-mustaqim*" (the straight path) is the path which never fails to guide and to lead the walker to his destination. Allah says:

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

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

Therefore (for) whomsoever Allah intends that He would guide him aught, He expands his breast for Islam, and (for) whomsoever He intends that He should leave him to err, He makes his breast strait and narrow as though he were ascending into the sky; thus does Allah lay uncleanness on those who do not believe. And this is the path of your Lord, (a) straight (path). (6:125-126)

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

He said: "This is a straight path with Me; surely as regards My servants, thou hast no authority over them except those who follow thee of the deviators". (15:41-42)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

... and excellent are these as companions. (4:69)

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

The last mentioned verse was revealed about 'All, the Leader of the faithful (a.s.), as *al-mutawatir* traditions say; and he (peace be on him) was the first to open this door in Islam. More details of it will be given in the fifth chapter. Third: The import of the guidance to the way depends on the meaning of the way itself. *al-Hidayah* means to guide, to lead; it accepts two objects, either without any preposition (as in the language of Hijaz) or with *ila* (to) before the second object (as in the language of other tribes). This detail has been given in *as-Sihah* of al-Jawhari, and obviously it is correct. Before going further, a mistaken notion should be removed. Some people think that the meaning of guidance changes, depending on whether its second object is preceded by the preposition *ila* or not. If there is no such preposition, then according to them, guidance means "to convey to the destination"; if it is preceded by *ila*, then it denotes "to show the path." In evidence, they offer the following verses:

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

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

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

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

and most surely you guide to the right path. (42:52)

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

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

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

Here the Arabic text has no preposition and yet it does not mean conveying to destination, it only denotes showing the way.

What has been mentioned in the verse 28:56 (*Surely you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He pleases*) is the reality or perfection of guidance. The verse shows that the Prophet could not bestow on his people the perfect guidance, the reality of guidance, as it was a task that Allah has reserved for Himself.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reply: Admittedly, the Law brought by Muhammad (s.a.w.) is more perfect than any other one. But it does not necessarily mean that all those who follow this Law are more perfect than all those who followed the previous laws. An average follower of the Law of Muhammad (s.a.w.) cannot surpass Nuh or Ibrahim (a.s.), although their laws were sent long before the Islamic Law. It is one thing to accept and follow a law; it is quite another to get spiritual perfection by total submission - by perfectly molding oneself in that law's pattern. A believer of previous nations who attained a high spiritual level, who became a mirror of divine attributes, -is most certainly better than, and superior to, a follower of this law who did not reach that state - even though the latter would be following the most perfect and comprehensive law, that is, the Law of Muhammad (s.a.w.). Therefore, it is quite in order for a believer of lower grade (although he may follow a perfect law) to pray to Allah to help him reach the level of a believer of higher grade (although he might have followed a less perfect law).

An exegete has replied to the above-mentioned objection in a way that is not free from defects. He has said: The religion of Allah is one, and that is Islam. The fundamental truths - the belief in One God, the Prophethood and the Day of Judgment and all that results from this belief - are the same in all the laws and revelations sent by Allah. The Law of Islam has an added distinction, in that it covers all aspects of human life and is, thus, the most comprehensive one. It looks more properly after public welfare. Moreover, its foundation is laid on reasoning - in all its forms: The logic, the admonition and

the goodly argumentation.

All divine religions are, thus, the same and the fundamental truths are common to all. The previous people have preceded us in this path. Therefore, Allah has ordered us to look into their affairs, to take lessons from them and to follow them to spiritual perfection.

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

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

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

Fifth: The people of the straight path are higher in rank than others, and their path is superior to the others' ways. It is because of their knowledge, and not because of their virtuous deeds. They have that knowledge of divine attributes which is hidden from others. (We have explained earlier that perfection of virtuous deeds is found in some of the inferior ways also. Therefore, deeds cannot be the criterion by which the people of the straight Path are given excellence over the rest.) The question arises as to what is that knowledge and how it is acquired. We shall deal with these questions when we shall explain the verse 13:17 (*He sends down water from the heaven, then the valleys flow according to their measure*). The following verses too point to this fact:

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

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

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

Traditions

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

it is the most excellent worship." (*al-Kafi*)

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

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

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

and He has said,

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

Therefore, whosoever is loved by Allah, he shall be among the secure ones; and it is a hidden position, cannot touch it save the purified ones." (*al-Ilal, al-Majalis and al-Khisal*)

The author says: The meaning of these traditions may be understood from the preceding commentary. The Imams (of *Ahlul-bayt*) have variously attributed the worship of the noble ones sometimes to gratitude and sometimes to love, because in final analysis both are one and the same. Gratitude and thank means putting the received bounty in its proper place. It is the thank of worship that it should be addressed to Allah, as only He, Himself, deserves to be worshipped. Allah is worshipped because He is Allah, that is, because He alone holds all attributes of beauty and glory. He, of all things, is Beautiful; He alone is loved for Himself. What is love? It is inclination and attraction towards beauty. We say: He is worshipped because He is He; We may express the same idea if we say: He is worshipped because He is beautiful and beloved. Again, the same theme may be explained by saying that He is worshipped because He is the Bestower of favors and is thanked through worship. All three expressions carry the same import. It has been narrated through Sunni chains that as-Sadiq (a.s.) explained the verse, "Thee do we worship..." in these words: "We do not ask from Thee other than Thee, and we do not worship Thee by substitute and replacement, as do those who are ignorant of Thee, removed from Thee."

The author says: This tradition points to what has been explained in the commentary that worship demands presence (of heart) and purity (of intention) which does not allow diversion to any substitute, to anything else. as-Sadiq (a.s.) said *inter alia* in a tradition: "And whosoever thinks that he worships (Allah) by (His) attributes without being conscious of Him, he refers (his worship) to an absent one; and whosoever thinks that he worships the attribute and the person (having that attribute) he nullifies monotheism, because the attribute is other than the person; and whosoever thinks that he ascribes the person to the attribute, he belittles the Great One, 'and the do not assign to Allah His proper prestige...' (*Tuhaful-'uqul*)

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

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

The author says: The two traditions point to two aspects of the reply of the previously mentioned objection - that the prayer for guidance, addressed by a person already guided aright, is trying to obtain a thing in hand, and that it was asking for impossible. The first tradition looks at the difference in the grades of guidance, and the second looks at oneness of guidance in its reality. Again *Ma'ani 'I-akhbar* quotes 'Ali (a.s.) as saying: "The straight path, in this world, is that which stops short of excesses and rises above shortcomings, and remains straight; and, in the next world, it is the path of the believers (leading them) to the Garden. "

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

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

ar-Rida (a.s.) narrates through his forefathers from Amiral al-mu'minin (a.s.) that he said: "I heard the Apostle of Allah saying: 'Allah, Mighty and Great is He, has said: "I have divide the Opening of the Book between Myself and My servant; so, half is for Me and the (other) half is for My servant. And My servant shall get what he asks for." When the servant says: *In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*, Allah, Great is His Glory, says: "My servant has started with My name, and it is incumbent upon Me that I should complete his works him and bless him in his affairs." And when he says: *All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds*, Allah, Great is His Glory says: "My servant has Praised Me, and he knows that the bounties that are with him are from Me, and that the misfortunate that have been averted from him were so averted by My grace; (O My angels!) I appoint You as My witnesses that I shall add for him the favors of the next world to those of this world, and will avert from him the calamities of the next world as I have averted from him the calamities of this world." And when he says, *The Beneficent, the Merciful*, Allah, Great is His Glory, says: "My servant bore witness for Me that I am the Beneficent, the Merciful; I make you My witness that I will most surely augment his share in My mercy, and I will most certainly increase his portion My bounties." And when he says, *The Master of the Day of Judgment*, Allah, the High, says: "I make you My witness that, as he has acknowledged that I am the Master of the Day of Judgment I will most certainly make his reckoning easier (for him) on the Day of Reckoning, and I will most certainly accept his good deed and look over his sins." And when he says: *Thee do we worship*, Allah, Mighty and Great is He, says: "My servant is telling truth, He worships Me only. Be My witness that I will most surely give him for his worship a reward that will be the (object of) envy to all who opposed him when he worshipped Me." And when he says, *and Thee do we beseech for help*, Allah, the High, says: "From Me has My servant sought help, and in Me has he taken refuge. Be My witness that I will most certainly help him in his affairs, and will aid him in his difficulties, and will take his hand in his calamities." And when he says, *Guide us to the eight path...* , Allah, Mighty and Great is He, says: "This (part) is for My servant, and My servant shall have what he asks for; and I have answered (the prayer of) My servant, and have given him what he hopes for and have protected him from what he is

afraid of." "" (*Uyunul-akhbar*).

The author says: as-Saduq has narrated in '*Ilalu 'sh-shara'i*', an almost similar tradition from ar-Rida (a.s.). The tradition explains the chapter of The Opening in the frame of the daily prayer. It further confirms the previously mentioned fact that this divine revelation has been sent, as though on behalf of the servants of Allah, to teach them the manners of servitude; to show them how to praise their Lord and how to declare their allegiance to Him. It is a chapter made especially for the purpose of worship; and no other chapter comes near to it in this respect. For example:

1. The entire chapter is a divine speech, revealed on behalf of His servant, so that he may recite it when he stands to worship his Lord.
2. It is divided in two parts: one for Allah and the other for the servant.
3. It contains, in spite of its brevity, all the Qur'anic wisdom. The Qur'an is a vast treasure of fundamental truths, moral values and the most comprehensive *shari'ah* which consists of the rules of worship and mutual dealings, as well as the penal and civil codes. Further it is a valuable mine of divine promises and threats, stories of previous peoples as well as parables and moral lessons. But, in spite of this wide scope, all its teachings may be returned to four fundamental truths: the Oneness of God, the prophethood, the resurrection (with all its details) and the guidance of mankind to its bliss in this world as well as in the next. Needless to reiterate that this chapter contains all these basic realities in these very short, and at the same time very eloquent, sentence.

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

Our Father which art in heaven Hallowed be thy name.

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

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.

Amen.

(Matthews 6:9-13)

Ponder deeply on the teachings contained in these sentences, supposed to be of divine revelation, and see what manners of servitude does this prayer teach. First it tells them that their Father (i.e. God, in their terminology) is in heaven. Then it prays about the Father that His name be hallowed, His kingdom come and His will be done in earth as it is in heaven. The question is: Who will fulfill these wishes which look more like political slogans than spiritual invocation. Then it makes them ask for their daily bread, and for His forgiveness in lieu of their forgiveness - that He should waive His rights as they have waived theirs. But what right do they possess except that which they have been given by God Himself? Then they beseech Him not to lead them into temptation but to deliver them from evil. This is asking for impossible, because this world is the place appointed for our test and

trial, so that we may acquire spiritual perfection. Would not salvation lose its meaning, if there was no test and trial?

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

Other Traditions

It is narrated in *Man la yahduruhu'l-faqih and at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "The straight path is Amiru'l-mu'minin (a.s.)."

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "(The Straight path) is the path to the knowledge of Allah. And there are two paths, one in this world and the other in the next. As for the path in this world, it is the Imam whose obedience is obligatory; whosoever knows him in this world and follows his guidance, he shall proceed on the path which is the bridge over the hell in the next world; and whosoever does not know him in this world, his foot shall slip (over that bridge) in the next world, and he shall fall down into the fire of the hell." (*Ma'ani 'l-akhbar*)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

... and most surely it is a Mighty Book, falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it. (41:41-42) Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian. (15:9)

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

4

Chapter

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 1-5

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الم:1

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ 2:2

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ 2:3

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ 2:4

أُولَئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ 2:5

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

2:1 Alif lam mim.

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

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

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

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

General Comment

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

Commentary

QUR'AN: *Alif lam mim:*

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

QUR'AN: *This Book, there is no doubt in it, (is) a guidance to those who guard (against evil), those who believe in the unseen:*

Those who guard against evil, or in other words, the pious ones, are the very people who believe. Piety or guarding oneself against evil, is not a special virtue of any particular group of the believers.

It is not like doing good, being humble before God or purity of intention, which are counted as various grades of the faith. Piety, on the other hand, is a comprehensive virtue that runs through all the ranks of the true faith. It is for this reason that Allah has not reserved this adjective for any particular group of the believers.

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

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

The contrast is thus made clear between the pious ones on one hand and the disbeliever and the hypocrites (who are admonished in the next fifteen verses) on the other. The later two groups are surrounded by two straying and two blindness. Their first straying causes their unbelief and hypocrisy, and the second one (which comes after their unbelief and hypocrisy) confirms their first error and strengthens it. Look at what Allah says about the disbeliever: *Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing; and there is a covering over their eyes (2:7)*. Sealing their hearts has been ascribed to Allah, but the covering over their eyes was put by the disbeliever themselves. Likewise, Allah says about the hypocrites: *There is a disease in their hearts, so Allah added to their disease (2:10)*. The first disease is attributed to the hypocrites themselves, and the second one to Allah. The same reality has been explained in many verses. For example: *He causes many to err by it and many He leads aright by it! But He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors 2:;26); ... but when they turned aside, Allah made their hearts turn aside (61:5)*.

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

The second guidance is by the Qur'an; therefore, the first one must have been before the Qur'an. They must have been guided by a healthy and unimpaired psychology. If a man's nature is faultless and flawless, it cannot fail to see that it is dependent on some thing above it. Also, it realizes that every other thing, which it may perceive, imagine or understand, depends likewise on a thing outside the chain of dependent and needy things. Thus, it comes to believe that there must be a Being, unseen and un-perceptible through the senses, who is the beginning and end of every other thing. It also sees that the said Essential Being does not neglect even the smallest detail when it comes to creative perfection of His creatures. This makes him realize that the said Creator cannot leave the man to wander aimlessly hither and thither in his life; that He must have provided for him a guidance to lead him aright in his actions and morals. By this healthy reasoning, the man acquires the belief in One God, in the institution of prophethood and in the Day of Resurrection. In this way, his faith in the fundamentals of religion becomes complete. That faith leads him to show his servitude before his Lord, and to use all that is in his power - wealth, prestige, knowledge, power, and any other excellence - to keep this faith alive and to convey it to others. Thus we come to the prayer and benevolent spending. The five virtues enumerated in these verses are such that a healthy nature unfailingly leads the man to them. Once a man reaches this stage, Allah bestows on him His another grace, that is, the guidance by the Qur'an.

The above-mentioned five qualities - correct belief and correct deeds - fall between two guidance,

a preceding one and a following one.

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

Allah confirms those who believe with the sure word in *this world's life and in the hereafter* (14:27). *O you who believe! fear Allah and believe in His apostle. He will give you two portions of His mercy, and make for you a light with which you will walk...* (57:28).

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

And Allah does not guide the unjust people (61:7)... *and Allah does not guide the transgressing people*(61:5).

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

The above verses give an indication that man has another life, hidden behind this one. It is by that life that he lives in this world as well as after death and at resurrection. Allah says: *Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth...* (6:122). We shall explain it, God willing, later on.

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

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

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

QUR'AN: *and they are sure of the hereafter*: Instead of only believing in the hereafter, they are sure of it. There is an indication here that one cannot be pious, cannot guard himself against evil, until he is really certain of the hereafter - a certainty that does not let him forget it even for a short time. A man believes in a matter, yet sometimes forgets some of its demands and then commits something contrary. But if he believes in, and is sure of, the day when he shall have to give account of all that he has done big or small - he will not do anything against the divine law, will not commit any sin. Allah says: *... and do not follow desire, lest it should lead you astray from the path of Allah; (as for) those who go astray from the path of Allah, for them surely is a severe punishment because they forgot the day of reckoning* (38:26). Clearly it is because of forgetting the day of Reckoning that man goes astray. It follows that if one remembers it and is sure of it, he will surely guard himself against evil, will become pious.

QUR'AN: *These are on guidance from their Lord and these it is that shall be the successful ones*: Guidance is always from Allah, it is not ascribed to anyone else except in a metaphorical way. Allah describes His guidance in these words: *Therefore (for) whomsoever Allah intends that He*

would guide him aright, He expands his breast for Islam... (6:125). If one's breast is expanded, he will be free from every tightness and niggardliness. And Allah says that:... *whoever is preserved from the niggardliness of his soul, these it is that are the successful ones* (59:9). Therefore, He says in this verse about those who are on His guidance that "they shall be the successful ones."

Traditions

As-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allah: *Those who believe in the unseen*: "Those who believe in the rising of *al-Qa'im* (one who stands, i.e., al-Mahdi, the twelfth Imam - a.s.) that it is truth." (*Ma'ani 'I-akhbar*)

The author says: This explanation is given in other traditions also; and it is based on the "flow" of the Qur'an. According to *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi, as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allah: *and spend(benevolently) out of what We have given them*, that it means: the knowledge We have given them.

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

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

A Philosophical Discussion

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

Pure rational proofs often go wrong. There is no test or experiment, perceptible through the senses, to verify those rational proofs or their premises. Sensual perceptions are free from this defect; when we perceive a thing through a sense, we verify it through repeated tests and experiments; this testing continues till we are sure of the characteristics or properties of the object of test.

Therefore, sensual perception is free from doubt, while rational proof is not.

But this argument has many flaws:

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

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

Third: No doubt, there should be a way to distinguish the right perception from the wrong. But it is not the "repeated testing", *per se*, that creates that distinction in our mind. Rather, it becomes one of the premises of a rational proof, which in turn provides that distinction. When we discover a property of an object, and the property remains the same through repeated tests, a rational proof, on the following lines, is offered by our thinking power. If this property were not this thing's own property, it would not be found in it so unfailingly; But it is always found in it without fail; Therefore, it is its own property. It is now obvious that sensual perception too depends on rational premises to finalize its findings.

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

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

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

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

Another Philosophical Discussion

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

By these stages, he becomes aware of the basic principle that positive and negative are mutually exclusive and totally exhaustive; they are contradictories, they cannot both be present nor can both be absent. This fundamental truth is the foundation -stone of every self-evident or theoretical

proposition. (Even if one doubts this statement, he intuitively knows that this "doubt" cannot be present with its negative, with its "non doubt.")

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

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

First: The most potent knowledge (that comes through the five senses) is often wrong and in error. Then how can one be sure of the knowledge obtained through other sources? How can we rely, in this background, on any knowledge or proposition outside our own selves? Second: When we wish to comprehend any outside object, what we get is merely its knowledge; we do not grasp the object itself. Then, how can it be possible to grasp any object?

Reply to the First Argument:

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

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

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

Reply to the Second Argument: The issue in dispute is knowledge, which means to unveil an object. The Skeptics admit that when they try to comprehend an object, they get its knowledge. Their only complaint is that they do not grasp the object itself. But nobody has ever claimed that knowledge means grasping the object itself; our only claim is that knowledge unveils some of the realities of its object, that is, of the thing so known. Moreover, the Skeptic refutes his own views practically in every movement and at every moment. He claims that he does not know anything outside his own self, outside his own mind. But when he is hungry or thirsty, he moves to the food or water; when he sees a wall falling down, he runs away from it. But he does not try to get food when he just thinks about hunger, and does not run away when he just thinks about a falling wall. It means that he does not act on the pictures in his mind - which he claims are the real things, and acts on that feeling or perception which comes to him from outside which, according to him, does not have any reality and should not be relied upon!

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

Every single atom in this world is in constant movement; every single thing is continuously moving towards perfection or deterioration. In other words, what a thing was at a given instant, is not the same in the next. Understanding and perception is a function of brain. Therefore, it is a material property of a material compound. Naturally, this process too is governed by the laws of change and development. It means that all functions of brain, including knowledge, are constantly changing and developing. It is, therefore, wrong to say that there is any such thing as established knowledge. Whatever knowledge

there is has only relative permanence - some propositions last longer than others. And it is this un-permanent conception that is called knowledge.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 5

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 6-7

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أُنذِرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ 2:6
خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ 2:7

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

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

Commentary

QUR'AN: *Surely those who disbelieve... will not believe:*

They were the people who obstinately clung to rejection of faith and in whose hearts disbelief had established deep roots. This may be inferred from the fact that warning them and not warning them was all alike to them; they would not move from their obduracy. Probably it refers to the disbeliever of Quraysh, who were the bitterest enemies of Islam and who did try their utmost to extinguish the light of faith; they persisted stubbornly in their enmity until Allah destroyed them in Badr and other battles. The sentence, "alike is it to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe", strengthens this interpretation; because it could not be applied to all the disbeliever of the world - otherwise the door of guidance would be closed. Also, this same sentence has come in Chapter of Ya Sin (36:10) which is a Meccan chapter. Then it appears in this chapter that is the first chapter revealed at Medina. (It was revealed before the battle of Badr.) Therefore, more probably this verse also refers to the same Meccan group. In other places too the same explanation may be given to the word, "those who disbelieve", unless there is a reason to the contrary.

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

QUR'AN: *Allah has set a seal... great punishment:*

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

Its further explanation will be given under 2:26; *Surely Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable - that of a gnator any thing above that ...*

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

Traditions

Az-Zubayri says that he said to as-Sadiq (a.s.): "Tell me how many ways of *al-kufr* (disbelief, infidelity, to cover) are there according to the Book of Allah? Mighty and Great is He! He (the Imam) said: 'Disbelief, according to the Book of Allah, is of five types. There is the disbelief of denial (and denial is of two kinds), and the disbelief by neglecting what Allah has ordered, and the disbelief of disavowal, and the ingratitude. As for the disbelief of denial, it is denial of the Lordship; it is the talk of those who say: "there is no Lord (i.e. Creator), nor any Garden nor Fire ." It is the word of two groups of disbeliever who are called atheists. And they are those who say: "*nothing destroys us but time*" (45: 24). It is a religion invented by them as it seemed good to them, but they have no proof to support their view. That is why Allah has said (about them): *And they have no knowledge of that; they only conjecture* (ibid.), that it is in reality as they say. And He also said: *Surely those who disbelieve, alike is it to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe.*" (*al-Kafi*)

And as for the second kind, it is the denial after knowing; it means that the denier denies (the existence of God), but he knows (very well) that He is the truth, and he is convinced of it (in his heart). And Allah has said (about such people): *And they denied them unjustly and proudly while their soul had been convinced of them* (27:14); ... *and aforetime they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved, but when there came to them that which they did recognize* (i.e. the Prophet) *they disbelieved in him; so Allah's curse is on the unbelievers* (2: 89).

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

And the third way of disbelief is ingratitude to the bounties (of Allah); and it is as Allah says quoting (the Prophet) Sulayman: *"This is of the grace of my Lord that He may try me whether I am grateful or ungrateful; and whoever is grateful, he is grateful only for his own self and whoever is ungrateful, then surely my Lord is Self-sufficient, Honored"* (27:40); *If you are grateful, I would certainly give you more, and if you are ungrateful, My chastisement is truly severe*(14:7). *Therefore remember Me, I will remember you, and be thankful to Me, and do not be ungrateful to Me*(2:152). (In all these verses Allah has used the word *al-kufr* disbelief, to denote ungratefulness, and ingratitude.)

And the fourth way of disbelief is leaving out or neglecting what Allah has ordered to do. It is as Allah says: *And when We made a covenant with you: You shall not shed your blood and you shall not turn your people out of your cities; then you gave a promise while you witnessed. Yet you it is who slay your people and turn a party from among you out of their homes, backing each other up against them unlawfully and exceeding the limits; and if they should come to you as captives, you would ransom them - while their very turning out was unlawful for you. Do you then believe in a part of the book and disbelieve in the other?* (2:84-85). In this verse Allah has charged them with disbelief because they did not follow the commandment of Allah; (it should be noted that) Allah has (in this very verse) linked them to belief, yet He did not accept it from them and it did not benefit them before Allah. So Allah (further) said: *What then is the reward of such among you as do this but disgrace in the life of this world, and on the day of resurrection they shall beset back to the most grievous chastisement, and Allah is not at all heedless of what you do* (ibid.)

And the fifth way of disbelief is disavowal. It is as Allah says, quoting Ibrahim (a.s.) ..*we renounce you, and enmity and hatred have appeared between us and you for ever until you believe in Allah alone*" (60:4), that is, we disavow and repudiate you. And He says, describing Iblis and his disowning his friends from mankind on the Day of Resurrection: ..*surely I disbelieved in your*

associating me (with Allah)before" (14:22). And also He says: And he said: "You have only taken for yourselves idols besides Allah by way of friendship between you in the world's life, then on the resurrection day some of you shall deny others, and some of you shall curse others... (29: 25), that is, some of you shall dissociate from others.

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

6

Chapter

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 8-20

- 2:8 وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ
يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ
فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ
وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ
أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِن لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ
وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا كَمَا آمَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِن لَّا يَعْلَمُونَ
وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنُوا وَمَا وَدَّوْنَا أَن نَّكُونَ مَعَهُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِئُونَ
اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ
أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ فَمَا رَبِحَت تِّجَارَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ
مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَّا يُبْصِرُونَ
صُمٌّ بُكْمٌ عُمَىٰ فَهُمْ لَّا يَرْجِعُونَ
أَوْ كَصَيْبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ يَجْعَلُونَ أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ مِنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ
يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَارَهُمْ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

- 2:8 And there are some people who say: "We believe in Allah and in the last day"; while they are not at all believers.
- 2:9 They desire to deceive Allah and those who believe and they do not deceive except themselves and they do not perceive.
- 2:10 There is a disease in their hearts, so Allah added to their disease and for them is a painful chastisement because of the lie they were saying.
- 2:11 And when it is said to them, "Do not make mischief in the land", they say: "We are but peace-makers."
- 2:12 Now surely they themselves are the mischief-makers, but they do not perceive.
- 2:13 And when it is said to them: "Believe as the people have believed", they say: "Shall we believe as the fools have believed?" Now surely they themselves are the fools, but they do not know.
- 2:14 And when they meet those who believe, they say: "We believe"; and when they are alone with their Satans, they say: "Surely we are with you, we were only mocking."
- 2:15 Allah pays them back their mockery, and leaves them alone in their rebellion blindly wandering on.
- 2:16 These are they who buy error for the guidance, so their bargain brings (them) no gain, nor are they guided aright.
- 2:17 Their parable is like the parable of one who kindled a fire, but when it had illumined all around him, Allah took away their light, and left them in utter darkness - they do not see.
- 2:18 Deaf, dumb (and) blind, so they will not turn back.
- 2:19 Or like an abundant rain from the heaven in which is utter darkness and thunder and lightning; they put their fingers into their ears because of the thunder peals, for fear of death, and

Allah encompasses the unbelievers.

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

Commentary

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

QUR'AN: *They desire to deceive: "al-Khad'ah" is deceit, duplicity.*

QUR'AN: *When they are alone with their Satans: "ash-Shaytan" means evil, wicked; that is why the Iblis is called the Satan.*

QUR'AN: *Their parable is like the parable of one who kindled a fire... they will not return:*

The hypocrites are like a man who is surrounded by a blinding darkness in which he cannot distinguish good from bad, beneficial from harmful; to remove it he kindles a fire, and in its light is able to see to some distance around it; then as soon as it has illumined all around, Allah, extinguishes it by wind, rain or some other thing like it and he is left as he was before - in utter darkness. And now he is pressed between two darkness - that of the night and that of bewilderment and nullity of his endeavor. This parable fits exactly on hypocrites. A hypocrite declares himself to be a Muslim, and through it gains some benefits, as he is treated as a Muslim in matters of marriage and inheritance etc. But as soon as death approaches - the time when the real and complete benefits of Islam should have appeared - Allah takes away the light, nullifies his deeds and leaves him in utter darkness in which he cannot see at all. Thus he falls between two darkness - his original one and the one he added with his dark deeds.

QUR'AN: *Or like an abundant rain... Allah has power over all things: "as-Sayyib" (abundant rain); "al-barq" (lightning; flash of lightning); "al-ra'd" (thunder that is heard after lightning); "as-sa'iqah" (thunderbolt, to strike with lightning).*

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

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

7

Chapter

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 21-25

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ 2:21
الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ 2:22

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ 2:23
فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ 2:24
وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأَنُؤُوا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ 2:25

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

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

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

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

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

Commentary

QUR'AN: *O men! worship your Lord... may guard(against evil):*

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

In this background, Allah calls the men to be His good servants, to worship Him and to join, not the disbelievers and the hypocrites, but the pious ones, those who guard themselves against evil. This context shows that the clause, "so that you may guard (against evil)", is governed by the verb "worship" - you should worship Allah to join those who guard against evil, who are pious. It may also be governed by the verb, "created" - Allah created you in order that you may guard yourselves against evil.

QUR'AN: *Who made the earth a bed... do not set up equals to Allah while you know: "al-Andad"* is plural of *an-nidd* (alike, equal, peer). The phrase, "while you know", is unconditional, and

grammatically it is circumstantial phrase of "do not set up"; these two factors lend extra-ordinary force to the prohibition of setting up equals to Allah. The sentence shows that a man who has even a little knowledge should not ascribe any equal or partner to Allah; he should know that it is Allah Who has created him and those before him and arranged and managed this system in the creation for their sustenance and survival.

QUR'AN: *And if you are in doubt... then produce a chapter like it...* : It is a challenge which human beings and jinn can never meet. This challenge has been offered to demonstrate the miracle of the Qur'an, to show that it is a Book sent down by Allah, there is no doubt in it; that it has been revealed as an everlasting miracle that will remain alive till the end of the world. This challenge has repeatedly been given in the QUR'AN: -

Say: "If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Qur'an, they could not bring the like of it, even though some of them were aiders of the others" (17:88). Or, do they say: "He has forged it?" Say: "Then bring ten chapters like it forged and call upon whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful" (11:13).

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

The word "*min mithlihi*"(translated here as "like it") may also be rendered as "from like him." In that case it will be a challenge to bring a like of the Qur'an written by someone like the Holy Prophet. This Qur'an has been brought by a person who was never taught by any teacher, who had not learnt these valuable and marvellous truths from any human being, nor had he taken this most eloquent style from any mortal. If the disbelievers thought that such a man can write such a Book, then let them bring its like from some such illiterate man. In this light, the verse would have the same import as the following one:

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

Obviously, this and the other challenging verses dare the antagonists to bring, if they can, like of even the shortest chapter of the Qur'an - say, the Chapter of *al-Kawthar* or *al-'Asr*.

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

QUR'AN: *And if you are in doubt... then produce a chapter like it.*: It is a challenge which human beings and jinn can never meet. This challenge has been offered to demonstrate the miracle of the Qur'an, to show that it is a book sent down by Allah, there is no doubt in it; that it has been revealed as an everlasting miracle that will remain alive till the end of the world. This challenge has repeatedly been given in the QUR'AN:

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which we have receive We have revealed to Our servant", that is the Qur'an. It is a challenge to them to bring a like of the Qur'an in its imitable style and meaning.

The word "*min mithlihi*" (translated here as "like it") may also be rendered as "from like him." In that case it will be a challenge to bring a like of the Qur'an as written by someone like the Holy Prophet. This Qur'an has been by a person who was never taught by any teacher, who had not learned these valuable and marvelous truths from any human being, nor had he taken this most eloquent style from any mortal. If the disbeliever thought that such a man can write such a book then let them bring its like from such illiterate man. In this light the verse would have the same import as the following one:

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Miracle and its Quiddity

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

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

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

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

The Miracle of the Qur'an

Undoubtedly, the Qur'an has offered a continuing challenge, by which it proves itself to be a miracle. This challenge has been given in many verses of Meccan as well as Medinite period. All of them show that this Book is a divine miracle, a super-natural sign. The verse under discussion, "And if you are in doubt as to that which we have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it... ", is one of those challenges: Produce a chapter like one of the Qur'an from someone like the Prophet.

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

The verses of challenge vary in their scope and generality. The most general is the verse: *Say: "If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Qur'an, they could not bring the like of it, even though some of them were aiders of the others"*(17:88) The verse is a Meccan period, and it is easy to see that it contains an all-encompassing challenge.

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

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

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

The Qur'an claims to be a comprehensive miracle, covering all its aspects. It is a miracle of every individual man and jinn - an average person or a select one, learned or ignorant, man or woman, of a very high rank of excellence or of a lower level - in short, anyone who has enough intelligence to understand the Qur'anic speech. Man, by nature, comprehends a virtue and understands its various grades. Every person should look into an excellence which he or someone else has got; then he should compare that excellence or virtue with what the Qur'an contains of the same; and then he should decide - in all honesty and justice - whether it is in human power to bring a like of the Qur'an. Is it possible for a man to bring such divine knowledge, so well reasoned, as the Qur'an has done? Is it within human power to build such character, based on foundation of reality, which may honestly be compared with the Qur'anic teaching in purity and excellence? Can human beings legislate perfect laws covering all human activities without blundering into discrepancies, with the spirit of monotheism and the word of piety permeating every order and its every implication, with purity and cleanliness and all-inclusiveness come from an untaught man? A man who was born and brought up among a people whose only share in human virtues was a life sustained with raids, plunders and wars; they buried their daughters alive, and killed their children for fear of poverty; they boasted of their fathers and married their mothers; debauchery was their pride; they condemned knowledge and showed off their ignorance; in spite of their haughtiness and chauvinism, they were preyed upon by every hunter and were easy targets for anyone who wished to conquer them - one day they were under the Yemenite rule, the next day were ruled over by the Ethiopians; someday Byzantine emperors

lorded over them, the other day it was Persia's turn to humiliate them. This is the picture, in miniature, of the Arabs before Islam. And in such environment, the Qur'an was brought by the Prophet of Islam.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The First Specific Challenge: The Knowledge it Contains

Now we come to its specific challenges. It has offered particular challenge concerning the knowledge it imparts and cognition it contains. Allah says: ... *and we have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything* (16:89); ... *nor anything greener dry but (it is all) in a clear book* (6:59). There are many other verses of the same theme. Look at the fundamental teachings given in the text of the Qur'an; then see its details for which it has referred the people to the Prophet - as Allah says: ... *and whatever the Apostle gives you, take it, and from whatever he forbids you, keep back...* (59:7); *that you may judge between people by means of that which Allah has taught you*(4:105). Then you will know that Islam has put its attention to all big and small topics relevant to divine knowledge, moral virtues and religious laws - covering worship, mutual worship, mutual dealings, social regulations, penal code, and, in short, everything that affects life and character. All this is based on the foundation of human nature and monotheism. Analyze the details and you will find monotheism as their basis; combine the basis with relevant principles and you will get the details.

Then it has declared that all the knowledge will remain valid to the end of the world; will continue to guide mankind and will always be relevant to human needs and environment. Allah says: ... *and most surely it is a Mighty Book: Falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it; a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One* (41:41-42). *Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian* (15:9). In other words, it is a book which is beyond the reach of the law of change and development; it will never be disturbed by abrogation.

A question may be asked here: The sociologists are of the opinion that the laws and regulations controlling the society must change according to the changes occurring in the structure of society. As the time passes and civilization marches ahead, it becomes necessary to change the laws to cope with the changed situation. Then how can the *shari'ah* of Islam continue without any change or abrogation all these centuries? We shall explain this matter, God willing, under the verse: *Mankind was but one people...* (2:213). Here it is enough to point out that the Qur'an has built its laws on the foundation of monotheism and excellent ethics that spring from healthy human nature; it declares that legislation must grow up from the seed of creation and existence. The scholars of sociology, on the other hand, have fixed their eyes on changes of society, totally ignoring the spiritual side of monotheism and morality. As a result, their word concentrates on material development of the society - and society is not a living organism, it does not have a soul, and the word of Allah is the highest.

The Second Specific Challenge: The Recipient of the Revelation

Another aspect of this challenge is the personality of the untaught Prophet who brought this Qur'an as a miracle in its words and in its meanings. He had not learned from any teacher, was not trained by any instructor. This challenge is contained in the following words of Allah: Say: "*If Allah had desired (otherwise) I would not have recited it to you, nor would he have taught it to you; Indeed I have lived a lifetime among you before it; do you not then understand?*" (10:16). The Prophet lived among them as one of them. In all those years he had not risen above them in scholarship, nor was he renowned for any knowledge. He did not deliver any lecture, nor did he compose a single line of poetry, up to his fortieth year - that is to say, for about two thirds of his total lifespan; he did not get any distinction in literature or scholarship all these years. Then all of a sudden, he brought what he said was the revelation from God, before which giants of literature felt like pigmies, and eloquent

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

The outmost that his adversaries could say was that he must have learned those stories from Christian monks during his trade-journeys to Syria. But he had gone to Syria only twice: First, in his early childhood with his uncle, Abu Talib and then, at the age of twenty five, with Maysarah, the slave of Khadijah. In both these journeys he was never alone day or night, and nobody ever reported any such meeting with any supposed teacher. Even if we accept for the sake of argument that such training session did not take place, many questions will arise from it: Who taught him this divine knowledge of monotheism? Where did he get these wise rules and these realities? And lastly, who gave him this unsurpassed elocution which has kept the silver-tongued elocutionists dumbfounded all these years?

Another suggestion was that he learned these sublime truths from a blacksmith, of Roman origin, who made and sold swords. Allah replied to this allegation in this verse: And certainly we know that they say: *"Only a mortal teaches him." The tongue of him whom they are inclined to blame for it is barbarous, and this is clear Arabic language* (16:103).

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

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

The Third Specific Challenge: Its Prophecies and Knowledge of Unseen

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

1. The information about previous prophets and their nations: Allah says about some of these stories: *These are of the tidings of the unseen which We revealed to you; you did not know them - neither you nor your people - before this...* (11:49) and he says after the story of Yusuf: *This is one of the tidings of the unseen (which) We revealed to you, and you were not with them when they resolved upon their affair, and they were devising plans* (12:102); also, about the story of Maryam: *This is one of the tidings of the unseen which We revealed to you; and you were not with them when they cast their pens (to decide) which of them should have Maryam in his charge, and you were not with them when they contended one with another*(3:44); and about 'Isa: *Such is 'Isa, son of Maryam; (this is) the saying of truth about which they dispute*(19:34). There are many verses of the same import.

2. Prophecies of the future events: For example: The Romans would avenge their defeat: *The Romans are vanquished, in a near land; and they, after being vanquished, shall overcome within a few years (30:2-4); the Prophet would return to Mecca after his hijrah: Most surely He who has made the Qur'an binding on you will bring you back to the destination (28:85);* the vision of the Prophet would certainly come true: *Certainly Allah had shown to His Apostle the vision with truth: You shall most certainly enter the Sacred Mosque, if Allah pleases, in security, (some) having their heads shaved and (others) having their hair cut, you shall not fear (48:27);* the behavior, in future, of a group of Muslims: *Those who are left behind will say when you set forth for the gaining of acquisition: Allow us (that) we may follow you. They desire to change the words of Allah (48:15); nobody would be able to harm the Prophet: ... and Allah will protect you from the men (5:70);* the Qur'an will remain under the protection of Allah: *Surely We have revealed the reminder and we will most surely be its guardian(5:19).* We may include in this category other numerous verses giving good tidings to the believers and threatening the disbelievers and pagans of Mecca of various retributions.

In this category come the prophecies of the signs and disturbances appearing before the Day of Judgment. For example: *And it is forbidden to a town which We destroyed that they shall not return, until when Gog and Magog are let loose and they shall hasten forth from every elevated place. And the true promise shall draw nigh, then lo! the eyes of those who disbelieved shall be fixedly open: O woe to us! Surely we were in heedlessness as to this; nay, we were unjust ones(21:95 - 7).* Allah has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will most certainly make them successors in the earth as He made successors those before them... (24:55). Say: "He has the power that He should send on you a chastisement from above you or from beneath your feet, or that He should throw you into confusion, (making you) of different parties; and make some of you taste the fighting of to others... (6:65).

3. The verses based on such scientific realities which were unknown, and even unthought of, when the Qur'an was revealed, and which have just now been discovered after long researches: *And We send the winds fertilizing (15:22) ; And the earth - We have spread it forth and put in it anchors (ie mountains)and caused to grow in it of everything, weighed(15:19) ; Have we not made the earth a resting place, and the mountains as pegs (therein)? (78:6-7).*

4. The verses that allude to many great events and disorders that were to happen in the Islamic community, or the world in general, after the lifetime of the Prophet. For example: O you who believe! whoever of you turns back from his religion then soon Allah will bring a people that He shall love them and they shall love Him, humbled before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall strive hard in Allah's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer: this is Allah's grace, He gives it to whom He pleases (5:54); And every nation had an apostle; so when their apostle came the matter was decided between them with justice and they shall not be dealt with unjustly. And they say: "When will this threat come about, if you are truthful?" Say; I do not control for myself any harm, or nay benefit, except what Allah pleases; every nation has a term; when their term comes, they shall not then remain behind for an hour, nor can they go before (their time). Say: "Tell me if their punishment overtakes you by night or by day! what then if there of it that the guilty would hasten on?" (10:47-50); Then set your face uprightly for the (right) religion in natural devotion (to the truth), the nature made by Allah in which he has made men; ... and be not of the polytheists, of those who divided their religion and became sects; every set rejoicing in what they had with them (30:30-32). There are many verses that come into this category, and we shall describe some of them when explaining the seventeenth chapter (The Night-journey). It should be noted here that this

category is one of the specialists of this book of ours.

The Fourth Specific Challenge: No Discrepancies in the Qur'an

It is one of the challenges of the Qur'an that there is no discrepancy in it. Allah says: *Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy* (4:82).

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

In this background, look at the Qur'an. Muhammad (s.a.w.) brought this book piece by piece, one small chapter or a few verses at a time. It continued for twenty three years in different places, various conditions and divergent situations: In Mecca and Medina, by day and by night, during journeys and at home, in thick of battle and in time of peace, during hard up days and in easy times, when Muslims suffered defeat and when they were victorious, in safety and in danger. It contained all types of subjects - it unveiled spiritual knowledge, taught excellent ethics and ordained laws for every conceivable aspect of life. In spite of all these factors, there is not a whiff of discrepancy in its matter or meaning - it is oft-repeated book whose parts resemble one with the other. There is not a least difference, contradiction or contrariety in the realities it has explained, in the principles it has laid down. One verse explains the rest, one sentence clarifies the other, as 'Ali (a.s.) said: "It's one part speaks with the other, and one portion testifies about the others."

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

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

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

Question: Well, how can you explain away the difficulty that arises out of abrogation? Many

Qur'anic verses have been abrogated, as the Qur'an itself says: *Whatever signs We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it (2:106) ; and when We change (one) communication for (another) communication, and Allah knows best what He reveals... (16:101).* Abrogation is at least a change of opinion, an inconsistency of thought, if not an outright contradiction in speech.

Reply: Abrogation is neither a contradiction in speech nor a change of opinion or thought. A rule is abrogated when the society, the environment, changes in such a way that the underlying wisdom of that rule remains no longer valid. The difference, if any, is not in the opinion; it is rather in the subject matter. A clear evidence of it may be seen in the abrogated verses themselves - they invariably always contained some phrases or clauses to show that the given order was a temporary one, that it would soon be abrogated. For example: *and as for those who are guilty of lewdness from among your women, call to witness against them four (witnesses) from among you; then if they bear witness confine them to the houses until death takes them away or Allah makes some way for them (4:15).* Note the last sentence and the hint it gives. Another example: *Many of the people of the Book wish that they could turn you back into unbelievers after your faith... But pardon and forgive(them) until Allah should bring about His command(2:109).* Here too the concluding phrase shows that the rule ordained was not for ever.

The Fifth Specific Challenge: Its Eloquence

The Qur'an has also challenged its adversaries to bring its like in its eloquence. Allah says: *Or, do they say: "He has forged it?" Say: "Then bring ten chapters like it forged and call upon whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful." But if they do not answer you, then know that it is revealed by Allah's knowledge and that there is no god but He; will you then submit? (11:13-14)* These verses were revealed in Mecca. Again Allah says: *Or, do they say: "He has forged it?" Say: "Then bring a chapter like this and call whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful." Nay, they have rejected that of which they have no comprehensive knowledge, and its final interpretation has not come to them (10:38-39).* These are Meccan verses too. All these verses challenge the doubters and disbelievers to bring the like of ten or even one chapter of the Qur'an in its style and eloquence, as eloquence was the most accomplished art of the Arabs of those days. Undoubtedly, they had reached the highest peak of eloquence. No preceding, contemporary or following nation ever reached even near them in their mastery of literature. Their expression was elegant, their style enchanting; their words perfectly fitted their themes and meanings; their talks were always in harmony with the occasions; their words were plain and their sentences beautiful; and their speech had an easy flow and inimitable grace. It was a way of which they were the pioneers and the only walkers. The Qur'an challenged such a nation in every possible way, so as to excite their rage, rouse their fury and fire them with determination to meet the challenge. It should not be forgotten that they were extremely proud of their art of eloquence and -never acknowledged the least elocutionary skill to anyone else. In spite of that arrogance of theirs, the Prophet dared them to bring just one chapter like the Qur'an. It is a challenge that even now is ringing in the ears of disbeliever, defying them to forge, if they can, just one chapter like it. But the Arabs' only answer was to avoid it; the more forcefully they were challenged, the more evident their helplessness was. Ultimately, they used to hide themselves to avoid hearing its sound. Allah says: *Now surely they fold up their breasts that they may conceal from Him; now surely, when they put their garments as a covering, He knows what they conceal and what they make known(11:5).*

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

All attempts to meet this challenge suffered the same fate.

Two Questions:

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

Second: Let us accept for the time being that a particular composition of a speech may reach super-natural level, may become a miracle. Every intended theme may be clothed in various sentences, each differing from the others in grades of perfection; and out of those numerous sentences one would reach a standard which would be beyond human ability and power - and that composition would be a miracle. It means that for every intended meaning there would be one miraculous sentence; and other structures would be below that standard. But we see that the Qur'an, more often than not, repeats many themes - and especially the stories - using different compositions and dissimilar styles. Whichever sentence-structure and style is accepted as a miracle, the other ones would fall short of that standard. Reply: Before replying to these objections one matter should be clarified here.

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

This theory was totally wrong. This explanation is not in conformity with the clear import of the challenging verses. Allah says for example: *Or, do they say: "He has forged it?" Say: "Then bring ten chapters like it forged and call upon whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful. "But if they do not answer you, then know that it is revealed by Allah's knowledge and that there is no god but He; will you then submit?"* (11:13 - 14). Ponder on the sentences, "then know that it is revealed by Allah's knowledge." The challenge was meant to prove that the Qur'an was a revelation; that it was not a speech forged by the Apostle; and that it was revealed by Allah's knowledge and not by the Satans. The same theme is found in the following verses:

Or, do they say: "He has forged it." Nay! they do not believe. Then let them bring a talk like it if they are truthful. (52:33 - 34). *And the Satans have not come down with it; and it behooves them*

not, and they have not the power to do (it). Most surely they are far removed from the hearing (of it) (26:210-212). On the other hand, this theory of "turning away" implies that the reality of the Qur'an's miracle was not in its being a revelation from Allah; the miracle was that Allah prevented the people from bringing a like of it. Again look at the verse: Or, do they say: "He has forged it?" Say: "Then bring a chapter like this and call whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful." Nay, they have rejected that of which they have no comprehensive knowledge, and its final interpretation has not yet come to them... (10:38-39). This verse clearly says that what made them helpless before the Qur'an, what made it impossible for them to bring a like of even one of its chapters, was the fact that it has a final interpretation whose knowledge is reserved for Allah - a knowledge which they lacked. It is this inherent quality of the Qur'an which vanquished the adversaries. It was not that they had ability to bring its like but Allah prevented them from doing so. Then, there is the verse: Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy (4: 82). It shows that the miracle is in the inherent quality of the Qur'an that it was free from discrepancy in its words and meanings - because it is a quality which is not within the power of any creature - not that there was some discrepancy in this Book, but Allah prevented people from finding it out.

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

Now we come to the objections mentioned earlier:

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

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

The first factor - single words for their meanings - has been invented by social instinct of man. But the remaining two depend on intellectual refinement and delicate discernment.

Human perception, intelligence and discernment is limited and restricted. We cannot comprehend all the details of an event, all concomitants of a fact. As a result, we cannot be sure of being right at any time. Furthermore, we are gradually moving from deficiency to perfection, and so is our perception and discernment. Look at any spellbinding orator or enchanting poet; compare his earlier work with his latest and you will see the difference.

In this background, let us look at human speech - any human speech. First, we cannot be sure that it

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

Now, when we *find* a decisive speech, based on comprehensive knowledge, and free from all types of discrepancy, we will have to admit that it is not the work of a mortal man. This reality has been described in the following verses: *Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy* (4:82); *(I swear) by the heaven endued with rotation, and by the earth splitting (with plants etc.), most surely it is a decisive word, and it is not a jest* (86:11 -14). Note the adjectives used for the heaven and the earth - they point to the constant changes occurring therein, because the oath is about a Book which is free from change and difference, inasmuch as it is based on an unchangeable and lasting reality, that is, its "interpretation." (It is a Qur'anic terminology that will be explained in ch. 3.) Also, Allah says: *Nay! it is a glorious Qur'an, in a guarded tablet* (85:21-22); *(I swear) by the Book that makes manifest (the truth); surely We have made it an Arabic Qur'an so that you may understand. And surely it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom* (43:2 -4); *But nay! (I swear) by the falling of stars; and most certainly it is a great oath if you only knew; most surely it is an honored Qur'an, in a book that is hidden; none do touch it save the purified ones. A revelation by the Lord of the worlds* (56:75-80). These and other similar verses show that the Qur'an is based on established realities that do not change, that are never altered. And, therefore, the Qur'an itself is safe from change, alteration and discrepancy.

To come back to the main objection: Accepted that language has been made by men. But it does not mean that there cannot be found a piece of literature that is beyond the reach of the very men who made the language. Otherwise, we would have to say that a sword-maker must be the bravest of all the swordsmen, the inventor of chess or lute must be the most accomplished chess-master or lutanist!

The perfect eloquence demands that, first, the word should be in complete harmony with the intended meaning, and, second, the conveyed meaning must be in accordance with the established fact. How the words fit the meanings? The structural sequence of the words and their parts should perfectly agree with the natural order of the intended meaning and its parts - bringing the man-made language and sentences in total agreement with the nature. (See for details *Dala'ilul- i'jaz* of ash-Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Qahir al-Jurjani.) As for the meaning, it must be correct and true, based on a real fact existing outside our imagination - and that fact should be of permanent value, unchangeable and unalterable. The first quality (the agreement of the word with meaning) depends on this basic quality of the meaning. A very eloquent sweet sounding jocular speech cannot stand before a serious talk; nor can an eloquent, serious speech - if it is based on wrong premises - be equal to a talk that reflects true facts and comprehensive wisdom.

A speech attains the highest standard of eloquence when its words are sweet, its style free flowing, its meaning fitting the occasion and its conveyed proposition based on true facts.

Such a talk, based as it is on reality, can never differ with other realities, can never disagree with other truths. Truth and reality is a non-divisible entity. Truth cannot refute another truth; reality cannot oppose another reality. Lie, on the other hand, may be in opposition to another lie as it surely is against the truth. Ponder on the verse: *... and what is there after the truth but error* (10: 32). Note that truth is singular, there is no division in it. Again Allah says: *... and follow not (other) ways, for they will scatter you away from His ways...* (6:153). Lie has many ways, it is not only disunited but

also disuniting.

Obviously, there can be no difference whatsoever between one truth and the other; instead, there shall be total union and unison between them - one truth will lead to the other, one reality will guide to the other; thus, one part of the Qur'an confirms the others, one sentence testifies for the others.

It is a wonderful quality of the Qur'an. Take any verse; it is clear in its meaning; add to it another relevant verse equally clear; and you will find them together pointing to a new reality that was not shown by either verse separately: then put them side by side with a third relevant verse, and you will gain fresh insight into new sublime realities. It is a unique quality of the Qur'an, and you will see many examples of this special characteristic in this book. Unfortunately the exegetes had so far neglected this method. Had they followed this way since the early days, they would have discovered by now so much of its hidden treasures.

This lengthy discourse was necessary to show that the two objections laid down against the Qur'anic miracle of eloquence were baseless. Miraculous eloquence is not based on words alone. Therefore, it is out of place to say that as it is man who had made the language, how can any speech be above the reach of the man himself? Also, there is no room for the question that as only one out of many possible compositions can be the highest, how is it possible to express one idea in different ways, and then to claim that all were of miraculous standard? Our foregoing explanation has made it clear that the miracle of eloquence depends on meaning - on its agreement with sublime unchangeable reality and on its conformity with the words.

Reality of Miracle According to the Qur'an

The Qur'an reasserts the occurrence of miracle an unusual preternatural phenomenon, which shows the authority of metaphysical forces over the physical and material world. Miracle is not something against self-evident rational truth. Some people have tried to explain away the verses that describe various miracles; their aim was to make the Qur'an fit the principles of modern physical sciences. But such attempts are unacceptable, as they are a forced burden on the language and the Qur'an. We are going to explain, under various headings, what the Qur'an teaches us about the meaning and reality of miracle.

1. The Qur'an Confirms the General Rule of the Cause-and-Effect

The Qur'an says that in this natural world every thing, every effect, has a cause; that there is a system of cause-and-effect permeating through this world. It is a self-evident reality; and on this truth depend the scientific and academic researches and discussions. Man by nature believes that there must be a cause for every natural phenomenon. Likewise, academic researches try to find out relevant causes for all such happenings. What is a cause? It is such a thing, or a combination of things, that whenever it occurs, another thing - its effect - unfailingly comes into being. We try to find out by experiments the causes of various things. For example, experience has taught us that if there is any burn, it must have been caused by fire, movement, friction or some such cause. A cause must be unfailable, comprehensive and universal. In other words, whenever and wherever the cause is found, its effect must be found. This matter is clearly confirmed by the Qur'an. It takes this principle for granted when it talks about life, death, sustenance and other heavenly or earthly phenomena - although it ultimately ascribes all the effects, and their causes too, to Allah. The Qur'an, therefore, confirms the general system of the cause-and-effect; whenever a cause is found (with all its necessary conditions) its effect must come into being, and whenever we see an effect, it surely and unfailingly proves the

existence of its cause.

2. The Qur'an Affirms Miracles (Super-Natural Events)

The Qur'an, nevertheless, narrates many an event that goes against the normal, natural system of the cause-and-effect. It ascribes many super-natural miracles to various prophets, like Nuh, Hud, Salih, Ibrahim, Lut, Dawud, Sulayman, Mûsa, 'Isa and Muhammad (peace of Allah be on them all!). It should not be forgotten here that those events, although abnormal and uncustomary, were not inherently impossible; they were not like an assertion that 'A positive proposition and its opposite are affirmed together and are negated together'; or like a statement that 'A thing can be separated from its own self'; or that 'One is not a half of two'. We instinctively know that such propositions are impossible, they cannot be. But the miracles shown by the prophets were not of this category; otherwise, the minds of untold billions of religionists, since the dawn of humanity, would not have accepted them and believed in them. No man accepts an inherently impossible statement, nor does any sane person ascribe such a thing to another.

Moreover, the effects that are called miracle, are not unknown to the nature. The natural world is continuously engaged in bestowing on the matter one form after the other, turning one event into another, giving life to the dead, and death to the living, transforming the misfortune into fortune and the comfort into discomfort. All this is happening daily in the world of nature; the only difference between a natural event and a miraculous one is in the speed and steps required to reach the goal. A natural cause brings about its effect, in special conditions, at a particular time and space, step by step in a long series of changes. The matter present in a walking-stick may one day appear in a running serpent; a disintegrating skeleton may one day become a living man - but in its natural course it will take a very long time, under certain conditions of time and space, with numerous consecutive causes which would constantly change that particular matter from one form to the other, taking it from one step to the next and then to the third and so on, until it appears in the required shape and form. In normal way, it cannot happen without its proper causes, without its necessary conditions; nor can it be brought into being by will-power of a human being. But when it comes to a miracle, it happens just by the will of the prophet, without any material cause and without any lapse of time.

Of course, it is very difficult for a simple mind - as it is for a scientific brain - to understand such super-natural events; man is, after all, accustomed to the natural causality. On the other hand, no scientist can outright reject occurrence of super-natural phenomena even in this atomic age. Every day someone or the other demonstrates his skill bringing some super-natural events about; people see it, radios and televisions broadcast it, newspapers and magazines publish it; and nobody says that it could not have happened as it was against the laws of nature.

Such phenomena have led many modern scholars to the theory that man, like everything else, is surrounded by unknown magnetic or electric currents; man may, through rigorous training, get control over the surrounding currents, and use them to affect other material things in abnormal and unusual ways, bringing those astonishing feats about.

If this theory is proved correct and all-inclusive, it will supercede all present theories that explain various happenings and effects in terms of motion and power; it will replace all previous causes with one all-pervasive natural cause: the magnetic currents.

This is their theory. They are right in their belief that every natural phenomenon must have a natural cause if the causal relationship between them is intact.

The Qur'an has not identified by name any all-pervasive natural cause that would explain all natural and super-natural events, as it is not within the main purposes of this divine book. But it affirms that every natural phenomenon has a natural cause by permission of Allah. In other words,

every phenomenon is totally dependent on Allah, Who has appointed for it a certain procedure, a natural cause through which it gets its existence - the existence that is given by Allah. Allah says: *and whoever fears Allah He will make for him an outlet, and give him sustenance from whence he thinks not; and whoever trusts in Allah, He is sufficient for him; surely Allah attains His purpose; Allah indeed has made a measure for every thing* (65:2-3). Its first sentence unreservedly declares that whoever fears Allah and has trust in Him, Allah is sufficient for him, and He will surely manage his affairs and make him succeed, even if in the normal way it may seem impossible, even if the material causes go against him. It is supported by the following verses: *And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then verily I am very near; I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me* (2:186); *Call upon Me, I will answer you*(40:60); *Is not Allah sufficient for His servant?* (39:36).

The next sentence, "surely Allah attains His purpose", explains the reason of the first declaration. The same theme is found in the verse: *... and Allah is predominant over His affair, but most people do not know* (12:21). This sentence too is all-inclusive and without any condition. Allah has His own way to let a thing happen, if He so wills - even if the normal ways are closed, even if usual paths to it are cut off. This may possibly happen in two ways: First, Allah may bring that thing into being simply by His will, without resorting to any material or natural cause. Second, there may be an alternative natural cause, unknown to us, which Allah may have appointed for that phenomenon; it may be hidden from our eyes but the Maker and Creator, Who has prescribed it, knows it and uses it to attain His purpose. This second possibility seems more appropriate in view of the last sentence, "Allah indeed has made a measure for every thing." This sentence shows that every effect, whether it is in accordance with the normal causality or not, has a measure appointed by Allah, is related to other beings, has a connection with other things; Allah may bring that effect into existence through any other related thing, even if the normal cause is absent. What should not be forgotten is the basic fact that it is Allah Who has bestowed causality on a cause; this relation of cause and effect is not independent of Allah.

Allah has created causal relation between various things. He can attain His purpose through any way He wishes. No doubt, there is the system of cause-and-effect in the world; but this chain is in the hands of Allah, He may use it in any way He wills. There is a real causal relation between a thing and the things that have preceded it but that reality is not as we know it - that is why no academic or scientific theory is capable of explaining all phenomena of the world; it is really as Allah knows, makes and manages it.

This basic principle has been referred to in the verses of "decree" or "measure": *And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure* (15:21). *Surely We have created every thing according to a measure*(54:49); *... and Who created every thing, then ordain for it a measure* (25:2). *Who created then made complete, and Who made (things) according to a measure then guided* (them to their goal) (87:2-3). Look also at the following verses: *No misfortune befalls on the earth nor in your own souls, but it is in a book before We bring it into existence* (57:22). *No affliction comes about but by Allah's permission; and whoever believes in Allah, He guides aright his heart; and Allah is Cognizant of all things* (64:11).

These verses (and especially the first) show that the things take their particular identity in accordance with a measure appointed for it by Allah; that measure gives it its individuality and defines it; and that measure and definition precedes the thing and then accompanies it. A thing can be properly delineated only if it is seen in its perspective, clearly defining its relation to all other things. The other related things serve as a mould that gives this item its peculiar shape and particular form.

Every material effect is connected with all things which precede or accompany it. All such things together serve as the cause of this effect, and this one in its turn becomes a part of the cause of other effects that come later.

Also, it may be proved from the following two verses: *That is Allah your Lord, the Creator of every thing... (40:62); there is no living creature but He holds it by its forelock; surely my Lord is on the straight path (11: 56)*. Add to them the fact that the Qur'an confirms the general system of causality and - you will find the complete picture displayed before your eyes.

The first verse says that every thing is created by Allah and the second one states that creation is on a single pattern; there is no deviation in it as that would cause chaos and disturbance.

- The Qur'an confirms the general system of causality for all material things.
- It follows that every material thing and effect is invariably always created by a cause – a cause that precedes it and brings it into being. It makes no difference whether it is a normal and usual cause, or a supernatural one. There must always be a cause.

Many usual causes which sometimes fail to bring about the expected effects are not the real causes. The real causes are those which never fail to create the expected effects. An example may be given of various diseases and their causes; influenza was Previously thought to be caused by cold; but cold did not always create it, now it has been discovered that it is caused by a virus. The same is true about many supernatural feats.

3. Whatever is Caused by Natural Causes is Really Caused by Allah

The Qur'an, while affirming the causal relation between a cause and its effect, ascribes every effect to Allah. The inference is that these normal and usual causes are not independent in creating their effects; the real cause, in the true sense of this word, is only Allah. Allah says: *surely His is the creation and the command (7:54); Whais in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's (2:284); His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth (57:5); Say: "All is from Allah" (4:78)*. There are numerous such verses showing that everything belongs exclusively to Allah; He may deal with it in any way He likes; no one else can handle it at all except by permission of Allah; He allows whomsoever He wishes to manage, influence and effect it to a certain extent. But this divine permission, establishing the relation of causality, does not make that cause independent of Allah; it is just a permission given by the real owner to use his property. The man having this permission cannot transgress the limits imposed by the owner. Allah says: *Say: "O Allah, Master of kingdom! Thou givest the kingdom to whomsoever Thou pleasest and takest away the kingdom from whomsoever Thou pleasest (3:26); Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (to its goal) (2: 50); ... whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission? (2:255); ... and He is firmly established on 'Arsh, regulating the affair; there is no intercessor except after His permission (10: 3)*.

The causes do have the causality because Allah has given it to them. They have got it, but are not independent of Allah. It is this factor that has been described in above verses as "intercession" and "permission." Permission means that there was an impediment which, but for this permission would have hindered the now-authorized agent from interfering in this affair.

In short, every cause has been given the power to create the relevant effects; but the real authority is yet in the hands of Allah.

4. The Souls of the Prophets do have Influence Over the Super-Natural Events

Allah says: ... *and it was not meet for an apostle that he should bring a sign except with Allah's permission; but when the command of Allah came, judgment was given with truth, and those who treated (it) as a lie were lost (40:78).*

The verse shows that it was the apostle who brought the sign - by permission of Allah. The souls of the prophets were given a special power to cause the miracle; and that causal power, like all other causes, created its effect with permission of Allah.

Again Allah says: *And they followed what the Satans chant (of sorcery) against the kingdom of Sulayman; and not that Sulayman disbelieved, but (it was) the Satans that disbelieved, they taught men sorcery and what was sent down to the two angels at Babylon, Harut and Marut, Yet these two taught no one until they had said, "Surely we are only a trials therefore do not be a disbeliever. Even then men learned from these two that by which they might cause a separation between a man and his wife; and they cannot hurt with it any one except with Allah 's permission (2:102).*

This verse proves two things: magic has some reality; and it, not unlike miracle, is caused by a psychological factor of the magician, by permission of Allah.

Take a miracle, a magic, a mysterious wonder of a saint, or a spell bringing skill acquired through rigorous practice - all these extra-ordinary or super-natural deeds emanate from their agents' psychological factors - or will-power - as the above-mentioned verses have shown. But Allah has made it clear that the psychological cause found in His apostles, prophets and believers is predominant, has the mastery, over all other causes, in all imaginable conditions; it can never be overpowered. Allah says: *And certainly Our word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the apostles:*

Most surely they shall be the assisted ones, and most surely Our host alone shall be the victorious ones(37:171-173). Allah has written down: I will most certainly prevail, I and My apostle... (58:21). Most surely We help Our apostles and those who believe, in this world 's life and on the day when the witnesses shall stand (40:). As you see, these verses do not put any condition or restriction on the promised victory; the apostles and the believers shall be victorious over their adversaries in all conditions and situations.

It may be inferred from it that this divine source is something metaphysical, preternatural. Material things are, in their nature, measured and limited; they get the worst of it if they are faced by another thing which is superior in power. But this preternatural spiritual source, which is assisted by the will of Allah, is never defeated by any factor; whenever it is faced by any material adversary, it is given by Allah a far more superior power to achieve victory with flying colors.

5. Whatever is Caused by Psychological Power Depends on a Command from Allah

Read again the last sentence of the verse 40:78, mentioned at the beginning of the preceding chapter: "but when the command of Allah came, judgment was given with truth, and those who treated (it) as a lie were lost." You will see that the supernatural event caused by the psychological power of the agent depends on a command from Allah - in addition to His permission. That command may coincide with the said permission, or may be one with it. The command of *Allah* is His creation, described by the word 'Be' in the verse: *His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it, "Be", and it is (36:82).* Also Allah says: *Surely this is a reminder, so whoever wishes takes to his Lord a way. And you do not wish except that Allah wishes; surely Allah is Knowing, Wise (76:29-30). It is naught but a reminder for the worlds, for him among you who wishes to go straight. And you do not wish except that Allah wishes, the Lord of the worlds (81:27-29).* These verses show that the affairs which are within the sphere of the man's will, and under his control and authority, are still dependent on the divine will for their existence. What these verses say is this: The intentional actions

of a man are done by his will; but that will itself depends on the will of Allah.

The verses do not say that whatever is wished by man is wished by Allah. Had it been the case, no human wish would have remained unfulfilled - because it would have become the will of Allah! Also, many verses refute this idea. *And if We had wished We would certainly have given to every soul its guidance... (32:13). And if your Lord had wished surely all those who are in the earth would have believed (10:99).*

Our will depends on the divine will; our action depends on our will, and also they depend - indirectly, through our will on the will of Allah. And both our will and action depend on the command of Allah - on His word, "Be."

Things, affairs and events may be either natural or supernatural; and the super-natural may be either on the side of good, like miracle, or on that of evil, like magic and sooth saying. But all of them come into being through natural causes, and at the same time they depend on the will of Allah. In other words, they cannot come into being unless the natural cause coincides, or becomes one, with the permission and command of Allah. All things are equal in this respect; but when a prophet brings about a miracle, or a good servant of Allah prays to Him for a thing, an additional factor, that is, the decisive command of Allah, is added thereto; and the desired effect or event unfailingly comes into being. Allah says: *Allah has written down: I will most certainly prevail, I and My apostles (58:21); I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me... (2:186).* See also other such verses quoted in the preceding chapter.

6. The Qur'an Attributes the Miracle to an Invincible Cause

The preceding chapters have made it clear that miracle, like other natural and super-natural things, needs a natural cause; and that all causes depend on some metaphysical causes. All these events and effects may, thus, be divided into four categories:

First: The normal events: They come into being by normal apparent causes which are accompanied by real causes - in most cases those real causes are material ones; and those causes depend on the divine will and command.

Second: The extra-ordinary events of evil nature, like sorcery and soothsaying: They are caused by natural but unusual and abnormal causes, which are accompanied by the real causes; and those causes depend on the divine permission and will.

Third: The extra-ordinary events of good nature, like a prayer answered by Allah: They are caused by the natural and real cause, with permission and will of Allah - but such events do not contain any element of challenge, that is, they do not purport to prove the truth of any call or claim.

Fourth: The miracles: The extra-ordinary, super-natural events of good character, which are brought about as a challenge, to prove the truth of the call or claim. They too are caused by the natural and real causes with permission and will of Allah. The third and fourth categories have an extra quality in them: Their cause is fortified by an invincible factor; it can never be overpowered, as it is always accompanied by the decisive command of Allah.

Question: It is strange to say that miracle is caused by a natural cause. Suppose, we discover the real natural cause of a miracle; will it not then be possible for us to create that miracle? If yes, then miraculous ness would be a relative matter; any action would be a miracle in the eyes of those who are unaware of its cause, but quite an ordinary thing for those who know. In the same way, an event that was believed to be a miracle in dark ages would not be so impressive in this age of science and knowledge. If scientific research round out the real natural causes of the miracles, there would be no miracle at all - and no miracle could be used to prove the truth of the prophet's claim. What all this leads to is this: A miracle is not a proof except against him who is ignorant of its natural cause;

therefore, it cannot be put as an evidence of the truth of the prophet's claim.

Reply: Miraculousness of a miracle does not depend on unknowability of its cause; nor is it a miracle because it emanates from an extraordinary or mysterious cause. It is a miracle because it is brought about by such an extraordinary cause which is invincible, which cannot be overcome, cannot be defeated. Let us look at the case of a seriously sick person, who, all of a sudden, is cured by the prayers of a believer. It is called a miraculous event, because it emanates from an invincible cause. We know that patient could be cured by medical treatment, and it would have been a normal process; but this cause, that is, the medical treatment, could be foiled by other more powerful factors; and that is why it is not called a miracle.

7. The Qur'an Counts Miracle as a Proof of the Truth of the Claim of Prophethood Question:

What is the connection between miracle and veracity of the claim of prophethood? Reason fails to see any binding relation between the two. But the Qur'an time and again asserts this concomitance, as may be seen in the stories of various prophets, for example, Hud, Salih, Musa, 'Isa and Muhammad (peace of Allah be on all of them!). The Qur'an narrates that no sooner did they announce their claim than they were asked by their people to bring some miracle to prove the truth of their claim; and they responded to it by showing the miracle.

Not only that. Some of them were given their miracle even before their nations had asked them for it. Allah told Mûsa (a. s.) at the start of his mission: *Go you and your brother with My signs and be not remiss in remembering Me* (20:42). And He says about 'Isa(a.s.): *And (will make him) an apostle to the children of Israel: "That I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, that I create for you out of dust like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird with Allah's permission and I heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead to life with Allah's permission and I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your house; most surely there is a sign in this for you, if you are believers"* (3:49).

The same is the position of the Qur'an which was given to the Prophet right at the start of his mission. Reason does not see any connection whatsoever between the truth of the message of an apostle or a prophet on one hand and his ability to show a super-natural sign on the other.

Moreover, the beauty of the principles expounded by the apostles and the prophets, strengthened as it is by irrefutable proofs, dispenses with the need of any miracle - for an intelligent and knowledgeable person. That is why it is said that miracles are needed for convincing the simple-minded people, because they cannot understand a learned discourse; but knowledgeable persons do not need them.

Reply: The prophets had not brought the miracles to prove any principle of religion, like belief in Oneness of God and the Day of Resurrection etc. - the truth of which could be realized by intellect and reason. They always proved such things with reasoning and logical arguments. For example, Allah says regarding the existence of the Creator: *Their apostles said: "Is there doubt about Allah, the Master of the heavens and the earth?"* (14:10); and He says about resurrection: *And We did not create the heaven and the earth and what is between them in vain; that is the opinion of those who disbelieve; then woe to those who disbelieve on account of the fire. Shall We treat those who believe and do good like the mischief-makers in the earth? Or shall We make those who guard (against evil) like the wicked?* (38:27-28).

Why were, then, the apostles asked to show miracle, and why did they bring it about? It was to prove that they were in fact sent by Allah; it was meant to authenticate their claim.

The prophets claimed that they were sent by Allah, that He had revealed His message to them - either directly or through an angel. It was an assertion of a super-natural event; a claim of a reality

beyond the physical senses and mental cognition of their people; a fact above the level of man's perception. If that claim was right, it would be a special metaphysical disposition reserved for the prophets only. The difficulty was that the prophets were like any other human being in their humanity and in its characteristics. How could they be favored for this especial relationship with the world beyond nature?

The disbelievers, therefore, resorted to two methods to disprove the prophets' claim:

First Method: They tried to refute it through such "arguments" as the following:

a) *They said: "You are nothing but human being like us; you wish to turn us away from what our fathers used to worship" (14:10).* The apostles were like all other men; and other men do not receive such divine revelation as was claimed by the apostles. If they could be given revelation from God, why could not others get it as well? Were not all of them alike in their humanity?

The apostles replied to it in these words: *Their apostles said to them: "We are nothing but human beings like yourselves, but Allah bestows (His) favors on whom He pleases of His servants..." (14:11).* They accepted that they were like all men in their humanity, but showed that apostleship was a very especial favor of Allah, and He bestows it on whom He pleases. It is not difficult to see that being alike does not preclude some of them from being reserved for some especial favors. Of course, if Allah had pleased, He could have bestowed it on anyone among them, but He chose for this favor whom He pleased. The same was the thrust of their protest against the Prophet: *"Has the reminder been revealed to him from among us?" (38:8)*

b) Of the same nature, but with added sarcasm, were the following remarks of the polytheists of Mecca: *And they say: "Why was not this Qur'an revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?" (43:31) And they say: "What sort of apostle is this that he eats food and goes about in the markets; why has not an angel been sent down to him so that he be a warner with him? Or a treasure be thrown down to him, or be for him a garden from which he may eat!" (25:7-8)*

What they wanted to say was this: If the Apostle (of Islam) really has been chosen by God to receive divine revelation, then he must be someone above all the mortals. Then why does he require food to eat, and why is he obliged to go about in the markets to earn his livelihood? If he is truly a representative of God, he should have been accompanied by an angel to assist him in his work, or he should have been given a treasure to save him the trouble of earning his livelihood in the markets, or a garden should have been bestowed on him, so that he would not need a food like ours.

Allah answered them in these words: *See how they coin comparisons for thee! So they have gone astray, therefore they shall not be able to find a way... And We did not send before thee any messengers but they most surely ate food and went about in the markets; and We have made some of you a trial for others; will you bear patiently? And your Lord is Ever-seeing (25:9,20).* And in reply to their demand for sending down an angel, it was said in another chapter: *And if We had made him angel, We would certainly have made him a man, and We would certainly have made confused to them what they make confused (6:9).*

c) Going further, they raised their demands even higher: *And those who do not hope for Our meeting, Say: "Why have not angels been sent down upon us, or (why) do we not see our Lord?" Now certainly they are too proud of themselves and have revolted a great revolt (25:21).* According to their thinking, there was no difference between them and the Prophet; all were human beings. Then why should he be reserved for this office of apostleship? They too should be visited by angels; or, even better, they should see the Lord. Allah replied to them: *On the day when they shall see the angels, there shall be no joy on that day for the guilty, and they shall say: "It is a forbidden thing totally prohibited" (25:22).* It means that if they persist in their disbelief, they shall not see the angels

except at the time of death, and then they shall not find any joy in it. The same thing has been mentioned in another verse: *And they say: "O you to whom the Reminder has been revealed! you are most surely insane. Why do you not bring to us the angels if you are of the truthful ones?" We do not send the angels but with truth, and then they would not be respited*(15:6-8).

d) This last verse shows us one more twist of their "arguments." The Prophet, according to their thinking, was truthful in his claim of revelation, but he was insane; whatever news he brought was a product of his unstable mind and was, therefore, not correct. The same "argument" was put against Nuh (a.s.), as the Qur'an says: ... *and they called (Nuh) mad, and he was driven away* (54:9).

These were the variations of their "arguments" against the claims of the Prophet, the arguments which were based on similarity of the prophets and their people in their humanity.

Second Method: It was to reject outright the claim of the prophets, and demand from them proof of their veracity, asking them to bring some signs to show that they were in fact representatives of Allah and recipients of His revelation.

The apostles and the prophets claimed a distinction which was intangible and unknowable to their people. They claimed that they were given apostleship and/or prophethood; that they were spoken to by Allah - either directly or through angels. Now, such a claim could not be verified by any test or experiment. It could be objected against in two ways: (i) There was no proof that such a claim was true; (ii) there was proof that it was not true. Revelation, divine speech, (and the resulting *shari'ah* and religions discipline) could not be experienced by anyone other than the claimant; the normal system of cause and effect was against it. If such a claim were true, it would mean that the Prophet was in direct contact with the world beyond nature; he was tuned to the divine power - the power that can change the course of nature, can make the effect appear without their usual causes. In that case, he should be able to produce some another tangible super-natural effect; after all one super-natural event is like any other super-natural event so far as the divine authority is concerned. If Allah spoke to the Prophet - a super-natural effect He should show on his hands some other tangible super-natural effects in order to prove the truth of his former claim, that is, the claim that he receives revelation from God. If God wanted to guide the people aright by means of a super-natural thing, that is, revelation, then let Him prove the truth of His Prophet by means of another super-natural, that is, miracle.

That was why the people asked for miracles whenever a prophet was sent to them. They wanted miracles to verify his claim of prophethood, and not to ensure the truth of his teachings. Suppose a man is sent by a ruler to his subjects with his commands and laws. He reaches his destination and they ask him for his credentials. Will they be satisfied if, at this juncture, he starts explaining the wisdom underlying each rule and regulation? Certainly not. They will say: All that you have said, just shows that these rules are based on wisdom and meant for our good; but it does not prove in any way that they are from our ruler, nor that you are his deputy authorized to manage our affairs on his behalf. We shall believe in your claim only when you show us a credential to this effect, for example, an appointment letter duly signed by the ruler and having his official seal. It is as the polytheists had said to the Prophet: ..*until you bring down to us a book which we may read*" (17:93).

From the above explanation, two things become abundantly clear:

First: Miracle has an inseparable connection with the truth of the claim of prophethood. Learned and ignorant, elite and common, all men need miracle in order to be able to accept the truth of a prophet's claim.

Second: What the prophet receives and perceives of the revelation is entirely different from those things which we feel by senses or comprehend by intellect. In plain words, revelation is not a

function of mind; it is a reality totally separate from "right thinking." This fact is brilliantly clear from the Book of Allah; and no one, having an iota of common sense, can entertain any doubt about it.

But in recent times some "scholars" have closed their eyes from this reality, and tried to reinterpret the spiritual facts and divine knowledge in the light of the natural sciences. They have, accordingly, based their explanations on materialistic theory. They believe that human perception and comprehension is a characteristic of matter, emanating from the brain. They are of the opinion that all real merits and perfections – whether of an individual or of a group - are developments of matter only. Based on these premises, they have explained prophethood and all related spiritual factors on the following materialistic lines:

Prophethood is a sort of a sharp mental power, an intellectual genius. The genius who is called prophet, looks at the social conditions of his nation; analyses what they have inherited of the beliefs, ideas, customs and superstitions; and then changes them to conform with the needs of his time and place, in the most suitable manner. In that light, he frames for them the basic social principles and ordains practical rules and regulations - in order to raise their standard of life, to elevate their morality and ethics, to make them better members of society. Basing on this hypothesis, they have declared that:

- 1) Prophet is an intellectual genius, who calls his people to the good of their social life.
- 2) Revelation is the good thought which comes into his mind.
- 3) Divine book is the collection of those good thoughts and ideas, inasmuch as they are free from personal desires and selfish motives.
- 4) Angels who, the prophet says, come to him, are only the natural material forces which keep the world going. Or, they are psychological traits which lead the man to his perfection.

The Holy Ghost is a higher development of those material forces, which rains those pure ideas on the prophet's mind.

Satan is a retrogression of the same material forces, which poisons the minds with evil thoughts and incites the people to anti-social deeds.

In the same vein they have explained away all the realities which the prophets have told us about - like the Tablet, the Pen, the Throne, the Chair, the Book, the Reckoning, the Garden, and the Fire.

- 5) Religions are products of times; they change with the times.
- 6) The miracles, attributed to the prophets, are nothing more than myths and fictions; which were forged in the interest of religion, to strengthen the belief of common people; or to enhance the prestige of religious leaders in the eyes of their followers.

This in short is their explanation. But prophethood, in this meaning, should rather be called a political device than a divine reality. It is not possible here to throw light on its various facets. What the readers, however, should not overlook is that this interpretation has no resemblance whatsoever to what has been described in the Books of Allah and the traditions of the prophets. What led these "scholars" to such interpretations was their total submission to materialistic theories; that was why they rejected every metaphysical reality, and tried to bring it down to the level of lifeless matter.

Such peoples are academic descendants of an earlier group: Many early theologians interpreted every religious reality the Throne, the Chair, the Tablet, the Pen, the Angels etc. in material terms, adding, at the same time, that those things existed beyond the grasp of our senses. Needless to say that that interpretation was not based on any actual experiment or sensual perception. Now that the area of physical sciences has expanded so much, and every thing is being analyzed, tested and experimented on, this later generation was obliged to reject the idea of physical existence of those religious realities, because, as mentioned above, their existence could not be proved by any test or experiment.

Therefore, they had to invent other meanings for those realities, well within the area of sensual perception. They thought that they were serving the cause of religion in this way - because their interpretation would bring those realities within the sensual and physical recognition, and thus save them from being totally rejected by modern scholars.

Both groups have strayed from the right path. The ancient theologians correctly understood the meanings of these words, without resorting to any allegorical interpretation. But they erred when they thought that those were material things although beyond the purview of sensual perception, not subjected to the laws of matter.

The modern scholars took the wrong way from the very start; they gave these words wrong meanings in their eagerness to make them conform with material realities; in their attempt to pull these sublime truths down to the level of physical experience.

The correct way is to explain these words according to the dictates of the language and the usage; then shall come the stage of identifying what, how and where, for example, the Pen is. This should be done with the help of other relevant verses. After the Pen is identified, it may be compared with current scientific ideas to check whether it goes against them. If that examination reveals that the identified entity was beyond the domain of matter, then it should not be proved, or disproved, by the principles of physical sciences. The science is concerned with material and physical things. What authority has it got to judge metaphysical or spiritual things? Can we allow a linguist to prove, or disprove, a proposition of astronomy by the rules of grammar? If not, then why should the rules of physical sciences be applied to prove, disprove or interpret metaphysical realities?

QUR'AN: *But if you do (it) not - and never shall you do(it) - then be on guard against the fire of which men and stones are the fuel; it is prepared for the unbelievers. And convey good news to those who believe and do good deeds that for them are gardens in which rivers flow; whenever they shall be given a portion of the fruit thereof, they shall say: "This is what was given to us before;" and they shall be given the like of it, and they shall have pure mates in them; and in them they shall abide.*

The chapter began with description of three groups: the pious ones, the disbelievers and the hypocrites. But then all of them were joined together by the words, "O men!", calling them to worship Allah. In this context, they could be divided in two groups only: those who answered this call (i.e. the believers) and those who did not answer it (i.e. the disbelievers). The hypocrites do not come into this picture, probably because in their appearance they are with the first group, while in reality they are included in the second. Perhaps that is why the previous designation of the first group (*those who guard against evil*) has been changed here for "those who believe."

"*al-Waqud*" is fuel. The verse says that man himself is the fuel of hell. He is his own fuel, to keep the fire burning, and to get himself burned in that fire. Allah says: *then in the fire shall they be burned* (40:72). *It is the fire kindled by Allah, which rises above the hearts*(104:6-7). Man shall be burned in a fire that will be kindled and fueled by his own self.

The next verse, 2:25, runs parallel to it and we find the same principle at work here also: "whenever they shall be given a portion of the fruit thereof, they shall say: 'This is what was given to us before;' and they shall be given the like of it." It indicates that man shall get there only what he has himself prepared here. The Prophet has said: "As you live so you will die, and as you die so you will be raised." But the people of the paradise have a pleasant distinction *vis-a-vis* the people of the fire, because they shall be given ever-increasing rewards by their Lord: *They have therein what they wish and with Us is more yet* (50:35).

..".of which men and stones are the fuel": The stones referred to here are the idols which the

disbelievers worshipped. Allah says: *Surely you and what you worship besides Allah are the firewood of hell...* (21:98).

..".they shall have pure mates in them": The adjective "pure", inasmuch as it qualifies the "mates", refers to purity from all such things as may create aversion and unpleasantness - whether in their bodies or in their behavior. In other words, the mates given to the believers in paradise will be free from every disagreeable characteristics or trait.

Traditions

As-Saduq narrates that as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked about this verse and he said: "The pure mates are the ones who shall be free from menstruation and other excrements."

The author says: Some other traditions have expanded the meaning to include cleanliness from all defective traits, all characteristics causing aversion.

8

Chapter

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 26-27

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَذَا مَثَلًا يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ 2:26
الَّذِينَ يَنْفُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ 2:27
2:26 Surely Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable (that of) a gnat or any thing above that; then as for those who believe, they know that it is the truth from their Lord, and as for those who disbelieve, they say: "What is it that Allah means by this parable?" He causes many to err by it and many He leads aright by it, but He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors.
2:27 Who break the covenant of Allah after its confirmation and cut asunder what Allah has ordered to be joined, and make mischief in the land; these it is that are the losers.

Commentary

QUR'AN: *Surely Allah is not ashamed...* :

Gnat or mosquito is one of the smallest animals perceptible by naked eyes. These two verses run parallel to verses 19 - 21 of ch. 13: *Is then he who knows that what has been sent down to you from your Lord is the truth like unto him who is blind? Only those possessed of understanding shall bear in mind, those who fulfil the promise of Allah and do not break the covenant, and those who join that which Allah has bidden to be joined, and fear Allah and fear the evil reckoning.*

The verse clearly shows that there is a straying, a blindness, which afflicts the man as a result of his evil deeds; it is different from that initial straying and blindness which the man opts for by his own free will. Look at the sentence, "but He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors." They transgressed first, and it was only then that Allah made them go astray.

Guidance and misguidance are two comprehensive words; they encompass every felicity and infelicity that comes from Allah to His good and wicked servants respectively. As Allah describes in the Qur'an, He makes His good servants live a happy life, strengthens them with the spirit of faith, bring them out of the darkness into the light, and gives them a light by which they walk among the people; He has taken them under His protection and guardianship, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve, He is with them, answers them when they call on Him, and remembers them when they remember Him; and the angels come down to them with good news of eternal peace.

Diametrically opposed to it is the condition of evil-doers. Allah causes them to err, takes them out of the light into the darkness, sets a seal upon their hearts and hearings, and a covering over their eyes He alters their faces turning them on their backs; places chains on their necks and these reach up to their chins, so they have their heads raised aloft, and makes a barrier before them and a barrier behind them, then He covers them over so that they cannot see; He appoints for them the Satans to become their associates, and they turn them away from the right path while they think that they are guided aright; those Satans make their misdeeds to seem good to them and they are their guardians;

Allah leads them on by steps from whence they perceive not; and yet He respites them, but His plan is firm; He makes a plan for them and leaves them alone in their rebellion, blindly wandering on.

These are some examples of the conditions of the two groups. On deeper consideration, it appears that man, in this world, lives two lives: there is this life which may be seen and perceived by all, and there is another life hidden behind this one; that hidden life is either good or bad - depending on his faith and deeds. Man will become aware of that hidden life when the veil of secrecy will be removed after death. Then he will see himself in his true form.

Further, it appears from the Qur'anic verses that man has had a spiritual life before the life of this world; and he shall have another life after this one. In other words, man has been given three lives - this life in this world is the second one, there was one preceding it and there will be another following. The condition of the third life shall be determined by that of this second life - which, in its turn, is governed by the first one.

Many exegetes have explained away the verses about the first life; they say that it is only a literary style, which presents imaginary pictures as real facts. And as for the verses concerning the life hereafter, they too are misrepresented as allegories and metaphors. But both types of verses are too clear in this meaning to allow such misinterpretations.

We shall explain the verses about the first life under ch. 7. As for the life hereafter, many verses show that the same good or bad deeds which man commits in this life, shall be returned to him, as their own reward or punishment, on the day of requital. Allah has mentioned this fact in many verses: ... *and do not make excuses today; You shall be recompensed only what you did* (66:7); *then every soul shall be paid back in full what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly* (2:281); *then be on guard against the fire of which men and stones are fuel* (2:24); *Then let him summon his council We too would summon the tormentors* (of the hell) (96:17-18); *On the day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil...* (3:30); *they eat nothing but fire into their bellies...* (2 A74); ... *surely they only swallow fire into their bellies...* (4:10). There are many verses of the same import.

Then there is the verse 50:22, which by itself is enough to convince one of this principle: *Certainly you were heedless, Of it, but now We have removed from you your veil, so your sight today is sharp.* The words, "you were heedless of it" indicate that there was something present in this world, to which the guilty one has not paid any attention; "removed from you your veil" means that, but for that veil, he could have seen that reality even in this worldly life. What the man would see on the Day of Resurrection was present even in this earthly life; otherwise, it would not be logical to say that previously you were inattentive to it, or that it was hidden from your eyes, but now that the cover has been removed, you may see it clearly.

There is no allegory or metaphor in these verses. Try to explain in plain Arabic the principle which we have mentioned just now. You will not find a more explicit way than the one used in these verses. Then, how can they be explained away as allegories ?

The divine talk here points at two realities:-

First: Recompense: What a man will get in hereafter -reward or punishment, paradise or hell - shall be in recompense of the good or evil he would have done in this life.

Second: Embodiment of the deeds: Many verses indicate that the good or evil deeds themselves turn into their own pleasant or unpleasant recompense. (Or, that the recompense is an inseparable concomitant of the deeds themselves.) It is hidden from our eyes in this life, but we shall see it clearly on the day of reckoning.

These realities are not really two. But we had to explain it in this way to bring it nearer to the

minds. The Qur'ân too says that it uses similitude to make people understand.

QUR'AN: *but He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors:*

"al -Fisq"= *transgression*, sinfulness). It is the Qur'ân that, first of all, used this word in its now prevalent

meaning. It is derived from *fasaqati 't-tamrah* the date broke out of its outer rind). That is why it has been further explained by the words, "who break the covenant of

Allâh after its confirmation" - a thing must be whole before it is broken. Also the transgressors are described at the end of the verse as the losers - one must be owning a thing before he can

lose it. Allâh further says: *Surely the losers are they who have lost themselves and their people on the resurrection day (42:45)*. All these expressions show how appropriate the adjective,

"*al-fasiqin*"(the transgressors) is in this context. You should never think that the adjectives used by Allâh in His book for His good servants (like "those who are near to Allâh", "the sincere ones", "the humble ones", "the good ones", "the purified ones" etc.) or for the evil ones (like "the unjust", "the transgressors", "the losers", "those who go astray", etc.) are cheap epithets, or that they are literary embellishment. Each adjective has its own significance; each points to a particular stage in man's spiritual journey. Each has its own characteristics, and gives rise to its especial effects and consequences. On physical level, every age has its own characteristics and powers, which cannot be found before or after that age; likewise, on spiritual plane, every attribute has its own special effects.

An Essay on Compulsion and Delegation

The sentence, "but He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors", explains how Allah manages the actions of His servants. Does He compel them to act in a predetermined way? Or, has He delegated to them all powers in this respect? It is better to solve this knotty problem here and now, by the guidance of the Qur'an.

Allah says: *Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's (2;284); His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth (57:5) ; to Him belongs the kingdom, and to Him is due (all) praise (64:1)*. These and other similar verses prove that to Allah belongs the whole universe; His ownership is unconditional and unlimited. A man owns a thing, let us say, a donkey; he may use it and take its advantage to a certain extent- only. For example, he may ride it or use it as a beast of burden; but he can-not starve it to death, nor can he burn it alive. Why? Because his ownership is not absolute; society would condemn him if he were to commit such atrocities. His ownership allows him certain advantages only; and not every possible use. But when we say that Allah is the Owner of the worlds, we mean absolute, real and unrestricted ownership. There is no owner except Allah; the things own, or control, for themselves neither any harm nor any profit, neither life, death no resurrection. It is only Allah who owns and controls every affair of every creature; He may do with them whatever He pleases; no one can ask Him why; He cannot be blamed or questioned for anything He does, because He is the absolute Owner. He has, of course, allowed some of His creatures to use some other things to a certain limits; but both the user and the used are His property; and the user cannot exceed the authorized limit. Allah, as the absolute Owner, cannot be questioned about His dispositions; but others have to give account of how they exercised their authority. Allah says: *who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission? (2:255); there is no intercessor except after His permission(10:3); ... that if Allah please He would certainly guide all the people? (13:31); And if Allah please He would certainly make you a single nation, but He causes to*

err whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases... (16:93); And you do not please except that Allah please (76:30); He cannot be questioned concerning what He does and they shall be questioned (21:23) . Allah disposes and manages His property in any way He pleases; no one can use any other thing except with His permission, because He is the real Owner and Sustainer of every thing.

Now we come to the rules and laws which Allah ordains for His creatures. He uses the same method which has been adopted by the human society - ordaining what is good and praising and rewarding its doers; forbidding what is bad and condemning and punishing its doers. For example, He says: *If you give alms openly, it is well (2:271),... evil is a bad name after faith (49:11)* . Obviously, the laws ordained by Allah look at the good of man, and aim at perfecting the human society. Allah says: *... answer (the call of)Allah and His Apostle when he calls you to that which gives you life (8: 24) ; that is better for you, if you know(61:11); Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion (16:90); Surely Allah does not enjoin indecency (7:28)*. There are many such verses; and they show that the principles which the laws are based upon are always the same - be it a divine commandment or a human legislation. What is good in itself and ensures the good of the society is allowed, enjoined and prescribed; and what is evil in itself and endangers the social structure is forbidden; man is praised and rewarded for doing the former, and blamed and punished for doing the later. Some of those principles are as follows:

People do whatever they do because of its underlying wisdom and good. Legislation of laws is no exception to this rule; the laws too are made because of their underlying good and benefit. They reward the law-abiding citizens and chastise, if they so wish, the law-breakers. The said recompense must be correlated to the action done - in its quantity and quality. Also, it is accepted that the enjoyment and prohibition can be addressed to him only who is not under any duress or compulsion who has got freedom of will and choice. The above-mentioned recompense too is related to such actions only which emanate from free will and choice. Of course, if someone, by his own action, puts himself in a tight corner, in a difficult position where he has to transgress a law, he may be justly punished for that transgression, and his plea of helplessness will not be heeded at all.

Allah uses these same principles in His dealing with His creatures. He does not compel the man to obey or to disobey the divine commands. Had there been any compulsion, rewarding the obedient ones with the paradise and punishing the disobedient ones with the hell would have been absolutely wrong: the reward would have been an unprincipled venture, and the punishment an unmitigated oppression and injustice and all of it is evil according to reason. Moreover, it would mean favouring one against the other without any justification, without any cause - and this too is a demerit according to reason. Furthermore, it would provide the aggrieved party with a valid argument against Allah; but Allah says: *... so that people should not have an argument against Allah after the (coming of) apostles (4:165); ... that he who would perish might perish by clear proof, and he who wouldlive might live by clear proof (8:42)*.

The above discourse makes the following points clear;

First: Divine laws are not based on compulsion. These rules have been made for the good of man in this life and the hereafter. And they have been prescribed for him because he has freedom of will, he may obey the rule if he so wishes, and may disobey if he so chooses. He will be fully recompensed for what-ever good or bad he does by his free will.

Second: There are things and actions which are not in conformity with the divine sanctity, yet the Qur'an attributes them to Allah, like misleading, deceiving, scheming against some-one, leaving him

wandering on in his rebellion, letting the Satan overpower the man and become his associate. All these actions are related to various kinds of misleading and misguidance. But Allah is above all defects and demerits, and, therefore, these words when attributed to Him, should convey a meaning in keeping with His sacred name. Initial misleading, even in the sense of making inattentive and forgetful, cannot be ascribed to Allah. What the above-mentioned expressions actually mean is this: When someone by his own free will, opts to go astray, chooses the wrong path and commits sins, then Allah leaves him in that straying, and, thus, increases his error - it is done as a punishment of his wrong choice. Allah says: *He causes many to err by it and many He leads aright, by it, but He does not cause to err by it(any) except the transgressors (2:26)... . when they turned aside, Allah made their hearts turn aside(61:5). Thus does Allah cause him to err who is extravagant, a doubter (40:34).*

Third: The divine decree does not cover the actions of the man inasmuch as they are attributed to him - they are done by the doer, although not created by him. We shall further explain it later.

Fourth: Now that it has been seen that the divine law is not based on compulsion, it should be clearly understood that it is not based on delegation of power either. How can a "master" issue an authoritative command if he has delegated all his powers to the servant. In other words, this theory of delegation negates the comprehensive ownership of Allah *vis-a-vis* many of His possessions.

A Philosophical Discourse on Compulsion and Delegation

Every species is related to a particular type of action and reaction. In fact it is these special characteristics which identify the species as such. We looked at various kinds of actions and reactions emanating from various groups. Our reason told us that there should be an efficient cause, an agent, to bring each kind of these actions and reactions into being. Therefore, we put every group in a separate category, identifying it as a species. When we compared human characteristics, for example, with those of an animal, and delineated them clearly, we decided that they were two different species, with different characteristics.

When the actions are seen in relation to their subjects, that is, the species, they are primarily divided into two categories:

First: The actions emanating from the nature - where the knowledge of their emanation has no effect at all on their existence. For example, the growth and nutrition of the vegetables; the movement of the bodies; our own health or illness. These things are known to us, present in our own bodies; but our knowing or not knowing them has no effect whatsoever on their coming into being; they totally depend upon their doer - that is, nature.

Second: The actions issuing forth from the doer with his knowledge - where the said knowledge has a bearing on their being, like the intentional actions of the man and even of some animals. The doer does such an action after knowing and identifying it; and it is the knowledge and perception that gives him that insight. The knowledge makes him realize what would constitute his perfection, and helps him in deciding whether a particular action would lead to that desired perfection. The knowledge distinguishes the means of perfection from other things; and this distinction helps the doer in choosing a particular course of action. And the action comes into being.

The activities based upon ingrained aptitude (like issuing forth of the required voices, when a man speaks), as well as those emanating from natural disposition, or from the dictates of nature (like

breathing) and, likewise, those springing from overwhelming grief or fear etc., do not require contemplation or meditation by the doer. Why? Because there is not more than one form of knowledge here, and the doer does not have to delay his activity awaiting a final decision. Therefore, he does it immediately. But in other cases, where the doer has before his eyes two or more possible forms of knowledge to choose from, he has to spend at least a few moments in contemplation and deliberation. For example, Zayd is hungry, and he gets a bread. Its one aspect is that it may satiate his hunger; but there may be other aspects too - it may be another man's property, it may be poisoned, it may have become dirty and so on. Zayd has to reflect whether the bread is legally, morally and hygienically fit for consumption. When he reaches a conclusion, the actions follows without any delay.

The first type of activities is called involuntary, like natural reactions; the second type is called voluntary, or intentional, like walking or talking.

The intentional actions, emanating from man's knowledge and will, are again divided into two categories:

First: When the man decides to do - or, not to do - a certain work, he may do so entirely on his own, without being influenced by any other fellow. In the example given above, Zayd may decide, on his own, not to eat the bread because it was someone else's property; or he may eat it in spite of that snag. This is called a deed done by man's free will.

Second: When the man opts for a certain course of action under the influence of someone else. A tyrant may force a helpless person to act according to that tyrant's instruction under duress. The poor fellow in this condition commits sins and crimes against his own will. This is called a deed done under compulsion.

Right? But let us look at this second category more closely. We have said that this kind of deed results from the compeller's compulsion; he does not allow any freedom to the doer, who has to take the only way left open by the oppressor. But even then, it is the doer himself who decides to proceed on that way. It is true that the major factor leading to this decision was the tyrant's compulsion; but it is equally true that the decision was taken by the doer himself, even though it was taken to save himself from the tyrant's oppression. In short, even the deeds done under compulsion are done by the will of the doer. It follows that the division of intentional actions into these two categories is not real, not based on actual facts. The intentional action is the one which emanates from a knowledge and a will that tips the balance in its favor. This reality is found in the deed done under compulsion as well as in the one done by free will. It makes no difference that it was some other man's force or fear that tipped the balance in one case and the doer's own thinking that did so in the other. A man sitting near a wall looks up to find that it was about to fall; overcome by fear he sprints away from that place. And we say that he did so by his own free will. Suppose, a tyrant threatens to bull-doze the wall over him if he did not move away. Overcome by fear, he sprints away from there. And we say that it was done under compulsion. But the fundamentals in both cases are the same. The man is overcome by fear and decides to move away. So, why should we put them in two different categories.

Objection: There is enough difference between the two actions to warrant their assignment to two different categories. The deed done by free will is based on its underlying wisdom (in the eyes of the doer); the doer deserves praise or blame, and gets reward or punishment, for it. All these factors are simply absent in the case of a deed done under compulsion.

Reply: It is true. But these factors are based on subjective approach of the society. They do not have any existence outside the imagination. By talking on these subjective approaches we have crossed the limits of philosophy. Philosophy deals with the things that exist in reality, as well as with those things' natural characteristics. What all this leads to is the conclusion that the discussion

whether man is free in his actions is beyond the scope of philosophy.

We may yet bring it back on the track of philosophy from another direction:

A transient (possible) thing has equal relation with existence and non-existence. It, therefore, needs a sufficient cause to tip the balance in favour of existence, so that it may come into being.

The transient thing, when related to its sufficient cause, becomes an essential being - it becomes impossible for it not to exist. That is why it is said that a transient does not come into being unless it becomes an essential being.

A transient, by its definition, must have a sufficient cause for its existence. A transient existing without its sufficient cause is a contradiction in terms. And that cause gives it the essentiality, so long as it exists.

Now look at the universe at a glance. You will find a chain made up of unnumerable links, all of which would be essential beings. In other words, not a single existing thing could be called a transient, so long as it exists.

But this "essential - ness" comes to it only when it is looked at in relation to its sufficient cause.

The sufficient cause may be a single thing or a compound of various causes - the material, the formal, the efficient and the final causes, plus the necessary conditions of time and space as well as other preliminaries. An effect when related to its sufficient cause must invariably exist - because the said cause would make it essential. But when seen with only a part of that cause, or if related to any outside factor, it would not be essential; it would remain a transient as before.

If a transient, on being related to only a part of its sufficient cause (e.g., to its efficient cause only) become essential and come into being, its sufficient cause would be superfluous; and it would be a contradiction in term.

It shows that in this natural world two systems are found simultaneously: one of essentiality and the other of transience. The system of essentiality covers the sufficient causes and their effects - there is no transience in any part of this world, neither in any person nor in any action. The system of transience permeates the matter and its potentialities when related to only a part of the sufficient cause. Take any human action; if it is related to its sufficient cause - man (the efficient cause), knowledge and will (the final), matter (the material) and its shape (the formal) plus all conditions of time and space including removal of every hindrance - it would become essential. But if it is seen in relation to only its efficient cause, that is, man, it would remain transient.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the transient things need a cause for their existence because of their transience. And this need would not end until the chain of cause and effect finally reaches a cause Who is the Essential Being. This observation leads to the following two conclusions:

First: The need of an effect for its cause does not end on its being related to its transient cause. The need continues until it reaches the Final Cause, the Essential Being.

Second: This need emanates from its transient nature. It needs a cause to bring it into existence with all its characteristics and traits, including its relationship with its various causes, fulfilling all the conditions of its existence.

Now we may ponder upon the question of compulsion and delegation of power, keeping in view the above-mentioned premises:

First: No delegation of power: Man, like all other things and their actions, depends on the will of Allah, for his existence. In the same way, man's action depends on the will of Allah in its existence. Therefore, the Mu'tazilites' view - that human actions have no relation at all to the divine will - is completely baseless. There was no reason at all for them to deny the decree and measure of Allah in respect of the man's actions.

Second: No compulsion: This relation to the will of Allah, inasmuch as it is concerned with existence, keeps all the characteristics of the created thing in view. Every effect emanates from its cause - with all its characteristics which have any bearing on its existence. A man's creation is attributed to Allah, keeping in view all its intermediary causes and condition - the father, the mother, the time, the place, the features, the quantity, the quality and a lot of other concomitants. Likewise, the action of man is attributed to Allah, keeping in view all its characteristics and conditions. When a man's action is attributed to Allah and His will, it does not cease to be the man's action; it is still caused by the said man's will. The will of Allah decrees that the action be done by the man emanating from the man's own free will and choice. Therefore, it would be a contradiction in term to say that the action was no longer done by man's free will because it was related to the divine will. Allah Himself has decreed it to be a work of the man by his free will; how can it be said that the divine will lost its effectiveness and the action happened without the man's free will? It is now clear that the view of *al - Mujabbirah* - that the human action's relation to the divine will nullifies its relation to the human will - is absolutely devoid of truth.

The above discourse shows that the said action has a relation to the human will and a relation to the divine will; neither relation nullifies the other, because each is connected with the other vertically, not horizontally.

Third: The human action, when related to its sufficient cause; becomes essential. But seen in relation to only a part of the sufficient cause, it remains transient. For example, when the action is related to only its sufficient cause, that is, man, it does not become essential, but remains transient as before.

Therefore, what a group of modern materialist philosophers have said - that the whole system of nature is permeated by compulsion, and there is no free will at all in the universe - is totally wrong. As we have said, all effects in relation to their sufficient causes are essential, but, when related to only a part of the said causes, are transient. And it is the foundation on which man's life is based. A man teaches and trains his child and then hopes that his efforts would bear fruit. If there was no freedom in the world, if everything was essential and had to happen anyhow, then all this teaching and training would be of no earthly use; there would remain no place for hope in human life.

Traditions

A great number of traditions (narrated from the Imams of Ahlulbayt - a.s.) says: "There is neither compulsion nor delegation (of power), but (there is) a position between these two (extremes)."

It is reported in 'Uyunu 'l-akhbar, through several chains: When the Leader of the faithful, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) returned from Siffin, an old man (who has participated in that battle) stood up and said: "O Leader of the faithful! Tell us about this journey of ours, was it by Allah's decree and measure?" The Leader of the faithful said: "Yes, O Shaykh! By Allah you did not ascend any elevation, nor did you descend to any valley but by a decree of Allah and by His measure." The old man, thereupon said: "I leave to Allah all my troubles (of this journey), O Leader of the faithful!" ('Ali - a.s.) replied: "Have patience, O Shaykh! Perhaps you take it to mean a firm decree and a compulsory measure! If it were so, then there would be no justification of reward or punishment, no sense of command, prohibition or admonition, no meaning of promise or threat; there would not be any blame on an evil-doer nor any praise for a good-doer. Nay, the good-doer would have been rather more deserving of blame than the evil-doer, and the evil-doer rather more worthy of grace than the

good-doer. (Beware!) this is the belief of the idol-worshippers and the enemies of the Beneficent God (who are) the Qadariyyah of this ummah and its Majus. O Shaykh! Verily Allah ordained (the shari'ah) giving freedom of will (to men) and prohibited (evil) to keep us on guard; and He gave plentiful (reward) on meagre (deeds); and He was not disobeyed by being overpowered, nor was He obeyed by compulsion; and He did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in vain; that is the opinion of those who disbelieve on account of the fire."

The author says: The topics of the speech of Allah and His decree and measure were among the earliest about which the Muslims differed among themselves. This second dispute may be described as follows:

The eternal divine will govern every thing in the universe. These things are transient in their quiddity; but when they do exist, they do so because the will of Allah decreed their existence - and in this way their existence becomes essential - otherwise, the divine decree would be meaningless. Conversely, when a thing does not exist, it is because Allah did not decree its existence - and in this way its existence becomes impossible - otherwise, the divine will would be meaningless. In short, whatever exists, exists because Allah has decreed its existence, - thus turning it into an essential being. This principle applies everywhere. But the difficulty arises when it comes to such a human action that issues from our own will and choice. We know that we can do it if we so desire, and can ignore it if we so wish. Their doing and not doing is equally possible to us. The balance is tipped in favour of either side by our own will and choice. Our actions are based on our choice, and our will brings them into existence. The difficulty that arises at this point is this: We have earlier seen that nothing comes into being without the will and decree of Allah, which turns the thing into an essential being - if so, then how can any action of ours be termed as "possible" one? It must exist because the divine will has decreed it! Moreover, how can our will affect it in any way when it is governed by the will of Allah? Also, in this background, it cannot be said that man had power to do a certain work before he did it. And, because he did not have that power, Allah could not give him any order or command for or against that work. Going a step further, if Allah gave him an order and he did not comply, it would mean that Allah Himself had not wanted that thing to happen; so it was impossible for it to happen. Then the question would arise: How could Allah order him to perform an impossible task? Conversely, if someone complied with that order, it was because Allah Himself wanted it to happen. Then why should the man be rewarded without any valid reason? By the same reasoning, a sinner should not be punished, as it would be against justice, a naked oppression. One may go on enumerating the difficulties arising out of this subject. A large number of Muslims felt obliged to admit, and believe in, all these absurdities. They said that:

Man does not have power to do a work before the time comes to do it. The reason has nothing to do with the merit or demerit of any action. Whatever Allah does becomes good; and whatever He forbids becomes evil.

Accordingly, Allah may choose an action without any justification; He may give reward without any cause; He may ordain laws beyond the capacity of the doer or agent; He may inflict punishment on a disobedient servant even though the said disobedience and transgression was not of his doing.

It appears that the old man, who had asked the question, thought that the belief in the divine will and decree meant that there was no merit or demerit in any action and that man had no right of any reward (or punishment). Naturally he was disappointed when he heard that the journey was by the decree of Allah; that is why he said: "I leave to Allah all my troubles." What he meant was this: My journey to Siffin and back and my fighting in the way of Allah had no benefit for me as it was governed and done by the will of Allah; my share in all this venture was only the trouble and the

inconvenience which I underwent. Therefore, I shall leave it to Allah to balance my account, as it was He Who put me through all these troubles. The Imam ('Ali) replied to him by saying, "If it were so, there would be no justification of reward or punishment..." The Imam pointed to the rational principle on which the legislation is based. And at the end he reasoned that Allah did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in vain. If Allah could will the man's actions in a way as to deprive him of his freedom of will and choice, it would mean that He could do things without any purpose and aim; then He could create the whole creation aimlessly and in vain. This in its turn would render the principle of resurrection and reward and punishment invalid too.

It is narrated in at-Tawhid and 'Uyuni'l-akhbar that ar-Rida (a.s.) was asked about compulsion and delegation, and he said: "Should I not teach you in this regard a principle by which you shall never differ (among yourselves), and no one will argue with you on this subject but that you shall defeat him (by it)?" We said: "(Teach it to us) if you so please." Thereupon he said: "Verily Allah is not obeyed through compulsion, nor is He disobeyed by overpowering; and He did not leave the servants remiss in His kingdom; He (still) owns what He has given into their possession, and has power on what He has put into their power. Now, if the servants decided to obey Him, He would not prevent them from it, nor would he put any obstruction to it; and if they decided to disobey Him, then if He pleased to bar their way to it He would do so, and if He did not hinder it and they committed it, then it was not He Who led them into that (sin)." Then the Imam said: "Whoever would accurately delineate the boundaries of this speech would surely overcome his adversary."

The author says: Why did "al-Mujabbirah" (the believers in compulsion) say what they said? It was because they pondered on the divine decree and measure, and it led them to the conclusion that when Allah decrees a thing it must happen inescapably. Their deliberation of this subject was correct, and so was the conclusion arrived at. Where they fell in error was in correlating that conclusion with reality; they did not understand the difference between a reality and an idea based on subjective approach; they forgot the distinction between essentiality and possibility.

It is correct to say, on the basis of the divine decree and measure, that nothing happens in this world unless it turns an essential being; it is because every thing and every affair comes into being when it is decreed by Allah, according to the measure prescribed by Him; and then it cannot fail to happen, otherwise the decree of Allah would fail. At the same time, it should be kept in mind that a transient or possible thing becomes essential because of its sufficient cause. When looked at in conjunction with its sufficient cause, it would be called "essential"; but separated from that cause, it would remain as it was before - a transient or possible thing. Let us look at an action of man which he does by his free will and choice. When we look at it in relation to all things that are necessary to bring it into being - knowledge, will, proper tools and organs, the material, formal, efficient and final causes, and all the conditions of time and space - it will become an essential being; and it is in this context that it become subject of the eternal divine will. In other words, it becomes an essential being when all aspects of its sufficient cause are complete. But, looked in relation to each of those aspects separately, it remains only a transient and possible thing. If it is seen vis-a-vis its efficient cause only, that is, in relation to the doer only, it will retain its characteristics of transience and possibility - it will not become an essential being.

It is now clear to see at which point the believers in "compulsion" have deviated from the right path. They thought that, inasmuch as the human action was subject to the divine will and decree, man had no power on it; he was not a free agent; he was rather a helpless tool in divine hands. But they did not take into consideration the fact that the divine will takes it into hand only when all aspects of its sufficient cause are complete, and not before that. The divine will decrees that a certain action be

done by Zayd - not unconditionally, but on the condition that it is done by Zayd's free will, at a certain time and a certain place. Therefore, its relation to the divine will itself demands that it should be an action of a free agent, done by his own free will and choice.

Doubtlessly, that action will be called an "essential" one if seen in relation to the divine will; but at the same time and by virtue of the same divine will, it will be a possible and transient action when related to the doer, that is, the man. In other words, there are two wills - the human and the divine; they do not run parallel to each other; the divine will comes after and above the human will - they are in a vertical, and not a horizontal position to each other. Therefore, there is no competition or collision between the two wills. It was a short-sightedness on part of the believers in compulsion to negate the human will in order to establish the divine one.

The Mu'tazilites said that human actions are done by man's free will. But they went to the other extreme, and fell in an error no less objectionable than that of al-Mujabbirah. They too said that if human action was subjected to the divine will man would not have any freedom of will and choice. And then they took a position diametrically opposed to that of al-Mujabbirah, and came to the conclusion that the divine will had no relation whatsoever to the human action. Thus they had to accept another creator - the man himself - for human actions. In this way, they accepted dualism without knowing what they were doing. Going further they fell into traps more harmful than the belief of al-Mujabbirah. As the Imam has said: "The poor al-Qadariyyah, they wanted to emphasize the justice of Allah, so they removed Him from His power and authority... "

A master, showing kindness to one of his slaves, married him to a slave-girl of his; he bestowed on him a property, gave him a well-furnished house and provided him with all the necessities of life. Then there came some people there, looked at his property, and began arguing among themselves. Someone said: "Even though the master has given this property to his slave and has made him its owner, the slave has no right in, or authority over, this property at all. Does any slave own any thing? The slave together with all his belongings belongs to the master."

Another said: "No. You are wrong. The master has bestowed on this slave the right of property. Now the slave is its absolute owner, and the master has lost all his rights, and authority over this property. We may say that he has abdicated in favor of his slave. "

The former was the opinion of al-Mujabbirah; the later that of the Mu'tazilites. But both were wrong. The correct view would have been to say: The master has got his status of mastership; the slave his position of servitude and bondage. The master has made the slave owner of his (i.e., master's) property. The property belongs to the master at the same time that it belongs to the slave. There are two ownerships - one over the other. This is what the Imams of Ahlulbayt (a. s.) have taught us to believe, and what the reason supports.

'Abayah ibn Rib'i al-Asadi asked 'Ali, the Leader of the faithful, the meaning of "capability." The Leader of the faithful asked a counter question: "Do you have that capability without God or with God?" When 'Abayah remained silent, he told him, "Tell me, O 'Abayah!" He said: "What should I say? O Leader of the faithful!" He said: "You should say that you have got that capability by (grace of) Allah, to Whom it belongs and not to you. If He made you its owner, it would be of His bounties, and if He took it away from you, it would be a trial from Him; and He is the Owner of what He gave into your possession, and has power over what He put under your power... " (al-Ihtijaj)

The author says: Its meaning may be understood from the preceding explanation.

al-Mufid reports in his Sharhu'l-'aqa'id: It has been narrated from Abu'l-Hasan, the third, (a.s.) that he was asked whether the actions of the servants were created by Allah. He (a.s.) said: "If He were their creator, He would not have disowned their liability. And He (Allah) has said: Verily, Allah is

free from liability to the idolators... (9:3). It does not mean that Allah was not responsible for the creation of the idolators; what Allah has disowned any responsibility of, is their idol worship and their evils."

The author says: There are two aspects of a deed - its actual existence, and its relation to its doer. It is only when an action is seen in relation to its doer that it is called obedience or disobedience, good or bad, virtue or sin. So far as actual existence is concerned, there is no difference between marriage and fornication. What distinguishes one from the other is the command of Allah - marriage conforms with the divine law, and fornication goes against that law. Someone is killed without any reason; another is killed by a lawful authority in reprisal of a murder. A teacher punishes an orphan in order to guide him aright; an oppressor hits at the same orphan unjustly. In all these examples, the actual movements of the actions are identical. But one group is called sin because it does not conform with the divine law or goes against the common weal of the society.

Allah says: Allah is the Creator of everything... (39:62). Every action is a "thing" inasmuch as it exists. And the Imam has said: "Whatsoever may be called a thing is created, except Allah..." Also, Allah says: Who made good everything that He has created... (32:7). It may be inferred that everything is good because it is created. Creation and goodness are inseparable factors. But at the same time, we see that Allah has named some actions as evil. For example, He says: Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it, and whoever brings an evil deed, he shall not be recompensed but only with the like of it... (6:160). These are obviously the actions done by man; not the factor of recompense which cannot apply to divine actions. Such a deed is called sin. It is evil because it lacks some thing; because it is a nullification of a spiritual virtue or social good. In other words, a sin is sin because it is a negation, a non-being; otherwise it would have been good.

Now, let us look at the following verses of the Qur'an:

No misfortune befalls on the earth nor in your own souls, but it is in a book before We bring it into existence... (57:22); No affliction comes about but by Allah's permission; and whoever believes in Allah, He guides aright his heart... (64:11); And whatever affliction befalls you, it is on account of what your hands have wrought, and (yet) He pardons most (of your faults) (42:30); Whatever benefit comes to you, it is from Allah, and whatever misfortune befalls you, it is from yourself (4:79); ... and if a benefit comes to them, they say: "This is from Allah;"- and if a misfortune befalls them they say: "This is from you." Say: "All is from Allah;" but what is the matter with these people that well-nigh they do not understand what is told (them)? (4:78). On pondering upon these verses, it becomes clear that these misfortunes are relative evils. A man is bestowed with the bounties of Allah, like security and peace; health and wealth, and so on; then he loses one or more of these bounties. This misfortune, in relation to that man, is evil because it has nullified some existing things, that is, the bounties which he had previously enjoyed. Thus, every misfortune is created by Allah, and at that stage it is not an evil. But it is an evil when seen in relation to the man who loses an existing bounty because of it.

Likewise, every sin is a negative factor, and as such, it is not to be attributed to Allah at all; though it may be attributed to Him from another angle, inasmuch as it happens by permission of Allah.

al-Bazanti said: I told ar-Rida (a.s.) that some of our fellows believe in compulsion and some of them advocate the (belief of) capability. Thereupon he told me: "Write down (as I say): Allah, Blessed and High is He, has said: 'O son of Adam! By My will you have become such that you wish for yourself what you wish; and by My power you discharged the duties imposed by Me (on you); and by My bounty, you got power to disobey Me; I made you hearing, seeing (and) powerful. Whatever benefit comes to you, it is from Allah; and whatever misfortune befalls you, it is from yourself. And it is as it is because I have more right on your good deeds than you have yourself; and you are more

liable to your sins than Me. And it is because I cannot be questioned concerning what I do and they shall be questioned. Thus, I have arranged for you everything that you want... " (Qurbu '1-asnad)

This, or nearly the same, tradition is narrated through other chains, of the Sunnis as well as of the Shi'ahs. In short, the deeds that cannot be attributed to Allah, are the sins per se. It further explains the sentence of the preceding tradition: "If he were their creator, He would not have disowned their liability... What Allah has disowned any responsibility of, is their idol-worship and their evils... "

Abu Ja'far and Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said: "Certainly, Allah is too Merciful to His creatures to compel them to sin and then to punish them for it. And Allah is too powerful for anyone to think that He would will a thing and it would not happen!" (The narrator) said: "Then they (a.s.) were asked: 'Is there a third position between the (positions of) compulsion and (independent) capability?' They said: 'Yes, broader than (the space) between the heaven and the earth.'" (at-Tawhid)

Muhammad ibn 'Ajlani said: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) whether Allah has delegated (the authority of) the affair to the servants. He said: Allah is too honourable to delegate (the authority) to them.' I said: 'Then has He compelled the servants in their deeds?' He said: Allah is too just to compel a servant on a deed and then to punish him for it.'" (ibid.)

In the same book Mihzam is reported as saying: "Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said: 'Tell me what is that concerning which our followers (whom you have left behind) have differed among themselves.' I said: 'About the compulsion and the delegation?' He said: 'Then ask me about it.' I asked: 'Has Allah compelled the servants to (commit) sins?' He replied: 'Allah is too overpowering to do it to them.' I asked: 'Then has He delegated (the authority) to them?' He replied: 'Allah has too much power over them to do so.' I asked: 'Then what is it (i.e., the correct position)? May Allah make your affairs right for you!'" (The narrator says:) "The Imam turned his hand twice or thrice, then said: 'If I were to answer you concerning it, you would not believe.'"

The author says: "Allah is too overpowering to do it to them": Compulsion means that a force majeure subdues the subject in such a way that his power of action is nullified. "Too overpowering" (or, more overpowering than that) is the predominant will of Allah - He has willed that the action would emanate from the doer by his free will and choice, and this is what is actually happening in the world. The divine will has given the man freedom of will; neither the divine will negates the human will, nor the human will collides with the divine will.

It is reported in at-Tawhid that as-Sadiq (a. s.) said: "The Apostle of Allah said: 'Whoever thinks that Allah enjoins the evil and indecency, he tells a lie against Allah; and whoever believes that the good and bad (do happen) without the will of Allah, he removes Allah from His authority.'"

It is reported that al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf wrote to al-Hasan al-Basri, 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd, Wasil ibn 'Ata' and 'Amir ash-Sha'bi, asking them to describe what they had got (and what has reached them) in respect of (divine) decree and measure. al-Hasan al-Basri wrote to him: "The best thing that has reached me is that which I heard the Leader of the faithful, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) saying: 'Do you think that He Who has forbidden you has (also) acted cunningly against you? Rather, your lower and higher (parts) have cunningly deceived you, and Allah is free from its liability.'" And 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd wrote to him: "The best thing I have heard about the decree and measure is the saying of the Leader of the faithful, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.): 'If perfidy were in reality decreed, the perfidious man, if punished, would have been oppressed.'" And Wasil ibn 'Ata' wrote to him: "The best I have heard about the decree and measure is the saying of the Leader of the faithful, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.); 'Do you think that He would guide you to the path and (then) obstruct you (from moving on)?" And ash-Sha'bi wrote to him: "The best thing I have heard concerning the decree and measure is the word of the Leader of the faithful, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a. s.); 'Whatever you have to seek Allah's pardon for it,

it is from you; and whatever you thank Allah for it, it is from Him.'" When their letters reached al-Hajjaj and he studied them, he said: "Certainly they have taken it from a clear spring." (at-Tara'if)

It is narrated in the same book that someone asked Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq (a. s.) about the decree and measure, and he replied: "Whatever you may blame the servant (of Allah) for it, it is from him; and whatever you cannot blame the servant (of Allah) for it, it is the work of Allah. Allah will say to the servant: 'Why did you disobey? Why did you transgress? Why did you drink liquor? Why did you fornicate?' This is, therefore, the work of the servant. But He will not say to him: 'Why were you sick? Why were you of short stature? Why did you become white? Why were you black?' (He will not ask it) because it is the work of Allah."

'Ali (as.) was asked about monotheism and justice (of Allah), and he said: "Monotheism is that you should not imagine Him; and justice is that you should not accuse Him." (Nahju'l-balaghah)

The author says: There are numerous traditions on this subject; but those quoted above throw light on all the aspects of the topic.

The above-mentioned traditions show various special methods of argument regarding the subject matter.

a) Some of them argue on the basis of legislation itself - order and prohibition; punishment and reward etc. - that man has freedom of will, without any compulsion or delegation of power. See, for example, the speech of the Leader of the faithful, 'Ali (as.), replying to the old man. It is similar to the argument we have inferred from the words of Allah.

b) Others bring in evidence the verses of the Qur'an which cannot be reconciled with the theory of compulsion or delegation of power. For example: And Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth (3:189); and your Lord is not in the least unjust to the servants (41:46). Also, there is the verse, Say: "Surely Allah does not enjoin indecency" (7:28).

Poser: A deed may be described as unjust or indecent if it is seen in relation to us. But when it is attributed to Allah it is not called unjust or indecent. Therefore, even if all "our" deeds were actually done by Allah, it would be perfectly right to say that He is not unjust and does not enjoin indecency.

Reply: The sentence seen in the context leaves no room for such misconceptions. The complete verse is as follows: And when they commit an indecency they say: "We found our fathers doing this and Allah has enjoined it on us " Say: "Surely Allah does not enjoin indecency. Do you say against Allah what you do not know?" Look at the sentence, "and Allah has enjoined it on us." The pronoun "it" clearly refers to the indecency committed by them; and it is the same deed which is referred to in the sentence, "Surely Allah does not enjoin indecency,." Allah does not enjoin what is termed as indecency in context of human activities; it does not matter whether in other framework it is called indecency or not.

c) A third type of reasoning is based on the divine attributes. Allah has given Himself many good names, and has described Himself with many sublime attributes, which cannot be squared with compulsion or delegation of power. Allah is the Subduer, the Omnipotent, the Benevolent and the Merciful. These attributes can only be believed in if one believes that everything depends on Allah in its existence, and that its defects and shortcomings cannot be attributed to Him at all. (Refer to the traditions quoted from at-Tawhid.)

d) Yet others refer to seeking the pardon of Allah as well as to the blame which society directs at the wrong-doer. If sin were not from the man himself, there would have been no meaning in asking for divine pardon. If all our actions were done by Allah why should we be blamed for only some of them and not for the others?

e) Lastly, there are the traditions which explain the words, like causing to err, sealing the hearts

and misleading, when they are attributed to Allah:

ar-Rida (a.s.) said explaining the words of Allah, and He (Allah) left them in utter darkness - they do not see: "Allah is not described as leaving something as His creatures do. But when He knew that they would not return from disbelief and error, He held back His help and grace from them and let them alone with their choice." ('Uyunu 'l-akhbar)

The same book narrates from the same Imam in explanation of the words of Allah, Allah has set a seal upon their hearts: "It is setting a seal on the hearts of the disbelievers as a punishment of their disbelief, as Allah has said: ... nay! Allah has set a seal upon them owing to their disbelief, so they shall not believe except a few (4:155)."

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said concerning the words of Allah, Surely Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable... : "This divine word answers those who think that Allah makes (His) servants go astray and then punishes them for that straying... " (Majma'u'l-bayan)

The author says: Its meaning may be understood from previous explanations.

9

Chapter

URAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 28-29

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمَيِّتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ 28:28

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ 29:29

2:28 *How do you deny Allah and you were dead and He gave you life? Again He will cause you to die and again bring you to life; then you shall be brought back to Him.*

2:29 *He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth, and He directed Himself to the heaven, so He made them complete seven heavens; and He knows all things.*

General Comment

The talk reverts again to the initial topic. The beginning of the chapter dealt with three categories of mankind; then all were addressed together (verses 21-27) with the words, "O men", Now these verses describe the same subject with a greater detail. The twelve verses, starting from here, depict the reality of man; show the potentialities of perfection which Allah has endowed him with; delineate the vast scope of his inner being; describe the various stages - death and life, and again death and life; then the return to Allah - through which he passes in his journey, explaining that the final destination is Allah. In this context, the verses describe some basic bounties of Allah upon him creative as well as legislative. He created for him all that is in the earth and made the heaven subservient to him. He made him His deputy on the earth, ordered the angels to prostrate before him, put the first man into the Garden, opened for him the door of repentance and enhanced his prestige by guiding him to His worship. In this background, the opening words, "How do you deny Allah", serve to emphasize the grace and bounty of Allah on man.

Commentary

QUR'AN: *How do you deny Allah... you shall be brought back to Him:* The verse is somewhat (though not exactly) similar to the verse 40:11: *They shall say: "Our Lord! twice didst Thou give us death, and twice hast Thou give us life, so we do confess our faults; is there then a way to get out?"* This (later) is one of the verses that prove an *al-barzakh* (intervening period or life) between this world and the next. It says that Allah gives death twice. First is the death that transfers us from this world. But when and where shall we be given the second death? Giving of death presupposes a preceding life. It means that man shall be given a life in the period intervening between this first death and the Day of Resurrection. This argument is solid, and it has been offered in some traditions too.

Question: Both verses have exactly the same connotation. Both mention two deaths and two lives. According to the verse 2:28, the stage before the life of this world has been called the first death. Then comes the first life in this world, followed by the second death transferring the man to the next

world, and lastly will come the second life on the Day of Resurrection. The second verse (40:11) too should be interpreted in the same way, because both have the same import. It means that after the death of this world, there is no life, before the Day of Resurrection.

Reply: It is wrong to say that the two verses have the same connotation. The verse 2:28 mentions one death, one causing to die and two giving of life; while the verse 40:11 is talking about two giving of death and two giving of life. There is a world of difference between "death" and "causing to die." "Causing to die" shows a preceding life; while "death" can be used just for absence of life - even when there was no life before it. The verse 40:11 refers to the death after this life, then the life of the intervening period, then the death after that, and finally to the life on the Day of Resurrection. The verse 2:28 on the other hand, refers first to the lifeless state ("death", and not "causing to die") before coming to this world, then goes on mentioning this life, then death and then the life of the intervening period. There will be some delay before man is returned to his Lord. The conjunctive used "*thumma*" (then) denotes some delay. Its use here supports this explanation because after the life of the intervening period there shall come again a death and only then the man shall be returned to Allah.

QUR'AN: *and you were dead and He gave you life*: It shows the reality of man and his existence. He is a being, ever-changing, ever proceeding on his path of perfection, step by step, stage by stage. Before coming into this world, he was dead, then he was made alive by Allah and came here; again he will be caused to die and then be made alive again. Allah says: ... *and He began the creation of man from dust. Then He made his progeny of an extract of water held in light estimation. Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit...* (32:7-9); ... *then We did grow it into another creation; so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators* (23:14); *And they say: "What! when we have become lost in the earth, shall we then indeed be in a new generation?- Nay! they are disbelievers in the meeting of their Lord. Say: "The angel of death who is given charge of you shall cause you to die, then to your Lord you shall be brought back" (32:10-11); From it We created you and into it We shall send you back from it will We raise you a second time* (20:55). The verses will be explained when we shall come to them; they have been quoted here only to show that man is a part of the earth, he was created from it, gradually developed until he grew into "another creation"; this "another creation" proceeds on the path of his perfection; then the angel of death completely removes this "man" from the body; and he returns to Allah. This is the path which the man has to take.

The divine decree has planned the universe in such a way that every thing is related to every thing else; there is a constant action and reaction between it and the rest of the creation. Man too influences, and is in turn influenced by, all that exists in the earth and in the heavens - the elements and their characteristics, the animal world, the vegetable world, the minerals, the water, the air and, in short, every creation of nature. The fact is that the scope of man's activities is much greater, and his circle far bigger than anything else's. He has been given thinking and reasoning powers, and, as a result of this unique gift of Allah, he influences the other creatures, manages them, arranges and rearranges them, manipulates them, destroys them, amends them and perfects them, on a scale unheard of outside his circle. Every creature is under his domain. Sometimes he imitates nature by creating synthetic items for his needs; at other times he sets some forces of nature against the others. In short, he obtains, by all possible means, whatever he wants from whatever he wants. Passage of time has further strengthened his hands; now he has deeper insight in the working of nature, and manipulates the system even more effectively. That is so that Allah may establish the reality by His words, and so that the truth of His speech may be seen even more clearly: *And He has made subservient to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all, from Himself* (45:13). The verse

following the, verse under discussion, that is, 2:29, states the same fact: *He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth, and He directed Himself to the heavens, so He made them complete seven heavens.* The context - description of the bounties of Allah bestowed on man - shows that it was for the benefit of man that Allah directed Himself to the heavens and made them complete seven. (Ponder on the point!)

This is the path taken by the man in his journey of existence; and this is the imprint of his activities on the universe; it shows where he began from and what is his final destination.

Man's life in this world originates from nature, as the Qur'an confirms. But the same book declares also that this very life emanates from Allah: ... *and indeed I created you before, when you were nothing* (19:9); *Surely He it is Who originates and returns* (85:13). Man is a creature that is brought up in the caressing fold of creation, gets his nourishment from the breast of production, and is connected on this level with lifeless nature. But, on the level of origination, he is related to the command of Allah, to His authority: *His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it, "Be", and it is* (36:82); *Our word for a thing when We intend it, is only that We say to it, "Be", and it is* (16:40).

This much about genesis. As for the return journey, the path divides in two: the path of happiness, and that of unhappiness.

The path of happiness is the shortest route, leading the man to the sublime spiritual heights. It keeps raising his status and enhancing his rank until it takes him, to the divine nearness. The path of unhappiness, on the other hand, is a long route that keeps demeaning and debasing him rendering him lowest of the low, until he reaches the divine presence. *And Allah encompasses them on every side* (85:20). This subject has been fully explained under the verse, *Guide us to the straight path* (1:6).

This was a short description of man's path. Details about his life in this world, and before and after it, will be given in their proper place. The verse under discussion is not concerned with those details; it makes only a passing reference to it as it has some bearing on guidance and misguidance, happiness and unhappiness. *He made them complete seven heavens:* We shall write about the heavens in Chapter 32 (*as-Sajdah*), God willing.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 30-33

- وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ
 2:30 قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ
 2:31 وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ
 2:32 قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ
 2:33 آدَمُ أَنْبِئُهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ
 2:30 *And when your Lord said to the angels, "Verily I am going to make in the earth a vicegerent"; they said: "wilt thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood while we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness?" He said: "Surely I know what you do not know."*
 2:31 *And He taught Adam the names, all of them, then presented them to the angels and He said: "Tell Me the names of those if you are right."*
 2:32 *They said: "Glory be to Thee! we have no knowledge but that which Thou hast taught us; surely Thou, Thou (alone), art the knowing, the Wise."*
 2:33 *He said: "O Adam! inform them of their names. And when he had informed them of their names, He said: "Did I not say to you that I surely know the unseen (secrets) of the heavens and the earth and (that) I know what you manifest and what you were hiding?"*

Commentary

The verses tell us why the man has been sent to this world, what is the significance of his appointment as the vicegerent of Allah in this earth, what are the characteristics and special features of this vicegerency. Unlike other Qur'anic stories, it has been told in one place only, that is, in these verses.

QUR'AN: *And when your Lord said:* We shall explain in vol. IV, what the "speech" or "saying," means when it is attributed to Allah, to angels and to the Satan.

QUR'AN: *they said:* "Wilt thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it... and extol Thy holiness?"

The angels heard the announcement, "I am going to make in the earth a vicegerent", and at once arrived at the conclusion that the would-be vicegerent would make mischief in the earth and shed blood. Apparently they understood the ultimate behavior of the said vicegerent from the words, "in the earth." A vicegerent appointed in the earth would certainly be created from material components; he would necessarily be bestowed with two basic traits of desire and anger; the earth is a place of unceasing struggle and constant confrontation; its resources are limited, its opportunities finite; but the proposed vicegerent's desire would be unlimited, infinite. The condition of the earth and earthly things was hardly reassuring. Its creatures were subjected to ever-continuing deterioration and disintegration; its good was always turning into bad; it was a place where an individual could not live without a group having similar characteristics and traits. Keeping all this in view, the angels at

once understood that what Allah intended to create was not only an individual, but a species. The members of that species would have to live together, cooperating with one another; that is to say, they would have to establish a society, a social order. And with a venture like this, they were bound to cause mischief and to shed blood.

On the other hand, they knew that vicegerency - setting one thing in place of another - was unthinkable unless the vicegerent was a true copy of his predecessor in all the characteristics, traits and intrinsic abilities. The proposed earthly creature was to be made vicegerent of Allah in the earth. Allah has got for Himself the best names, the sublime attributes; His mercy and power are beyond the comprehension of His creatures; He, in His person, is untouched by any defect; and, in his actions, is free from all kinds of evil and disorder. How could an earthly vicegerent, with all his defects and deficiencies, represent the majesty and splendor of Allah in the earth? Well, could a lowly creature of earth be a mirror of divine beauty and sublimity?

This was their question - and it was no more than a question. It was not a protest, not an objection; they actually wanted to know the truth. They later asserted their belief that Allah was the Knowing, the Wise. They believed that what Allah intended to do was based on knowledge and wisdom; and their question was put in order to learn the underlying wisdom of the decision of Allah. What their question - or, pleading - amounted to was as follows:

Allah intends to appoint a vicegerent in the earth in order that the said vicegerent should represent Allah by celebrating His praise and glorifying His holiness through his worthy presence. But his earthly nature would not let him do so; it would irresistibly pull him towards mischief and wickedness. So far as the main purpose of this vicegerency - celebrating Allah's praise and glorifying His holiness - is concerned, we are already doing it. Therefore, we are Allah's *de facto* vicegerents; and if Allah wishes, He may bestow upon us this designation. What is the need, then, of a new creation to act as vicegerent of Allah in the earth? For the reply, Allah used a sentence, "Surely I know what you do not know", and an action, "And He taught Adam the names, all of them." The context shows that:

First: The vicegerent was to get the vicegerency of Allah; he was not to become a successor of any earthly creature that had preceded him. If Allah had wanted the man to take the place of that previous creature, the reply, "And He taught Adam the names, all of them", would be quite irrelevant.

Assuming that man was given vicegerency of Allah, this prestige would not be restricted to the person of Adam only, his descendants too would be vicegerents of Allah in the earth. Adam was taught the names; in other words, this knowledge was ingrained in human being in such a manner that, since that first day, it has been constantly bearing newer, fresher and better fruits; whenever man gets a chance, he discovers new avenues of knowledge; and thus he always finds himself imbued with previously unknown potentialities that more often than not turn into real achievements. It is a never ending process; it is a wonder that will not cease, and ever-fresh insight that will never fail to astonish.

That this assumption is correct, and the whole mankind is vicegerent of Allah, is evident by the following verses: *And remember (O people of 'Ad!)when He made you successors of Nuh's people... (7:69); Then We made you successors in the land after them... (10:14); ... and He makes you successors in the earth (27:62)*. The word translated here as "successor" is the same that has been translated as "vicegerent" in the verse under discussion.

Second: Allah did not say that the vicegerent-designate would not cause mischief and bloodshed; nor did He reject the plea of the angels that they celebrated His praise and extolled His glory. By this silence, He confirmed that the angels were right on both counts. But then He made manifest one thing

which the angels were not aware of. He showed them that there was a matter which they could not shoulder the responsibility of, while this proposed vicegerent could do so. Man was entrusted with a divine secret which the angels, in their nature, were unable to know or understand. And that divine gift would more than compensate the ensuing mischief and bloodshed. Allah told them, first, that surely He knew what they did not know. Then He referred to the same reply by telling them: "Did I not say that I surely know the unseen (secrets) of the heavens and the earth?" Looking at the intervening sentences it may easily be understood that the "unseen (secrets)" refer to "the names." It does not refer to Adam's knowledge of those names. The angels were unaware of even the existence of these "names"; it was not that they knew about the names but were not sure whether Adam knew them or not. Had the angels been doubtful only about Adam's knowledge of the names, it would have been enough to tell Adam to inform the angels of the names in order that they would have known that Adam knew. Instead, Allah first asked them to tell Him "the names of those." The angels had claimed the vicegerency of Allah for themselves, and had hinted that Adam was not fit for it; but the essential qualification for the vicegerency was the knowledge of the names; therefore, Allah asked both candidates about the names; the angels did not know them, and Adam knew; it proved that he had the qualification while they lacked it. The question (about this knowledge) addressed to the angels ends with the clause, "if you are right"; it means that they had claimed a position, essential qualification of which was this knowledge.

QUR'AN: *And He taught Adam the names, all of them, then presented them to the angels:* The Arabic pronoun, "them", used in "then presented them", is made for rational beings, those who have life, sense and understanding. Obviously, the names (or, the named ones) were some living and sensible being who were hidden behind the curtain of the "unseen." It follows that the knowledge given to Adam of their names was something totally different from what we understand from the knowledge of names. Merely knowing the names (in the sense known to us) has no distinction; otherwise, the angels too would have become equal to Adam in this respect as soon as they heard those names from Adam. Also, there would have been no distinction for Adam in such a knowledge. The angels could rightly complain to Allah that He taught those names to Adam, but kept them (i.e. the angels) in dark; had He taught them too, they would have been equal to, if not better than, Adam! Understandably, such favoritism could not have silenced the angels. Surely, it was something deeper than merely knowing all the names.

It would not have been a convincing argument for Allah to teach Adam a dictionary and then put it as an evidence against the angels - the honored servants who do not precede Him in speech and who act according to His commandment only - telling them to inform Him of the words which they had not been taught, and which the mankind was to invent in future. Moreover, the only purpose of language is to convey the feelings and ideas to the hearer; but the angels do not need any language for this purpose; they convey and receive the ideas directly without the medium of words; their stage is far higher than that of human beings in this respect.

However, it is clear that the knowledge of the names which the angels got after hearing them from Adam was not the same as Adam had got by teaching of Allah - the inferior knowledge of the names they could grasp, but not the superior one which qualified Adam for vicegerency of Allah.

Adam deserved the vicegerency because he was given the knowledge of the names, and not because he informed the angels of those names. That is why they declared, "Glory be to Thee! we have no knowledge but that which Thou hast taught us." They accepted that they did not possess that knowledge.

The above discourse leads us to believe that Adam was taught the names of the named ones in such

a way that he clearly knew their reality and recognized their substantial existence; it was not merely knowing the semantic value of a noun. The named ones were substantial realities, the actual beings that were, at the same time, hidden behind the curtain of the unseen (secrets) of the heavens and the earth. This especial knowledge could be learnt only by an earthly human being, but was quite incomprehensible by a heavenly angel. And this knowledge had an intrinsic bearing upon vicegerency.

"*Al-Asma*" (the names), in the sentences, "And He taught Adam the names", is a plural with the definite article "*al*" (the) prefixed to it. Grammatically, it denotes generality, comprehensiveness; and it is followed by the emphatic, "all of them." Clearly, Adam was taught all the names of every named thing, without any restriction or limitation. As described earlier, the pronoun them in the clause, "then presented them to the angels", shows that every name, that is, the named one, was a living being having knowledge and intellect; and at the same time, he was in the curtain of the unseen – the unseen of the heavens and the earth.

"The unseen of the heavens and the earth": It is a genitive case. Somewhere else this phrase may mean the unseen parts of the heavens and the earth. But in this verse, where Allah intends to demonstrate His perfect and comprehensive power, and to show the deficiency and incapability of the angels, it must mean a secret which is unseen to all the worlds, to all the heavens and the earth; an unseen beyond the sphere of the universe.

If you look at all the particulars of this verse - that "the names" denotes generality, that the named ones were alive and had knowledge, and that they were unseen to - the heavens and the earth - you will agree that it perfectly fits on the theme of the verse 15:21, *And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it and We do not send it down but in a known measure*. Whatever is called a thing - whatever is "named" a thing - Allah has its vast treasures, ever-lasting, never-ending, unmeasured by any measure, unlimited by any limit. Measure and limit come to it when it is created and sent down. The vastness of these treasures is not of the same kind as the multiplicity of number, because a number, no matter how large, is by definition measured, limited and quantified. The said treasure are vast in their ranks and grades. (We shall further explain it in Chapter 15.)

The named ones who were presented before the angels were sublime beings, who were well-protected by Allah, hidden in curtains of the unseen. He sent them down to the universe with their blessings and benefactions, and created all that is in the heavens and in the earth from their light and splendor. Although they had numerous identities, they were not different in their number or in their persons; whatever difference there was, it was in their ranks and grades.

QUR'AN: *and I know what you manifest and what you were hiding*: The sentence stands face to face with the mention of the unseen (secrets) of the heavens and the earth. Probably it refers to those things which are the parts of the heavens and the earth; and in this way both sentences together cover all unseen things - those which are beyond the sphere of the heavens and the earth together with those which are within that sphere. Instead of saying "and what you hide", Allah said, "and what you were hiding." This changed style shows that there was something hidden especially in respect of Adam and his appointment as vicegerent. Probably it was the incident described in the next verse: "... (the angels) *prostrated except Iblis. He refused and he showed arrogance, and he was one of the unbelievers.*" It shows that Iblis was an unbeliever before then, and that his refusal to prostrate had sprung from that disbelief, which he had kept hidden upto that moment. Obviously, the prostration of the angels and the refusal of Iblis had happened after Allah had told them, "Surely I know what you do not know", but before He said to them, "... I know what you manifest and what you were hiding" (i.e. the unbelief kept secret by Iblis). It also explains the reason why the former sentence was

changed to, "I surely know the unseen (secrets) of the heavens and the earth."

Traditions

As-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "The angels could not know what they said (*Wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood*), if they had not (earlier) seen someone who had made mischief in it and shed blood." (*At-Tafsir*, al-'Ayyashi)

The author says: This tradition may be pointing to an earlier creature that inhabited the earth before the mankind, as some other traditions say. It is not against what we have said that they understood it from the very words of Allah: *Verily, I am going to make in the earth a vicegerent*; rather the tradition and our explanation are complementary. The tradition, without putting it in the framework of our explanation, would show that the angels too, like Iblis, had committed the folly of unauthorized analogy — a very objectionable practice.

Zurarah said: "I visited Abu Ja'far (a.s.) and he asked (me): 'What do you have of Shi'ah traditions?' I said: 'I do have a large number of it; and I was thinking of kindling a fire to burn them in it.' He said: 'Hide it (somewhere), you will (naturally) forget what you are not familiar with.'" (Zurarah said): "Then, I thought about the mankind (and asked him about them). He said: 'How did the angels get their knowledge when they said, *Wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood?*'" Zurarah further reports that whenever Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) mentioned this tradition, he said: "It is a shattering blow against al-Qadariyyah (i.e. those who say that man is completely independent of Allah in his actions)." Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) further said: "Adam (a.s.) had, in the heaven, a friend from among the angels. When Adam got down from the heaven to the earth, the angel felt lonely; he complained (of it) to Allah and sought His permission. Allah allowed him and he came down to him (Adam); he found him (Adam) sitting in a desolate region. When Adam saw him, he put his hand on his head and cried aloud." Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said: "They narrate that (it was such a loud cry that) all the creatures heard it. The angel told him: 'O Adam! I do not see but that you have disobeyed your Lord and put on yourself a burden beyond your strength. Do you know what Allah had told us about you, and (what) we had said in His reply?' (Adam) said: 'No.' (The angel) said: 'Allah told us, "I am going to make in the earth a vicegerent." We said: "Wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood?" Thus, He created you to place you in the earth. Could it be right for you to stay in the heaven? Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said: "Allah in this way consoled Adam for three days." (*ibid.*)

The author says: The tradition shows that the Garden of Adam was in the-heaven. Other traditions on this subject will be given later.

In the same book, Abu'l-'Abbas is quoted as saying that he asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) about the words of Allah, *And He taught Adam the names, all of them*, (and enquired) as to what Allah had taught him. (The Imam) said: "The earths, the mountains, the canyons and the valleys." Then he looked at the rug which he sat upon and said: "And this rug is among the things which He taught him." It is reported in the same book that al-Fudayl ibn al-Abbas asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) what were the names which Allah taught Adam. He replied: "The names of the valleys and the vegetables and the trees and the mountains of the earth."

The same book narrates from Dawud ibn Sarhan al-Attar that he said: "I was with Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.); he called for the table - spread and we took our meals. Then he called for the washbowl and hand-towel. I said to him: 'May I be your ransom! The words of Allah: *And He taught Adam the*

names, all of them - was (this) wash-bowl and hand-towel among them?' He (a.s.) said: 'The mountain-passes and the valleys.' Saying this he pointed by his hand this and that way." As-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Verily, Allah taught Adam the names of His proofs, all of them; then He presented them - and they were the spirits - to the angels, and said: 'Tell Me the names of these if you are right in your claims that you have more right, than Adam, to the vicegerency in the earth because of your glorifying and extolling (Me).' They said: '*Glory be to Thee! we have no knowledge but that which Thou hast taught us; surely Thou, Thou (alone), art the Knowing, the Wise.*' Allah, Blessed and High is He! said: '*O Adam! inform them of their names.*' When he informed them of their names, they knew of their (i.e. those spirits) high rank before Allah, Great is His name! They realized that they (i.e. those spirits) were more deserving to be the vicegerents of Allah in His earth, and (to be) His proofs over His creatures. Then Allah removed them (the spirits) from their sight, and subjugated them with their (i.e. those spirits) obedience and love; and told them, '*Did I not say to you that I surely know the unseen (secrets) of the heavens and the earth and (that) I know what you manifest and what you were hiding?*'" (*Ma'ani 'l-akhbar*)

The author says: The meaning of this tradition may be understood from the commentary given earlier; and it may also be realized that there was no contradiction between this tradition and the preceding ones. It was explained earlier that the verse 15:21 (*And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasure of it...*) that every thing originally exists in the treasures of the unseen; the things that are with us came into being on descending from there. The name given to a thing in this existence is in fact the name of that which is hidden in the treasures of the unseen. You may say that Allah taught Adam every thing that was in His treasures of the unseen - unseen that was hidden from the heavens and the earth. The same idea may be conveyed in these words: Allah taught Adam the names of all things - the things that were unseen secrets hidden from the heavens and the earth. The sum total of both statements is the same.

It is not out of place here to point to the traditions of *fat-tinah* (the substance, of which a thing is made).

Such a tradition, narrated in *Biharu'l-anwar*, is as follows: Jabir ibn 'Abdillah said: I said to the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.): 'What was the first thing which Allah created?' He said: 'The light of your prophet, O Jabir! Allah created it, then created from it every good; then He caused it to stand before Him in the station of "nearness", so long as Allah wished. Then He divided it into parts; and He created the Throne from one part, and the Chair from another part, and the bearers of the Throne and the occupiers of the Chair from yet another part; and He placed the fourth part in the station of love, as long as Allah wished. Then He divided it into parts; and He created the Pen from one part, and the Tablet from another part, and the Garden from yet another part; and He placed the fourth part in the station of fear, as long as Allah wished. Then He divided it into portions, and He created the angels from one portion, and the sun from another portion, and the moon from yet another portion, and He placed the fourth portion in the station of hope, as long as Allah wished. Then He divided it into portions, and He created the understanding from one portion, and the knowledge and forbearance from another portion, and the (divine) protection and help from yet other portion, and He placed the fourth portion in the station of modesty as long as Allah wished. Then He looked at it with awe-inspiring eye, and that Light started perspiring, and one hundred and twenty-four thousand drops dropped from it; and Allah created from each drop the soul of a prophet and apostle. Then the souls of the prophets began breathing, and Allah created from their breasts the souls of (His) friends and the martyrs and the good ones.'"

The author says: There are numerous traditions of the same type; and on deep pondering they

support what we have written earlier; some of them will be discussed later on. You should not reject such traditions outright, thinking that they were forged by the Sufis. The wonders of the creation are unfathomable; the scientists and the philosophers have spent, and are spending, their lives in discovering some of its secrets; but every solved enigma brings in its wake a lot of fresh previously untaught of enigmas. Do not forget that this is the unfathomability of this physical world - the smallest in range, the narrowest in scope, the lowest in rank. How can we pass judgment about other worlds beyond this one - the worlds of light, spaciousness and abundance?

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSE 34

إِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ 2:34

2:34 *And when We said to the angels: "Prostrate before Adam", then all prostrated except Iblis. He refused and he showed arrogance and he was one of the unbelievers.*

General Comment

It has been explained earlier that the preceding words, "and what you were hiding", show that there was a hidden thing that had, meanwhile, come into open. The last sentence of this verse too leads to the same conclusion. Instead of saying, "He refused and he showed arrogance, and he disbelieved it says, "... he was one of the unbelievers." It was not that he became an unbeliever at that moment; he was an unbeliever long since, but had kept it a secret, and this event brought it into open. Also, it was mentioned that the event of the prostration of the angels must have happened between the divine words, "Surely I know what you do not know", and the words, "... I know what you manifest and what you were hiding." It may be asked: Why then has Allah put this verse after those words? Probably it has been done just to create a link between the stories of creation of Adam and his being placed in the Paradise. The twelve verses (28 - 39) were revealed to describe how and when man was made vicegerent of Allah, how was he sent down to the earth, and what is to happen to him in this life - the happenings that will have a bearing on his lasting happiness or unhappiness. For this theme, the event of prostration has not much importance except as a connecting link. That is why it has been mentioned here only briefly without going into details. Perhaps, it is because of the same reason that the Qur'an has changed the pronouns referring to Allah from the third person (*your Lord said*) to the first (*And when We said*).

The angels had not hidden anything from Allah; it was Iblis who had done so. Then why did Allah ascribe this deed to all of them (*you were hiding*)? Allah in this talk used the same method which even the human beings have adopted for their own speeches; we ascribe the work of an individual to the whole group, if the doer is not properly identified or if he tries to remain anonymous. Also, there may be another explanation for it. Apparently the first announcement, "I am going to make in the earth a vicegerent", had shown that the said vicegerent would have authority over the angels too. It may be inferred from the command obliging them to prostrate before Adam. Probably on hearing that first announcement some disturbing thought had come into their minds, as it had never occurred to them that any earthly creature could be given authority over everything including themselves. Some traditions too point to it. In this context the words, "what you were hiding", could easily be addressed to the angels.

Commentary

QUR'AN: "*Prostrate before Adam*" ... ;

Apparently it shows that prostration *per se*, may be done before other than Allah, if it is done in conformity with Allah's command, as a mark of respect to that person. A similar case is found in the story of Yusuf (a.s.): *And he raised his parents upon the throne and they (all) fell down in prostration before him, and he said: "O my father! this is the interpretation of my vision of old; and my Lord has indeed made it to be true"* (12:100)

This topic needs some clarification:

It was explained in the chapter of The Opening what worship means. The worshipper places himself in the position of servitude and performs what manifests this status, which clearly shows that he accepts the mastership of his master. Those acts must be such as to show the master's mastership or the servant's servitude; for example, prostrating before the master, bowing down to him, standing before him when he sits, walking behind him when he walks, etc. The more apt an action is to show this status, the more reserved it becomes to the rites of the divine worship. Prostration is the most significant symbol of the master's status and the servant's low rank, because the man in this act falls down and puts his forehead on the ground. For this reason, it has the strongest connection with the divine worship.

However, prostration is not the same thing as worship. They have two different meanings, and worship is not a quidditative substance of prostration. A quidditative characteristic can never be separated from any being. But prostration may be done without any thought of reverence or worship - for example, just to make fun of someone. Keeping this in view, it may safely be said that although the connection of prostration with divine worship is the strongest, that worship is not its quiddity. Therefore, prostration, *per se*, cannot be exclusively reserved for Allah. If there is any impediment or obstruction, it should emanate from the *Shari'ah* or the reason. What the *Shari'ah* and reason forbid is ascribing the prerogatives of the lordship to anyone other than Allah, But they do not forbid honoring someone or according him respect when it is done without elevating him to godhead.

The discourse given above was from purely academic point of view. But the religious good taste, conditioned as it is by rituals of worship, has strictly reserved the prostration for divine worship; it should not be done for anyone other than Allah; in Islam, one is forbidden to prostrate before others even as a mark of respect.

Apart from prostration, there is no proof - either from the Qur'an and tradition or from reason and logic - against according respect and showing reverence to others than Allah, especially when it is done as a part of the love of Allah; examples may be given of revering and loving the good servants of Allah and paying respect to the graves of the friends of Allah or to the things attributed to them. There is no reason why such actions should be prohibited. (We shall deal with this subject in a more appropriate place, God willing.)

Traditions

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said: "When Allah created Adam and ordered the angels to prostrate before him, it came into the angels' mind: 'We never thought that Allah had created any creature more honorable than us; we are His neighbors, and we are the nearest of His creation to Him.' Thereupon Allah said: 'Did I not say to you that I know what you manifest and what you were hiding?' - (it was) a reference to what they had mentioned concerning the affairs of the *jinn*, and had concealed what was in their own minds. So, the angels, who had said what they had said, took refuge with the

Throne." (*At-Tafsir*, al-'Ayyashi)

Another tradition of the same theme is narrated in the same book from 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.), the last part of which runs as follows: "When the angels realized that they had fallen into error, they took refuge with the Throne; and it was a group of the angels - and they were those who were around the Throne; it was not all the angels (who had thought so)... So, they have taken refuge with the Throne till the Day of Resurrection."

The author says: The theme of the two traditions may be inferred from the talk of the angels: "We celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness"; and "Glory be to Thee! we have no knowledge but that which Thou hast taught us; surely Thou, Thou (alone), art the Knowing, the Wise."

It will be explained later that the Throne means the divine knowledge, as the traditions narrated from the Imams of Ahlulbayt (a.s.) say. (Therefore, the angels' taking refuge with the Throne would refer to their confession that they knew only that which Allah had taught them, and that only Allah was the Knowing, the Wise.)

According to some traditions, the word "the unbelievers", (in the clause, "and he was one of the unbelievers") refers to the species, jinn, to which Iblis belonged, and which was created before man. Allah says: *And certainly We created man of clay that gives forth sound, of black mud fashioned into shape. And the jinn We created before of intensely hot fire* (15:26-27).

According to the above-mentioned traditions, the attribution of hiding to the angels (*what you were hiding*) needs no explanation; the clause means exactly what it says; the angels had actually hidden in their hearts the idea of their supremacy.

A third group of traditions says that the said clause refers to Iblis and his hidden thought that he would not make obeisance to Adam and would not prostrate before him if asked to do so.

There is no contradiction between these various explanations, because all the meanings may be inferred from the Qur'anic verses. They are all true and based on fact. Various traditions throw light on various facets of the same fact.

Abu Basir said: "I said to Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.): 'Did the angels prostrate and put their foreheads on the earth?' He said: 'Yes, as an honour (bestowed on him) by Allah.'" (*Qisasu'l-anbiya'*, ar-Rawandi)

The Imam said: "Verily the prostration of the angels before Adam was in obedience to Allâh and for their love of Adam." (*Tuhafu'l-'uqul*)

Musa ibn Ja'far (peace be on them both) narrates through his forefathers that a Jew asked Amiru'l-mu'minîn 'Ali (a.s.) about the miracles of the Prophet in comparison with the miracles of (other) prophets (in course of which) he said: "This is Adam before whom Allah ordered His angels to prostrate." "Did He do any thing like it for Muhammad?" 'Ali (a.s.) said: "It was so. But Allah ordered His angels to prostrate before Adam; yet their prostration was not a prostration of worship; (it was not) that they had worshipped Adam against Allah, Mighty and Great is He! It was rather as an acknowledgement of Adam's superiority and a mercy of Allah towards him. And Muhammad (s.a.w.) was given what was better than that. Verily Allah, Great and High is He!, blessed him in His omnipotence, and the angels, all of them, prayed for him, and the believers were obliged to pray for him. So this is the increase, O Jew!" (*Al-Ihtijaj*)

Allah created Adam, and he remained for forty years in (that) shape (i.e. a statue without life). And Iblis, the cursed, used to pass by him and say: "Why have you been created?" al-'Àlim (i.e. al-Kazim - a.s.) said: "Then Iblis said: 'If Allah ordered me to prostrate before this, I would certainly disobey Him.'... Then Allah said to the angels, 'Prostrate before Adam'; all of them prostrated; but Iblis showed the envy that was in his heart and he refused to prostrate." (*At-Tafsir*, al-Qummi)

Biharu'l-anwar narrates, quoting from *Qisasu'l-anbiya'*, as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said: "Iblis was ordered to prostrate before Adam, and he said: 'O my Lord! By Thy honor! If Thou excusest me from prostrating before Adam, I would certainly worship Thee a worship no one would ever have worshipped Thee in a like manner.' Allah, Great is His glory!, said: 'I like to be worshipped according to My own pleasure.'"

The Imam also said: "Verily Iblis cried aloud four times: First, on the day he was cursed, and the day he was dropped down to the earth, and the day Muhammad (s.a.w.) was sent (as prophet) after a (long) interval of the apostles, and when the source of the Book was sent down. And he snorted (in satisfaction) twice: when Adam ate from the tree and when he (Adam) was sent down from the Garden." And he said about the words of Allah: *so their nakedness appeared unto them* (20:121): "Their nakedness was not seen before, then it was uncovered."

Also he said: "The tree from which Adam was forbidden (to eat) was the spikenard."

The author says: The traditions - and there are many support what we have written about prostration.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 35-39

- 2:35 *وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ*
- 2:36 *فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَى حِينٍ*
- 2:37 *فَتَلَقَى آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ*
- 2:38 *قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ*
- 2:39 *وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ*
- 2:35 *And We said: "O Adam! dwell you and your wife in the Garden and eat (you both) from it (freely) a plenteous (food) wherever you (two) wish and do not approach (you two) this tree, for then you (two) will be of the unjust."*
- 2:36 *But the Satan made them both slip from it and drove them out of what they were in; and We said: "Get down, some of you being the enemies of others; and there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time."*
- 2:37 *Then Adam received (some) words from his Lord, so He returned to him mercifully; surely He is Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful.*
- 2:38 *We said: "Get down you there from all together; and if there comes to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve."*
- 2:39 *And (as to) those who disbelieve in, and belie, Our signs, they are the inmates of the fire, in it they shall abide.*

Commentary

QUR'AN *And We said: -O Adam! dwell you and your wife... "*

Although the story of the angels' prostration before Adam has been repeated several times in the Qur'an, that of his placement in the Garden has been given in three places only:

First: The verses given above, from Chapter 2 (the Cow).

Second: In Chapter 7 (the Elevated Places): *And (We said): "O Adam! dwell you and your wife in the Garden; so eat from where you desire, but do not go near this tree, for then you will be of the unjust- (19). But the Satan whispered an evil suggestion to them that he might make manifest to them what was hidden from them of their nakedness, and he said: —Your Lord has not forbidden you from this tree except that you may not both become two angels or that you may (not) become of the immortals" (20). And he swore to them both: "Most surely I am a sincere adviser to you- (21). Then he caused them to fall by deceit; so when they tasted of the tree, their nakedness became manifest to them, and they both began to cover themselves with the leaves of the Garden; and their Lord called out to them: "Did I not forbid you both from that tree and say to you that the Satan is your open enemy?" (22). They said: "Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves, and if Thou forgive us not, and have (not) mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers" (23). He said: Get down, some of you being the enemies of others, and there is for you in the earth an abode and a*

provision for a time (24). He (also) said: —*Therein shall you live, and therein shall you die, and from it shall you be raised*" (25).

Third: In Chapter 20 (*Ta-Ha*): *And certainly We had covenanted unto Adam before, but he forgot; and We did not find in him any determination (115). And when We said to the angels: "Prostrate before Adam -, they did prostrate, but Iblis (did it not); he refused (116). So we said. -O Adam! Surely this is an enemy to you and to your wife; therefore let him not drive you both forth from the Garden so that you should be put to toil (117); Surely it is (ordained) for you that you shall not be hungry therein nor bare of clothing (118); and that you shall not be thirsty therein nor shall you feel the heat of the sun- (119). But the Satan whispered an evil suggestion to him; he said: "O Adam! Shall I guide you to the tree of immortality and a kingdom which decays not?" (120). Then they both ate of it, so their nakedness appeared unto them, and they both began to cover themselves with leaves of the Garden, and Adam disobeyed his Lord, so he got astray (121). Then his Lord chose him, so He turned to him and guided (him) (122). He said: "Get down you two there from, all (of you), one of you (is) enemy to another. So if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy (123). And whoever turns away from My remembrance, his shall surely be a straitened life, and We will raise him, on the Day of Resurrection, blind- (124). He shall say: "My Lord! why hast Thou raised me blind, and I was a seeing one indeed?" (125) He will say: "Even so: Our signs came to you, but you forgot them; even thus shall you be forsaken this day- (126). And thus do We recompense him who is extravagant and does not believe in the signs of his Lord; and certainly the chastisement of the hereafter is severer and more lasting" (127).*

The context, and particularly the opening words of the story, "Verily I am going to make in the earth a vicegerent", clearly show that it was for the earth that Adam was created; it was the original plan that he should live and die in the earth. Allah had temporarily placed the couple in the Garden to test them in order that their nakedness might be uncovered to them. Also the context in all three places shows that the order to the angels to prostrate before Adam, and then to Adam to stay in the Garden is a single, continuous, story. It all shows that Adam (a.s.) was created specifically for the earth, and the way to send him down was through the Garden as mentioned in the Qur'an: It was shown that he was superior to the angels and, therefore, more qualified for the vicegerency of Allah; then they were told to prostrate before him, in acknowledgement of his superiority; then he was placed in the Garden but forbidden to go near a particular tree; so that on eating from it they should become aware of their nakedness and then be sent down to the earth. It means that the last link in this chain was their becoming aware of their private parts - it was this factor which irrevocably showed that they were fit for this earth, ready for this life. "*As-Saw'ah*", (literally means shame, disgrace, private part of the body. In this story it has been used in the last meaning, as may be seen from the words, "and they both began to cover themselves with leaves of the Garden." That is why we have translated it as "nakedness.") However, their awareness of their pudenda proved that in addition to their spiritual qualities, they had also animal instincts and desires ingrained in them. It naturally made them dependent on nutrition and growth. Iblis wanted them to become aware of their nakedness. Adam and his wife were given earthly, human existence and were at once placed in the Garden without any delay; they were not given time to perceive and understand their nakedness or its concomitants; they had not yet comprehended the life of this earth and its necessities. When they were sent to the Garden their connection with the spiritual world, including the angels, was strong; their link with it was not weakened. It should be noted that Allah has said, "what was hidden from them"; He has not said, "what had been hidden from them"; it may be inferred from the expression used that their nakedness

could not remain hidden for ever in this life; it was hidden for only a short period when they were placed in the Garden. The uncovering of their nakedness with all its concomitants was a predetermined fact and it depended upon their eating from that tree. That is why Allah had told them: "therefore let him not drive you both forth from the Garden so that you should be put to toil"; thereafter, the Satan "drove them out of what they were in."

It should not be overlooked that even when Allah pardoned them after their repentance, He did not return them to the Garden - they were sent down to the earth to live therein. If their eating of the tree, the uncovering of their private parts and the life of this world- were not a confirmed divine plan, an irrevocable predetermined decree, they would have been returned to their place in the Garden as soon as they were forgiven their mistake. In short, it was the divine plan that they should spend sometime in the Garden to get them prepared for the life in this world; and their removal from the Garden, according to the causal relation decreed by Allah, depended on their eating from the tree and becoming aware of their nakedness, and it happened because they listened to the whispering of the Satan.

Allah says: "And certainly We had covenanted unto Adam before, but he forgot." Which covenant does this verse allude to? Does it refer to the admonition, "and do not approach (you two) this tree, for then you (two) will be of the unjust"? Or to the warning, "surely this (i.e., the Satan) is an enemy to you and to your wife"? Or does it refer to the general covenant made with all human beings in general and with the prophets in particular?

The first possibility is out of question altogether. Allah says: "But the Satan whispered an evil suggestion to them... and he said: 'Your Lord has not forbidden you from this tree except that you may not become two angels or that you may (not) become of the immortals...' " Obviously, when Adam and his wife committed the error and tasted of the tree they were aware of the prohibition - even the evil suggestion of the Satan had begun with a reference to it. And Allah says in this verse that "We had covenanted unto Adam before, but he forgot; and We did not find in him any determination." It, therefore, could not refer to that prohibition, because Adam had not forgotten it at all.

The second suggestion - that the covenant might refer to the warning against the Satan - is not so wide of mark; still it is not supported by apparent meaning of the verses. The said warning was given to both Adam and his wife, while this verse refers to a covenant made especially with Adam.

It leaves us with the last alternative that the covenant means the general covenant which was made with the whole mankind and more particularly with the prophets. This verse (about the covenant with Adam and his forgetting it) occurs at the beginning of the story in the chapter of Ta-Ha, and the story concludes with the words, "So if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy. And whoever turns away from My remembrance, his shall surely be a straitened life, and We will raise him, on the Day of Resurrection, blind. He shall say: 'My Lord! why hast Thou raised me blind, and I was a seeing one indeed?' He will say: 'Even so: Our signs came to you, but you forgot them; even thus shall you be forsaken (literally: forgotten) today.'"

These concluding verses perfectly fit that opening one. To turn away from the remembrance of Allah is not different from forgetting the covenant of Allah. Add to it the use of the same verb (*you forgot them*) in the next verse. All these references are perfectly compatible with the covenant made with the souls of the human beings about the Mastership of Allah and their own servitude. That covenant obliged the man that lie should never forget that Allah is his Lord, the Ruler and Master of his affairs; nor should he lose sight of the fact that he is a wholly owned slave of Allah; that he has no authority whatsoever over his benefit or harm; nor does he has any control over his life, death or

resurrection; in short he owns neither his person, his characteristics nor his actions.

The error that stands opposite to this remembrance is forgetfulness — man forgets his Lord and His All-encompassing Mastership; he becomes engrossed in his own self, getting bogged down more and more in the mire of this world's attractions.

Look at this world's life, with all its diversity; and see how it spreads its tentacles in all directions. Note how it is shared by the believer and the unbeliever both. And then find out how the two groups respond to its joy and sorrow. How different is their respective attitude towards this life's success and failure, happiness and unhappiness, content and discontent, relief and suffering. These factors affect the two groups - the believers and the unbelievers - in entirely different ways. The believer has the knowledge of Allah and the unbeliever lacks this knowledge. And it causes all the differences in their respective behavior. Every man looks at this world; a world that is submerged in all types of misfortunes and disasters: a life followed by death, a health ruined by disease, a prosperity eaten away by poverty, a comfort destroyed by discomfort, a gain nullified by loss - this is, in a nutshell, the life of this world. The believer knows that everything and every affair belongs to Allah; nothing is independent of God, the Lord. Every thing and every affair emanates from Him; and all that originates from Him is good and beautiful, nothing but beauty and splendor, goodness and excellence, can come from Him. And because all things and all affairs issue forth from his Lord and Master, he thinks that all is elegant and fine; he dislikes nothing and fears nothing; everything in his eyes is likeable, except that which his Master tells him to dislike. He subjugates his likes and dislikes to those of his Master. In short, all his attention is fixed to the pleasure of his Master. He knows that everything is the sole property of God; none else has any share in anything. That being the case, why should he worry how the Master manages His own property? He does not think that he is competent to meddle in the affairs of his Lord. This submission to Allah creates a perfect tranquility, a truly happy life, untarnished by unhappiness; a light without darkness, a joy without sorrow, a benefit without harm, and a riches without want. It all happens because he believes in Allah and in His mastership.

On the other hand is the unbeliever who does not know Allah. By cutting himself off from the one and only Master, he has to bow his head before every creature. He believes that everything is independent in its actions - that it has a power of its own to benefit or to harm, to do good or evil. Consequently, he remains in constant fear of everything; he is ever apprehensive of every real or imagined danger. He is always grieving for what has befallen him, longing for the opportunities he has missed. He feels nostalgia for the prestige or wealth that is gone; breaks his heart for the children, relatives or friends who have left him. He is inextricably trapped by the attractions of the world; he relies on them and has trust in them; and when any thing goes wrong, he sinks into despair. Then as soon as he makes a virtue of necessity and is resigned to that misfortunate, a new calamity overwhelms him. In this way, He always driven from pillar to post, with a heavy heart and a gloomy countenance; "thus does Allah lay uncleanness on those who do not believe."

It can be seen, in the light of the above discourse, that forgetting the covenant and unhappiness of this world's life, both are interrelated - the later springs from the former. This fact becomes clearer if we compare the wordings of the verse 20:123-124 with those used in the verse under discussion. The former says: *So if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy. And whoever turns away from My remembrance, his share surely be a straitened life, and We will raise him, on the Day of Resurrection, blind.* And the same idea has been expressed in this verse in the following words: *... then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.*

It may be inferred from these verses that the forbidden tree was of such a nature that if one ate from

it he would certainly be entangled in the troubles and misfortunes of this life he would spend his life in this world, heedless of his own place, forgetting his Lord. Probably Adam (a.s.) wanted to combine the fruit of that tree with the covenant that he had entered into with his Lord. But he could not succeed, the fruit had its effect, he forgot the covenant and fell into the troubles and toils of this world. Then he was saved when he repented before Allah and Allah turned to him with mercy.

QUR'AN: *and eat (you two) from it (freely) a plenteous (food):*

"ar-Raghad" literally means happiness, well-being, good life and affluence *arghada 'l-qawmu mawashiyahum* means, "the people left their cattle to graze wherever it liked. *"Qawmun raghad"* and *"nisa'un raghad"* means people (or women) having a life of plenty and opulence.

QUR'AN: *and do not approach (you two) this tree;*

The context shows that actual prohibition was of eating from it; but they were told not even to approach it; the prohibition was couched in these terms for emphasis. What was really forbidden is seen from the: *so when they tasted of the tree, their nakedness became manifest to them (7:22), and... they both ate of it, so their nakedness appeared unto them (20:121).*

QUR'AN: *for then you (two) will be of the unjust:*

az-Zalimin is the *nomen agentis* of *az-zulm* (injustice, to do wrong). It is not from *az-zulmah* (darkness), as has been suggested by someone. Adam and his wife acknowledged their wrong-doing, and the Qur'an quotes them as saying: *"Our Lord! we have been unjust to ourselves, and if you forgive us not, and have (not) mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers"* (7:23).

This clause has been changed in Chapter 20 to "so that you should be put to toil"; and the toil has further been explained in these words: *Surely it is (ordained) for you that you shall not be hungry therein (i.e. in the Garden) nor bare of clothing; and that you shall not be thirsty therein nor shall you feel the heat of the sun (20:118-119).* Clearly, the injustice and wrong-doing, mentioned in the verse 2:25, was to bring in its wake the toil of this world - hunger, thirst, nakedness and other discomforts. The injustice or wrong that they had done was against their own selves; it was neither a sin (as this term is used in the *shari'ah*) nor an injustice against Allah. It shows that the prohibition was in the nature of an advice pointing out to them what was good for their own comfort; it did not have the force of an ordained law. Adam and his wife did wrong to themselves, because their disregard to that divine advice caused their removal from the Garden.

When a man commits a sin (i.e. an offence, from the *shari'ah* point of view), he is given a punishment. Then if he repents and his repentance is accepted, the punishment is completely waived off, and he is returned to his previous position as though he had not committed the sin at all. If Adam and his wife were guilty of such a sin, they should have been returned to their place in the Garden soon after their repentance was accepted. But it was not done. It clearly shows that the prohibition did not have the force of an ordained law; it was only an advice. Even so, neglecting it had its natural effect on both of them and they had to come out of the Garden. But this removal, from the Garden was not a punishment for any sin or crime; it was the natural consequence of the wrong they had done against their own selves. (We shall write again on this subject, God willing.)

QUR'AN: *But the Satan made them both slip from it:*

The Satan could have misled them by creating evil thoughts in their hearts, in the same way as he misleads other human beings. But many verses, in the three narratives quoted at the beginning of this commentary, show that the Satan had appeared before Adam and his wife, and had talked to them face to face:

So We said: "O Adam! surely this is an enemy to you and to your wife" (20:117). Allah had pointed out the Satan to Adam, not by any verbal description but by showing to him the person of the

said enemy. (Note the demonstrative pronoun, "this is.")

(The Satan) *said: "O Adam! shall I guide you to the tree of immortality... "* (20:120). The speaker, that is, the Satan, must have talked to Adam face to face.

And he (i.e. the Satan) swore to them both: "Most surely I am a sincere adviser to you" (7:21). Obviously, he was visible to Adam and his wife and swore during his talk with them.

... and their Lord called out to them: "Did I not forbid you both from that tree and say to you that the Satan is your open enemy?" (7:22) It indicates that the Satan was visible to Adam and his wife. If the Satan had misled them by creating evil thoughts into their minds without appearing before them, they could have said to Allah that they were not aware that that thought was put into their minds by the Satan; that they mistook it to be their own thought because the Satan had not appeared before them.

They used to see and recognize the Satan. Likewise, other prophets - all of them covered by Allah's protection - used to see and recognize him if and when he came to them. Many traditions mention such encounters in the stories of Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa, Yahya, Ayyub, Isma'il and Muhammad (may Allah bless him and his as well as the prophets).

The above-quoted verses as well as the verse 7:20(*and he said: "Your Lord has not forbidden from this tree except that... "*) also show that the Satan had visited them near that tree in the Garden. He entered the Garden, talked to them and put evil suggestion before them. He was able to do so because the Garden was not the Garden of eternal abode. The Qur'an also says that Adam, his wife and the Satan all were removed from the Garden together. (Of course, Allah had said to the Satan: *"Then get down from this, for it does not befit you to behave proudly therein"*(7:131). But the pronouns "this" and "therein" may refer to the angels or to the heaven. It may mean: Get down from the company of the angels; or, get down from the heaven as it is a place of honor.)

QUR'AN: *and We said: "Get down, some of you being the enemies of others... "*

The second person pronouns, used in this verse, are plural, which denote at least three persons. Clearly, it was addressed to Adam, his wife and the Satan. The Satan was turned out of the heaven and/or the company of the angels before (as described above). This verse combines in itself that previous order too; and manifests the firm decree of Allah establishing enmity between Iblis on one side and Adam and his wife and their descendants on the other. It also promulgates another decree that they shall live in the earth, die therein, and be raised again from it.

It may safely be said that the whole human race (Adam together with his descendants) is covered by the last mentioned decree: *Therein shall you live, and therein shall you die, and from it shall you be raised*(7:25). This verse comes at the end of the story (in Chapter 7) which begins with the following words:*And certainly We created you, then We fashioned you, then We said to the angels: "Prostrate before Adam.."*(7:11). In both verses plural pronouns have been used; and it is an indication that the creation and the decree to live and die in the earth includes more than two, that is, other human beings too besides Adam and his wife.

The story of Adam may have been used by Allah to represent the rise, fall and rise again of the whole mankind. Adam was the first representatives of humanity, and his life was a symbol, a miniature, of the human beings life-span in this world.

The angels were told to prostrate before Adam, because he was the vicegerent of Allah in the earth. It has been mentioned earlier that this vicegerency was bestowed on the whole mankind. The angels prostrated before Adam, as he was the symbol of humanity, the representative of his race.

Adam and his wife were placed in the Garden and then were sent down from there because they had eaten of the forbidden tree. Every man may see his own face in this mirror. His soul, before

coming to this world, enjoyed the sublime and lofty existence; his abode was spiritually near to his Lord - a place of joy and happiness, of splendor and light; in the company of purified companions and spiritual friends, near to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. Then he opted for this transient life, and was at once entangled in the troubles and toils of this world; leaving that purified existence, he was attracted to this tedious and odious life.

Adam at once repented and prayed for the mercy of Allah. In the same way, man may return to Allah and consequently to the eternal abode of honor and bliss. But if he took the wrong turning, did not try to return to Allah, and, in short, followed his base desires, he would change the bounty of Allah into disbelief and ungratefulness, would direct himself to the place of disgrace - to the hell; and how evil that resting place is!

QUR'AN: *Then Adam received (some) words from his Lord so He returned to him mercifully: "at-Talaqqi" (to receive) signifies "to learn."* It was this learning of the words that paved the way for the repentance of Adam.

"At-Tawbah" literally means to return; generally it is used for repentance, because when a man repents, he returns to his Lord. This verb is at times ascribed to Allah (as in this verse), and signifies that Allah returns or restores the servant to His grace and mercy. In other words, He accepts the plea of the servant and forgives his sins. At other times it is attributed to the servant; then it signifies the servant's return to Allah, that is, his repentance from his sins.

At-Tawbah (repentance) of man is flanked on both sides by two *tawbahs* (mercies) of Allah. Man can never do without the mercy of Allah. He needs mercy and help of Allah to turn away from sins; only then he may return to Allah, may repent from his sins; then again the mercy of Allah comes forward, and his repentance is accepted. Therefore, an accepted repentance of man issues forth from the mercy of Allah, and also ends on His mercy. The verse 9:118 clearly mentions this fact: *then He returned to them (mercifully) so that they might return* (i.e. might repent).

What were the words which Adam received from his Lord? Some people think that it refers to their invocation reported in Chapter 7: *They said: "Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves, and if thou forgive us not, and have (not) mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers"* (7:23). But this view is not supported by the sequence of the events. Adam and his wife had addressed that invocation before they were told to get down from the Garden (7:24); and it was after getting that order that he "received some words" from Allah, as is clear from the verse 2:36-37. Therefore, "some words" cannot refer to that previously uttered invocation.

There may, however, be another explanation: When Allah announced to the angels that He was going to make a vicegerent in the earth, they said: "Wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood, while we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness?" Allah did not say that their accusation against the would-be vicegerent was wrong; His only answer was that He taught Adam all the names. There must have been something deep, meaningful and relevant in this teaching of the names; otherwise, the angels could not be satisfied, their objection could not be answered. The names taught to Adam must have contained some such thing that would come to the rescue of man if he sinned, would save him from disgrace if he erred. Probably, the words received at the time of repentance were related to the names taught to him in the beginning.

It cannot be denied that Adam (a.s.) did wrong to himself by placing himself in this world - a crossroads of happiness and unhappiness; had he been ensnared by it he would have perished; but he chose to return to his original place of spiritual bliss and was saved; he had to undergo, in this process, untold miseries and unbearable hardships. In any case, he put himself in so much trouble that he became "unjust" to himself. The question arises as to why Allah selected this hard way to send him

from the Garden to the earth. The fact, however, remains that in this process he attained to such heights of eternal bliss and spiritual perfection as would have been impossible to reach without coming down to the earth - and that too with a stigma of mistake.

The events leading to his removal from the Garden and, later, to the acceptance of his repentance showed to him his true reality - how humble, dependent, deficient and servile he was; and at the same time he came to realize that every difficulty of this world leads to manifold ease in the next life; every unpleasantness here results in enhanced pleasantness there; every trouble in the obedience to Allah brings in its wake the pleasure of Allah and His unlimited reward; the process continues until the servant reaches the sublime presence of his Lord. Adam knew, through his own experience, taste of many of the beautiful attributes of Allah: His forgiveness, turning mercifully to the servants, covering their mistakes, bestowing mercy on them, putting them in the shadow of His compassion and grace - these are some of the divine attributes which He has especially reserved for the sinners. Adam could not know and understand them without passing through the stages which Allah had decreed for him.

This, however, was his repentance; it made ordination of a *shari'ah* essential. It was necessary for Adam and his descendants to know which path they should take so as to reach their destination, the abode of bliss and happiness. His repentance brought him to the stage where promulgation of religion and ordination of the *shari'ah* was inevitable.

That is why Allah frequently mentions the repentance before the belief: *Stand fast then (in the right path) as you are commanded, as also he who has turned (to Allah) with you...* (11:112); *And most surely I am most forgiving to him who repents and believes and does good...* (20:82). There are many such verses in the Qur'an.

QUR'AN: *We said: "Get down you therefore all together; and if there comes to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve. And (as to) those who disbelieve in, and belie, Our signs, they are the inmates of the fire, in it they shall abide."*

This is the essence of religion ordained, for the first time, for Adam (a.s.) and his descendants. Allah has condensed the whole religion in these two sentences; nothing has been added, nor can be added to it up to the Day of Resurrection.

Ponder on this story and particularly the narrative of Chapter 20. You will see that Allah had issued two decrees in respect of Adam and his descendants. When he ate from the tree, it was decreed that he should get down to the earth and spend his life therein - a life of trouble and toil. And when he repented, it was ordained that he and his descendants should be honored with divine guidance. The first decree initiated the earthly life for him; the second, issued after his repentance, bestowed dignity and grace to that life, by providing it with divine guidance. From then on, man's life is composed of two lives: A material, earthly life and a spiritual, heavenly one. It may be inferred from repetition of the order to "get down" in this narrative: *"Get down, some of you being the enemies of others; and there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time"* (2:36). *"Get down you therefrom all together- and if there comes to you a guidance from Me..."* (2:38).

Repentance of Adam (2:37) occurred between these two orders. The sequence shows that Adam had repented before their departing from the Garden, although he had slipped from his earlier position of honor. It may also be inferred from the change in the styles of the following verses: Allah said to Adam, when placing him in the Garden, *"do not go near this tree"* (7:19); but when they ate from it, *their Lord called out to them: "Did I not forbid you both from that tree..."* (7:22). Note the demonstrative pronoun, "this", (for a nearer object) in the former speech, and "that" (for a farther one)

in the latter. Also contrast the verb, "said", (showing proximity) of the former with "called out" (showing distance) of the latter. All this together supports the above-given explanation that at the time of the second order Adam was still in the Garden but not in his earlier honored place.

"Get down, some of you being the enemies of others; and there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time" (2:36; 7:24). "Therein shall you live, and therein shall you die, and from it shall you be raised" (7:25). The verses indicate that the life on the earth was very different from that in the Garden. This life is firmly connected with the earth, full of difficulties and hardships. Man, in this life, is created from the earth, then after death is returned into it, and will, on the Day of Resurrection, be raised from it, This life is different from that of the Garden. It follows that Adam had lived a heavenly - and not earthly life in the Garden.

This observation gives us a certainty that the Garden of Adam was in the heaven, although it was not the Garden of eternal abode from which one is never turned out.

What is meant by "the heaven"? We shall, God willing explain it somewhere else.

Now, we come to the mistake of Adam. The explanation given under various verses throws sufficient light on this subject. But the importance of the topic justifies its recapitulation in a systematic way:

The verses obviously say that he had committed a mistake and disobeyed the divine command: "... for then you (two) will be of the unjust"; "and Adam disobeyed his Lord, so he got astray", and they too acknowledged their error: "Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves, and if Thou forgive us not, and have (not) mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers." But on meditating on the verses, and particularly on the admonition not to eat of the tree, we come to a definite conclusion that the said prohibition was not in the nature of an authoritative command; it was rather like an advice to guide Adam to his good and comfort. The following proof irresistibly lead us to this conclusion:

First: Allah said in this, as well as in Chapter 7, that eating of the tree would be an injustice, a wrong-doing (*for then you will be of the unjust*). The same result has been described two as "toil" (*so that you should be put to toil*); and the "toil" has been explained in the terms of worldly needs and troubles, because it was ordained "for you that you shall not be hungry therein (i.e., as long as you remained in the Garden) nor bare of clothing; and that you shall not be thirsty therein nor shall you feel the heat of the sun." It seems clear that it was to protect them from these worldly troubles and toils that they were told not to go near that tree, The prohibition, therefore, was not more than an advice; certainly it was not an authoritative command. Going against an advice does not entail a sin, does not involve rebellion against the adviser. The injustice, mentioned in this story, therefore, means their doing wrong against their own selves, putting themselves in this world's hardship and toil; but it cannot mean the sin committed by a servant against his master.

Second: When a servant repents, that is, returns to Allah, his Lord, and the Lord accepts that repentance, all the effects of the sin are erased, as though he had not committed any sin at all. If the prohibition against eating from the tree had the force of an authoritative command, an ordained law, Adam and his wife should have been returned to their place in the Garden as soon as their repentance was accepted. But they were not. It decisively proves that the prohibition was of advisory nature like telling someone not to put his hand in a fire; if he does not listen to the advice, his hand would certainly burn, and the subsequent apology would not unburn it, even if the apology was accepted. Likewise, Adam and his wife disregarded the advice, and as a result of eating from the tree, had to go out of the Garden and live in the earth a life of trial and hardship. Their repentance could not take them back to the Garden as their coming to the earth was the natural and inevitable result of that action.

The prohibition, in short, was not a law ordained by the Master - like the announcement that the *shari'ah* would be punished. If it were like such a command, the repentance would have rubbed out the effect of disobedience and they would have been sent back to the Garden straight away.

Third: *We said: "Get down you therefrom all together; and if there comes to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve. And (as to) those who disbelieve in, and belie, Our signs, they are the inmates of the fire, in it they shall abide."* These verses have put in a nutshell all the detailed laws, rules, and regulations sent by Allah for the mankind, through His angels, books and apostles. And it was the first *shari'ah* which Allah ordained for the world, the world of Adam and his descendants. It was ordained after the second order to "get down" - and the order to "get down" was not a legislative, but a creative, command, resulting from his eating of the tree.

It means that at the time when Adam partook of the tree, no *shari'ah* was ordained yet, and no law was promulgated. Therefore, whatever Adam did was not a transgression against any law of the *shari'ah*, nor was there any sin or crime involved in acting against that advice.

Question: The order to the angels and Iblis to prostrate before Adam was an authoritative command, and it was given before the order to Adam not to go near that tree. Therefore, it is difficult to believe that at that time there was no obligatory law.

Reply: We are talking about Adam and his descendants, and not about the angels and Iblis. It is irrelevant whether the angels and Iblis were given a compulsory order before Adam was placed in the Garden.

Question: If the prohibition were of an advisory nature, Allah would not have described its disregard in the terms of "injustice", "disobedience", and "going astray."

Reply: We have already explained that the "injustice" done by Adam and his wife was against their own selves; it was not a sin against Allah.

"al-Isyan" (disobedience) literally means to resist, or to yield with difficulty. The Arabs say: I broke it and it was broken; I broke it *fa-'asa* but it resisted, or yielded to my pressure with difficulty. Not heeding an order is called *al-'isyan*, because one does not yield to that enjoinder or prohibition. This resistance may occur against an advice as much as against a compulsory order. The word in itself does not imply sinning; it all depends on the nature of the order that was disregarded.

Of course, nowadays we, the Muslims, use this word as synonymous to sinning. And now it has become a terminology of the *shari'ah* (or of the Muslims), used for disobedience to an authoritative command. But this later transference cannot effect its original or literal meaning for which it was used in the Qur'an.

"al-Ghawayah" (to go astray) literally means inability of a man to look after his interests; not managing one's affairs properly. This word by itself does not indicate committing a sin or crime. It is the context that determines its value. Its emphasis changes depending on whether the neglected order was an advice or an authoritative command.

Question: Then why did they repent? Why did they say, "and if Thou forgive us not, and have (not) mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers?"

Reply: *at-Tawbah* (repentance) means to turn to. And the word can be used in various meanings, depending on context.

A servant rebels against his master, and thereafter returns to him and asks for his forgiveness; the master, if he so wishes, pardons him, and gives him his previous rank and position.

A doctor tells a patient not to eat certain fruits, lest his illness be prolonged or the disease be complicated. The patient disregards the prohibition and, as a result, puts his life in danger. Now he

feels embarrassed and repents before the doctor, asking for his forgiveness, begging him to prescribe for him a medicine to enable him to regain his health and vigor. The doctor may tell him that now it will be necessary for him to undergo a long and difficult treatment, adding that if he persevered in the prescribed regimen his health would be much better than before.

The significance of the other words used in the narrative, like forgiveness, mercy and loss, may likewise change with the context.

Traditions

al-Qummi ('Ali) narrates, in his *at-Tafsir*, from his father (Ibrahim ibn Hashim) who narrates, from as-Sadiq (a.s.) (omitting the chain of intervening narrators, although it was fully described by his Shaykh). He said: "as-Sadiq" (a.s.) was asked about the Garden of Adam whether it was a garden of this world or one of the hereafter's. He (a.s.) said: 'It was a garden of this world, wherein the sun and the moon rose. Had it been a Garden of the hereafter, he would not have come out of it.' He (a.s.) further said: 'Allah placed him in the Garden and allowed him its freedom with the exception of the tree. (It was done) because here was a creature of Allah who could not survive without (some) enjoinder and prohibition, nor (could it continue) without food, cloth, shelter and marriage; nor could he know, without divine help, what was beneficial to him from what was harmful. Then came to him Iblis and told him: "if you (two) ate from this tree, which Allah has forbidden You, You (two) would become two angels and would abide in the Garden for ever, and if you (two) did not eat from it, Allah would turn you out from the Garden;" and he swore to them that he was a sincere adviser to them; as Allah quotes his words: *Your Lord has not forbidden you from this tree except that you may not both become two angels or that you may (not) become of the immortals. And he swore to them both: "Most surely I am a sincere adviser to you."* Adam believed in his words, and they (i.e. Adam and his wife) ate from the tree; and they became as Allah says: *their nakedness became manifest to them*; what Allah had clothed them with of the (attires of the) Garden dropped away from them, and they both began to cover themselves with the leaves of the Garden; and their Lord called out to them: *Did I not forbid you both from that tree and say to you that the Satan is your open enemy?* They said, as Allah quotes them: *"Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves; and if Thou forgive us not, and have (not) mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers."* Thereupon Allah said to them: *"Get down, some of you being the enemies of others; and there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time.* He (the Imam) said: "that (time) is the Day of Resurrection." He further said: "Then Adam descended on the (hill of) as-Safa – and it got this name because *Safiyu'llah* (the sincere friend of Allah, i.e. Adam) came down on it; and Hawwa' (Eve) descended on the (hill of) al -Marwah - and it was named al -Marwah because *al-mar'ah* (the woman) descended on it. Then Adam remained in prostration for forty days, weeping for the Garden. So Jibril (Gabriel) came to him and said: 'Did Allah not create you with His hand, and (did He not) breath into you from His spirit, and (did He not) made His angels prostrate before you?' He said: 'Certainly.' (Then Jibril said:) 'and He ordered you not to eat from the tree and you disobeyed Him?' Adam said: 'Iblis swore to me falsely.'

The author says: There are other traditions too from Ahlulbayt (a.s.) to the effect that the Garden of Adam was of this world; although some of them are from the same Ibrahim ibn Hashim.

The phrase, "a garden of this world", has been used in contrast to the Garden of everlasting abode. It indicates a state between this world and the hereafter. Adam's garden was not the Garden of everlasting abode, but neither was it a garden like that of ours *al-Barzakh* is the state, place and time between one's death and the Day of Resurrection. The said Garden may be called a Garden of al-

Barzakh, and it may well have been situated in this world. The sentences, "Adam descended on the (hill of) as-Safa", and "Hawwa' descended on the (hill of) al-Marwah", indicate that, before it, they were somewhere above this world. The interpretation of "a time" with the "Day of Resurrection" is also revealing. Man remains in al-Barzakh after his death, and at the same time he remains in the earth. Many Qur'anic verses use these expressions interchangeably.

For example: *He will say: "How many years did you tarry in the earth?" They will say: "'We tarried a day or part of a day but ask those who keep account. He will say: "You did tarry but a little - had you but known (it)" (23:112-114). And at the time when the Hour shall come, the guilty shall swear (that) they did not tarry but an hour; thus they used to utter lies. And those who are given knowledge and faith will say: "Certainly you tarried according to the decree of Allah till the Day of Resurrection, but you did not know" (30:55-56).*

Apart from that, many traditions of Ahlulbait (a.s.) show that the Garden of Adam was in the heaven, and that he and his wife descended from the heaven. For the one who is familiar with the language of traditions, it is not difficult to believe that the said Garden was in the heaven and that they had descended from the heaven to the earth, even if they were created in the earth itself and live therein all along. These expressions are not any different from those which say that the Garden is in the heaven, and yet say that the grave is an orchard from the orchards of the Garden or a pit from the pits of the Fire. Many similar expressions are found in the traditions. Any lingering doubt will be removed when we shall write about the heaven, God willing.

There is no mention in the correct and reliable traditions as to how Iblis found his way to Adam and his wife, or as to what means he adopted for this purpose. Some traditions mention the serpent and peacock as the two helpers of Iblis in his endeavor to mislead Adam and his wife; but they are extremely unreliable. Obviously, such traditions were interpolated under the influence of Judaism. This story has been taken from the Jews, and to make this point clear, we are quoting it from the Bible (King James version). The story is given in the book of Genesis:

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence a river it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth towards the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to creature, tail cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the

man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God has made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she of the fruit, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of the life; And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them. And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." (Genesis, ch. 2: vs. 7 to ch. 3: vs. 24)

Compare the narrative of the Qur'an with that of the Bible, then ponder on various traditions narrated in the Shi'ah or Sunni books; you will come to know many revealing differences. But we are not going into it because it is beyond the scope of this book.

Question: How could Iblis enter the Garden and mislead Adam therein? The question arises because:

i) The Garden is a place of cleanliness and purity, *wherein there shall be nothing vain nor any sin*(52:23);

ii) The garden is in the heaven, and Iblis was already turned out therefrom when he refused to prostrate before Adam. *Then get out of it, for surely you are driven away (15:34). Then get down from this, for it does not befit you to behave proudly therein (7:13).*

Reply: (i) The Qur'an disallows vain and sinful acts in the Garden of eternal abode (in which the believers shall be placed after resurrection) and the Garden of al-Barzakh wherein they are placed after death. But it is silent about the Garden of Adam, in which he was placed together with his wife before man was sent to this world and given any authoritative law. Rather, it may be said that it shows not only possibility of disobedience therein, but also its occurrence. Proof: This very disobedience of Adam and his wife.

Moreover, vanity and sin are relative terms; and they do not occur until man comes into this world, and is given some authoritative laws to follow.

ii) The argument may be replied as follows:

a. It cannot be definitely said that the clauses, "get down of it" and "get down from this" were meant to turn Iblis out of the heaven, because "the heaven" has not been mentioned in preceding sentences. The order, therefore, could mean, 'get out of the ranks of the angels', or 'get down from the honor and dignity given to thee'.

b. May be, the order to get down or to get out meant only that he could not live or stay in the heaven with the angels. If so, then it was not a prohibition against occasionally going or ascending thereto. This interpretation is supported by the verses which describe the Satans' occasional goings upto the heaven to eavesdrop the conversations of the angels. For example: *And We have guarded it (i.e. the heaven) against every accursed Satan, but he who steals a hearing; so there follows him a visible flame (15:17 - 18).* Also, it has been narrated that before the time of 'Isa (a.s.), the Satans were going up to the seventh heaven; when he was born they were barred from the fourth heaven and above; then after the birth of the Prophet they were barred from all the heavens.

c. There is no mention in the Book of Allah that Iblis had entered the Garden. Therefore, the question does not arise at all. It has, of course, been narrated in the traditions; but they are not *al-mutawatir*; and possibly the narrators have described the story in their own words, and not exactly as the Imam said.

Utmost that may be put as evidence that Iblis had entered the Garden is the verse: *and he (i.e. the Satan) said: "Your Lord has not forbidden you from this tree except that you may not become two angels... " (7:19),* as he had used the pronoun, "this", ("this tree") which denotes nearness. But if it is taken to mean nearness in place, it would give the same meaning in Allah's command, *... do not go near this tree (7:18).* Surely it, cannot be said that the pronoun indicates that Allah was in that place near the tree.'

'Abdu 's-Salam al-Harawi said: "I said to ar-Rida (a.s.): 'O son of the Messenger of Allah! tell me about the tree from which Adam and Hawwa' ate, what was it? Because people do have different views about it; some have narrated that it was a wheat-plant, and others have reported that it was the tree of envy.' He said: 'All this is true.' I said: 'Then what do these explanations, with their differences, mean?' He said: 'O son of as-Salt! verily the tree of the Garden bears (fruits of) many kinds; and it was a wheat-plant and (yet) it bore grapes; and it was not like a tree of this world. And when Allah raised the status of Adam by making the angels prostrate before him and by placing him in the Garden, he said: "Has Allah created any man superior than me?" And Allah knew what had come into his mind; so He called out to him: "Raise your head, O Adam! and look at the pillar of the Throne." So, he looked at the pillar of the Throne and found written on it: "There is no god except Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; 'Ali ibn Abl Ta'lib is the Leader of the faithful, and his

wife, Fatimah is the Chief of the women of the worlds, and al-Hasan and al-Husayn are the Chiefs of the youths of the people of the Garden." Adam said: "O my Lord! who are they?" He, Mighty and Great is He said: "O Adam! they are (from) your off-springs; and they are better than you and all My creation; and if it were not (for) them, I would have not created you, nor the Garden, nor the fire, nor the heaven, nor the earth. So be careful not to look at them with envious eyes; otherwise, I will turn you out of My nearness." But he looked at them with envious eyes and entertained the hope of (attaining to) their rank. So, the Satan got the better of him, until he ate from the forbidden tree; and got the better of Hawwa', and she looked at Fatimah with envious eyes until she too, like Adam, ate from the tree. Thereupon, Allah turned them out of His Garden, and got them down from His nearness to the earth." (*'Uyunu'l-akhbar*)

The author says: This matter has been described in many traditions, some more detailed than this; others, more concise. In this tradition, the Imam has confirmed that the tree was the wheat-plant, and also that it was the tree of envy. The former implies that the tree was not worthy of attention of the people of the Garden; the later indicates that it was too lofty to come within the grasp of Adam and his wife (as a tradition says that it was the tree of the knowledge of Muhammad and his progeny).

Apparently, the two interpretations are totally different from each other, and the tradition seems a problematic one. But if you ponder on the covenant referred to earlier, you will see that both meanings are complementary, and not mutually exclusive. Adam (a.s.) wanted to combine the pleasures of the Garden - a place of nearness to Allah, where it was necessary to always keep the covenant before one's eyes, and not to let one's attention divert to anyone or anything else - with the forbidden tree - which would bring all the world's troubles in its wake; but he failed in his endeavor, was sent down to the earth because he had been heedless of the said covenant and of its demands, It was reserved for the Prophet to combine these two seemingly apposite factors; it was he who, for the first time, harmonized this world with the next, synchronized the matter with the spirit, and brought into being a whole man.

However, Allah again guided Adam aright, chose him for His vicegerency, and as a result of his repentance, raised him above the worldly desires and made him remember again the forgotten covenant.

"But he looked at them with envious eyes and entertained the hope of (attaining to) their rank": The second clause explains the first; Adam wanted that he too should attain to that status; it was not that he was envious (i.e., had any ill will) against them. Envy is a vice, while aspiring to raise one's status is not.

Now let us look at the following two traditions:

1. Ath-Thumali narrates from Abu Ja'far (a.s.) that he said: "Allah made a covenant with Adam that he should not go near the tree. But when the time came when, according to the knowledge of Allah, he was to eat of it, he forgot (the covenant) and ate from it. And that is (the meaning of) the words of Allah: *And certainly We had covenanted unto Adam before, but he forgot; and We did not find in him any determination.*" (*Kamalu 'd-din*)

2. Al-'Ayyashi narrated in his *at-Tafsir* from one of the two (i.e., the fifth or the sixth) Imams, that he was asked as to why Allah punished Adam for his forgetfulness. He said: "He had not forgotten; and how could he forget when he had remembered it (very well) and (even) Iblis had told him: *Your Lord has not forbidden you from this tree except that you May not both become two angels or that you may (not) become of the immortals.*"

The way to harmonize these seemingly conflicting traditions is clear if one applies to them the foregoing explanation.

Abu 's-Salt al-Harawî said: "al-Ma'mun gathered for 'Ali ibn Musa ar-Rida (a.s.) people of various sects from among the Muslims, the Jews, the Christians, the Magians, the Sabaeans and all other religions. Nobody stood (for religious discussion with the Imam) but that he was forced to accept his (Imam's) arguments and was put to silence. Then stood before him 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Jahm and said to him: 'Do you believe in the sinlessness of the prophets? O son of the Messenger of Allah!' He said: 'Yes.' He ('Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Jahm) said: 'Then what would you do with the words of Allah: *and Adam disobeyed his Lord, so he got astray?* ... ' Then said our master, ar-Rida (a.s.): 'Woe unto you! O 'Ali! Have fear of Allah (in your heart) and do not ascribe indecencies to the prophets of Allah, and do not interpret by your own opinion the Book of Allah (Mighty and Great is He!) Verily Allah (Mighty and Great is He!) says: ... *but none knows its interpretation except Allah and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge* (3:7). As for the words of Allah, *and Adam disobeyed his Lord, so he got astray*, (the fact is that) Allah (Mighty and Great is He!) had created Adam (to be) His proof in His earth and (to be) His vicegerent in His towns; He had not created him for the Garden; and the disobedience was (done) by Adam in the Garden, and not in the earth; (and it came to pass) so that the measures of the decree of Allah (Mighty and Great is He) might be fulfilled. So when he was sent down to the earth and was made (Allah's) proof and vicegerent, he was protected (i.e. became sinless), as Allah says: *Surely Allah chose Adam and Nuh and the descendants of Ibrahim and the descendants of 'Imran above all the worlds.* '" (3:33) (*al-Amali*, as-Saduq)

The author says: The sentence, "and the disobedience was... in the Garden", points to what we have already mentioned that there was no religious law ordained in the Garden; and that Adam (a.s.) even before his creation, was destined to live in the earth; and, therefore, the disobedience was of an advice, and not of an ordained law. In this context, there appears no reason why anyone should try (as someone has done) to explain away this tradition in a round-about way.

'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Jahm said: "I was present in the court of al-Ma'mun; and Ali ibn Musa was there with him. And al-Ma'mun said to him: 'O son of the Messenger of Allah! Is it not your belief that the prophets are sinless?' He said: 'Yes.' (al-Ma'mun) said: 'Then what is the meaning of the words of Allah, the High: *and Adam disobeyed his Lord, so he got astray?*' (The Imam) said: 'Verily Allah said to Adam: *dwell you and your wife in the Garden and eat (youboth) freely wherever you (two) wish and do not approach (you two) this tree*, (pointing to a tree) *for then you (two) will be of the unjust.* Allah did not say to him: Do not eat from this tree nor from another tree of its kind. And they did not eat from it; they ate from another (similar) tree because the Satan whispered evil suggestion to them and said: *"Your Lord has not forbidden you from this* (i.e. the other similar) *tree; He has only forbidden you from approaching that one; and He has not forbidden you from that three except that you may not both become two angels or that you may not become of the immortals."* And he swore to them both: *"Most surely I am a sincere adviser to you.* "And Adam and Hawwa' had not seen before that anyone swearing falsely in the name of Allah; thus he caused them to fall by deceit and they ate from that (tree) because they believed in his oath in the name of Allah. And it all happened before Adam was made a prophet, and it was not a big sin leading 'one to the fire; it was only a forgiven minor (sin) that is permissible to the prophets before they begin receiving revelation. But when Allah chose him and made him prophet he became sinless, not committing any minor or major sin. Allah (Mighty and Great is He!) has said: *Surely Allah chose Adam and Nuh and the descendants of Ibrahim and the descendants of 'Imran above all the worlds.* (*'Uyunu'l-akhbar*)

The author says: as-Saduq (May Allah have mercy on him!) after narrating the tradition in full, has

commented as follows:

"Strange that 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Jahm, in spite of his open hostility towards, and enmity and hatred of, Ahlulbayt (a.s.), should narrate this tradition."

This comment only looks at the belief of the sinlessness of the prophets which this tradition purportedly proves; but as-Saduq (May Allah have mercy on him!) did not look deep into its implications. The reported reply is not in accord with the well-known belief of the Imams of *Ahlulbayt*, that all the prophets were fully protected from all major and minor sins before as well as after getting the prophethood.

Moreover, the reply presumes that the verse does not mean what it apparently says. According to this tradition, the verse, "Your Lord has not forbidden you from this tree except that you may not both become two angels ...", should be read as follows: "Your Lord has not forbidden you from this (i.e. the other similar) tree; He has only forbidden you from approaching that one; and He has not forbidden you from that tree except that you may not both become two angels. Such deletions are against the norms of eloquence. The quoted speech of the Satan clearly shows that he was instigating them to eat from the very tree that was forbidden, holding out to them the hope of becoming angels or immortals: *"Your Lord has not forbidden you from this tree except that you may not both become two angels or that you may (not)become of the immortals."* *"O Adam! shall I guide you to the tree of immortality and a kingdom which decays not?"* The narrator, that is, 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Jahm, had himself been given the correct and complete answer in the court of al-Ma'mun, as the preceding tradition shows; therefore, there is something wrong in this narration of his, although some parts may be somehow interpreted correctly.

As-Saduq has narrated (through his chain) from al-Baqir (a.s.), through his forefathers, from 'Ali (a.s.) that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: "Adam and Hawwa' stayed in the Garden, (till they were sent out of it) for seven hours according to the (counting of the) days of the world, until Allah sent them down on the same day."

'Abdullah ibn Sinan said: "Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) was asked and I was present there: 'How long did Adam and his wife stay in the Garden until their mistake removed them from it?' He said: 'Verily Allah breathed His spirit into Adam after the midday on Friday; then created his wife from his lowest rib; then He made His angels prostrate before him and placed him in His Garden the same day. And by God! he did not stay therein but six hours of the same day until he disobeyed Allah. Thereupon, Allah removed them both from it after the sunset, and they were put into the courtyard of the Garden till the morning; then their nakedness became manifest to them; and their Lord called out to them: *"Did I not forbid you both from that tree?"* Adam felt ashamed and bowed (his head) and said: *"Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves and we confess our sins; therefore, forgive us (our sins)."* Allah said to them: *"Get down you both from My heavens to the earth; because no sinner shall remain in My nearness - neither in My Garden nor in My heavens."* "" (*At-Tafsir*, al-'Ayyashi)

The author says: The tradition gives a new detail, that Adam and Hawwa' were removed first from the Garden to its courtyard and then from the courtyard to the earth. There are some indications in the Qur'an to support this information:

First: They were twice told to "get down" (vide vs. 2:36 and 2:38). It was a creative, and not a legislative, order, and a creative order takes effect the instant it is given.

If the first order told them to get down to the earth, there was no question of their not getting down to the earth at once; and, therefore, the second order would be superfluous. But in the light of this tradition the two commands would be perfectly in order.

Second: As mentioned in the commentary, this idea may be inferred from the changed verbs and

pronouns of the verses. Allah describes in these words his talk with Adam when he was being placed in the Garden: *And We said: "O Adam! dwell you and your wife in the Garden... and do not approach (you two) this tree.* But after they had eaten from the tree, *their Lord called out to them: "Did I not forbid you both from that tree?"* The verb, "We said" of the former has been changed to "called out to them" in the latter; as the demonstrative pronoun, "this tree" (showing nearness) was replaced by "that tree" (showing distance). These changes show that Adam had been removed, by the time of the second address, from his original place of nearness in the Garden to a distant place - which the tradition describes as the courtyard.

But this tradition says that Hawwa' was created from the lowest rib of Adam; it is a Biblical story which has been totally rejected by the Imams of *Ahlulbait*, (as will be seen from the traditions which will be quoted under the verses of the creation of Adam). This tradition, therefore, is unacceptable unless this expression is taken to mean that Hawwa' was created from the clay left over from the creation of Adam and which was lying near his lowest rib.

Whether he stayed in the Garden for six hours (as this tradition says) or seven (as the former says) is not very important, because such things are mere approximation.

It is reported from the fifth or the sixth Imam (peace be on them both) that he said about the verse, *then Adam received (some) words from his Lord*, that (the words were as follows): "There is no god except Thee; Glory be to Thee, O Allah! and praise! I have committed evil and been unjust to myself; therefore, forgive me (my sin) and Thou art the best of the forgivers. There is no god except Thee; Glory be to Thee, O Allah! and praise! I have done wrong and been unjust to myself; therefore, have mercy on me, and Thou art the best of the forgivers. There is no god except Thee; Glory to Thee, O Allah! and praise! I have committed evil and been unjust to myself, therefore, have mercy on me, and Thou art the best of those who have mercy. There is no god except Thee; Glory be to Thee, O Allah! and praise! I have done wrong and been unjust to myself; therefore, forgive me (my sin) and turn to me (with mercy) surely Thou. Thou alone, art oft-returning (with mercy), the Merciful." (*Al-Kafi*)

The author says: This theme has been narrated also by as-Saduq, al-'Ayyashi, al-Qummi and others; nearly the same thing has been narrated through the Sunni chains; and it may possibly be inferred from the apparent meaning, of the verses.

Al-Kulayni has written in *al-Kafi*: "And another tradition says in respect of this verse: (Adam) had asked from (Allah) by the right of Muhammad and 'Ali and Fatimah and al-Hasan and al-Husayn."

The author says: This explanation too has been narrated by as-Saduq, al-'Ayyashi, al-Qummi and others. A nearly similar tradition has been narrated through the Sunni chains. It is reported in *ad-Durru'l-manthur* that the Prophet said: "When Adam committed the sin that he committed, he raised his head towards the heaven and said: 'I beseech Thee, by the right of Muhammad, to forgive me.' Allah revealed to him (i.e. asked him through revelation): 'And who is Muhammad?' He said: 'Blessed is Thy name! When Thou created Me, I raised my head towards Thy Throne and saw written therein: There is no god except Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Thus I knew that no one could be more honored in Thy presence than him whose name Thou hadst placed with Thy name.' Thereupon, Allah revealed to him: 'O Adam! Verily he is the last of the prophets, from thy descendants; and if it were not for him, I would have not created thee.'

The author says: Although these traditions seem not to be in accord with the apparent meaning of the verse, on deeper consideration this explanation does not look so far-fetched. The sentence, "Then Adam received (some) words from his Lord", shows that he was taught those words by the Lord, and that he had got that knowledge before his repentance. Also, it is known that Allah had taught him all

the names. Allah told the angels that He was going to make in the earth a vicegerent; *they said: "Wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood, while we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness? He said: "Surely I know what you do not know." And He taught Adam the names, all of them.* There must have been something in those names to wipe out every injustice, to erase every sin and to cure every spiritual and moral disease; otherwise, the objection of the angels could not be answered - Allah did not say a single word to refute the angels' assertion; all He did was to teach Adam all the names. It means that those names could cure all the ills of humanity; the angels understood it and surrendered to the knowledge and wisdom of Allah. We have earlier explained that those names were sublime creations hidden from the heavens and the earth; they were intermediaries to convey the grace and bounties of Allah to His creation; and no creature would be able to attain to its perfection without their assistance. At this stage, we may refer to some traditions which say that Adam saw the figures of Muhammad and his *Ahlulbayt*, and also their light at the time he was taught the names; and the ones which mention that he saw them when Allah took out his offspring from his back; and the others which describe his seeing them in the Garden. However, Allah has not identified those words, and has used it as a common noun, "(some) words"; nevertheless, the Qur'an has clearly used the expression, "word", for an individual being, as for example, in the verse 3:45: *Allah gives you good news of a word from Him whose name is the Messiah, 'Isa son of Maryam...*

Some exegetes have written that the "words", mentioned in this verse, refer to the plea of Adam and his wife reported in Chapter 7: *They said: "Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves, and if Thou forgive us not, and have (net) mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers."*

But the sequence of events does not support this view. The repentance of Adam, according to the narrative of Chapter 2, had occurred after his coming to the earth. The verse (2:37) describing the repentance comes after the verse (2:36) that mentions his descent to the earth. But they had uttered that plea while they were still in the Garden, before coming down to the earth. The plea is given in verse 7:23, and the order to "get down" comes after that in verse 7:24. Apparently, this plea was in response to their admonition by Allah: *"Did I not forbid you both from that tree... ?"*; they wanted to declare their servitude and to surrender themselves to Allah; acknowledging that all the authority was in the hands of Allah and He might do what He pleased; He was their Lord, and they had put themselves in danger of loss by being unjust to themselves.

As-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Verily, Musa asked his Lord to let him meet Adam; and he was joined with him (i.e., Adam). Musa said to him: 'O father! Did Allah not create you with His hand, and breathe into you of His spirit; and make the angels prostrate before you, and order you not to eat of the tree? Then why did you disobey Him?' (Adam) said: 'O Musa! How long before my creation did you find my mistake (mentioned) in the Torah?' He said: 'Thirty thousand years before.' (Adam) said: 'That is it.'" As-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Thus refuted Adam the argument of Musa." (*At-Tafsir*, al-Qummi)

The author says: as-Suyutî has narrated in *ad-Durru'l-manthur* approximately similar traditions, through various chains, from the Prophet.

Al-Baqir (a.s.) said: "By God, Allah had surely created Adam for the world, and He gave him place in the Garden, in order that he might disobey Him and thus He might return him to that for which He had created him." (*'Ilalu 'sh-shara 'i*)

The author says: A tradition of the same theme, narrated by al-'Ayyashi from as-Sadiq (a.s.), concerning an angel friend of Adam, has been quoted earlier.

A Syrian asked 'Ali (a.s.) as to which valley in the earth was the most honored. He (a.s.) said: "The valley called Sarandib wherein Adam descended from the heaven." (*Al-Ihtijaj*)

The author says: In contrast to it, there are numerous traditions showing that he had descended at

Mecca (and some of them have been quoted above). Maybe, he first came down to Sarandib and then got down to Mecca.

It has been reported by at-Tabarani, Abu 'sh-Shaykh (in his *al-'Azamah*) and Ibn Marduwayh, from Abu Dharr, that he said: "I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! What do you say, was Adam a prophet?' He said: 'Yes. He was a prophet (and) an apostle; Allah talked to him before; He had told him: "O Adam! dwell you and your wife in the Garden."

The author says: The Sunnis have narrated almost similar traditions through various chains.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 40-44

2:40 يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِي أُوفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونِ
 2:41 وَأَمِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَكُمْ وَلَا تَكُونُوا أَوَّلَ كَافِرٍ بِهِ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِآيَاتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا وَإِيَّايَ فَاتَّقُونِ
 2:42 وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ
 2:43 وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ
 2:44 أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

2:40 *O children of Israel! Remember My bounties which I bestowed on You, and be faithful to (Your) covenant with Me, I will fulfill (My) covenant with you; and of Me, Me alone, should you be afraid.*

2:41 *And believe in what I have sent down verifying that which is with You, and be not the first to deny it, neither take a mean price in exchange for My signs; and Me, Me alone, should you fear.*

2:42 *And do not mix up the truth with the falsehood, nor hide the truth while You know (it).*

2:43 *And keep up Prayer and pay the zakat and bow down with those who bow down.*

2:44 *What! do you enjoin men to be good and forget your own selves while you read the Book? Have you then no sense?*

General Comment

Now begins the rebuking of the Jews that continues for more than a hundred verses. Allah reminds them of the bounties bestowed, of the honors given; contrasting it with their ingratitude and disobedience; showing how at every juncture they paid the favors of Allah with disregard of their covenant, open rebellion against divine commands and even with polytheism. The series reminds them of twelve events of their history - like rescuing them from Pharaoh and his people by parting the river, drowning of Pharaoh and his army, the appointed rendezvous at the mount Saina'i, the Jews' starting calf-worship in Musa's absence, and Musa's order to them to kill themselves, their demand from Musa to show their Lord to them face to face, their death by lightning and then their arising from dead etc. - all of which shows how they were chosen to receive the special favors of Allah. But their ingratitude runs parallel to it. They repeatedly broke the covenants made with Allah, committed capital sins, heinous crimes and shameful deeds; more despicable was their spiritual poverty and moral bankruptcy - in open defiance to their book and total disregard to the reason. It was all because their hearts were hardened, their souls lost and their endeavors worthless.

Commentary

Qur'an: ... *and be faithful to (your) covenant with Me:*

"*al-'Ahd*" (covenant) literally means guarding and maintenance. By association it has become to

mean covenant, oath, testament, will, encounter, house, etc.

Qur'an: ... *and of Me, ... should you be afraid:*

"ar-Rahbah" (fear) is opposite of *ar-raghbah* (desire).

Qur'an: ... *and be not the first to deny it:*

That is, first among the people of the book, or first among your own people. This first-ness is not all-inclusive, because the disbelievers of Mecca had rejected the Message before the Jews.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 45-46

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ 2:45
الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ 2:46

2:45 *And seek assistance through patience and prayer; and most surely it is a hard thing, except for the humble ones,*

2:46 *who know that they shall meet their Lord and that they shall return to Him.*

General Comment

Qur'an: ... *and seek assistance through patience and prayer:*

Man seeks assistance in such affairs and tasks as he cannot manage alone, and in hardships and difficulties which he cannot overcome himself. In reality there is no helper except Allah. Man can, therefore, manage all his affairs and overcome all his difficulties by courage and steadfastness (i.e. by patience) and by looking towards Allah (i.e. by prayer). These two factors are the best way to get assistance: patience makes even the great misfortunes look trivial, and putting all his confidence in Allah awakens the spirit of faith; and thus man comes to realize that the cause which he is relying upon can never fail to produce the desired effect.

Qur'an: ... *and most surely it is a hard thing except for the humble ones:*

The pronoun, it, refers to the "prayer." It is difficult to relate it to "seeking the assistance", because it will then cover patience too, and the word "the humble ones" will not look appropriate - humbleness does not fit very much with patience. The word used here for humbleness is "*khushu*"; "*khudu*" too has the same meaning but with one difference: while the latter shows itself in the limbs of the body, the former refers to the inner feeling.

Qur'an: ... *who know that they shall meet their Lord:*

The word used in this verse for "knowing" is "*yazunnun*"; it literally means "they think." But the context, that is, the belief in the hereafter, demands a firm conviction that would leave no room for any doubt or supposition. Allah says: ... *and they are sure of the hereafter* (2:4). Or, may be, Allah, by using this word, makes us realize that even an elementary idea of the hereafter is sufficient to create in a man humility and humbleness before his Lord. Many a knowledge comes to man in stages: (1) first he becomes aware of an idea; (2) then he has some doubts about its correctness; (3) then he becomes inclined to accept it; (4) then gradually the possibility of his accepting the opposite view vanishes completely and he becomes firmly convinced of the truth of that idea - and this firm conviction is called knowledge. If such a knowledge is concerned with some frightening affair, then his worry and disquiet will begin as soon as he reaches the third stage when he is only inclined to accept it - is only "thinking" that probably it may be true. This Qur'anic expression, in other words, says that man, for showing humbleness before Allah, needs only to be aware of the idea that there is a Lord; Whom he may return to after his death. In this context only a strong supposition should be

enough to make him desist from disobeying his Lord; it would not be necessary, for this purpose, to reach the stage of firm knowledge. From this point of view, the verse looks almost similar to the verse: ... *therefore, whoever hopes to meet his Lord, he should do good deeds, and not join any one in the worship of his Lord* (18:110).

The above discourse is based on the assumption that the words, "they shall meet their Lord.." refer to the Day of Resurrection. But if they are interpreted in another way (as we shall describe in Chapter 7), there should be no difficulty at all in its explanation.

Traditions

As-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Whenever 'Ali (a.s.) faced a difficulty, he used to stand up for the prayer and then recite this verse: and seek assistance through patience and prayer." (*al-Kafi*)

The same Imam said about this verse: "The patience means fasting." Also he said: "When a man is confronted by a hard misfortune, he should fast. Surely Allah says: and seek assistance through patience, that is, fast." (*ibid.*)

The author says: al-'Ayyashi too has narrated the theme of these two traditions in his *at-Tafsir*. Interpretation of "patience" as fast is based on the "flow" of the Qur'an.

Abu'l-Hasan (a.s.) said about this verse: "The patience means fast; when a man is visited by a hardship or misfortune, he should fast; surely Allah says: *And seek assistance through patience and prayer; and most surely it is a hard thing except for the humble ones*. And the humble one is he who shows humility in his prayer, turning all his attention to it; and it means the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and the Leader of the faithful (a.s.)." (*al-Ayyashi*)

The author says: The Imam has inferred from this verse the desirability of fasting and praying when one is facing any hardship or turmoil; and likewise, the desirability of seeking the divine help through the medium of the Prophet and 'Ali (a.s.) at that time. In this way, the tradition interprets the fast and the prayer as the Prophet and 'Ali (a.s.).

'Ali (a.s.) said about the verse, *who know that they shall meet their Lord...* : Allah says that they are sure that they would be resurrected. And the supposition *az-zann* here means certainty. (*ibid.*)

The author says: as-Saduq also has narrated this tradition.

al-Baqir (a.s.) said that this verse was revealed about 'Ali, 'Uthman ibn Maz'un, 'Ammar ibn Yasir and (some of) their friends. (*al-Manaqib*, Ibn Shahrashub)

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 47-48

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ 2:47

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ 2:48

2:47O Children of Israel! call to mind My favor which I bestowed on you and that I made you excel the nation.

2:48And be on your guard against the day when one soul shall not avail another in the least; neither shall intercession on its behalf be accepted, nor shall any compensation be taken from it, nor shall they be helped.

Commentary

Qur'an: *And be on your guard against the day when one soul shall not avail another in the least:*

The temporal power and authority, with all its various systems and varying conditions, is based on a necessity of life - the only justification of this institution is that it fulfils this need in the framework of the prevailing factors of the society. It some times exchanges a commodity for another, gives up a benefit for another, substitutes an order with another - without any hard and fast criterion to regulate - such dispensations. The same phenomenon is observed in their judiciary. Logically, a crime must be recompensed with punishment. Yet some times the judge, because of some extraneous reasons, decides not to punish the criminal. Some times the criminal rouses in the judge an overwhelming feeling of pity by his passionate appeal for mercy. Or he wins him over by bribe which induces him to deliver an unjust judgment. Or an influential man intercedes with the judge on behalf of the said criminal and the judge cannot ignore that intercession. Or, the said criminal becomes a state witness leading to the conviction of even greater criminals, and is himself, thus, released without any punishment. Or his tribe or colleagues get him freed from the clutches of the authorities. Whatever the cause may be, it is a well-established custom in the worldly governments and human societies to let the wrong-doers go free at times.

The ancient tribes and the idol-worshippers believed that the life hereafter was an extension of this one; that the customs of this world were valid for that one too, and that the next world was permeated by the same actions and reactions which prevailed in this one. Thus they offered sacrifices and offerings to their deities seeking forgiveness for their sins or assistance in their needs; the offerings were supposed to intercede on their behalf. Some times a sin was expiated or help was sought by offering even a human sacrifice. They carried this idea of continuation of the life so far as to bury with a man all types of necessities of life, not forgetting his ornaments and arms, in order that he might use them on his onward journey; some times even his concubines and soldiers were buried alive with him to keep him company. You may see a lot of such finds in archaeological museums around the world. Some such ideas have persisted even among the Muslims - with all their diverse cultures and languages, albeit in modified forms.

The Qur'an has rejected all such superstitious beliefs and baseless ideas in no uncertain terms:

... and the command on that day shall be entirely Allah's (82:19).

... and they see the chastisement and their ties are cut asunder (2:166).

And certainly you have come to Us alone as We created you at first, and you have left behind your backs the things which We gave you, and We do not see with you your intercessors about whom you asserted that they were (Allah's) associates in respect to you; certainly the ties between you are now cut off and what you asserted is gone from you (6:94).

There shall every soul become acquainted with what is sent before, and they shall be brought back to Allah, their true Master and what they did fabricate shall escape from them (10:30).

There are many similar verses; and they show that the life hereafter is cut off from the natural causes which govern this life, and is quite separate from material connections. Once this principle is understood all the above-mentioned myths would automatically be cleared away. But the Qur'an is not content with this general declaration; it refutes each and every myth and superstition described above:

And be on your guard against the day when one soul shall not avail another in the least; - neither shall intercession on its behalf be accepted, nor shall any compensation be taken from it, nor shall they be helped (12:48)

... before the day comes in which there is no bargaining, neither any friendship nor intercession(2:254)

The day on which a friend shall not avail (his) friend aught... (44:41).

... there shall be no savior for you from Allah... (40:33).

What is the matter with you that you do not help each other? Nay! on this day they are submissive (37:25 - 26).

And they worship beside Allah what can neither harm them nor profit them, and they say: "These are our intercessors with Allah" Say: "Do you (presume to) inform Allah of what He knows not in the heavens and the earth?" Glory be to Him, and supremely exalted is He above what they set up with Him. (10: 18).

... the unjust shall not have any friend nor any intercessors who should be obeyed (40:18).

So we have no intercessors, nor a true-friend (26:100-101).

There are many other verses of the same theme, all rejecting the intercession on the Day of Resurrection.

On the other hand, the Qur'an does not totally reject the intercession; rather it confirms it to a certain extent. For example, it says:

Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six periods and He is firmly established on the throne; you have not besides Him any guardian or any intercessors; will you not then mind? (32:4)

... there is no guardian for them, nor any intercessor besides Him (6:51).

Say: Allah's is the intercession altogether" (39:44).

... whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them (2:255).

Surely your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods; and He is firmly established on the throne; regulating the affair; there is no intercessor except after His permission (10: 3).

And they say,- "The Beneficent God had taken to Himself a son." Glory be to Him! Nay! they are honored servants; they do not precede Him in speech and (only) according to His commandment do they act. He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they do not intercede except

for whom He approves, and for fear of Him they tremble (21:26 - 28).

And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for intercession, but he who bears witness of the truth, and they know (him) (43:86).

They shall have no authority for intercession, save he who has made a covenant with the Beneficent God(19:87).

On that day shall no intercession avail except of him whom the Beneficent God allows and whose word He is pleased with. He knows what is before them and what is behind them, while they do not comprehend Him in knowledge And intercession will not avail aught with Him save of him whom He permits (34:23).

And how many an angel is there in the heavens whose intercession does not avail at all except after Allah has given permission to whom He pleases and chooses (53: 26).

Some of these verses (like the first three) say that intercession is reserved for Allah, while the rest declare that others too may intercede with Allah's permission. In any case, all of them confirm the intercession per se. How are these verses related to the preceding ones which totally reject intercession? It is exactly the same relation that exists between the verses that say that the knowledge of unseen is reserved to Allah and those which declare that others too may have that knowledge with the permission of Allah. As Allah says:

Say: "No one in the heaven and the earth knows the unseen but Allah" (27:65).

And with Him are the keys of the unseen, does not know it any except He (6:59).

The Knower of the unseen! so He does not reveal His secrets to any, except to him whom He chooses of an apostle (72:27).

The same is the case with various verses on the subjects of creating, sustaining, giving death, causality, command, authority and similar things. Some verses reserve them for Allah, while some say that others too may do these things. It is a well-known style of the Qur'an: first it rejects the idea that anyone other than Allah has any virtue or perfection; thereafter it confirms the same virtue or perfection for others depending on the permission and pleasure of Allah. When read together, the verses show that nobody has any virtue by his own power and right; whatever excellence there may be, he has got it because Allah has given it to him. Allah puts much emphasis to this fact; He attaches the proviso of His will even for those things which are firmly decreed by Him. For example:

So as to those who are unhappy, they shall be in the fire; for them shall be sighing and groaning in it; abiding therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord please; surely your Lord is the (mighty) doer of what He intends. And as to those who are made happy, they shall be in the garden, abiding in it as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord please; a gift which shall never be cut off (11:106 -108).

Note that abiding for ever is made dependent on the pleasure of Allah, even in case of the garden, although it is a gift which shall never be cut off. It emphasizes the fact that even when Allah firmly decrees a thing, it does not pass out of His control or authority; "Surely your Lord is (mighty) doer of what He intends" (11:107). When Allah gives a thing, it does not go out of His total possession. When He denies some thing to someone, it is not done to protect Himself against any need or poverty!

In short, the verses that reject intercession - albeit talking about the Day of Resurrection - do so in the context of intercession independent of Allah's authority; while the ones proving it, prove it basically for Allah and then, depending on His pleasure, for others.

Thus the intercession is proved for other than Allah with His permission.

Now we should see what is the meaning of intercession? Who may intercede? On behalf of whom? And when? How is it related to the divine forgiveness?

Qur'anic Discourse About Intercession

1. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF INTERCESSION?

"Ash-Shafa'ah" (intercession) is derived from *"ash-shaf"* which means "even" as opposed to odd - the interceder adds his own recommendation to the plea of the petitioner; in this way the number of pleaders becomes even, and the weak plea of the petitioner is strengthened by the prestige of the intercessor. We are accustomed in our social and communal life to seek others' intercession and help for fulfilling our needs. We resort to it to get an advantage or to ward off a disadvantage. Here we are not talking about an advantage or a disadvantage, a benefit or a harm that is caused by natural causes, like hunger and thirst, heat or cold, illness or health; because in such cases we get what we want through its natural remedies, like eating and drinking, wearing clothes, getting treatment and so on. What we are talking here about is the benefit and harm, punishment and reward resulting from the social laws made by civil authorities. Rising from the very relationship of mastership-and-servitude and for that matter, between every ruler and ruled - there are some commandments, orders and prohibitions; one who follows and obeys them is praised and rewarded, and the one who disobeys is condemned and punished; that reward or punishment may be either material or spiritual. When a master orders his servant to do or not to do a thing, and the servant obeys him he gets its reward, and if he disobeys he is punished. Whenever a rule is made, the punishment for its infringement is laid down too. This is the foundation which all the authorities are built upon.

When a man wants to get a material or spiritual benefit but is not suitably qualified for it; or when he desires to ward off a harm which is coming to him because of his disobedience, but has no shield to protect himself, then comes the time for intercession.

In other words, when he wants to get a reward without doing his task, or to save himself from punishment without performing his duty, then he looks for someone to intercede on his behalf. But intercession is effective only if the person for whom one intercedes is otherwise qualified to get the reward and has already established a relationship with the authority. If an ignorant person desires appointment to a prestigious academic post, no intercession can do him any good; nor can it avail in case of a rebellious traitor who shows no remorse for his misdeeds and does not submit to the lawful authorities. It clearly shows that intercession works as a supplement to the cause; it is not an independent cause.

The effect of an intercessor's words depends on one or the other factor which may have some influence upon the concerned authority; in other words, intercession must have a solid ground to stand upon. The intercessor endeavors to find a way to the heart of the authority concerned, in order that the said authority may give the reward to, or waive the punishment of, the person who is the subject of intercession. An intercessor does not ask the master to nullify his mastership or to release the servant from his servitude; nor does he plead with him to refrain from laying down rules and regulations for his servants or to abrogate his commandments (either generally or especially in that one case), in order to save the wrong-doer from the due consequences; nor does he ask him to discard the canon of reward and punishment, (either generally or in that particular case). In short, intercession can interfere with neither the institution of mastership and servanthship nor the masters authority to lay down the rules; nor can it effect the system of reward and punishment. These three factors are beyond the jurisdiction of intercession.

What an intercessor does is this: He accepts the inviolability of the above-mentioned three aspects.

Then he looks at one or more of the following factors and builds his intercession on that basis:

- a. He appeals to such attributes of the master as give rise to forgiveness, e.g., his nobility, magnanimity and generosity.
- b. He draws attention to such characteristics of the servant as justify mercy and pardon, e.g., his wretchedness, poverty, low status and misery.
- c. He puts at stake his own prestige and honor in the eyes of the master.

Thus, the import of intercession is like this: I cannot and do not say that you should forget your mastership over your servant or abrogate your commandment or nullify the system of reward and punishment. What I ask of you is to forgive this defaulting servant of yours because you are magnanimous and generous, and because no harm would come to you if you forgive his sins; and/or because your servant is a wretched creature of low status and steeped in misery; and it is befitting of a master like you to ignore the faults of a slave like him; and/or because you have bestowed on me a high prestige, and I implore you to forgive and pardon him in honor of my intercession.

The intercessor, in this way, bestows precedence on the factors of forgiveness and pardon over those of legislation and recompense. He removes the case from the latter's jurisdiction putting it under former's influence. As a result of this shift, the consequences of legislation (reward and punishment) do not remain applicable. The effect of intercession is, therefore, based on shifting the case from the jurisdiction of reward and punishment to that of pardon and forgiveness; it is not a confrontation between one cause (divine legislation) and the other (intercession).

By now it should have been clear that intercession too is one of the causes; it is the intermediate cause that connects a distant cause to its desired effect.

Allah is the ultimate Cause. This causality shows itself in two ways:

First: In creation: Every cause begins from Him and ends up to Him; He is the first and the final Cause. He is the real Creator and Originator. All other causes are mere channels to carry His boundless mercy and limitless bounty to His creatures.

Second: In legislation: He, in His mercy, established a contact with His creatures; He laid down the religion, sent down His commandments, and prescribed suitable reward and appropriate punishment for His obedient and disobedient servants; He sent prophets and apostles to bring us good tidings and to warn us of the consequences of transgression. The prophets and apostles conveyed to us His message in the best possible way. Thus His proof over us was complete: *and the word of your Lord has been accomplished with truth and justice, there is none to change His words...* (6: 115).

Both aspects of causality of Allah may be, and in fact are, related to intercession.

1. Intercession in creation: Quite obviously the intermediary causes of creation are the conduits that bring the divine mercy, life, sustenance and other bounties to the creatures; and as such they are intercessors between the Creator and the created. Some Qur'anic verses too are based on this very theme: *whatever is in the heavens and what is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission (2:255); Surely your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six periods, and He is firmly established on throne, regulating the affair; there is no intercessor except after His permission (10: 3).*

Intercession in the sphere of creation is only the intermediation of causes between the Creator and the created thing and effect, in bringing it into being and regulating its affairs.

2. Intercession in legislation: Intercession, as analyzed earlier, is effective in this sphere too. It is in this context that Allah says: *On that day shah no intercession avail except of him whom the Beneficent God allows and whose word He is pleased with (20: 109); And intercession will not avail aught with Him save of him whom He permits (34:23); And how many an angel is there in the*

heavens whose intercession does not avail at all except after Allah has given permission to whom He pleases and chooses (53:26); and they do not intercede except for him whom He approves... (21:28); And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for intercession, but he who bears witness of the truth and they know(him) (43:86). These verses clearly affirm intercessory role for various servants of Allah both men and angels — with divine permission and pleasure. It means that Allah has given them some power and authority in this matter, and to Him belongs all the kingdom and all the affairs. Those intercessors may appeal to Allah's mercy, forgiveness and other relevant attributes to cover and protect a servant who otherwise would have deserved punishment because of his sins and transgressions. That intercession would transfer his case from the general law of recompense to the special domain of grace and mercy. (It has already been explained that the effect of intercession is based on shifting a case from the former's to the latter's jurisdiction-, it is not a confrontation between one law and the other.) Allah clearly says: *... so these are they of whom Allah changes the evil deeds to good ones (25:70).* Allah has the power to change one type of deed into other, in the same way as He may render an act null and void. He says: *And We will proceed to what they have done of deeds, so We shall render them as scattered floating dust (25:23); ... so He rendered their deeds null (47:9); If you avoid the great sins which you are forbidden, We will expiate from you your (small) sins(4:31); Surely Allah does not forgive that any thing should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases (4:48).* The last quoted verse is certainly about the cases other than true belief and repentance, because with belief and repentance even polytheism is forgiven, like any other sin. Also Allah may nurture a small deed to make it greater than the original: *These shall be granted their reward twice (28:54); Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it (6:160).* Likewise, He may treat a nonexistent deed as existing: *And (as for) those who believe and their offspring follow them in faith, We will unite with them their offspring and We will not diminish to them aught of their work; every man is responsible for what he has done(52:21).*

To make a long story short, Allah does what He please, and decrees as He wills. Of course, He does so pursuant to His servants' interest, and in accordance with an intermediary cause - and intercession of the intercessors (e.g., the prophets, the friends of Allah and those who are nearer to Him) is one of those causes, and certainly no rashness or injustice is entailed therein.

It should have been clear by now that intercession, in its true sense, belongs to Allah only; all His attributes are intermediaries between Him and His creatures and are the channels through which His grace, mercy and decrees pass to the creatures; He is the real and all-encompassing intercessor: *Say: "Allah's is the intercession altogether" (39:44); ... you have not besides Him any guardian or any intercessor (32:4), ... there is no guardian for them nor any intercessor besides Him (6:51).* The intercessors, other than Allah, get that right by His permission, by His authority.

In short, intercession with Him is a confirmed reality - in cases where it does not go against the divine glory and honor.

2. THE OBJECTIONS AGAINST INTERCESSION

Intercession, as explained above, is a confirmed reality not in every case but in approved ones. The Qur'an and the traditions do not prove more than this. A little meditation on the meaning of intercession is enough to lead to this conclusion. Intercession is mediation in causality and effectiveness. Obviously causality cannot be limitless and unconditional. No cause can be a cause of every effect, nor can an effect be governed by every cause - otherwise it would render the system of cause and effect null and void. Those who do not believe in intercession have fallen in this very trap -

they thought that we affirm the intercession in its totality without any condition or limit. All their objections emanates from this very misunderstanding:

First Objection: Allah has threatened to punish the wrongdoer; now supposedly He waives the punishment on the Day of Judgment. The question is whether this waiver is justice or injustice. If it is justice, then the original promise of punishment would be injustice, quite unworthy of divine majesty; and if it is injustice, then the intercession of the prophets, for example, would be a plea for injustice, and it is a folly that should not be attributed to the prophets.

Reply - First: What will they say about those, orders that are given only to test the royalty of a servant and are changed at the last moment, like the order to Ibrahim to kill Isma'il? Surely its waiver too like the original order was based on justice. Such orders are given only to test the hidden quality of the servant concerned. Likewise, it may be said that salvation is written for all the believers. The laws of the *shari'ah* were ordained with punishments prescribed for transgressors - in order that the disbelievers should perish because of their disbelief. As for the obedient believers their rank would be enhanced by their good deeds. And as for the disobedient believers, they would be rescued by intercession: that intercession might be effective either totally or partially; in later case, they would have to suffer some of the punishments in al-Barzakh or on the Day of Judgment itself and then they would get deliverance.

Thus the original law with the prescribed punishment for the defaulters is nothing but justice, and, the subsequent waiver of that punishment too is nothing but justice.

Second: The waiver of the prescribed punishment as a result of intercession could be compared with the previous order - in being based on justice or injustice - only if that waiver were a contradiction of the previous order. But we have explained that it is not so. Intercession is not a contradiction of, or confrontation between one cause (divine legislation) and the other (intercession); it is in tact shifting his case from one jurisdiction (reward and punishment) to the other (mercy and forgiveness).

Second Objection: It is the established practice of Allah, that His actions are safe from contradiction and conflict. Whatever He decrees and orders, without any exception, runs on an established pattern. And this is the foundation which the system of cause and effect has been built upon. Allah says: *This is a straight path with Me, Surely, as regards My servants, thou hast no authority over them except those who follow thee of the deviators. And surely Hell is the promised place of them all (15:41-43); And (know) that this is My path, the straight one, therefore, follow it, and follow not (other) ways, for they will scatter you away from His way (6:153); For you shall not find any alteration in the course of Allah; and you shall not find any change in the course of Allah (3 5:43)*. And intercession, if effective, would certainly create conflict and contradiction in the actions Allah: If intercession caused waiver of punishment from all the sinners, of all their sins, then it would defeat the very purpose of the *shari'ah* and would turn the whole system into a joke. And if only some of the sinners, or only some of their sins were forgiven, then there would occur contradiction in divine actions and change and alteration in Allah's established course. Certainly, all the sinners are transgressors and every sin is disobedience of divine command. Therefore, forgiving only some of them or only some of their sins, because of intercession, would be impossible.

Intercession is used in this life of ours, where people are influenced by their desires or social connections. It cannot work in the affairs of the *shari'ah* nor can it influence the divine Judgment in any way.

Reply: No one doubts that the path of Allah is straight and His course without any change or conflict. But it should not be forgotten that this one and unchanged course is based on all His relevant

attributes, not on only one or two of them.

Allah is the One Who bestows on every creature diverse things like life death, sustenance, bounty and so on. These are the decrees that are contradictory or unrelated to each other; they do not have the same connection with the issuing authority i.e. God. Otherwise the relationship of cause and effect would become null and void. For example, Allah does not restore a sick man to health by virtue of His death-giving power; rather He does so because He is Merciful, Benevolent, Giver of health and Bestower of bounties. Likewise, He does not destroy an arrogant tyrant by His mercy and beneficence, but because He is the Avenger, the Omnipotent and the Subduer. The Qur'an is the best witness of this fact: Whenever it ascribes an event or affair to Him, it invariably always mentions the appropriate attribute by which that affair or event was decreed and managed.

You may say that every affair and every thing is decreed by Allah because of its underlying benefit and good. And He does whatever He does by His all relevant attributes, and not by only one or some of them. There is always action and reaction between benefits and good of various courses of a certain affair; and Allah issues His decree as a result of His knowledge that encompasses all those aspects; His vision is not limited to one or two sides only. Had there been one fixed cause or attribute, there would have been no change or difference between a believer and a non-believer, between a pious person and a debauchee; but there are numerous causes and attributes, and their sum-total often has effects quite different from the effect of its individual parts.

Therefore, intercession, and the consequent waiver of punishment - based on sum-total of numerous causes like mercy, pardon, Judgment, and giving everyone his due right - does not entail any change in the established course, nor any deviation from the right path.

Third Objection: Intercession, according to common understanding, prevails upon the authority to do against his original will. In other words, the original will is abrogated and changed because of the intercessor. A just judge would never accept an intercession unless his knowledge is changed, e.g., his original Judgment was wrong, and then he was made to realize that justice demanded a course opposite to his original plan. An unjust judge would accept intercession of his friends knowing fully well that the course suggested was wrong; but he values his personal relations more than the demands of justice and equity. Obviously, both these alternatives are impossible so far as Allah is concerned; His will is related to His knowledge, and His knowledge is eternal and unchangeable.

Reply: Intercession has nothing to do with change of will or knowledge. What actually changes is the thing willed about or known. Allah knows that a certain man will pass through various stages in his life; for a time his condition will be excellent - and Allah wills about him a certain will, and He knows that later his condition will change - and He wills about him another will; and every day He is in a (new) state (of glory). And He has said: *Allah effaces what He pleases and establishes (likewise), and with Him is the bases of the Book* (13:39); *Nay, both His hands are spread out, He expends as He pleases* (6:64). The same happens with out knowledge and will. We know that soon night will come and we will not be able to see in darkness, but a few hours later the sun will rise dispelling the darkness. When night comes out will is directed to light a lamp, and later when the morning comes the will is directed to extinguish that lamp. In this case, there was no change at all in out knowledge and will; what changed was the objects of that knowledge and will. And consequently they ceased to be governed by that knowledge and that will. After all, not every knowledge is related to every known object, nor every will is connected to every purpose.

What is impossible for Allah is disagreement of His knowledge with the thing known, or of His will with its object - while that thing or object remains unchanged. In other words, it is impossible for Him to be mistaken in His knowledge or for His will to be ineffective. We see an apparition far

away and take it to be a man; on coming nearer we find that it was a horse. In this case, our "knowledge" did not agree with its object; it was a mistake.

Likewise, we intend to do a certain work, then we realize that it would be wrong to do so; here our "will" was cancelled and became ineffective. But in these cases the objects of our knowledge and will had not changed. Such "disagreement" is certainly impossible for Allah. But as we have seen, intercession and the subsequent waiver of punishment does not come into this category.

Fourth Objection: Had Allah promised intercession, or had His prophets brought this message to their nations, the people would have been emboldened to disobey the commandments of Allah, and to transgress the limits of the *shari'ah*. It would have defeated the whole purpose behind the institutions of prophethood and religion. If we are to avoid this inherent difficulty, we shall have to interpret the relevant Qur'anic verses and traditions in a way that does not collide with this basic concept.

Reply - First: What will they say about the verses showing that Allah's mercy and forgiveness is all-encompassing? For example: *Surely Allah does not forgive that any thing should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases* (4:48). This verse, as explained earlier, covers the cases other than repentance, as the exception of polytheism shows - because in cases of repentance even polytheism may be forgiven.

Second: The promise or message of intercession could incite people to disregard the rules of the *shari'ah*, if it were accompanied by one of the following factors:

1. If it had pin-pointed either the sinner - by name or description - who was to be forgiven through intercession; or the particular sin that was to be wiped off - unconditionally, definitely and without any ambiguity.

2. Or, if intercession were effective against all types of punishment and at all times.

Read the following sentences to understand what the above conditions mean:

"All men, or a named group of men, will never be held responsible for any sins they commit; nor they ever be punished for their transgressions."

"A particularly named sin will never be punished for."

Obviously, such declarations would defeat the basic purpose of the *shari'ah*.

But Allah has kept both things vague. He has never said what sins or which sinners might benefit from intercession, nor has He Said whether all or only some of the punishment would be waived; nor has He made it clear whether or not the intercession would be effective in every condition and at all times. As all these things have been kept vague, no one could be sure of getting the benefit of intercession. In view of this uncertainty, he cannot feel bold to trespass the limits of Allah. On the other hand the possibility of intercession would save him from losing the hope of divine mercy, will keep him away from despair and despondency, from pessimism and hopelessness. Then there is the verse: *If you avoid great sins which you are forbidden, We will expiate from You your (small) sins...* (4:31). It clearly says that Allah will forgive small sins and waive the punishment, provided the servant shuns great sins. If Allah can say, "If you avoid great-sins, I shall forgive the small ones", He can as easily say, "If you keep your belief pure until you come to Me with unpolluted faith, I shall accept the intercession of intercessors on your behalf." *The important thing is to keep the faith strong; the sins weaken the faith, harden the heart and lead to polytheism. Allah has said: But none feels secure from Allah's plan except the people who shall perish* (7:99); *Nay! rather what they used to do has become like rust upon their hearts* (83:14); *Then evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the signs of Allah...* (30:10).

The hope of divine mercy (generated by the belief of intercession), in many cases, leads to repentance, piety and good deeds - and often the servant reaches a stage where intercession is not

needed after all. It is in fact the most important benefit of this belief.

Likewise, if it were mentioned who would benefit from intercession or which sins were likely to be interceded about, but it was declared that it would nevertheless entail some types of punishment up to a certain period, the man could not feel bold to commit sins.

And the fact is that the Qur'an has nowhere pin-pointed the sin or the sinner likely to benefit from intercession. On the contrary, it speaks only of averting the punishment from some people. And no objection can be leveled against such a vague expression.

Fifth Objection: Utmost that reason may prove is the possibility, and not the actuality, of intercession - in fact, it does not prove even that much. So far as the Qur'an is concerned, it does not show that intercession will actually take place. Some verses refute the idea of intercession altogether, e.g., ... *the day comes in which there is no bargaining, neither any friendship nor intercession* (2:254). Other verses say that intercession shall be of no avail, e.g., *So the intercession of intercessors shall not avail them*(74:48). Still others, after refuting the actuality of intercession, add the proviso like, *but by His permission* (2:255), *except after His permission* (10:3), *except for him whom He approves* (21:28). This style (a negative followed by exception of divine permission or approval) is used in the Qur'an invariably always to emphasize the negative statement; for example, it says: *We will make you recite so you shall not forget, except what Allah pleases* (87:6-7); *Abiding therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord pleases* (11:107). Obviously, there is no definite declaration in the Qur'an proving the actuality of intercession. As for the traditions, those giving its details are not reliable; and the reliable ones do not say more than the Qur'an does.

Reply: As for the verses refuting the intercession we have already explained that what they reject is the intercession without the permission of Allah. The verse 74:48, which says that "the intercession of intercessors shall not avail them", is not a proof against intercession; on the contrary it proves its actuality. The verse is in the Chapter, 'The Clothed One' and speaks about "them", i.e., a particular group of wrong-doers mentioned in verses 41 to 47; it is they who shall not benefit from the intercession of intercessors; it does not speak about all the sinners. Moreover, it uses the phrase, "the intercession of intercessors." There is a difference between saying, "Intercession shall not avail them", and saying, "Intercession of intercessors shall not avail them." When an infinitive verb or verbal noun is used in genitive or possessive case, it proves its actual existence, as ash-Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Qahir has clearly written in *Dala'ilu'l- Ijaz*. Therefore, the expression, "intercession of intercessors" proves that some intercession shall definitely take place on that day, although that particular group shall not be able to benefit from it. Also, the plural, "intercessors" points to the presence of a group of intercessors. Look for example at the phrases: *she was of those who remained behind* (7:83); *and he was one of the unbelievers covenant does* (2:34); *so he is of those who go astray* (7:175); *My covenant does not include the unjust ones* (2:124). The plurals in all these phrases would have been irrelevant if they did not mean existence of more than two persons having the attributes mentioned. Likewise, the verse: *So the intercession of intercessors shall not avail them*, instead of refuting the intercession, clearly proves the existence of intercessors and, therefore, intercession. As for the verses that contain the exceptions, "but by His permission", "except after His permission", they clearly prove the actuality of intercession, especially as the infinitive verb "permission" is used in genitive case (*His permission*). No one having a taste of Arabic literature can entertain any doubt about it.

It is childish to say that the two phrases, "but by His permission" and "except for him whom He approves" mean the same thing, i.e., the divine will. Moreover, the Qur'an has used various phrases

of exception in various places, e.g., "but by His permission", "except after His permission", "except for him whom He approves" and "but he who bears witness of the truth and they know (him)." Even if we accept that the divine permission and divine approval mean the same thing, i. e., divine will, can it be said that the last-mentioned phrase (*but he who bears witness of the truth...*) too implies the same? Such interpretation implies such inexactness and laxity in talk as even an ordinary Arab would not like attributed to him, let alone an eloquent one. Can we accuse the most eloquent divine speech, i.e., the Qur'an, of such inarticulateness?

As for the traditions, we shall show later that they too follow the line adopted by the Qur'an.

Sixth Objection: The verses do not say clearly that on the Day of Judgment, the punishment would be averted from the wrong-doers, after the sin has been proved and the sentence pronounced. The intercession attributed to the prophets means that they were the intermediaries between the Lord and His servant, they received revelation from their Lord and conveyed it to the people and guided them to the right path, leading them to spiritual and ethical perfection. In this sense, they are the intercessors for the believers in this world as well as in the hereafter.

Reply: No doubt, it is one of the aspects of intercession; but intercession is not limited to this much. The prophets called their people to the true faith and repentance, and this is the intercession mentioned by the objector. Now let us look again at the verse: *Surely Allah does not forgive that any thing should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides - that to whomsoever He pleases* (4:48). As described earlier, this verse covers the cases other than the true faith and repentance. (True faith and repentance would wipe out the polytheism too.) The exception of polytheism shows that here the talk is about other things - and intercession, in the meaning explained by us, is one of those cases.

Seventh Objection: Reason does not prove that intercession really exists; and the Qur'anic verses on this subject are ambiguous - in one place they prove it, at others refute it; sometimes they add some proviso, at the other they speak unconditionally. Therefore, the ethics of religion demands that we should believe in all of them and leave their meaning to Allah.

Reply: The ambiguous verses, when referred to the decisive ones, become decisive themselves. It is an easy process which is not beyond our ability and power. We shall explain this subject when writing about the verse: *of it there are some verses decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are ambiguous...* (3:).

3. WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM INTERCESSION?

As explained earlier, it was not in the best interest of religious guidance to pin-point who should benefit from intercession on the Day of Judgment. But vague hints and ambiguous statements can do no harm, and the Qur'an has used them to give us a general idea. Allah says: *Every soul is held in pledge for what it has earned, except the people of the right hand, in gardens; they shall ask each other about the guilty: "What has brought you into hell?" They shall say: "We were not of those who prayed, and we used not to feed the poor; and we used to enter (into vain discourse) with those who entered (into vain discourse); and we used to call the Day of Judgment a lie, till death overtook us." So the intercession of intercessors shall not avail them* (74:38-48). The verses declare that every soul shall remain mortgaged on the Day of Judgment for the sins it has earned, held responsible for the wrongs done in this life. The only exception is of the people of the right hand - they shall be released from that pledge, and shall settle in the gardens. They shall see the wrongdoers who shall be held captive of their sins, and herded into hell; they shall ask them for the reason of their entering into hell, and the guilty shall reply by enumerating four sins as the cause of their disgrace and punishment.

And because of those sins, they shall lose the benefit of the intercession of intercessors.

It implies that the people of the right hand would be free from those sins which deprive a man of the benefit of intercession. Allah shall release them from the fetters of sins and wrongs; and this release shall be as a result of the intercession of intercessors.

The verses are a part of the Chapter 74, (The Clothed One); it was revealed at Mecca at the beginning of the Call, as its contents amply prove. At that time the prayer and *zakat* as known to us were not promulgated. In this context the prayer, mentioned in the verse, "We were not of those who prayed", could only mean turning one's face towards Allah with humility and submission; likewise, the verse, "and we used not to feed the poor", could only refer to general spending on the poor in the way of Allah. *Al-Khawd* (= translated here as entering into vain discourse) literally means to wade into water, to plunge or rush into something. The verse, "we used to enter (into vain discourse)...", implies entanglement in the vain things of this life, which distract a man from remembrance of the hereafter; it may also mean vilification of the verses which remind one of the Day of Reckoning.

Those wrongdoers, therefore, shall be guilty of four sins: (1) Not turning their faces towards Allah with humility and submission; (2) not spending in the way of Allah; (3) vilification - of divine revelations; and (4) calling the Day of Judgment a lie. These four evils destroy the foundation of religion. Religion demands following the purified guides, setting one's face towards Allah, turning away from the worldly distractions, setting one's eyes on the Day of Judgment. If a man succeeds in it, he will be free from the third and the fourth sins, i.e., vilification of divine revelation and calling the Day of Judgment a lie. When, in this way, his fundamental belief is secured, he shall feel the urge to turn towards Allah and to help fellow human beings. These two factors are represented in these verses by prayer and spending in the way of Allah. Faith and deed all would thus combine to build the structure of religion. Other elements, like belief in Oneness of God and the prophethood, would naturally follow.

The people of the right hand are the ones who shall benefit from the intercession; and they are the ones whose religion and faith Allah is pleased with. They may come on the Day of Judgment with perfect deeds - and in that case there will be no need for any intercession; or they may come burdened with some sins and it is they who shall benefit from the intercession. Therefore, the intercession shall be for those people of the right hand who may have committed some sins.

Allah says: *If you avoid the great sins which you are forbidden, We will expiate from you your (small) sins* (4:31). Therefore, anybody coming on the Day of Judgment with a sin not expiated, shall certainly be guilty of a great sin; had it been a small one it would have been expiated long ago. We have to conclude from this verse that the intercession shall be for those people of the right hand who shall be guilty of great sins. The Prophet has said: "Verily my intercession is for those of my *ummah* who shall have committed great sins; as for the good doers, there shall be no difficulty for them ... "

The designation, "the people of the right hand", is the opposite of "the people of the left hand." These Qur'anic terms are based on the fact that man, on the Day of Judgment, shall be given his book of deeds either in his right hand or in the left. Allah says: (Remember) *the day when We will call every people with their Imam; then whoever is given his book in his light hand, these shall read their book; and they shall not be dealt with a whit unjustly. And whoever is blind in this, he shall (also) be blind in the hereafter; and more erring from the way* (17:71-72). We shall describe, when writing about this verse, that getting the book in the right hand is synonymous with following the rightful Imam; likewise getting the book in the left hand means following a misguiding leader or Imam. Allah says about Pharaoh: *He shall lead his people on the resurrection day, and bring them*

down to the fire (11:98). It means that not only the required four qualities but even the nomenclature, "the people of the right hand", is based on the fact that they followed an approved religion, that Allah was pleased with them.

Allah says in another place: *and they do not intercede except for him whom He approves* (21:28). This approval is general and without any condition or qualification. It is not like the one mentioned in verse:... *except of him whom the Beneficent God allows and whose word He is pleased with* (20:109), where approval or pleasure is related to the servant's word. In the verse under discussion the pleasure or approval is related to them, not to their deed; in other words, "whom He approves" means 'whose religion He approves'. Accordingly this verse too has the same import as the previous ones.

Again Allah says: *The day on which We will gather the pious ones to the Beneficent God as the guests of honor, and We will drive the guilty to hell like (thirsty) herd (to the watering place). They shall own not any intercession, save he who has made a covenant with the Beneficent God* (19:85-87). The one who has made a covenant with Allah shall be given possession of intercession. It should not be forgotten that not every guilty servant is an unbeliever. Allah says: *Whoever comes to his Lord (being) guilty, for him is surely hell; he shall not die therein nor shall he live; and whoever comes to Him a believer (and) he has done good deeds indeed, these it is who shall have the high ranks* (20:74-75). According to these verses, anyone who is not a good-doing believer is guilty, no matter whether he is an unbeliever or a wrong-doing believer. The latter group, i.e., those who have true belief but have also committed sins, is the one that has made a covenant with God. Allah says: *Did I not enjoin you (make a covenant with you), O children of Adam! that you should not worship the Satan? Surely he is your open enemy, and that you should worship Me; this is the straight path* (36:60-61). The phrase, "and that you should worship Me", is a covenant in the meaning of order, enjoinder; and the sentence, "this is the straight path", is also a covenant by implication because the straight path leads to felicity and safety. However, such believers shall enter the hell because of the sins they had committed, then they shall be rescued by intercession. It is to this covenant that the verse 2:80 alludes: (The Jews) *Say: "Fire shall not touch us but for a few days. Say: "Have you received a promise (covenant) from Allah?"* These verses too, therefore, lead us to the same conclusion, namely, the group that shall benefit from intercession on the Day of Judgment is that of the believers who would have committed great sins; it is they whose religion and belief Allah is pleased with and has approved.

4. WHO ARE THE INTERCESSORS?

It has been described that intercession takes place in two spheres: in creation and in legislation. So far as the intercession in creation is concerned, all intermediary causes are intercessors because they are placed between the Creator and the created.

As for the intercessors in the sphere of legislation and Judgment, they may be divided into two categories: (1) intercessors in this life, and (2) those in the hereafter.

Intercessors in this life: All the things that bring a man nearer to Allah and make him eligible for divine forgiveness. The following come into this category:

a. Repentance: Allah says: *Say: ... O my servants! who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives the faults altogether; surely He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. And return to your Lord...* (39:53 - 54). It covers all the sins, even polytheism; if one repents from it and believes in One God, one's previous polytheism is wiped out and forgiven.

b. True faith: Allah says: *O you who believe! Fear Allah and believe in His Apostle: He will give you two portions of His mercy, and make for you a light with which you will walk, and forgive you...* (57:28).

c. Good deed: *Allah has promised those who believe and do good deeds (that there is) for them pardon and great recompense (5:9); O you who believe! Fear Allah and seek an approach (medium) to Him...* (5:35). There are many verses of this theme.

d. The Qur'an: *Indeed has come to you from Allah a light and a manifest Book whereby Allah guides him who follows His pleasure, into the ways of peace, and takes them out from darkness towards the light by His will and guides them to the straight path (5:16).*

e. * Any thing related to a good deed, like the mosques, holy places and auspicious days.

f. The prophets and the apostles, as they seek forgiveness for their people. Allah says: *and had they, when they were unjust to themselves, come to you and asked forgiveness of Allah, and the Apostle had (also) asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful (4: 64).*

g. The angels, as they too ask forgiveness for the believers. Allah says: *Those who bear the throne and those around it celebrate the praise of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who believe (40:7); ... and the angels celebrate the praise of their Lord and ask forgiveness for those on earth...* (42:5).

h. The believers themselves, as they seek pardon for their believer brothers and for themselves. Allah quotes them as saying: *and pardon us, and forgive us, and have mercy on us, Thou art our Guardian...* (2:286).

Intercessors in the hereafter: We use the term, intercessor, in the meaning explained in the beginning. The following come into this category:

a. The prophets and the apostles: Allah says: *And they say: "The Beneficent God has taken to Himself a son." Glory be to Him. Nay! they are honoured servants,- they do not precede Him in speech and (only) according to His commandment do they act. He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they do not intercede except for him whom He approves...* (21:26-28). Those who were called 'son' of God, are in fact His honoured servants and they do intercede for him whom He approves. Among them is 'Isa, son of Maryam, and he was a prophet. It means that the prophets do intercede for approved persons.

Again Allah says: *And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for (or, do not own) intercession, but he who bears witness of the truth and they know (him) (43:86).*

b. The angels: The preceding two verses prove that the angels too may intercede, because they too were called daughters of Allah. M, Allah says: *And how many an angel is there in the heavens whose intercession does not avail at all except after Allah has given permission to whom He pleases and chooses (53:26) On that day shall no intercession avail except of him whom the Beneficent God allows and whose word He is pleased with, He knows what is before them and what is behind them...* (20:109-110).

c. The witnesses: Allah says: *And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for (or, do not own) intercession, but he who bears witness of truth and they know (him) (43:86).* This verse shows that those who bear witness of the truth do own (or, have authority for) intercession. The witness mentioned here does not mean the one killed in the battlefield. It refers to the witness for the deeds, as was described in the Chapter of the Opening, and will be further explained under the verse: *And thus we have made you a medium (i.e. just) nation that you may be witnesses over the people and (that) the Apostle may be a witness over you...* (2:143).

d. The believers: They shall be joined to the witnesses on the Day of Judgment; it follows that they too may intercede like the witnesses. Allah says: *And (as for) those who believe in Allah and His apostles, these it is that are the truthful and the witnesses with their Lord... (57:19).*

5. INTERCESSION: ABOUT WHAT?

The intercession in creation is related to every cause in this world of the cause and effect.

As for the intercession in matters of legislation and Judgment, some of them wipe out every sin and its punishment, right from polytheism to the smallest one. For example, repentance done, and true faith acquired, before the Day of Resurrection. Some wipe out effects of some particular sins, like some specified good deeds. As for the issue under discussion, i.e., the intercession of the prophets and other believers on the Day of Judgment, we have already explained that it shall avail those believers who might have committed big sins, but whose faith Allah is pleased with.

6. WHEN WILL INTERCESSION BE EFFECTED?

We are talking here too about the intercession on the Day of Judgment to waive off the punishment of sins. We have earlier quoted the verses of the Chapter 42 (The Clothed One): *Every soul is held in pledge for what it has earned, except the people of the right hand, in gardens they shall ask each other about the guilty (74:38-41).* As explained earlier, the verses clearly say who would benefit from the intercession, and who wont. They also imply that the intercession will get the wrongdoing believers released from fetters of their sins, and protect them from abiding for ever in the hell.

But there is nothing to show that intercession might avail against the turmoil of the Day of Resurrection. Rather, the verse proves that it will be effective only for rescuing the guilty believers from the hell, or preventing them from entering into it.

It may be inferred from the verses that this talk will take place after the people of the garden have settled in the gardens, and the people of the hell in the hell; and that the intercessors shall then intercede for a group of the guilty ones and rescue them from the hell. The phrase, "in gardens", implies it, as does the question, "What has brought you into hell?" Both phrases imply a more or less permanent abode. Likewise, the comment, "so the intercession... avails them not", denotes something occurring in present time i.e. after both groups have settled in their abodes.

As for al-Barzakh (the period between death and the Day of Resurrection) and presence of the Prophet and the Imams of the Ahlulbayt (a.s.) at the time of death and at the questioning in the grave and the help given by them to the believer to overcome those difficulties (as will be described under the verse: - *And there shall not be any one of the people of the book but he must certainly believe in him before his death(4:159)*, these things have nothing to do with intercession. It is rather exercising the authority given to them by Allah over the creation. Allah says: ... *and on the most elevated places there shall be men who know all by their marks, and they shall call out to the dwellers of the garden: "Peace be on you; they shall not have yet entered it, though they hope" ... And the dwellers of the most elevated places shall call out to men whom they will recognize by their marks, saying: "Of no avail were to you your amassing and your behaving haughtily. Are these they about whom you swore that Allah will not bestow mercy on them?" "Enter the garden; you shall have no fear nor shall you grieve" (7:46-49).* It gives a glimpse of the authority or rule vested in them by the permission of Allah. If we look at the verse 17:71 from this angle, it too throws light on this aspect: *(Remember) the day when We will call every people with their Imam; then whoever is given his book in his right hand.* The intermediary position of the Imam in calling every people and giving them their books is a sort of authority and rule vested in him by Allah.

To make a long story short, intercession shall happen at the very last stage on the Day of Judgment; it shall bring the divine forgiveness to the guilty believers, prevent them from entering into hell and take those out who would have entered into it; it shall be by extension of mercy and/or manifestation of benevolence and magnanimity.

Traditions

Al-Husayn ibn Khalid narrates from ar-Rida (a.s.), who narrated through his forefathers from the leader of the faithful (a.s.) that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: 'Whoever does not believe in my reservoir, and whoever does not believe in my intercession, may Allah not extend to him my intercession.' Then he (s.a.w.) said: 'Verily my intercession is for those of my *ummah* who shall have committed great sins; as for those good-doers, there shall be no difficulty for them.'" Al-Husayn ibn Khalid said: "I asked ar-Rida (a.s.): 'O son of the Messenger of Allah! What is then the meaning of the words of Allah, Mighty and Great is He: *and they do not intercede except for him whom He approves?*' He (a.s.) said 'They do not intercede except for him whose religion Allah is pleased with.'" (al-Amali as-Saduq)

The author says: The tradition of the Prophet, "Verily my intercession is... ", has been narrated by both sects with numerous chains; and we have shown earlier that it is based on the theme of the Qur'anic verses.

Suma'ah ibn Mihran narrates from Abu Ibrahim (a.s.) that he said about the words of Allah: *may be your Lord will raise you to a praised position*: "The people, on the Day of Resurrection, will remain standing for forty years; and the sun will be ordered so that it will ride over their heads and they will be bridled by sweat – and the earth will be told not to accept any of their sweat. So they will approach Adam to intercede for them and he will direct them to Nuh, and Nuh will direct them to Ibrahim, and Ibrahim will direct them to Musa, and Musa will direct them to 'Isa, and 'Isa will direct them saying: 'You should seek the help of Muhammad, the last prophet.' Thereupon, Muhammad (s.a.w.) will say: 'I'll do it,' and will proceed until, arriving at the door of the garden, he will knock at it. It will be asked, 'Who is it?' (while Allah knows better!), and he will say: 'Muhammad.' Then it will be said: 'Open for him.' When the door will be opened he will turn to his Lord, falling *insajdah*. He will not raise his head until he is told: 'Speak up and ask, you will be given; and intercede, your intercession shall be granted.' He will raise his head and turning to his Lord will fall (again) in *sajdah*. Then he will be promised as before; then he will raise his head. (Thereupon, he shall intercede) until he will intercede even for him who would have been burnt in the fire. Therefore, on the Day of Resurrection, no one among all the nations will be more eminent than Muhammad (s.a.w.); and it is (the meaning of) the words of Allah: *May be your Lord will raise you to a praised position.*" (al-'Ayyashi)

The author says: This meaning is narrated by both sects in great number, in detail as well as in short, with numerous chains; and it proves that the "praised position" means the position of intercession. This tradition is not in conflict with intercession of other prophets, because probably their intercession will be an offshoot of our Prophet's, and it will begin on his hand.

'Ubayd ibn Zurarah said: "Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) was asked whether a believer would have the right of intercession. He said: 'Yes.' Then someone said: 'Will even a believer need the intercession of Muhammad (s.a.w.) on that day?' He said: 'Yes. The believers too will come with wrongs and sins; and there will be none but he shall need the intercession of Muhammad on that day.'" ('Ubayd) said:

"And someone asked him about the words of the Messenger of Allah: 'I am the Chief of the children of Adam, and I say this without boasting.' He said: 'Yes.' (Then) he said: 'He will hold the chain-link of the door of the garden and open it; then he will fall in sajdah, and Allah will tell him 'Raise your head, do intercede, your intercession shall be granted, and ask, you shall be given.' Thereupon he will raise his head and intercede – and his intercession will be accepted; and he will ask and be given.'" (*ibid*)

Muhammad ibn al-Qasim narrates through his chains from Bishr ibn Shurayh al-Basri that he said: "I said to Muhammad ibn 'Ali (a.s.): 'Which verse in the Book of Allah is the most hope-inspiring?' He said: 'And what do your people say (about it)?' I said: 'They say, (it is the verse), Say: "*O my servants! Who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah.*"' He said: 'But we, the people of the house, do not say so.' I said: 'Then what do you say about it?' He said: 'We say (it is the verse), *And soon will your Lord give you so that you shall be well pleased.* (It means) the intercession, by Allah the intercession, by Allah the intercession.'" (*at-Tafsir*, Furat ibn Ibrahim)

The author says: The words of Allah, *may be your Lord will raise you to a praised position*, refers to the Prophet's glorious position of intercession, as the numerous traditions of the prophet himself prove. Moreover the wording of the verse too supports it: "will raise you" shows that it is a position which he will attain in future, i.e. on the Day of Judgment; "praised" is general and unconditional, and implies that he shall be praised by all men, past and present. *Al-Hamd* means to praise someone for a good done to you intentionally. This definition shows that the Prophet will do something by his own will and power which will benefit all of them and in return everyone will praise him. That is why the Imam said in the tradition of 'Ubayd ibn Zurarah, "and there will no one but he shall need the intercession of Muhammad that day."

We shall later explain it further.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 49-61

- وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَاكُمْ مِنَ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يُدَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي ذَلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ 2:49
- وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمْ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ 2:50
- وَإِذْ وَعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ 2:51
- ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنْكُمْ مِمَّنْ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ 2:52
- وَإِذْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ 2:53
- وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعِجْلَ فَتُوبُوا إِلَىٰ بَارِيكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ عِنْدَ بَارِيكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ 2:54
- وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ نَرَىٰ اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ 2:55
- ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكُمْ مِّن بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ 2:56
- وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّٰ وَالسَّلْوَىٰ كُلُّوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ 2:57
- وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطَايَاكُمْ وَسَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ 2:58
- فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ 2:59
- وَإِذِ اسْتَسْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ فَانْفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرِبَهُمْ كُلُّوا وَاشْرَبُوا مِن رِّزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْنُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ 2:60
- وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ لَنْ نَصْبِرَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامٍ وَاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ مِن بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّائِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِيهَا وَبَصِلَهَا قَالَ أَسْتَسْتَبْدِلُونَ الَّذِي هُوَ أَدْنَىٰ بِالَّذِي هُوَ خَيْرٌ اهْبِطُوا مِصْرًا فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ مَّا سَأَلْتُمْ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلَّةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَاوَأُوا بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّينَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ 2:61
- 2:49 And when We delivered you from Pharaoh's people, who subjected you to severe torment, killing your sons and sparing your women, and in this there was a great trial from your Lord.
- 2:50 And when We parted the sea for you, so We saved you and drowned the followers of Pharaoh while you watched by.
- 2:51 And when We appointed (a time of) forty nights with Musa, then you took the calf (for a god) after him and you were unjust;
- 2:52 then We pardoned you after that so that you might give thanks.
- 2:53 And when We gave Musa the book and the distinction that you might walk aright.
- 2:54 And when Musa said to his people: "O my people! you have surely been unjust to yourselves by taking the calf (for a god), therefore turn to your Creator (penitently) and kill your people, that is best for you with your Creator; so He turned to you (mercifully), for surely He is the Oft-returning (with mercy), the Merciful."
- 2:55 And when you said: "O Musa! we will not believe in you until we see Allah manifestly, " so the punishment overtook you while you looked on;
- 2:56 then We raised you up after your death that you may give thanks.
- 2:57 And We made the clouds to give shade over you and We sent to you manna and quails: Eat of good things that We have given you; and they did not do Us any harm, but they did harm their own selves.
- 2:58 And when We said: "Enter this city, then eat from it a plenteous (food) wherever you wish, and

enter the gate making obeisance, and say, forgiveness, We will forgive you your wrongs and give more to those who do good (to others).

2:59 But those who were unjust changed it for a saying other than that which had been spoken to them, so We sent upon those who were unjust a pestilence from heaven, because they transgressed.

2:60 And when Musa prayed for drink for his people, We said: "Strike the rock with your staff." So there gushed from it twelve springs; each tribe knew its drinking place: "Eat and drink of the provisions of Allah and do not act corruptly in the land, making mischief."

2:61 And when you said: "O Musa! we cannot bear with one food, therefore pray to your Lord on our behalf to bring forth for us out of what the earth grows, of its herbs and its cucumbers and its garlic and its lentils and its onions. He said: "Will you exchange that which is better for that which is worse? Enter a city, so you will have what you ask for." And abasement and humiliation were brought down upon them and they returned with Allah's wrath; this was so because they disbelieved in the signs of Allah and killed the prophets unjustly; this was so because they disobeyed and exceeded the limits.

Commentary

QUR'AN: *and sparing your women:*

They left your women alive in order that they (i.e. the women) might serve them. "*al-Istihya*" means to wish someone to remain alive. The word may also mean: They behaved indecently with the women until they (i.e. the women) lost their modesty. "*Yasumunakum*" . translated here as "they subjected you to", literally means, they imposed upon you.

QUR'AN: *And when We parted the sea for you:*

al-Farq . is opposite of *al-jam'* .; the words mean to separate and to gather, respectively. The same is the case of *al-fasl* . vis-a-vis "*al-wasl*" .. To separate the sea means to part its water. "*Bikum*" ., translated here as "for you", may also mean, "soon on your entering the sea."

QUR'AN: *And when We appointed (a time of) forty days with Musa:*

The same event has been described in Chapter 7 in these words: *And We appointed with Musa a time of thirty nights and completed them with ten (more), so the appointed time of his Lord was complete, forty nights (7:142)* . This verse mentions the total duration of the two promises together, as a tradition says.

QUR'AN: *therefore turn to your Creator (penitently):*

al-Bari' . is one of the beautiful names of Allah, as Allah says: *He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner; His are the most beautiful names...* (59:24). This name has been used three times in the Qur'an: twice in the verse under discussion and once in Chapter 59, quoted just above. Perhaps Allah used this name here because it was most suitable in the context of the event described. While it is nearer in meaning to *al-Khaliq* (the Creator) and *al-Mujid* (the Inventor), it is derived from *bara'a*, *yabra'u*, *bar'an* (he separated, he separates, to separate). Allah thus separates His creation from inexistence, or He separates man from the earth. This name in this context conveys the following idea: No doubt it is very hard to repent by killing your own people. But Allah, Who now orders you to destroy yourselves by killing, is the same God who had created you. He was pleased to create you when it was good for you; and now He has decreed that you should kill your own people, and this order too is good for you. How can He decide anything for you except that which is good, and He is your Maker and Creator. The phrase, "your Creator", points to a special relation which they have with Him, and it emphasizes the fact that the given command is not for revenge; it is based on

divine love, in order to purify them.

QUR'AN: *that is best for you with your Creator:*

This and the preceding verses (that enumerate their transgressions and sins) are addressed to the whole Jewish nation, although the sins were committed by only some groups of them and not by all. Obviously it is because they were very much united as a nation; if one did a thing, others were pleased with it. It was because of this feeling of their national unity that one group's action is attributed to the whole nation. Otherwise, not all the Israelites had killed the prophets, nor had all of them indulged in the calf-worship, or committed other sins mentioned herein. It proves that the order, "kill your people", actually meant, kill some of your people, i.e., the calf-worshippers. It may also be inferred from the words, "you have surely been unjust to yourselves by taking the calf for worship", and the words, "that is best for you with your Creator" (which apparently is the final part of the speech of Musa).

The words, "so He turned to you (mercifully)", prove that their repentance was accepted. Tradition says that their repentance was accepted and sin forgiven when only a few of them had been killed. This forgiveness before the order was fully complied with shows that the command was given as a trial. The case is somewhat similar to the dream of Ibrahim (a.s.) and his being told to sacrifice Isma'il; before he could reach the ultimate stage, he was told, *O Ibrahim! You have indeed made the vision come true*(37;104 -105) . Likewise, Musa (a.s.) told his people "turn to your Creator (penitently) and kill your people, that is best for you with your Creator", and Allah confirmed the order, yet He took the killing of some as equal to the execution of all, and informed them that their repentance was accepted, "so He turned to you (mercifully)."

QUR'AN: *a pestilence from heaven:*

"ar-Rijz" (punishment).

QUR'AN: *do not act corruptly:*

"La ta'thaw" . is derived from *al-'ayth and al-'athy* . it means the biggest chaos and mischief.

QUR'AN: *and its cucumbers and its garlic:*

"al-Khiyar" . is cucumber; *"al-fum"* . is garlic or wheat.

QUR'AN: *and they returned with Allah's wrath:*

"Ba'u" (they returned).

QUR'AN: *this was so because they disbelieved:*

It gives the reason of preceding statement; and the next sentence, "this was so because they disobeyed and exceeded the limits" is the reason of that reason. Their disobedience and perennial excesses caused them to reject the signs of Allah and kill the prophets. Allah says in another verse: *Then evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the signs of Allah and used to mock them* (30:10). How was the disbelief caused by disobedience? One of the coming traditions explains it.

Traditions

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said about the words of Allah: *and when We appointed* (a time of) *forty nights with Musa:* "It was thirty nights in the (divine) knowledge and measure, then something else happened (to show that it was not the final decree) and Allah added ten more; and in this way the appointed time of his Lord, the first and the last, was completed forty days." (al-'Ayyashi)

The author says: This tradition supports what we have mentioned earlier that the forty was the total

of the two appointed times.

'Ali (a.s.) said about the words of Allah: *and when Musa said to his people: "O my people! you have surely been unjust to yourselves... ": "They asked Musa: 'How should we repent?' He said: 'Some of you should kill the others.'* Thereupon, they took the knives and everyone started killing (the others), even his brother, father and son, without caring, by God! whom he killed. (It continued) till seventy thousand of them were killed. Then Allah revealed to Musa: *'Tell them to stay their hands; and he who was killed was forgiven and he who remained, his repentance was accepted.'* (*ad-Durru'l-manthur*)

The Imam said: "Musa (a.s.) went to the appointed place and time, and then came back to his people; and they had started worshipping the calf; then he told them: *'O my people! you have surely been unjust to yourselves by taking the calf (for worship), therefore turn to your Creator (penitently) and kill your people, that is best for you with your Creator.'* They asked him: 'How should we kill our people?' Musa said to them: 'Tomorrow everyone of you should come to Baytu 'l-Maqdis with a knife or a piece of iron or a sword; when I ascend the pulpit of the Children of Israel you should all keep your faces hidden, so that nobody should recognize the other at his side; then you should kill each other.' Thus seventy thousand of those who had worshipped the calf assembled in Baytu 'l-Maqdis. When Musa finished praying with them and ascended the pulpit, they started killing each other. (This continued) until Jibril came down and said: 'Now tell them, O Musa! to stop killing (each other), because Allah has accepted their repentance.' And (by that time) ten thousand of them had been killed. And Allah revealed: *that is best for you with your Creator; so He turned to you (mercifully), for surely His is Oftreturning (with mercy), the Merciful.* " (*at-Tafsir, al-Qummi*)

The author says: According to this tradition, the sentence, "that is best for you with your Creator", was said by Musa (a.s.) and was also used in the divine speech. In this way, Allah confirmed the word of Musa (a.s.), and made it clear that what had actually happened - the execution of ten thousand calf-worshippers - was all that was intended from the very beginning; and that the order of Musa was carried out in full, and not partially. According to what appears from the wording of Musa (a.s.), it was best for them if all of them were killed; but only some of them got killed, not all. By repeating the same words, Allah made it clear that what Musa (a.s.) had meant from the words, "the best for you", was not the execution of all.

The same *at-Tafsir* says about the words of Allah: *and We made the clouds to give shade over you:* "When Musa crossed the sea with the Israelites, they landed at a desert. They said: 'O Musa! you have really destroyed and killed us, by bringing us from an inhabited land to a desert where there is, either any shadow or tree nor even water.' At daytime a cloud appeared over them to protect them from the sun; and at night, manna came down to them, settling on leaves, trees and stones, and they ate it; and at dinner time roasted birds fell on their dinner-spread, and when they finished eating and drinking, the birds (became alive and) flew away. And Musa had a stone which he used to place in the midst of the station (of the caravan), striking it with his walking-stick and, lo! twelve springs gushed from it, as Allah described, every spring going to the station of a particular tribe - and they were twelve tribes." (*ibid.*)

Abu l-Hasan al-Madi (a.s.) said about the words of Allah: *and they did not do Us any harm but they did harm their own selves:* "Surely Allah is too powerful and too unassailable to be harmed or to ascribe any harm to Himself. But He has joined us to Himself and took any injustice done to us as an injustice done to Him, and treated our love as His love; then He revealed it in a (verse of the) Qur'an to His Prophet, and said: *and they did not do Us any harm, but they did harm their own*

selves. The narrator says: "I said, 'This is the revelation?' He said, 'Yes.'" (*al-Kafi*)

The author says: Nearly the same thing has been narrated from al-Baqir (a.s.).

"... too unassailable to be harmed": It is the explanation of the Qur'anic expression, "they did not do Us any harm"; the next sentence, "or to ascribe any harm to Himself", rejects also the opposite proposition. Allah can neither be harmed nor does He do any injustice Himself. Why did the narrator ask the question, "This is the revelation?" Obviously, for a negative sentence to be plausible there should be a real or hypothetic possibility of a positive connection between the subject and its predicate. We do not say, "This wall does not see." Why? Because wall has no possible connection with seeing. Now, Allah can have no possible connection at all with injustice or oppression. Therefore, the sentence, "they did not do Us any harm", would seem a superfluous and implausible assertion, because there was no need for saying that Allah could not be harmed nor did He harm anyone - unless it was meant to convey some fine point to the listeners. And that point is this: Great persons often speak on behalf of their servants and dependants; likewise, Allah in this verse is speaking on behalf of Muhammad and his progeny (peace be on them all), joining them to Himself in this declaration.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) recited the verse: *this was so because they disbelieved in the signs of Allah and killed the prophets unjustly; this was so because they disobeyed and exceeded the limits*, and then said: "By God, they did not hit them with their hands, nor did they kill them with their swords; but they heard their talks and announced it (to their enemies); so the prophets were caught on that charge and killed; this was the killing, the exceeding the limit and the disobedience." (*al-'Ayyashi*)

The author says: A similar tradition from the same Imam is found in *al-Kafi*. Apparently, the Imam inferred it from the words, "this was so because they disobeyed ... " Needless to say that murder, and especially of the prophets, and rejection of the signs of Allah cannot be termed as mere disobedience. It should be the other way round. But if we take the disobedience to mean disclosing the secrets then it would be perfectly right to say that they killed the prophets, because they (disobeyed them and) did not keep their secrets and thus delivered them into the hands of their enemies who killed them.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSE 62

نَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ 2:62

2:62 Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabaeans, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve.

Commentary

The verse first mentions the believers, and then says, "whoever believes in Allah..." The context shows that the latter phrase refers to the real belief, the true *iman*, and that the word, "those who believe", (mentioned at first) refers to those who call themselves believers. The verse says that Allah gives no importance to names, like the believers, the Jews, the Christians or the Sabaeans. One cannot get a reward from Allah, nor can he be saved from punishment, merely by giving oneself good titles, as they, for example, claim that: *no one will enter the Garden except he who was a Jew or a Christian*(2:111). The only criterion, the only standard, of honour and happiness is the real belief in Allah and the Day of Resurrection, accompanied by good deeds. It should be noted that Allah did not say, 'whoever of them believes'; otherwise it would have accorded some recognition to these titles, and would have implied that there was, after all, some benefit in acquiring these names.

This theme has been repeatedly expounded in the Qur'an. The honour and felicity depend entirely on true and sincere servitude; no name, no adjective, can do any good unless it is backed by correct belief and good deeds. This rule is applicable to all human beings, right from the prophets to the lowest rank. Look how Allah praises His prophets with all beautiful and excellent attributes, and then says: *and if they had set up others (with Him) certainly what they did would have become ineffectual for them*(6:88). Also, He describes the high status and great prestige of the Holy Prophet and his companions, and then ends it with these words: *Allah has promised those among them who believe and do good, forgiveness and a great reward* (48:29). Ponder on the significance of the phrase "among them."

Then we find that Allah had given a man some of His signs but he went astray: *and if We had pleased, We would certainly have exalted him thereby, but he clung to the earth and followed his low desire...* (7:176).

There are many verses clearly showing that the honour and respect with Allah depends on reality, not on appearance.

Traditions

Salman al-Farisi said: "I asked the Prophet (s.a.w.) about the people of that religion which I

followed (prior to Islam), and I described their (way of) prayer and worship. Then it was revealed: Surely *those who believe, and those who are Jews...* " (*ad-Durru'l-manthur*)

The author says: Various other traditions with different chains of narrators, say that this verse was revealed about the people of Salman.

Ibn Faddal said: "I asked ar-Rida (a.s.) why "*an-Nasara*" (the Christians) were given that name. He said: 'Because they were from a village called an-Nasirah (Nazarath) in Syria. Maryam and 'Isa settled there after they returned from Egypt.'" (*Ma'ani 'l-akhbar*)

The author says: We shall comment on this tradition when writing on the stories of 'Isa (a.s.) in Chapter 3 (The House of 'Imran), God willing.

The same tradition says that "*al-Yahud*" (the Jews) got this name because they are descended from Yahuda, son of Ya'qub. (*ibid.*)

The Imam said: "The Sabaeans are a people, neither Zoroastrian nor Jews, neither Christians nor Muslims; they worship the stars and planets. (*at-Tafsir*, al-Qummi)

The author says: It is idol-worship of a special type; they worshipped only the idols of the stars, while others worshipped whatever idol caught their fancy.

A Historical Discussion

Abu Rayhan at-Biruni writes in his book *al-'atharu'l-baqiyah*:

"The earliest known among them (i.e., the claimants of prophethood was Yudhasaf. He appeared in India at the end of the first year of the reign of Tahmurth; and he brought the Persian script. He called to the Sabaeen religion, and a great many people followed him. The Bishdadian kings and some of the Kayanis who resided in Balkh held the sun, the moon, the stars and the planets together with other elements in high esteem and believed that these luminaries were very sacred. It continued until Zoroaster appeared at the end of the thirtieth year of Peshtasav's reign. The remnants of those Sabaeans are now in Harran, from which they have got their new name, Harraniyyah. Also it is said that this nomenclature refers to Haran, son of Tarukh (Terah) and brother of Ibrahim (a.s.), as he allegedly was one of their religious leaders and its staunchest follower.

"Ibn Sancala, the Christian, has written a book against Sabaeans. In that book he has attributed many ridiculous things to this Haran. For example, he describes the Sabaeans' belief about Ibrahim (a.s.) in these words: "Ibrahim (a.s.) was removed from their community because a white spot had appeared on his foreskin, and the Sabaeans believed that a person having a white spot was unclean, and avoided mixing with such person. To remove that defect, Ibrahim cut his foreskin, i.e. circumcised himself. Then he entered one of the temples; and lo! an idol called out to him: "O Ibrahim! you went away from us with one defect and came back with two; get out and do not ever come back to us." Ibrahim was enraged; he smashed the idols; and went out. After some time, he felt remorse for what he had done, and decided to sacrifice his son on the altar of Jupiter, as it was their custom to kill their children to please the deities. When Jupiter was convinced of the sincerity of his repentance, it sent a lamb to him to slaughter in place of his son."

" 'Abdu 'l-Masih ibn Ishaq al-Kindi wrote a book in reply of a book by 'Abdullah ibn Isma'il al-Hashimi. In that book 'Abdu 'l-Masih writes about the Sabaeans:

"It is generally believed that they indulge in human sacrifice, although nowadays they cannot do so openly. But so far as our own information goes, they are monotheists who believe that God is free

from every defect and evil, they describe God in negative, not positive, terms; for example, they say: Allah cannot be defined or seen, He is not unjust or oppressive. According to them, the beautiful divine names may be used for God, but only in an allegorical sense, because no divine attribute can truly describe the reality. They believe that the management of all affairs is done and controlled by the sky and the heavenly bodies; the sky and those bodies are living things having the characteristics of speech, hearing and sight. They revere the light and the luminaries. One of their legacies is the dome above the niche in the Umayyid mosque of Damascus; it was their prayer house, and at that time even the Greeks and the Romans followed the same religion. Then it came under Jewish control and they turned it into a synagogue. Later, the Christians took it over and converted it into a church. Then came the Muslims, and they changed it into a mosque. The Sabaeans had their numerous places of worships, and their idols were named after various names of the sun, and shaped with fixed patterns, as has been described by Abu Ma'shar al-Balkhi in his book, *The Houses of Worship*. For example, there was the temple of Ba'lbak which housed the idol of the sun; of Qiran, which was related to the moon and built in the moon's shape, like a shawl worn over head and shoulders. And there is a village nearby, Salamsin by name; it is a corruption of its original name, (Sanam Sin the idol of the moon). Likewise, another village is called Tara'uz, that is, the gate of venus. They do also claim that the Ka'bah and its idols belonged to them, and that the Meccan idol-worshippers were of the Sabaean religion. According to them the idols, Lat and 'Uzza, represented Saturn and Venus. They have many prophets in their hierarchy, most of them being the Greek philosophers, for example, Hermes of Egypt, Agadhimun, Walles, Pythagoras and Babaswar (maternal grandfather of Plato) and many others like them. Some of them do not eat fish - lest it be spume; nor poultry, because it is always hot. Also, they do not use garlic, because it creates headache and burns the blood and semen (which is the source of continuity of the human race); and they avoid beans, because it dulls the intelligence and also because it had first sprouted in a human skull. They observe three compulsory prayers: at sunrise (eight *rak 'at*); at noon (five *rak'at*); and at the third hour of the night.

""They prostrate three times in each rak'ah. Also, they observe two optional prayers - at the second and ninth hours of the day.

" 'They pray with *taharah* and wudu ' ; they take bath after *janabah*; but they do not circumcise their children because they have not been told to do so. Most of their laws concerning marital and penal codes are like the *shari 'ah* of Islam; while the rules about touching a dead body are similar to Torah's. They offer sacrifices to the stars, their idols and the temples; the sacrificial animals are killed by the priests and witch-doctors, who read in it the future of the man who offers the sacrifice and answer to his questions.

" 'Hermes is sometimes called Idris, who is mentioned in Torah as Akhnukh. Some of them say that Yudhasaf was Hermes.

" 'Some others have said that the present-day Varraniyyah are not the real Sabaeans; rather these are mentioned in the books as heathens and idolaters. The Sabaeans were those Israelites who stayed behind at Babylon when their majority returned to Jerusalem in the reigns of Cyrus and Artaxerxes. They were favorably disposed to Zoroastrian beliefs, as well as to the religion of Nebuchadnezzar. What resulted from this exercise was a mixture of Judaism and Zoroastrianism - like the Samaritans of Syria. Most of them are found in Wasit and the rural areas of Iraq around Ja'far and Jamidah; they trace their genealogy to Enosh, son of Seth. They criticize and oppose the Harraniyyah and their religion. With exception of a few things, there is no similarity between the two religions: The Sabaeans face towards the North Pole in their prayers, while the Harraniyyah face towards the South Pole.

" 'Some people of the book have said that Methuselah had a son (other than Lamech), named Sabi, whom the Sabaeans have descended from. The people, before the *shari'ah* spread and before Yudhasaf appeared on the scene, followed Samanian beliefs; they lived in the eastern part of the world and worshipped idols. Their remnants are found in India, China and Taghazghaz, and the people of Khurasan call them Shamnan. Their relics, places of worship and idols are seen in eastern Khurasan adjoining India. They believe in eternity of the universe and transmigration of soul. According to them, the sky is falling down in an endless vacuum, and that is why it is moving round and round.'

"According to some writers, a group of them rejects the theory of eternity of the universe and says that it came into being one million year ago."

The author says: All the above description has been taken from the book of al-Biruni. The opinion, attributed to some writers, that Sabaeans' religion was a mixture of Judaism and Zoroastrianism flavored with some elements of Harraniyyah's beliefs, seems better suited in this context; after all, the verse obviously enumerates the groups which followed a divinely inspired religion.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 63-74

- وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ 2:63
 ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَكُنْتُمْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ 2:64
 وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَوْا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ 2:65
 فَجَعَلْنَاهَا نَكَالًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا وَمَا خَلْفَهَا وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ 2:66
 وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُوا بَقْرَةً قَالُوا أَتَنَذِّبُنَا هُرُورًا قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ 2:67
 قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ لَا فَارِضٌ وَلَا بَكْرٌ عَوَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ فافْعَلُوا مَا تُؤْمَرُونَ 2:68
 قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا لُونَهَا قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ صَفْرَاءُ فَاقْعُ لُونَهَا تَسْرُ النَّظِيرِينَ 2:69
 قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ إِنَّ الْبَقْرَ تَشَابَهَ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنَّا إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَمُهْتَدُونَ 2:70
 هُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ لَا ذَلُولٌ تُثِيرُ الْأَرْضَ وَلَا تَسْقِي الْحَرْثَ مُسَلَّمَةٌ لَا شِيَةَ فِيهَا قَالُوا الْآنَ جِئْتُ بِالْحَقِّ فَذَبْحُوهَا وَمَا كَادُوا يَفْعَلُونَ 2:71
 وَإِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَادَّارَأْتُمْ فِيهَا وَاللَّهُ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ 2:72
 فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا كَذَلِكَ يُحْيِي اللَّهُ الْمَوْتَى وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ 2:73
 ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشْفَقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ 2:74
- 2:63 *And when We took a promise from you and lifted the mountain over you": "Take hold of what We have given you with firmness and bear in mind what is in it, so that you may guard (against evil)."*
- 2:64 *Then you turned back after that; so were it not for the grace of Allah and His mercy on you, you would certainly have been among the losers.*
- 2:65 *And certainly you have known those among you who exceeded the limits of the Sabbath, so We said to them: "Be apes, despised and hated."*
- 2:66 *So We made them an example to those who witnessed it and those who came after it, and an admonition to those who guard (against evil).*
- 2:67 *And when Musa said to his people: "Surely Allah commands you that you should sacrifice a cow"; they said: "Do you ridicule us?" He said: "I seek the protection of Allah from being one of the ignorant."*
- 2:68 *They said: "Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is." Musa said: "He says, Surely she is a cow neither advanced in age nor too young, of middle age between that (and this); do therefore what you are commanded."*
- 2:69 *They said: "Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what her color is." Musa said: "He says, Surely she is a yellow cow; her color is intensely yellow, giving delight to the beholders."*
- 2:70 *They said: "Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is, for surely to us the cows are all alike, and if Allah please we shall surely be guided aright."*
- 2:71 *Musa said: "He says, Surely she is a cow not made submissive that she should plough the land, nor does she irrigate the tilth, sound, without a blemish in her." The said: 'Now you have brought the truth;' so they sacrificed her, though they had not the mind to do (it).*

2:72 *And when you killed a man, then you disagreed with respect to that, and Allah was to bring forth that which you were going to hide.*

2:73 *So, We said: "Strike the (dead body) with part of the (sacrificed cow)", thus Allah brings the dead to life, and He shows you His signs so that you may understand.*

2:74 *Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks, rather worse in hardness; and surely there are some rocks from which streams burst forth, and surely there are some of them which split asunder so water issues out of them, and surely there are some of them which fall down for fear of Allah, and Allah is not at all heedless of what you do.*

Commentary

QUR'AN: *And lifted the mountain over you:*

"*at-Tur*" is mountain; that is why has been substituted by "*al-jabal*" (mountain) in verse: *And when We wrested away the mountain over them as if it were a covering overhead (7:171)*. "*an-Natq*" (to wrest away; to pull out). The verse at first mentions taking of a promise; and ends with the command to take hold of what they were given and to bear in mind what was in it; in between it refers to the lifting of the mountain over them, without saying why it was lifted. But the context clearly shows that it was done to frighten them without putting them under compulsion, in order that they might obey what they were told - if Allah had wished to compel them, there was no need to take any promise before.

Objection: If we were to take the sentence, "and lifted the mountain over you", in its literal meaning, it would be a miraculous sign that would have forced the Israelites to obey the given command under duress and coercion; but Allah says: *There is no compulsion in the religion (2:256); ... will you then force men till they become believers? (10:99)*.

Reply: The objection is baseless. The sentence shows only that they were threatened and frightened. Just lifting the mountain over their head was not enough to coerce and force them to believe and obey. Otherwise, most of the miracles shown by Musa (a.s.) could be termed as "compulsion"! The said questioner has tried to explain away this sentence in this way: "The Israelites were at the foot of the mountain; it was shaken violently and during that convulsion its summit loomed over them, until they thought that it was going to fall over them. It is this natural phenomenon that has been described as pulling out the mountain and lifting it over them."

Such misinterpretations emanate from rejection of the principle of "miracle" altogether. We have already written in detail on this subject. If we were to explain away the verses of miracle in this way, no speech would remain safe from distortion; and no sentence could be taken to mean what it says; as a result, all the norms of eloquence and literature would lose their value.

QUR'AN: *so that you may guard (against evil): "La'alla"* is a particle meaning "perhaps", "may be"; it denotes hope - the speaker may be hoping for something, or the person spoken who gives rise to the hope, or the situation justifies the hope although the speaker or the listener does not feel optimistic himself. In any case, it implies some uncertainty about the final outcome. When this particle is used in a divine speech, it indicates hopefulness either with reference to the listener, or in context of the situation; but it can never refer to the speaker, that is, Allah, because He can never be uncertain of any result. It has clearly been explained by ar-Raghib in his *al-Mufradat*. Therefore, whenever this word is used in the Qur'an, it is translated as "so that ...", "in order that ..."

QUR'AN: *Be apes despised: "Khasi'in"* (despised, humiliated).

QUR'AN: *So We made them an example: "an-Nakal"* means exemplary punishment meted out to

one in order that others may desist from such transgression.

QUR'AN: *And when Musa said to his people: "Surely Allah commands you that you should sacrifice a cow... "*: This is the story of the cow of the Israelites, and it is these verses which have given this chapter its name, the Cow.

The Qur'an has used a dramatic style for this story. It opens with the middle of the story (verses 67 to 71), followed by its beginning (verse 72) and ending with its conclusion (verse 73). Another thing to note is the changes of the pronouns - upto verse 66, the Israelites were directly addressed in second person; but verses 67 to 71 are addressed to the Prophet mentioning the Israelites in third person; then it reverts again to the original second person (verses 72 - 73).

However, let us follow the narrative in the light of the Qur'an. Allah addresses the Prophet referring to the Israelites in third person: "And when Musa said to his people: 'Surely Allah commands you that you should sacrifice a cow'; they said ... " Obviously the order given to sacrifice a cow with subsequent description of its various characteristics and qualities, contained in these five verses (67 -71), is like a parenthetical statement which clarifies the meaning of the next two verses (72 -73), addressed to the Israelites: "And when you killed a man, then you disagreed with respect to that, and Allah was to bring forth that which you were going to hide. So We said: 'Strike the (dead body) with part of the (sacrificed cow),' thus Allah brings the dead to life, and He shows you His signs that you may understand. "

The five verses (67 -71) also show how ill-mannered the Israelites were; how offensive their behavior was towards their prophet. See how off-handedly they accused their prophet of speaking idle words, how arrogantly they made demand after demand of the Lord to make His command clear and plain, as though there was any ambiguity in the divine command or the prophetic utterance. Add to it their insulting mode of referring to God: Musa had told them, "Surely Allah commands you ... "; but they repeatedly used the words, "Call on your Lord for our sake ... ", as though He was not their Lord. Then again they went on repeating the demand to be told "what she is", "what her color is"; and when all was explained to them, they arrogantly claimed, "surely to us the cows are all alike." It should be noted that they did not say that that particular cow seemed indistinct to them; they instead claimed that all the cows were alike in their eyes - implying that the cows *per se* were the same, and if a certain individual cow had some special quality, this much description was not enough for identification purpose; they did not realize that it was not the cow, but the divine will, which produced the desired result. They were given a simple command to sacrifice "a cow", that is, any cow; they should have acted on that general unrestricted command, but they went on asking for more and more particulars; this was in itself a height of arrogance.

Then, look at their rudeness in asking their prophet, "Do you ridicule us?" It cast an aspersion on the prophet that he was, God forbid, an ignorant person who talked aimlessly. That is why he vehemently defended himself saying, "I seek the protection of Allah from being one of the ignorant." Even then, they had the temerity to say at the end of the story, "Now you have brought the truth", implying that the previous explanations were not "the truth", that the preceding divine speech and prophetic messages were, God forbid, untruths!

This story is not mentioned in the current Torah. Therefore, it was better not to address it to the Israelites. This may be another reason of changing the mode of address - the story was initially addressed to the Prophet, and after establishing the base, the pronouns were again changed to the original second person directly addressing the Israelites. Nevertheless, the Torah contains an order that implies that some such events must have taken place:

"If one be found slain in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field,

and it be not known who hath slain him: Then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain: And it shall be, that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take an heifer, which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn the yoke: And the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley: And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the Lord the God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the Lord; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried. And all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley- And they shall answer and say: Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them." (Deut., 21:1 - 8)

It must now be clear that the story as given here is not intended as a simple narrative. The main theme is taken up in verse 72 (*And when you killed a man...*), but before that, a part of the story is narrated to the Prophet in some detail in verses 67 - 71 for obvious reasons.

Let us now recapitulate what has been explained above, The verses 67-71 (*And when Musa said to his people: "Surely Allah commands you..."*), addressed to the Prophet, is a prologue to the forthcoming episode (verses 72 - 73), although the listeners do not know it yet. As the audience does not know why the Israelites were told to sacrifice a cow, its curiosity is aroused and the suspense continues until the relation between the sacrifice of the cow and detection of the murderer is revealed. It was this apparent irrelevance of the former to the latter that prompted the Israelites to accuse Musa (a.s.) of ridiculing them, of joking with them. This accusation showed that they were completely devoid of discipline, were very arrogant and disobedient. They were not inclined to obey any command without knowing its why and wherefore. They were not ready to believe in that which they could not see - belief in the unseen was against their grain. They were the people who had said to Musa (a.s.): "*O Musa! we will not believe in you until we see Allah manifestly*"(2:55).

Their trouble was that they wanted total independence in every affair, no matter whether it was within their domain or not. They erroneously thought that the unseen could be brought down to the level of the seen. Consequently, they wanted to adopt a deity which they could see by their naked eyes: *They said: "O Musa! make for us a god as they have (their) gods."* *He said: "Surely you are a people acting ignorantly"* (7:138).

No wonder that they did not understand the sublime status of their prophet Musa (a.s.) and thought that he, like themselves, followed his own desires and joked with, and ridiculed, the people. They accused him of joking and acting like ignorant ones. And Musa (a.s.) had to refute this charge: "I seek the protection of Allah from being one of the ignorant." Why did Musa (a.s.) seek the protection of Allah? Why did not he say straight away that he was not an ignorant person? It was because Musa (a.s.) preferred to rely on the divine protection which cannot fail, rather than on his own virtues.

The Israelites believed that one should not accept anything without proof. This principle is correct, of course. But they were mistaken in believing that man must know the reason of every order in full detail; that a command of general nature was not enough. That is why they went on asking for more and more detail about the cow they were told to slaughter. They thought that the cow, by its nature, could not bring a dead body to life; if somewhere there was a particular cow possessing this unheard of quality, it should be pin-pointed with accurate and detailed description. It was this trend of thought which prompted them to say: "Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is." They unnecessarily put themselves into a corner; and Allah, on this uncalled for demand, gave them a few

particulars; "Musa said: 'He says, Surely she is a cow neither advanced in age (i.e. not passed the calf-bearing age) nor too young (i.e. not virgin, nor one that has not given birth to a calf yet) of middle age between that (and this).'" "*al- 'Awan* " means a female in middle of child-bearing age. Then their Lord took mercy on them and admonished them not to indulge in too much questioning, and to be content with that which they were told: "do therefore what you are commanded ." But they did not listen to the divine advice and said: " 'Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what her color is.' Musa said: 'He says, Surely she is a yellow cow, her color is intensely yellow, giving delight to the beholders.'" This much explanation should have been enough for them, as by then the cow's age and color had been described to them. But no, it was not enough for the Israelites who unhesitatingly repeated their first question, shamelessly accusing Musa - and God too - of not giving them clear description as yet: "They said: 'Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is, for surely to us the cows are all alike, and if Allah please we shall surely be guided aright.'" So, Allah further particularized her nature and characteristics, saying: "Surely she is a cow not made submissive that she should plough land, nor does she irrigate the tith"; and then He put a further restriction about her color, "sound, without a blemish in her." Now that they were given all the details and could not think of any more questions, they said: "Now you have brought the truth." The sentence shows that they had to accept the command because they could not think of any more excuses to avoid it - but even then they put the blame of their previous disobedience on Musa - and by implication on Allah: that they had not complied with the order before because Musa (a.s.) and Allah had not explained it correctly. All this is implied in the last clause, "so they sacrificed her, though they had not the mind to do (it)."

OUR'AN : *And when you killed a man... :* It is the beginning of the main story. "*at-Tadaru*" (translated here as "disagreed") is derived from *ad-dar'* (repulse) and literally means to push one another. A man was killed and every group was disowning its responsibility, putting the blame on others. But Allah was to disclose what they wanted to hide.

QUR'AN: *So We said: "Strike the (dead body) with part of the (sacrificed cow)":* The Arabic text contains two pronouns -the first (masculine) refers to the dead body and the second (feminine) to the cow. The translation omits the pronouns replacing them with the nouns they stand for.

Someone has denied the actuality of this story, suggesting that the verses simply describe the promulgation of a law (as given in the Deut., 21:1- 8, quoted above). According to him, raising someone from the dead (mentioned in these verses) merely means finding out the identity of the killer - as Allah says: *And there is life for you in (the law of) retaliation(2:179)*. In short, he claims that there was no miracle involved, nor was there any dead body brought back to life. But the context of the story leaves no room for such misinterpretation - especially if we look at the words, "So We said: 'Strike the (dead body) with part of the (sacrificed cow)', thus Allah brings the dead to life."

QUR'AN: *Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks, rather worse in hardness: "al-Qaswah"* (sternness) in heart is like "hardness" in rock. "*Aw*" (or) is used here in the meaning of *bal*(rather). The next sentences show why their hearts were worse than rocks in hardness: "and surely there are some rocks from which streams burst forth." The sentence offers a contrast between rocks and water. Rocks are used as examples of hardness, while water is proverbially used to denote softness. Even then, there are some rocks - with all their hardness - from which streams of water - with all its softness - burst forth; "and surely there are some of them which split asunder so water issues out of them": The hard rocks send forth the soft waters; but the Israelites' hearts were so hard as never to allow any truth to issue out of them.

QUR'AN: *and surely there are some of them which fall down for fear of Allah:* We see how the

rocks and stones fall down - big rocks on the summits of mountains crack up, and then an ordinary earthquake is enough to dislodge them causing an avalanche. Also, the cracks fill up with ice and snow during winter, then the warmth of spring melts the ice sending the streams down the valleys. This phenomenon is related to its natural causes, yet Allah says that the rocks fall down from fear of Allah. Why? Because all the natural causes ultimately return to the First Cause, that is, Allah. Rocks, when they fall down because of the natural causes, are in fact obeying the divine decree which put them under the influence of those secondary causes. It may, therefore, be said that they understand the command of their Lord - an understanding that is created nature. They obey the decree of Allah inasmuch as they are thus molded by Him. Allah says: *and there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification (17:44); all are obedient to Him (2:116)*. Fear too is based on perception, as are the glorifying and the obeying. It may therefore be said that the rocks fall down for fear of Allah. This sentence is of the same genre as the following ones: *And the thunder declares His glory with His praise, and the angels too for awe of Him(13:13); And whoever is in the heavens and the earth makes obeisance to Allah only, willingly and unwillingly, and their shadows too at morn and eve(13:15)*. Here the sound of thunder has been counted as the declaration of divine glory and the shadow is said to prostrate for Allah. There are many verses of the same style and all are based on the same analysis as mentioned above.

However, the sentence, "and surely there are some of them which fall down for fear of Allah", further shows how the Jews' hearts were worse than rocks in hardness: The rocks are afraid of Allah and do fall down for His fear, but there is no fear of Allah in the Jews' hearts, they are not afraid of divine wrath.

The verse first mentions the believers, and then says, "whoever believes in Allah..." The context shows that the latter phrase refers to the real belief, the true *iman*, and that the word, "those who believe", (mentioned at first) refers to those who call themselves believers. The verse says that Allah gives no importance to names, like the believers, the Jews, the Christians or the Sabaeans. One cannot get a reward from Allah, nor can he be saved from punishment, merely by giving oneself good titles, as they, for example, claim that: *no one will enter the Garden except he who was a Jew or a Christian(2:111)*. The only criterion, the only standard, of honor and happiness is the real belief in Allah and the Day of Resurrection, accompanied by good deeds. It should be noted that Allah did not say, 'whoever of them believes'; otherwise it would have accorded some recognition to these titles, and would have implied that there was, after all, some benefit in acquiring these names.

This theme has been repeatedly expounded in the Qur'an. The honor and felicity depend entirely on true and sincere servitude; no name, no adjective, can do any good unless it is backed by correct belief and good deeds. This rule is applicable to all human beings, right from the prophets to the lowest rank. Look how Allah praises His prophets with all beautiful and excellent attributes, and then says: *and if they had set up others (with Him) certainly what they did would have become ineffectual for them(6:88)*. Also, He describes the high status and great prestige of the Holy Prophet and his companions, and then ends it with these words: *Allah has promised those among them who believe and do good, forgiveness and a great reward (48:29)*. Ponder on the significance of the phrase "among them."

Then we find that Allah had given a man some of His signs but he went astray: *and if We had pleased, We would certainly have exalted him thereby, but he clung to the earth and followed his low desire... (7:176)*.

There are many verses clearly showing that the honour and respect with Allah depends on reality, not on appearance.

Traditions

as -Sadiq (a.s.) was asked about the words of Allah: *Take hold of what We have given you with firmness*, whether it meant the strength of the bodies or the firm resolution of the heart. He (a. s.) said: "Both together" (al -*Mahdsin*).

The author says: This tradition has also been narrated by al-'Ayyashi in his *at-Tafsir*.

al-Halabi narrates in explanation of the words of Allah; *and bear in mind what is in it*, that he said: "Bear in mind what is in it and also bear in mind the chastisement that is laid down for its negligence." (al-'Ayyashi)

The author says: It has been inferred from the position of this clause - it follows the threat implied in lifting the mountain over them.

Abu Hurayrah said that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: "If the children of Israel had not said: *and if Allah please we shall surely be guided aright*, they would have never been given (respite). And had they (in the beginning) taken any cow and slaughtered her; it would have been enough for them; but they went on pressing (for more and more particulars), so Allah made it harder (and harder) for them." (*ad-Durru 'l-manthur*)

Ibn Faddal said: "I heard Abu 'l-Hasan (a.s.) saying: 'Surely Allah ordered the children of Israel to slaughter a cow - and what they needed was its tail. (But they asked for more and more details) so Allah made it harder (and harder) for them.'" (at-Tafsir, al-Qummi)

al-Bazanti said: "I heard ar-Rida (a.s.) saying: 'A man from the children of Israel killed one of his relatives, then he took the body and put it in the path (leading) to the best of the Israelities' clans. Thereafter he came demanding (the revenge of) his blood. Musa (a.s.) was informed that such and such a clan had killed such and such a man, and he was asked to tell them who the killer was. Musa said: "Bring me a cow." They said: "*Do you ridicule us?*" He said: "*I seek the protection of Allah from being one of the ignorant.*" And had they taken any cow, it would have been enough for them, but they pressed (for more particulars); therefore Allah made it harder for them. *They said: "Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is": Musa said: "He says, Surely she is a cow neither advanced in age nor too young, of middle age between that (and this).*" Even then, if they had taken any cow (fitting this description) it would have been enough. But they pressed for more, so Allah made it harder for them. *They said: "Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what her colour is". Musa said: "He says, Surely she is a yellow cow; her colour is intensely yellow, giving delight to the beholders.*" Even then if they had taken any such cow, it would have been enough for them. But they persisted (in asking for more details) and Allah made it even harder for them. *They said: "Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is, for surely to us the cows are all alike, and if Allah please we shall surely be guided aright." He said: "He says, Surely she is a cow not made submissive that she should plough the land, nor does she irrigate the tilth, sound, without a blemish in her."* They said: 'Now you have brought the truth.' They began their search and found such a cow with an Israelite youth. He said: "I shall not sell it but for a hide full of gold." Thereupon they came to Musa and informed him. He told them to buy it. So they bought and brought it. And Musa ordered it to be slaughtered. Then he ordered them to strike the dead body with its tail. As soon as they did so, the murdered man rose from the dead, and said: "O messenger of Allah! Surely it is my cousin who had killed me, and not the man against whom he has lodged his claim." In this way, they knew who the killer was. Thereafter, a companion of the messenger of Allah, Musa, said to him: "There is a story behind this cow." He asked: "And what is it?" He said: "(That) Israelite youth was very devoted to his father. And he purchased some goods, and came to his father

(who was asleep) and keys were under his head. And he did not like to awaken his father, and cancelled the deal. When his father woke up, he told him about it. The father said to him: 'Well done! Take this cow; it is a recompense for what you have lost.'" The messenger of Allah, Musa, said to him: "Look at the faithfulness and good deed, where does it take its people to?""

The author says: The traditions perfectly fit the description which we inferred from the verses.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 75-82

- 2:75 *أَفَنظَمُونَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُونَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ*
- 2:76 *ذَٰلِقَوْلِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَا بِبَعْضِهِمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ قَالُوا أَتُحَدِّثُونَهُمْ بِمَا فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لِيُحَاجُّوكُمْ بِهِ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ*
- 2:77 *أَوَلَا يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ*
- 2:78 *وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُونَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا أَمَانِي وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ*
- 2:79 *لَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ نَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِّمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِّمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ*
- 2:80 *وَقَالُوا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَةً قُلْ أَتَّخَذْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَنْ يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ عَهْدَهُ أَمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ*
- 2:81 *بَلَىٰ مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ*
- 2:82 *وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ*
- 2:75 *Do you then hope that they would believe in you? While a party from among them indeed used to hear the word of Allah, then altered it after they had understood it, and they know (this).*
- 2:76 *And when they meet those who believe they say: "We believe"; and when they are alone one with another they say: "Do you talk to them of what Allah has disclosed to you that they may argue with you by this before your Lord? Do you not then understand?."*
- 2:77 *What! Do they not know that Allah knows what they conceal and what they proclaim?.*
- 2:78 *And there are among them illiterates who know not the Book but only lies, and they do but conjecture.*
- 2:79 *Woe, then, to those who write the book with their hands and then say: "This is from Allah", so that they may sell it for a small price; therefore woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn (thereby).*
- 2:80 *And they say: "Fire shall not touch us but for a few days." Say: "Have you taken a promise from Allah, then Allah will never fail to keep His promise, or do you speak against Allah what you do not know?."*
- 2:81 *Yea! whoever earns evil and his sins beset him on every side, these are the inmates of the Fire; in it they shall abide.*
- 2:82 *And (as for) those who believe and do good deeds, these are the dwellers of the garden; in it they shall abide.*

Commentary

The context shows that the unbelievers, and especially those of Medina, thought that the Jews were the likeliest people to help and support the Apostle of Allah at his advent. The pagan tribes of Aws and Khazraj lived with the Jews of Medina, and they knew that the latter followed a divine religion and a revealed book. Thus it was not too much to expect them to believe in the latest in the series of divine religions and books.

This was the basis of their hope that the Jews would accept the Apostle of Allah as the true prophet, and would strengthen the cause of religion, and actively participate in the propagation of

truth. But no sooner did the Prophet migrate to Medina than the Jews showed their latent hostility. The hope was shattered and the expectation turned to disappointment. That is why Allah addresses the believers, saying: "Do you then hope that they would believe in you?" Concealment of truth and alteration of divine words was their deep-rooted life-pattern. Why wonder if they go back on what they used to say before the advent of Islam?

QUR'AN: Do you then hope... and they know this: The speech is now addressed to the Prophet and the believers, referring to the Jews in third person. This same style was used in the preceding story of the Cow, because the Jews had omitted the event from the Torah. These verses continue that mode of address because it exposes their habit of altering and manipulating the divine book.

QUR'AN: And when they meet those who believe... and what they proclaim: The two conditional clauses, "when they meet those who believe" and "when they are alone one with another" are not in opposition to each other - as were the clauses in the verse: *And when they meet those who believe, they say: "We believe"; and when they are alone with their Satans, they say: "Surely we are with you, we were only mocking (2:14).* Here the two clauses simply describe two instances of the Jews' transgressions and ignorance:

First: They indulge in hypocrisy, showing that they have accepted Islam, and trying in this way to protect themselves from trouble, ridicule and even death.

Second: They want to deceive Allah, forgetting that He is the Knower of the seen and the unseen, Aware of what they conceal and what they proclaim.

We may infer from the verses that the Jewish laity in Medina sometimes talked openly with the believers, telling them of some of the foretelling about the Prophet or giving them some information that proved the truth of Islam and its Prophet. But their leaders used to admonish them for it, telling them that it was a thing revealed to them, it should not be disclosed to the believers, lest they argued with the Jews before the Lord - as though if the believers did not argue with them before God, He would not know of it! Such thinking implies that Allah knew only the apparent, not the hidden and concealed things or thoughts. Allah refuted this foolish idea and said: "What! Do they not know that Allah knows what they conceal and what they proclaim?" It is our, and not God's, knowledge which is limited to the seen and does not comprehend the unseen, because our perception depends on the senses which in their turn depend on body organs - equipped with nervous instruments, surrounded by space and time, influenced by a hundred other material causes.

This talk also throws light on the materialistic outlook of the Israelites. They were so steeped in that belief that they applied the human limitations to God too. They thought that God was present and active inside the matter and prevailed over it. But that presence and that control and management were based on the same principles as a material cause brings out and controls a material effect. Such a belief was not a specialty of the Jews; it was and is held even by those followers of Islam who believe in fundamentality of matter. For these people, God's life, knowledge, power, choice, will, decree, order and management have the same meanings as do their own life, knowledge etc. It is a disease for which there is no cure. And the signs and warnings can avail nothing to a people who do not understand. Such views have made Islam a laughing-stock in the eyes of those who have no access to the true faith and correct Islamic knowledge. Those detractors say: The Muslims ascribe to their Prophet the saying, "Allah created Adam in His likeness"; and these followers of the Prophet have created a god in the likeness of Adam. One group of the Muslims ascribes to its Lord all the qualities of the matter. Another group does not understand anything of God's beautiful attributes; consequently it reduces all divine attributes to negatives. It says that the names and adjectives, which are used for both God and His creatures, have quite different meanings in both cases. When we say, "God is

Existent, Knowing, Powerful and Alive", the words denote some divine qualities totally incomprehensible to us, completely different from the meanings they have when they are applied to a human being. Therefore, it is necessary to reduce these words to their negatives. What the above sentence, for example, means is this: "God is not non-existent, not unaware, not powerless and not lifeless." Such explanation implies that they believe in that which they do not understand, worship that which they are uncertain about and invite others to believe in that which neither they nor anyone else knows anything about.

The word of truth is enough to dispel such falsehoods. The people have been admonished by the true religion to hold fast to the essence of reality and steer clear between the above-mentioned two extremes. They should know that Allah is not like His creatures, nor is He a set of negative propositions. The true religion directs common people to believe that Allah is a thing, unlike other things; that He has knowledge, unlike our knowledge; power, unlike our power; and will, not produced by contemplation; that He talks, not with a mouth; and hears, not with ears. As for the people of higher understanding, they must ponder on His signs and acquire deep knowledge of His religion. He has said: *Say: 'Are those who know and those who do not know alike?'* Only those possessed of understanding shall bear in mind (39:9). The people of higher understanding are not equal to a common man in their knowledge of truth and religion; likewise, the two are not alike in their respective responsibilities. This, therefore, is the teaching of religion for both groups respectively; it is there for them to follow, would they do so?

QUR'AN: *And there are among them illiterates who know not the Book but only lies and they do but conjecture; "al-Ummiyy" (one who does not read or write) is related to "al-umm" (mother). It is as though the excessive love of the mother prevented her from entrusting her child to a teacher to teach and train him; consequently he could learn only from his mother. "al-Amainiyy" is plural of "al-umniyyah" (lie). The verse says that some of the Jews were literates who did read and write the book - but making alterations in it; and the rest were illiterates who knew nothing of the book except the lies of the former group.*

QUR'AN: *Woe, then, to those who write the book with their hands... : "al-Wayl" (woe, disaster,, severe punishment, adversity, affliction); "al-ishtira" (to sell).*

QUR'AN: *therefore, woe to them for what their hands have written... : The pronouns may refer either to all Jews or only to the interpolators among them. If the former view is taken then the woe and condemnation would cover the illiterates too.*

QUR'AN: *Yea! whoever earns evil and his sins beset him on every side... "al-Khati'ah" (translated here as "sins") actually refers to the psychical condition resulting from evil-doing. That is why the verse speaks first of his evil-doing and then of the effects of the sins besetting him on every side. When he is beset by his sins on every side, there should remain no opening for the guidance to reach him; he, therefore, will go to Hell and abide there forever.*

Had there been an iota of faith in his heart, or some good traits like justice in his character, it would have been possible for the rays of guidance to penetrate to him. The overwhelming besetting of sins on every side, therefore, is possible in case of polytheism, as Allah says: *Surely Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases (4:48); and also in case of disbelief and denial of the divine signs, Allah says: And (as to) those who disbelieve in and belie Our signs, they are the inmates of the Fire, in it they shall abide (2:39).* In short, the earning of evil and being beset by sins on all sides is a broad expression covering all that would make one to abide in the Hell forever.

The two verses under discussion are almost similar to the verse: *Surely those who believe, and*

those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabaeans, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward... (2:62).

Both show that the basis of salvation and eternal happiness is the true belief and good deeds. The only difference between the two sets of the verses is that the verse 2:62 shows that mere taking to oneself nomenclatures like the Muslim, the Jew etc. is of no use; while the verses under discussion show that mere claiming of salvation is of no worth at all.

Traditions

Al-Baqir (a.s.) said about the words of Allah, *And when they meet those who believe... : " Some of the Jews (who were not inimical to the Muslims and were not a party to the Jewish conspiracy against them), on meeting the Muslims, used to narrate what the Torah contained of the description of Muhammad (s.a.w.); so their elders forbade them to do so and said: 'Do not inform them of what the Torah contains of the attributes of Muhammad (s.a.w.), lest they argue with you by that before your Lord.' Thereupon, this verse was revealed." (Majma 'u'l-bayan)*

It is narrated from the fifth or the sixth Imam that he said about the words of Allah, *Yea! whoever earns evil... "If they deny the wilayah (friendship, overlordship) of the Leader of the faithful, then they are the inmates of the Fire, in it they shall abide." (al- Kafi)*

The author says: ash-Shaykh at-Tusi has narrated in his *al-Amali* a tradition of nearly the same theme. The two traditions are based on the principle of the "flow" of the Qur'an and fit the verse on one of its best example. Allah has counted the love of, and submission to, the Prophet's family-members as a good deed, as He says: *Say: "I do not ask of you any recompense for it except the love for (my) near relatives; and whoever earns good, We give him more of good therein (42:23).* Also, the tradition may be taken as another explanation of the verse, as we shall describe in the Chapter 6 (The Table) that "the good" means complying with the demands of the belief of monotheism. If so, then the tradition particularly mentions 'Ali (a.s.) because he was the first of this *summah* to open this door.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 83-88

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَأَقِيمُوا

الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ 2:83

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لَا تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَلَا تُخْرِجُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ 2:84

ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتُخْرِجُونَ فَرِيقًا مِّنْكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ تَظَاهَرُونَ عَلَيْهِم بِالْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَإِن يَأْتُوكُمْ أُسَارَىٰ تُفَادُوهُمْ وَهُوَ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ إِخْرَاجُهُمْ أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ فَمَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ

الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ 2:85

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ فَلَا يَخَفُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ 2:86

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ بِالرُّسُلِ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ أَفَكُلَّمَا جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا

تَهْوَىٰ أَنْفُسُكُمْ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ فَفَرِيقًا كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِيقًا تَقْتُلُونَ 2:87

وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ بَلْ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيلًا مَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ 2:88

2:83 And when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel: "You shall not worship (any) but Allah and (you shall do) good to (your) parents, and to the near of kin and to the orphans and the needy, and speak to men good (words) and keep up prayer and pay the zakat." Then you turned back except a few of you and (now too) you turn aside.

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

2:85 Yet you it is who slay your people and turn a party from among you out of their homes, backing each other up against them unlawfully and exceeding the limits; and if they should come to you as captives, you would ransom them - while their very turning out was unlawful for you. Do you then believe in a part of the Book and disbelieve in the other? What then is the reward of such among you as do this but disgrace in the life of this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they shall be sent back to the most grievous chastisement, and Allah is not at all heedless of what you do.

2:86 These are they who have bought the life of this world for the hereafter, so their chastisement shall not be lightened nor shall they be helped.

2:87 And most certainly We gave Musa the Book and We sent apostles after him one after another; and We gave 'Isa, the son of Maryam, clear evidence and strengthened him with the holy spirit. What! whenever then an apostle came to you with that which your souls did not desire, you were insolent, so you called some (of them) liars and some you slew.

2:88 And they say: "Our hearts are covered." Nay, Allah has cursed them on account of their unbelief- so little it is that they believe.

Commentary

QUR'AN: And when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel: "You shall not worship (any) but Allah... ": To begin with, the verse refers to the Children of Israel in third person,

and then ends by addressing them in second person, "Then you turned back... " The first sentence mentions making a covenant with them - which must naturally be in words - then describes that covenant; this in its turn begins with a declarative sentence, "You shall not worship (any) but Allah", and ends up with some imperative ones, "and speak to men good words ... " When the stories of the Israelites began, they were addressed in second person, because the verses contained a lot of admonition and reprimand; it continued to the story of the Cow when, because of demands of eloquence, it was changed to third person. Consequently, this verse too began with third person, but when time came to quote the verbal covenant, the style reverted to the second person.

"You shall not worship (any) but Allah": It is a prohibition in the form of an information. This style shows the utmost importance attached to the ban by the speaker - it is as though the speaker has no doubt whatsoever that the order shall be complied with, and that, in this case, the servants will not dare to go near idolatry.

The same style is continued in the next clause, "and (you shall do) good to (your) parents, and to the near of kin and to the orphans and the needy."

The change over to second person, although resorted to for the purpose of quoting the covenant, has put the speech back to the original style and has linked the last clauses of the covenant to the fresh admonitory ones: "and keep up prayer and pay the *zakat*. Then you turned back ... "

QUR'AN: *and (you shall do) good to (your) parents...* :As translated here, it is a declarative sentence with the sense of imperative. It may also be translated as an imperative sentence: "and (do) good... " The verse gives in descending order of importance, the list of those whom one should do good to. The parents are the root of man's existence, and nearest of all to him. Then come the near of kin. Going outside the circle of relatives, the orphans are most deserving of kindness and beneficence, because in their small age they are deprived of their father - their guardian, protector and bread-earner. Other needy persons come after them.

"and to the orphans": "*al-Yatim*" (orphan) is he whose father has died. The word is not used for him who has lost his mother. Also, it is said that a human child is called "orphan" if his father dies, but in animals, the adjective is used for one whose mother dies.

"and the needy": "*al-Masakin*" is plural of *al-miskin* (needy, impoverished, destitute, lowly).

"and speak to men good (words)": "*Husnan*" (beauty, excellence) is an infinitive verb, used for adjective (beautiful, excellent, good) to give emphasis. Some reciters have recited it *hasanan* (beautiful, excellent, good). However, the sentence enjoins them to speak nicely to the people; it is an indirect way of ordering them to maintain good social relations to behave with people nicely, gently and good-mannered - no matter whether the opposite party is a believer or an unbeliever. It cannot be said to be abrogated by the verse of fighting, because the two verses are not contradictory to each other; the place and time of social contact is other than the place and time of fighting. For example, using hard words when admonishing a child to correct his behavior is not contrary to maintaining good social relation.

QUR'AN: "*You shall not shed your blood...* ": This too is a prohibitory order, in the form of an information - the same style which was used in, "You shall not worship (any) but Allah." "*as-safk*" (to shed blood).

QUR'AN: *backing each other up against them: "at-Tazahur"* (to help each other). *az-Zahir* (helper); it is derived from *az-zahr* (back) as though the helper strengthens the back of the helped one.

QUR'AN : *while their very turning away was unlawful* for you: Its literal translation will be, 'while it was unlawful for you their very turning out.' The pronoun "*it*" is not related here to any

previously mentioned noun etc., it is a pronoun used to begin a sentence. In the verse, *Say: "He, Allah is one" (112:1)*, the pronoun "He" has the same grammatical significance.

QUR'AN : *Do you believe in a part of the Book... : Why should you follow the rule of paying ransom for them and disobey the prohibition of turning them out? Are not both rules in the same book? Do you believe in a part of the Book and disbelieve in the other?*

QUR'AN: *And We sent apostles after him one after another: "at -Taqfiyah" (to send someone after someone else).*

QUR'AN: *and We gave Isa son of Maryam, clear evidence: This subject will be dealt with in Chapter 3, (The Family of 'Imran).*

QUR'AN : *And they say: "Our hearts are covered": al-Ghulf " is plural of al-aghlaf . It is derived from ghilaf(cover). They say: Our hearts are protected under various covers and veils - your call cannot reach our hearts. The sentence has the same import as the verse: And they say: "Our hearts are under coverings from that to which you call us (41:5).*

Traditions

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said about the words of Allah, *and speak to men good (words): "Speak to men the best of that which you would like to be said about yourself." (al-Kafi)*

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about this verse: "Speak to men, and do not speak but good until you know what it is.

"al-Baqir (a.s.) said: "Speak to men the best, of that which you would like to be said about yourself; for certainly Allah, Mighty and Great is He, dislikes an abuser, curler, speaker of evil against the believers, indecent, shameless (and) begger, and He loves the modest, mild-tempered, chaste (and) moderate."(*Ma'ani 'l-akhbar*)

The author says: A tradition, similar to the first one, has been narrated in al-Kafi from as-Sadiq (a.s.) with another chain of narrators; and similarly in al-'Ayyashi.

Another tradition, like the second one has been written from the same Imam in al-Kafi; and one like the third is narrated from al-Baqir (a.s.) in al -'Ayyashi. Apparently these meanings of the "good word" have been inferred from general usage.

as-Sadiq (a.s) said: "Verily Allah sent Muhammad (s.a.w.) with five swords: So (there is) a sword against a *dhimmi* (free non-Muslim subject of an Islamic country). Allah said: *and speak to men good (words)*; it was revealed about the *dhimmis*, then it was abrogated by another verse, *Fight those who do not believe in Allah... (9:29)* (al-'Ayyashi)

The author says: In this tradition the Imam has taken the "speech" to mean behavior. We say: Do not speak to him but good; what we mean is: Do not deal with him but in a good and decent manner. This meaning will apply only if we take the word, "abrogated" in its terminological sense. But it may also be taken in its literal sense (as we shall explain under the verse:*Whatever signs We abrogate or cause to be forgotten... 2:106*); and in that case this verse will not be in conflict with that of the fighting. It should be pointed out that such uses of words in their literal meanings (as against their terminological ones) are not infrequent in the traditions of the Imams.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 89-93

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ فَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ 2:89

يُنْسَمَا اشْتَرَوْا بِهِ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بَغْيًا أَنْ يَنْزِلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ فَبَاؤُوا بِغَضَبِ اللَّهِ عَلَى غَضَبٍ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ 2:90
وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا نُوْمِنُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْنَا وَيَكْفُرُونَ بِمَا وَرَاءَهُ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ قُلْ فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْبِيَاءَ اللَّهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ 2:91

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِهِ وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ 2:92
وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاسْمَعُوا قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا وَأَشْرَبُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِهِمْ قُلْ يُنْسَمَا يَا مَرْكُم بِهِ إِيْمَانُكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ 2:93

2:89 *And when there came to them a Book from Allah verifying that which they have, and aforetime they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved, but when there came to them that which they did recognize, they disbelieved in him; so Allah's curse is on the unbelievers.*

2:90 *Evil is that for which they sold their souls - that they should deny what Allah has revealed, out of envy that Allah should send down of His grace on whomsoever of His servants He pleases; so they returned with wrath upon wrath, and there is a disgraceful punishment for the unbelievers.*

2:91 *And when it is said to them, "Believe in what Allah has revealed, " they say: "We believe in that which was revealed to us;" and they deny what is besides that, while it is the truth verifying that which they have. Say: "Why then did you kill Allah's prophets before if you were indeed believers?."*

2:92 *And most certainly Musa came to you with clear evidence, then you took the calf (for a god) in his absence and you were unjust.*

2:93 *And (remember) when We made a covenant with you and raised the mountain over you: "Take hold of what We have given you with firmness and listen (to Our words)." They said: "We hear and disobey." And they were made to imbibe (the love of) the calf into their hearts on account of their unbelief. Say: "Evil is that which your belief bids you if you are believers."*

Commentary

QUR'AN: *And when there came to them a Book:* The context shows that "a Book" refers to the Qur'an.

QUR'AN : *and aforetime they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved:* It appears that whenever the pagans of Arabia clashed with the Jews, the latter prayed for victory by the right of the Prophet, and by his prophethood and emigration; and that this was their usual custom before the advent of the Prophet, so much so that even the pagans knew it of them. It all is implied in the word, "they used to."

QUR'AN: *but when there came to them that which they did recognize:* They knew that

Muhammad (s.a.w.) was the awaited Prophet, because all the attributes and particulars mentioned in their books fitted on him perfectly. And yet they denied his truth.

QUR'AN: *Evil is that for which they sold their souls... : "Baghyan"* (out of envy) is in accusative case, explaining the reason why they disbelieved in Muhammad (s.a.w.) even after recognizing him. What they did was "out of envy", "that Allah should send down of His grace on whomsoever of His servants He pleases" was the object of their envy. "so they returned with wrath upon wrath", that is, they returned doubly enraged. It may also mean that they invited double wrath of Allah upon themselves - the first because they disbelieved in Torah and the second because they disbelieved in the Qur'an.

The verse says that they were partisans of the Prophet long before he was born; they prayed to Allah for victory by his name and his Book. When the Prophet was sent and the Qur'an was revealed, they very well recognized that he was the Prophet in whose name they used to pray for victory, and whose coming they awaited. But they were overwhelmed by envy and arrogance. No sooner did the Prophet begin his call then they denied his truth, and forgot all that they used to tell about the awaited prophet. It was not surprising as they had earlier disbelieved in Torah too. Thus they committed disbelief after disbelief, and invited the wrath of Allah upon themselves, not once but twice.

QUR'AN: *and they deny what is besides that:* That is, they claim that they do not believe in any book other than Torah; but the fact is that they do not believe even in Torah.

QUR'AN: *Say: "Why then did you kill Allah's prophets..."*: The conjunctive, "then", serves to relate this question to their claim, "We believe in that which was revealed to us." If this claim of yours is correct then why did you kill the prophets of Allah? And why did you disbelieve in Musa by taking the calf for a god? And why did you say, "We hear and disobey", when We took a promise from you and lifted the mountain over you?

QUR'AN: *and they were made to imbibe (the love of)the calf into their hearts: "al-Ishrab"* (to make to imbibe, to make to drink). Instead of saying 'the love of the calf', the verse says, "to imbibe the calf", for emphasis, as though they had drunk the calf itself into their hearts. The sentence thus contains two metaphors - "the calf" for the love of the calf, and imbibing into hearts for loving.

QUR'AN: *Say: "Evil is that which your belief bids you..."*: It is a derisive expression ridiculing them for their killings of the prophets, their disbelief in Musa and their arrogance in committing sin after sin and then claiming that they were the true believers. The verse tauntingly asks them: Is this what your belief bids you?

Traditions

As-Sadiq (a.s.) explained the verse, *and when there came to them a Book from Allah verifying that which they have...*, in this way: "The Jews found in their books that Muhammad (s.a.w.), the Messenger of Allah, would migrate and settle between 'Ayr and Uhud. So, they went out looking for that place. They passed by a mountain called Hadad; and they said: 'Hadad -and Uhud are the same'. So they dispersed nearby; some of them settled at Tayma', and some others at Fadak and yet others at Khaybar. Those at Tayma' once desired (to see) some of their brethren (at another place). A Bedouin from (the tribe of) Qays passed by them and they hired (his camels).

He told them: 'I shall take you from between 'Ayr and Uhud.' They told him: 'When you pass between the two, tell us.' When they reached the land of Medina, he said: 'That is 'Ayr and this is Uhud.' They descended from his camels and said to him: 'We have now found (the place of) our

desire; now we do not need your camels, you may go wherever you wish.' Then they wrote to their brethren at Fadak and Khaybar: 'We have found the place, come therefore to us.' They wrote in reply: 'Now we have settled in this place, and have acquired properties; and we are so near to you. Therefore, when it will happen (i.e., when the Prophet will come to Medina), we shall rush to you.' Those Jews acquired properties in the land of Medina. When their wealth increased, its news came to the ears of Tubba' and he attacked them. They fortified themselves and he laid siege to them. (And they used to take pity on the weekly soldiers of Tubba' and throw dates and barley to them at night. This came to the notice of Tubba' and he softened towards them. He assured them of their safety and they came down to him. He told them: 'I do like this place of yours and I am inclined to settle down here.' They said: 'It is not for you. It is the migration place of a prophet; and no one may settle down here until that happens.' Thereupon he said: 'Then I am leaving among you some of the members of my clan, so that when it happens they shall help and assist him.' Thus he left behind the two tribes you see today, the Aws and the Khazraj. When these two (tribes) increased in number, they used to grab the properties of the Jews. At that time, the Jews used to warn them: 'Oh! when Muhammad (s.a.w.) is sent (by Allah) we shall certainly turn you out from our town and properties.' But when Muhammad (s.a.w.) was sent as Prophet, it was the Helpers (the Aws and the Khazraj) who believed in him and the very Jews denied him! This is the meaning of the words of Allah, *and aforesaid they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved...* " (*al-'Ayyashi*)

Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim and Abu Na'aym (in his *Dala'ilu 'n-nubuwwah*) have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "The Jews used to pray for victory against the Aws and the Khazraj by the right of the Messenger of Allah, before he was sent as prophet. However, when Allah raised him from the Arabs, the same Jews disbelieved in him and denied what they used to say about him. Mu'adh ibn Jabal, Bishr ibn Bara' ibn Ma'rur and Dawud ibn Salamah told them: 'O Jews! Fear Allah and accept Islam; because it was you who used to pray for victory against us by the right of Muhammad, while we were polytheists, and you used to tell us that he would (soon) be sent, describing to us his attributes.' Salam ibn Mushkim, one of the tribe of Banu an Nadir, said to them: 'He has not brought to us anything we know; and he is not the prophet we were telling you about.' Then Allah sent down (the verse): '*And when there came to them a Book from Allah...* "' (*ad-Durru 'l-manthur*)

Abu Nu'aym has narrated in his *Dala'ilu 'n-Nubuwwah* from the chains of 'Ata' and ad-Dahhak, from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "The Jews of Banu Qurayzah and Banu an-Nadir, before Muhammad (s.a.w.) was sent as prophet, used to pray to Allah for victory, invoking Him against the disbelievers and saying: 'O Allah! We seek Thy help, by the right of the untaught prophet, to let us triumph over them.' And they were given victory. But when there came to them that which they did recognize (i.e., Muhammad - s.a.w.), and actually they had no doubt whatsoever about him, they disbelieved in, and denied him. (*ad-Durru'l-manthur*)

The author says: Similar traditions have been narrated by various other chains also.

A commentator, after pointing to the last mentioned traditions and others like them, says: "These traditions - weak as their narrators are and incompatible as they are with the narrated traditions - are anomalous in their meaning too, because they maintain that the prayer for victory was made 'by the person of the Prophet' or, as some traditions say, 'by the right of the Prophet'; and such a prayer is against the *shari'ah*; and no one has any right on Allah. How could prayer be offered with the help of such a non-existent right.

Reply: This objection results from not understanding the meaning of "right" and oath. Oath is used to join and bind a proposition, order, request or exclamation to an honorable and sublime thing - if

that proposition etc. is wrong, the honor and sublimity of the thing bound to it, is tarnished and damaged. When you say, "By my life, Zayd is standing", you have bound the honor of your life to the truth of your statement; if that statement be wrong, your life would lose its honor. When you say, "By my life, I shall do this work", or "I entreat you, by my life, to do this work", you have, in the same way, put the honor of your life at stake for that work; if you did not do it, or if the second party did not heed to your entreaty, your life would lose its honor, its dignity. Two things emerge from this explanation:

First: Oath is the strongest method of emphasizing a talk, as the scholars of literature have confirmed.

Second: The thing by which one swears, must be more honorable and more important than the proposition etc. which it is related to; because a proposition cannot be emphasized with the help of a less important thing. Allah has sworn, in His Book, by His own name and attributes. For example, So, by your Lord, *We would most certainly question them all*(15:92). Also, He quotes others swearing by His name and attributes: *By Allah, our Lord...* (6:23); Then by Thy Might I will surely make them live an evil life(38:82) . But He has also sworn by His Prophet, His angels and His books, as well as by His creatures like the heaven, the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the night, the day, the mountains, the rivers, the towns, the man, the tree, the fig and the olive. It could not be possible unless these things had a real dignity of their own bestowed on them by Allah; every such thing must have an attribute reflecting one of the divine attributes, or an activity related to the divine sublimity and every dignity and honor emanates from Him.

Now, what objection can be raised against a suppliant, if he prays to Allah for something entreating Him by one of the above-mentioned things - considering the fact that Allah Himself has sworn by those things and has given them a sublimity and dignity? Why an exception should be made in case of the Apostle of Allah only? Is it not an affront to the Prophet to remove him from this common way of showing respect? By my life, Muhammad, the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) is not less honorable in the eyes of Allah than an Iraqi fig or a Syrian olive! These people forget that Allah Himself has sworn by His Prophet:By your life! they were blindly wandering on in their intoxication (15:72).

Now we should have a look at the "right." Right, as opposed to wrong, means a factual thing, existing outside imagination, like the earth and the man; in short, every real and substantial thing, as opposed to illusory and imaginary ones. Monetary and other social rights come within this category because they are firmly established by the society.

The Qur'an has nullified all the rights claimed by man, except that which is laid down and confirmed by Allah - in creation as well as in legislation. Right in the legislative and social spheres is that which Allah Himself has established, like the monetary rights, the rights of the brothers and the rights of the parents etc.

It is necessary to mention here that no one can lay down a right against Allah, no one can make it incumbent upon Allah to do or give something. But it is possible for Allah to make it incumbent upon Himself to do something, or to give someone something, all in the sphere of legislation. Then that "someone" shall have a right on Allah which Allah Himself has established. For example, Allah says:*even so (now) it is a right on Us (that) We deliver the believers (10:103); And certainly Our word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the apostles: Most surely they shall be assisted ones, and most surely Our host alone shall be the victorious ones (37:171-173)*

The assistance, promised here, is general and unconditional, not restricted by any proviso. Getting deliverance is the right of the believers on Allah, and getting assistance is, in the same way, the right

of the apostles. By establishing this right on Himself for the apostles, Allah has enhanced their dignity and honor. And there is nothing to prevent a suppliant from entreating Allah to help and deliver him from his difficulties, by the right of His apostle or apostles. Allah Himself has laid down that right and He Himself swears by every honorable thing, showing us that such oaths and adjurations are in fact liked by Him.

In short, there is no hitch in entreating Allah by His Apostle or by the right of His Apostle. The same applies to entreating Him by His friends, or by the right of His friends. He has established a right for them on Himself that He will surely assist them in the path of happiness, with every related assistance.

The claim that "no one has any right on Allah" is just nonsense. Of course, no one can lay down a right for himself on Allah; no one can make it incumbent on Allah to do some thing. But a suppliant does not pray to Allah by a right forced on Allah by someone else; he pleads to Him by a right which He Himself has established pledging His Own word; and His Promise is never broken.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 94-99

- 2:94 قُلْ إِنْ كَانَتْ لَكُمُ الدَّارُ الآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَالِصَةً مِّنْ دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوْا الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ
- 2:95 وَلَنْ يَتَمَنَّوَهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ
- وَلَتَجِدَنَّهُمْ أَحْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلَى حَيَاةٍ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا يَوَدُّ أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعَمَّرُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُرْحَزٍ بِهِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ أَنْ يُعَمَّرَ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ
- 2:96 قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِجِبْرِيْلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ
- 2:97 مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِلَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَجِبْرِيْلَ وَمِيكَالَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ
- 2:98 وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَا إِلَّا الْفَاسِقُونَ
- 2:94 Say: "If the future abode with Allah is purely for you to the exclusion of the people then invoke death if you are truthful."
- 2:95 And they will never invoke it on account of what their hands have sent before, and Allah knows the unjust ones.
- 2:96 And you will most certainly find them the greediest of men for life, and (greedier) than even those who are polytheists; every one of them loves that he should be granted a life of a thousand years, and his being granted a long life will in no way remove him further off from the chastisement, and Allah sees what they do.
- 2:97 Say: "Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel for surely he revealed it to your heart by Allah's Command, verifying that which is before it, and guidance and good news for the believers.
- 2:98 Whoever is the enemy of Allah and His angels and His apostles and Gabriel and Michael - so surely Allah is the enemy of the unbelievers."
- 2:99 And certainly We have revealed to you clear signs, and none disbelieve in them except the transgressors.

Commentary

QUR'AN: Say: "If the future abode... ": The Jews claimed, "Fire shall not touch us but for a few days"(2:80). When they were told to believe in what Allah had revealed, they declared: "We believe in that which was revealed to us" (2:91). All this implied that only they would be saved on the Day of Resurrection to the exclusion of all the others; that their deliverance and happiness in the next world would be unmarred by any unpleasant experience as the Fire shall not touch them but for a few days equal in number to the day they worshipped the calf. To remove that self-delusion and conceit, Allah put a challenge to them, to show them their true face, to make them realize that their claims were without any substance. He (Allah) told His Apostle to say to them: "If the future abode... is for you... " The "future abode" points to the felicity and happiness of that abode; the owner of a house arranges and manages it in the best possible way, and decorates it according to his taste and liking. "with Allah", that is, firmly established with Allah, by His order and His permission; the phrase has the same import here as in the verse: Surely the religion with Allah is Islam (3:19). "purely", that is,

unmixed with punishment or humiliation - utmost that you think possible is a punishment of just a few days. "to the exclusion of the people", because you presume that all religions, except your own, are false. If you really think so, "then invoke death if you are truthful ." This challenge is similar to the one given in verse: Say: "O you who *are Jews, if you think that you are the friends of Allah to the exclusion of other people, then invoke death if you are truthful*"(62:6). The argument is very clear about which nobody can have any doubt whatsoever. Any man (nay! even an animal having a limited perception and sensitivity), if given total freedom to choose between comfort and discomfort, will at once opt for the comfort, without any hesitation, without any contemplation. Put before him a life polluted with trouble and turmoil and another clean and pure, and tell him to take hold of any one; naturally, and without any doubt, he will grab at the pure one. If for any reason he is prevented from the life of his choice, he will always dream of it, and will remain looking for any opportunity to lay his hands upon it.

If the Jews are truthful in their claim that the other world's pure happiness belongs to them to the exclusion of others, then they "must yearn for it with their hearts, words and deeds.

"And they will never invoke it on account of what their hands have sent before", for example, the killings of the prophets, the disbelief in Musa (a.s.) and breaking of the covenants, "and Allah knows the unjust ones."

QUR'AN: *on account of what their hands have sent before*: It is a metaphorical reference to the "deeds." Most of the external deeds are done by hands; then the finished product is sent to the one who wants it or may benefit from it.

The sentence has two allegorical allusions: it counts every deed as having been done by hands; and it ascribes the action of "sending" to the hands while in fact it is the man who sends his deeds before.

Actions of a man, and especially those done regularly, are a clear mirror of his unconscious and sub-conscious personality. Evil deeds expose the evil nature of the doer - and such a nature does not like meeting its Lord or staying in the abode of His friends.

QUR'AN: *And you will most certainly find them the greediest of men for life*: It is an explanation of the divine word, "And they will never invoke it... " They do not yearn for death because they are greediest of all men for the life of this world. It is this greed and avid craving to remain in this world which prevents them from looking forward to the next abode. The word, "life", is used in this verse as a common noun - it is to show how insignificant and trifling this life is; Allah has said: *And this life of the world is nothing but a sport and a play, and as for the next abode, that most surely is life - did they but know (29:64).*

QUR'AN: *and (greedier) that even those who are polytheists*: Apparently the conjunctive, "and", joins this clause to the word, "men", that is, you will find them greedier than even the polytheists for life.

QUR'AN: *and his being granted a long life will in no way remove him further off from the chastisement*: The verse's literal translation: and it is not a remover of him from the chastisement his being granted a long life. "ma" (not, no, particle of negation); the pronoun "it" is that of *sha'n** and *qissah* "his being granted along life" is the subject preceded by the predicate, that is, "is not a remover of him... "

The sentence may also be syntactically analyzed in another way: the pronoun, "it", may refer to the love each of them had of being granted a life of a thousand years. It would accordingly mean that that love of theirs would not ward off the Divine Chastisement from them; in this case, the clause, "his being granted a long life" will be a description of that love.

Anyhow, what the verse says is this: They shall never invoke the death, and I swear that you will

most certainly find them the greediest of men for this base and insignificant life which prevents them from the happy and good life of the next abode; you will find them greedier than even the polytheists for this life, although the latter do not believe in the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment, and consequently their love for this life should be unparalleled; every one of them loves that he should be granted the longest life, but even the longest life cannot remove him further off from the Divine Chastisement, because life, no matter how long it is, is limited and has to come to an end.

QUR'AN: *every one of them loves that he should be granted a life of a thousand years*: that is, the longest life. "a thousand" is used to denote numerousness. In Arabic, it is the highest denomination which is described by a single word. Higher denominations are shown by repetition and combination, for example, ten thousand, a hundred thousand, a thousand thousand (i.e., a million).

QUR'AN: *And Allah sees what you do: "al-Basir"* is one of the beautiful names of Allah; it signifies that although He does not have a body or an eye, He is fully cognizant of all things which we perceive with our eyes. It shows a facet of the name, *al-'Alim* (the Knowing).

QUR'AN: *Say: "Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel - forsurely he revealed it to your heart by Allah's Command*: Apparently the verse was revealed as a reply to something the Jews had said - they arrogantly refused to believe in what was revealed to the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.), on the pretext that they were enemies of Gabriel who had the charge of bringing the revelation to Muhammad (s.a.w.). Allah replied to them in two verses - concerning the Qur'an and Gabriel both. Also the traditions giving the background of the verses confirm it. The verses contain four replies to their arrogance in denial of the Qur'an:

First: Gabriel has revealed the Qur'an to your heart by Allah's Command, not by his own wish. Therefore, even if they feel enmity towards Gabriel, it should not prevent them from believing in a revelation sent down by Allah's Command.

Second: The Qur'an verifies the Divine Book which was revealed before it and which they have in their hands. How can they believe in a book and deny another which verifies it?

Third: The Qur'an is a guidance for those who believe in it.

Fourth: It is also a good news for the believers. How can a sane person turn his face away from guidance and good news, even if it is brought to him by a supposed enemy of his?

So far as their professed enmity towards Gabriel was concerned, they were replied as follows:

Gabriel is one of the angels of Allah; he has no authority except to follow and obey the Divine Command - just like Michael and other angels. They are honored servants of Allah; they do not disobey His command, and they do as they are told. Likewise, the apostles of Allah have no authority except by Allah and from Allah. To have enmity towards them, to harbor hatred for them is enmity and hatred towards Allah Himself. Therefore, whoever is the enemy of Allah and His angels and His apostles and Gabriel and Michael, so surely Allah is his enemy.

All these replies are clearly given in these two verses.

QUR'AN: *for surely he revealed it to your heart by Allah's Command*: Apparently, it should have been "to my heart"; instead, it says, "to your heart." The pronoun has been changed from the first to the second person to draw attention to an important factor: So far as the revelation of the Qur'an is concerned, neither Gabriel has any choice or authority of his own in bringing it down (he is subject to the Divine command, which he faithfully carries out) nor the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) has any choice or authority of his own in receiving it and conveying it to his *ummah*; his heart is the receptacle of revelation, on which he has no control at all and which he is bound to convey to his people.

The Jews have been mentioned in these verses sometimes in the second person, and sometimes in the third. Their admonition and condemnation has continued for a long time; and the Speaker wants to

show that they do not deserve the honor of being addressed by Him. That is why He frequently changes the styles, again and again going from the second to the third person pronouns. The audience gets the impression that the Speaker does not like to speak to them - because of their heedlessness and depravity, but at the same time does not like to leave them as they are without pronouncing His judgment against them.

QUR'AN: *the enemy of the unbelievers:* Instead of saying, "their enemy", the verse uses the word, "enemy of the unbelievers"; it serves to show also the reason of that enmity. Allah is their enemy, because they are unbelievers, and Allah is the enemy of the unbelievers.

QUR'AN: *and none disbelieve in them except the transgressors:* It explains the cause of their disbelief; they disbelieve because they are transgressors. Or, may be the definite article "the", in "the transgressors" refers to the group mentioned in the beginning of the chapter: *but He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors, who break the covenant of Allah after its confirmation...* (2:26-27)

As for Gabriel and how he brought the revelation to the heart of the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.), we shall explain it, God willing, in another place; the same applies to Michael and other angels.

Traditions

Ibn 'Abbas explained the reason of the revelation of the verse, *Say: "Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel... "*, in these words: "When the Prophet came to Medina, Ibn Suriya and some Jews of Fadak asked him (some questions). They said: 'O Muhammad! How do you sleep? Because we have been told about the sleep of the Prophet who would come in the last days?'

He said: 'My eyes sleep while my heart is awake.' They said: 'You are right, O Muhammad! Now tell us about the child whether it is from the man or from the woman?' He said: 'As for the bones, the nerves and the veins, they are from the man; and as for the flesh, the blood, the nails and the hairs, they are from the woman.' They said: 'You are right, O Muhammad! Then why is it that sometimes the child resembles his paternal uncles, without having a least likeness of his maternal uncles? And sometimes he resembles his maternal uncles without having any likeness at all to his paternal uncles?' He replied: 'He resembles to that parent's (side) whose fluid dominates the others.' They said: 'You spoke the truth, O Muhammad! Now, tell us about your Lord, what is He?' Then Allah revealed (the Chapter 112): *Say: "He, Allah is One..."*, Then Ibn Suriya said: 'One (more) thing; if you tell (us) about it, I shall believe in you and follow you. Which angel is it that brings to you that which Allah reveals to you?' He said: 'Gabriel.' (Ibn Suriya) said: 'He is our enemy; he brings the (order of) fighting, hardship and war. And Michael brings comfort and happiness. Had it been Michael who came to you (with revelation) we would have believed in you.'

The author says: Very many traditions (nearly *mutawatir* in number) have been narrated by both Sunni and Shi'ah narrators, that (when) the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) (slept) his eyes used to sleep but his heart kept awake. Sleep did not make him unaware of himself; when asleep, he was well aware that he was asleep; when he dreamt he knew that he was dreaming. Not too often, this happens to some other good persons too when their souls are clean and they keep in touch with the Divine sublimity. When the soul rises to that level, it can never be oblivious of the various changes occurring to itself in its worldly life, nor can it forget its relation to its Lord. At this stage, it may look at the world and its life taking the whole spectrum at one glance, as a man looks at a tree and perceives it all at once. In this detached manner, it observes that all human beings are asleep - not only those who

are manifestly asleep, but those too who are thought to be awake. Almost all men have taken shelter under sensual perception; have bound themselves to the fetters of materialism. They are in fact asleep, even when they think they are awake. 'Ali (a.s.) has said: "The people are asleep; when they die they will wake up ..."

This topic will be further explained in other place; other sentences of this tradition too will be explained later.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 100-101

أَوْ كَلَّمَا عَاهَدُوا عَهْدًا نَبَذَهُ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ 2:100
 وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ 2:101
 2:100 *What! Whenever they make a covenant, a party of them cast it aside? Nay, most of them do not believe.*

2:101 *And when there came to them an Apostle from Allah verifying that which they have, a party of those who were given the Book threw the Book of Allah behind their backs as if they knew nothing.*

Commentary

Qur'an: *cast it aside: "an-Nabdh"* (to throw away, to renounce).

Qur'an: *And when there came to them an Apostle from Allah... "*: The word, "an Apostle, definitely means the Apostle of Allah, Muhammad (s.a.w.); it does not refer to any other apostle who might have come "verifying that which they have", because "when there came" does not mean "whenever there came"; in other words, it does not signify a recurring incidence, but an event that happened once only.

The verse points to the Jews' adverse attitude towards the truth: they were so steeped in falsehood that they concealed the foretelling of the Torah about the Prophet of Islam, and refused to believe in the Qur'an which verified that which they had in their hands.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 102-103

وَاتَّبَعُوا مَا تَتْلُوا الشَّيَاطِينُ عَلَىٰ مُلْكِ سُلَيْمَانَ وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَٰكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ كَفَرُوا يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَىٰ الْمَلَائِكَةِ
بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ هَارُوتَ وَمَارُوتَ وَمَا يُعَلِّمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّىٰ يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ
وَمَا هُمْ بِضَارِّينَ بِهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوا لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَقٍ وَلَبِئْسَ
مَا شَرَوْا بِهِ أَنفُسَهُمْ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ 2:102

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَمَثُوبَةٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَّو كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ 2:103

2:102 *And they followed what the satans chanted (of sorcery) against the kingdom of Sulayman; and Sulayman was not an unbeliever, but, the satans disbelieved; they taught men sorcery and what was sent down to the two angels at Babylon, Harut and Marut Yet these two taught no one until they had said: "Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not be a disbeliever." Even then men learned from these two that by which they might cause a separation between a man and his wife; and they cannot hurt with it any one except with Allah's permission; and they learned what harmed them and did not profit them; and certainly they knew that he who bought it should have no share (of good) in the hereafter, and vile was the price for which they sold their souls; had they but known (this).*

2:103 *And if they had believed and guarded themselves (against evil), reward from Allah would certainly have been better; had they but known (this).*

Commentary

QUR'AN: *And they followed what the satans chanted.*

The exegetes have disputed among themselves about each and every aspect of this verse; so much so that the resulting picture of the differences is almost unparalleled in the whole Qur'an. A list of the differences is given below:

"they followed": Does the pronoun, "they", refer to the Jews of the Sulayman's time, or to those at the time of the Prophet, or to all?

"chanted": The Arabic word is "*tatlu*" which may be translated as "chanted", "recited", "told a lie about",

"faked" or "followed and acted according to." In which sense the word is used here? Every meaning has some supporters.

"satans": Does it refer to the satans of *jinn*? Or to those among the human beings? Or to both?

"about": The Arabic participle is '*ala*' (against, on, about, upon). Does the phrase mean, about the kingdom of Sulayman? Or, during the reign of Sulayman? Or, against his kingdom? Or, on his reign?

"the satans disbelieved": Some say, they disbelieved because they published the sorcery among the people. Others say, they disbelieved because they ascribed the sorcery to Sulayman. Still others say, the disbelief, as mentioned here, actually means sorcery.

"they taught men sorcery": It means they instructed them as a teacher instructs his students. No! it

means that they buried the chants under Sulayman's chair, and then directed the men to it who brought it out and learnt it.

"and what was sent down": The word translated here as "what" is "*ma*" which is a relative pronoun ("what") also, it is a particle of negation ("not"). "And" is mostly used as a conjunctive; but not infrequently, it is also used to begin a new sentence. A group says that "*ma*" means "what", and the conjunctive joins it to "what the satans chanted" (the Jews followed what was sent down). Another party is of the opinion that the conjunctive joins it to "sorcery" (the satans taught them sorcery and that which was sent down). A third group thinks that "*ma*" means "not", and the word "and" begins a new sentence (And sorcery was not sent down to the two angels, contrary to what the Jews claimed).

"sent down": Was it sent down from the heavens? Or from the highlands?

"the two angels": They were the angels from the heaven. No! They were two good men, or men who feigned to be good. No! It is not "*al-malakayn* (two angels); it is "*al-malikayn*" (to kings)

"Babylon": It is the famous ancient city of Iraq. No! It is a city in Damawand (Iran); Wrong! It is the land between Nasibayn (Turkey) and Ra'su'l-'Ayn.

"these two taught no one": Teaching is used in its common meaning of instruction. No! It means, these two apprised no one.

"do not be a disbeliever": By learning sorcery? Or, by practicing it? Or, by both?

"the men learned from these two": The "two" refers to the two angels. No! It means, they learned from the two subjects, sorcery and disbelief. Wrong! They learned the practice of sorcery, in place of the advice given by the angels.

"that by which they might cause a separation between a man and his wife": Some exegetes say that they caused love or hate between the couple with the help of their sorcery. Others think that they misled one of the spouses to disbelief and polytheism, and the apostasy caused the separation mentioned here. A third group say that they created hatred and enmity between the couple with their calumny and slander.

This, in short, gives a glimpse of the differences of opinions concerning the explanations of the words and clauses of the verse. There are still more differences about the event referred to whether it narrates an actual happening or is just a parable; and so on and so forth. Compute the differences mentioned above and you will get nearly one million and two hundred sixty thousand possible explanations!!

It seems an astounding quality of the Qur'an that a verse that is subjected to so many divergent interpretations, still maintains its highest standard of eloquence; that in spite of all these vagaries of the exegetes, its meaning is not disjointed, nor its beauty marred.

A similar treatment has been meted out to the verse: *Is he then who has with him clear proof from his Lord, and a witness from him recites it and before it (is) the Book of Musa, a guide and a mercy* (11:17).

However, it appears from the context that this verse deals with a hitherto unmentioned affair of the Jews, that is, their wide-spread use of sorcery. They based this practice on one or two stories, which were very popular among them.

The Jews were addicted to making alterations and interpolations in, and omissions from, their Divine books, let alone the historical narrations. They used to change their books and records fitting them to the prevalent moods of their times. A story narrated by them was not to be relied upon. But this Qur'anic admonition is based on their own belief, because it was they who used to narrate these stories.

The verse proves that the practice of sorcery was prevalent among the Jews, and that they ascribed it to Sulayman (a.s.) They presumed that Sulayman (a.s.) got the kingdom and subjugated the *jinn*, the human beings, the animals and the birds all with the help of sorcery; and all the supernatural miraculous events related to him depended on witchcraft. And they claimed that some of the enchantments in their hands had come down to them from him. The remaining portion was attributed to the two angels at Babylon, named Harut and Marut.

The Qur'an refutes the stories, saying that the prophet Sulayman (a.s.) never indulged in witchcraft and sorcery. How could he, when sorcery was nothing but disbelief in Allah? Sulayman (a.s.) could not be an unbeliever as he was a sinless, innocent prophet. All this is clearly seen from the words of Allah: "and Sulayman was not an unbeliever, but the satans disbelieved, they taught men sorcery"; "and certainly they knew that he who bought it should have no share (of good) in the hereafter." Sulayman's position was too distinguished, his rank too high, and his name too sacred to be associated with disbelief and sorcery. He was the prophet whose outstanding position has been eulogized in several places in the chapters of Meccan period, long before this Chapter of the Cow was revealed. See, for example, the chapters of the Cattle (6th), the Prophets (21st), the Ant (27th) and Sad (38th). You shall find therein that Sulayman (a.s.) was an excellent servant of Allah, a prophet and an apostle; Allah gave him the knowledge and the wisdom; and granted him a kingdom which was not fit for any one after him. Obviously, Sulayman could not indulge in sorcery; it was just a mythical story invented by the satans, which they dictated to their human friends; and it was the satans who disbelieved because they misguided the men by teaching them sorcery.

As for the story of the two angels at Babylon, the Qur'anic stand is as follows:

The two angels, Harut and Marut were certainly given some sorcery as a means of test and trial for the human beings - and no objection could be raised against that; after all, Allah has taught the human nature the ways of evil too in order that He may test them with it. Likewise, sorcery was sent down to the two angels; but they did not teach it to anyone until they had said to him: Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not become a disbeliever by using it for wrongful purposes; you must use it only to nullify the effect of witchcraft, to expose the viles of the sorcerers and things like that. But the men learned from them that by which they might destroy the domestic peace and turn the love between husband and wife - the best of the things ingrained in human nature into hatred, causing a separation between them. Also they learned what harmed them and did not benefit them.

The verse therefore may be explained as follows:

And they (i.e., the Jews coming after the reign of Sulayman - every generation passing on the legacy to the later one) followed what the satans from among the *jinn* faked and lied about the kingdom of Sulayman. "*Tatlu*" (translated here as recited or chanted) actually has the connotation of "lied about" or "faked about", because it is followed by the preposition "*ala*" - (*on*) which has changed its semantic value. Why do we say that the satans were from the *jinn*? The following two verses read together provide the answer to this question:

And of the satans there were those who dived for him and did other work beside that, and We kept guard over them (21:82); and when he fell down, the jinn came to know plainly that if they had known the unseen, they would not have tarried in abasing torment (34:14). The first verse shows that the satans were reduced to subjection by Sulayman. (a.s.) who kept them away from mischief by assigning to them very heavy task; and the second verse refers to the same slavish group as the *jinn*

QUR'AN: *and Sulayman. was not an unbeliever:*"and" is used here in the meaning of "while." Sulayman. did not indulge in sorcery; therefore, it was not he who disbelieved; rather it was the

satans who disbelieved, because they misled the people by teaching them sorcery.

QUR'AN: *and what was sent down*: The Jews followed that which was sent down - through inspiration - to the two angels at Babylon, Harut and Marut Yet these two did not teach any one any thing of the sorcery, without warning him not to practice it. They admonished every one who wanted to learn sorcery: Surely we are only a trial for you. What we teach you is but a means of test for you. Beware! Don't become an unbeliever by practicing sorcery.

QUR'AN: *Even then men learned from these two*.-that is, from the two angels, Harut and Marut "that by which they might cause a separation", that is, the sorcery which caused separation "between a man and his wife."

QUR'AN: *and they cannot hurt with it any one except with Allah's permission*: It is a parenthetical sentence, to remove a possible misunderstanding: One could assume, on hearing that the sorcerers caused separation between a husband and his wife, that the sorcerers were powerful enough to disturb the divinely ordained arrangement of the world; that they could undo the Divine Decree and change the system created by Allah. This sentence clears the air and emphasizes the fact that sorcery draws its strength from the Divine Decree; it cannot affect any thing but with the permission of Allah. Therefore, the sorcerers act within the framework of the system designed by Allah.

This sentence was placed where it is because only the preceding sentence (*that by which they might cause a separation...*) mentions the effect of sorcery. Therefore, it was explained that whatever effect it had was based on the permission of Allah The following clause (*and they learned what harmed them and did not profit them*) is not concerned with this aspect of sorcery, and the above -mentioned clarifying parenthetical sentence, if placed after it, would have looked out of place.

QUR'AN: *and certainly they knew that he who bought it should have no share (of good) in the hereafter*: They knew it because their reason and intellect told them that the sorcery was the wicked source of disorder in the society. Also, they were made aware of it by Musa (a.s.) when he had said: *and the magician shall not be successful wheresoever he may come from* (20:69).

QUR'AN: *and vile was the price for which they sold their souls; had they but known (this)*: They knew that sorcery was bad for them and ruinous for their future abode; yet it was as though they did not know it -because they did not act according to their knowledge. If a knowledge fails to lead the knower to the straight path, then it is not knowledge; it is ignorance. Allah says: *Have you then seen him who takes his low desire for his god, and Allah has made him err in spite of (his) knowledge...* (45:23). Therefore, it was completely in order to wish for them knowledge and guidance, even if they had had the knowledge before.

QURAN: *And if they had believed and guarded themselves...*

If they had followed the dictates of belief and piety, instead of following the satans' yams and practicing sorcery which is nothing short of disbelief, they would have got its reward from Allah. This verse indicates that the disbelief emanating from sorcery is disbelief within the sphere of action, like that which results from withholding *zakat* it is not disbelief within the sphere of faith. Had the sorcery been a disbelief within the sphere of faith, Allah would have only said, "And if they believed", without adding "and guarded themselves (against evil)." The Jews had believed, no doubt; but they did not guard themselves against evil and did not desist from the things forbidden by Allah there fore, AIM did not attach any importance, any value, to their belief, and they were called the disbelievers.

QUR'AN: *reward from Allah would certainly have been better; had they but known (this)*: that is, better than the rewards and profits they seek through sorcery and amass through disbelief.

Traditions

Al-Baqir (a.s.) said, *inter alia*, explaining the words of Allah *And they followed what the satans chanted* (of sorcery) *against the kingdom of Sulayman... : "When Sulayman died, Iblis invented sorcery and wrote it in a book; then folding it, wrote on its back: 'This is the valuable treasure of knowledge which Asif ibn Barkhiya produced for the king Sulayman ibn Dawud Whoever wanted such and such thing, should do so and so.'* Then he buried it under his throne. Thereafter, he unearthed it for the Jews and recited it (before them). The disbelievers said: 'Sulayman had not gained supremacy over us but because of this.' And the believers said: 'Nay! He was a servant of Allah and His prophet.' Thus Allah, Great is His remembrance! said: *And they followed what the satans chanted* (of sorcery) *against the kingdom of 'Sulayman" (at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi, al-Qummi)*

The author says: This tradition says that it was the Satan, that is, Iblis, who invented sorcery and wrote and recited it. There is no discrepancy between this statement and the verse under discussion which ascribes these things to the satans from among the *jinn* Even their deeds are ultimately attributed to the Iblis, because he is the source of all evil; it is he who instigates his friends to wickedness and evil. Such usage is common in the traditions.

It appears from this tradition that the verb, "*tatlu*" in this verse is derived from "*at-tilawah* (to recite, to chant). It is not in conflict with the interpretation given by us in the commentary that it gives the meaning of "lied about" or "faked about"; because, as we said there, this connotation emerges from the preposition, "*ala*" - *which* has changed its semantic value. The sentence, therefore, may be interpreted as follows: The satans chanted the sorcery, reciting it, and faking it, lying about the kingdom of Sulayman.

Etymologically, *tala*, *yatlu*, *tilawatan* returns to *waliya*, *yali*, *wilayatan* which has the semantic value of being near to, governing and following; one owns a thing gradually, one part following the other - reciting is called *at-tilawah* simply because in recitation one word follows the other.

A fuller discourse of this subject will be given under the verse: *Verily, your guardian is only Allah and His Apostle and those who believe, those who establish prayer and pay zakat while they bow down* (5:58).

ar-Rida (a.s.) said, *inter alia*, in his discussion with *al-Ma* - "And as for Harut and Marut they were two angels; they taught sorcery to the people in order that they could protect themselves from the enchantments of the sorcerers, and could nullify their devices. And they did not teach any one any (enchantment) until they had said to him: '*Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not be a disbeliever.*' But a group became disbelievers by practicing what they were warned against; and they caused a separation between a man and his wife with their practice (of sorcery). Allah has said: *and they cannot hurt with it any one except with Allah's permission.*" (*'Uyunu'l-akhbar*)

On Some Spurious Traditions

Ibn Jarir has narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "Whenever Sulayman wanted to enter the toilet or to attend to some of his affairs, he gave his ring to al-Jaradah, his wife. When Allah decided to test Sulayman in the way He tested him, one day Sulayman gave his ring (as usual) to al-Jaradah. Then Satan came to her in the likeness of Sulayman and said: 'Give me my ring.' So he took it and put it on. As soon as he did so, the satans (from the *jinn* and the human beings) came under his control. Then

came Sulayman and said to her: 'Give me my ring.' She said: 'You are a liar; you are not Sulayman.' So Sulayman knew that it was a trial to test him. The satans got a free hand, and wrote, in those very days, some books containing enchantments and disbelief, and buried them under the chair of Sulayman. Thereafter they unearthed them and recited them before the people. And they said: 'It was because of these books that Sulayman dominated over the people.' Thus the people avoided Sulayman and accused him of disbelief. (It continued) until Allah sent Muhammad (s.a.w.) and revealed to him: *and Sulayman was not an unbeliever, but the satans disbelieved.*" (*ad-Durru 'l-manthur*)

The author says: This story is found in other traditions too. It is a long story forming a part of a multitude purporting to show the supposed sins and mistakes of the prophets.

Said ibn Jarir and al-Khatib (in his *at-Tarikh*) have quoted Nafi' as saying: " I went on a journey with Ibn 'Umar. When the

night was coming to its end, he said: 'O Nafi'! Look at the red star, has it risen?' Twice or thrice I said: 'No.' Then I said: 'It has risen.' He said: 'No welcome to it!' I said: 'Praise the Lord! (It is but) a star, subjugated, obedient (and) submissive!' He said: 'I have not told you except that which I heard the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) saying. He said: "The angels (once) said: 'O Lord! How doest Thou bear with the mistakes and sins of the children of Adam?' (Allah) said: 'I have put them to trial and given them some dispensation.' They said: 'If we were in their place, we would not have disobeyed Thee.' He said: 'Then select (for trial) two angels from among yourselves.' They spared no effort in the selection and (finally) selected Harut and Marut. They came down (to the earth); and Allah created in them the lust." (At this juncture, Nafi' said: 'And what is lust?' He said: 'Sexual urge.') "Then there came a woman, az-Zuhrah (i.e., Venus) by name, and both felt attracted towards her, each concealing his feeling from his companion. Then one of them asked the other: 'Do you feel in your heart what I do in mine?' The other said: 'Yes!' Thereupon, they asked her for themselves. She said: 'I will not give you power (over myself) until you teach me the name by which you ascend to, and descend from, the heaven.' They refused to do so. Then they asked her again; and again she refused. At last they did (teach her the name). When she flew (to the heaven), Allah effaced her into a star and cut her wings. Then the (two angels) sought pardon from Allah; and He gave them an option, saying: 'If it is your wish, I shall let you return to the position you held before, and then you shall be punished on the Day of Resurrection. Or, if you wish, I shall chastise you in this world, and when the Day of Resurrection comes you shall be reinstated to your previously held position.' So one of them said to the other: 'The punishment of this world will come to an end and will be short-lived.'

Therefore, they opted for this world's chastisement against the punishment of the next world. And Allah revealed to them to go to Babylon. They went there and the earth swallowed them up; they are hanging upside-down between the heaven and the earth, undergoing punishment up to the Day of Resurrection." " (*ad- Durru'l-manthur*)

The author says: Something like this has been narrated in some Shi'ah books too from al-Baqir (a.s.). as-Suyuti, the Sunni traditionalist, has narrated more than twenty traditions of the same theme about Harut, Marut and the Venus; some of those traditions have been confirmed as having "correct" chains of narrators; and the chains end on various companions, like Ibn 'Abbas, Ibn Mas'ud, 'Ali, Abud-Darda', 'Umar, 'A'ishah and Ibn 'Umar.

These are fictitious stories, which collectively ascribe to the angels of Allah the worst type of polytheism and the most heinous sins, that is, idol-worship, murder, fornication and liquor-drinking. Could the angels indulge in such sins, when they are known to be the honoured servants of Allah who are purified from all sins and mistakes? And they accuse the planet Venus to be a woman of loose

character, who was transformed into a luminary body – have you ever heard of such a punishment!! – while it is known to be a heavenly body, free from any defect in its creation or any flaw in its system; a planet by which Allah swears in the Qur'an: *But nay! I swear by the stars that run their course (and) hide themselves*(81:15-16).

.. (81:15-16). Moreover, the astronomy has today unveiled its reality, and found out in detail the elements it is made of, as well as their quantity and combination – in short all matters related to it.

This story, like that given earlier (about Sulayman and his ring), is in complete agreement with the legends popular among the Jews. They remind one of the Greek mythology related to the stars and the planets.

A discerning reader will agree that these traditions, like those slandering and defaming the prophets and apostles, are but a few samples of the intrigues and machinations of the Jews.

Their prevalence in the Muslims' books of traditions is a living proof of the hold they held on the Muslims' minds in the early days of Islam. The Jews toyed with the Muslim traditions in any way they liked; and the Muslim traditionalists were their willing partners in these interpolations.

But Allah has kept His Book under His Own protection. The enemies of truth cannot play with it. Whenever one of their satans tries to steal a hearing he is chased away by a visible flame. Allah has said: *Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most certainly be its guardian* (15:9); *and most surely it is a Mighty Book: Falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it; a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One* (41:41- 42); *And We reveal of the Qur'an that which is a healing and mercy to the believers, and it adds only to the perdition of the unjust* (17:82). The promise given in these verses is unconditional. Every interpolation, every alteration is repulsed by the Qur'an. The Book of Allah unmasks the true face of the interpolators, adding to their perdition. Also, the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) has said: "Whatever is in conformity with the Book of Allah, take it; and whatever is against it, leave it." *Theummah* has been given this frame of reference; it is this yardstick with which all the traditions attributed to the Prophet and his Ahlulbayt are to be measured. The Qur'an removes every falsehood and exposes every deception. Allah says: *Nay! We cast the truth against falsehood, so that it breaks its head, and lo! it vanishes* (21:18); *and Allah desired to manifest the truth of what was true by His words... that He may manifest the truth of what was true and show the falsehood of what was false, even though the guilty ones disliked* (8:7-8). Allah confirms the truth and erases the falsehood by showing the true faces of both.

Some people, and especially those with materialistic out-look, who are overawed by the western civilization, have used the above- mentioned historical fact as a pretext to throw away all the traditions attributed to the Prophet. They looked at some traditionalists and al- Haruriyyah and found that they accepted every tradition – without any scrutiny whatsoever. They reacted to it by going to the other extreme and rejecting every tradition – without any scrutiny

whatsoever. It needs not much intelligence to realize that the total acceptance of the traditions is as bad as its total rejection.

Its unconditional acceptance nullifies the standard laid down for the purpose of differentiating between the truth and the falsehood; and encourages one to ascribe lies to the Prophet. Likewise, its indiscriminate rejection casts aside the said standard and leads one to the rejection of the Book of Allah itself – the Mighty Book that falsehood does not come to it from before it nor from behind it. Allah has said in this Book: *and whatever the Apostle gives you, take it; and from whatever he forbids you, keep back* (59:7); *And We did not send any apostle but that he should be obeyed by Allah's permission* (4:64). If the sayings of the Prophet had no authority, or if his words – reported to his contemporaries who were absent from his gathering or to the generations coming after his time –

had no validity then nothing of the religion could survive at all.

Man by his instinct relies and accepts the reports brought by others – he cannot survive without it. As for the alterations and interpolations, it is not a disease peculiar to the traditions of the Prophet. The society depends on the reported news and information; and the motives to tell lies, to make changes and alterations to suit one's purpose, to twist the words and to quote them out of context, are much more stronger in the case of the worldly affairs. So, what do we do? Do we reject all reports and information? No! We scrutinize every report with the help of some well-established and relevant standard; what passes the test, is accepted as truth; and that which fails is thrown aside as falsehood; and if no clear result emerges from the test, if we are unable to decide whether the report was true or not, we reserve our judgment – as our nature tells us to do in such cases.

The above procedure is applied regarding the subjects we have some expertise about. As for a subject outside our specialty, the common practice is to refer it to the specialists in that field and accept their judgment.

This is, in short, the dictate of human nature for the smooth running of the society. The self same system is adhered to in religion for distinguishing truth from falsehood. The litmus-paper of this test is the Book of Allah – if a tradition conforms to it, its truth is confirmed; if it clearly goes against it, its falsehood is known; and if no definite stand may be taken because of some ambiguities, then the judgment is reserved. This system has been explained in the *mutawatir* traditions of the Prophet and the Imams (of the *Ahlulbait – a.s.*). It applies to all the traditions that are not concerned with jurisprudence; as for those dealing with the law and jurisprudence, they are governed by the Principles of Jurisprudence.

A Philosophical Discourse on Sorcery and Witchcraft

It is a common knowledge that many unusual events do take place which are outside the frame of the established natural system. It is difficult to find someone who has not seen, or heard about, some abnormal or seemingly supernatural events. But we find after scrutiny that most of them are not enigmatic and mysterious at all; rather they arise from normal and natural causes. Often they result from practice and training, for example, eating poison, lifting heavy load, walking or dancing on tight-rope etc. Some are based on natural causes that are not known to the general public, for example, a man walks into flaming fire without coming to any harm, (he applies some chemicals like talc to his body); or sends a sheet of blank paper and the addressee understands the message it contains. (He writes with an invisible ink which becomes visible if heated by fire or treated with some chemicals.) A third set depends on the sleight of hand like jugglery. All these seemingly abnormal feats actually emanate from the normal causes, although the causes remain hidden from a common man's eyes; they may even be beyond his ability.

Yet there are other strange happenings that cannot be attributed to any normal physical cause. For example, giving information of the unseen, and particularly foretelling the future events; the charms for love and hate, the spells harmfully or beneficially affecting man's virility; hypnotism; mesmerism; spiritualism; telekinesis and so on. It is known that such events do take place from time to time; we have seen some demonstrations ourselves; and similar reports were brought to us by reliable sources. Today there are many people in India, Iran and the western countries, who demonstrate such extraordinary feats – and their authenticity is beyond doubt.

It appears from close investigation of their methods and regimen that these feats spring from the will-power of the doer, and from his unshakable confidence in effectiveness of his work. The will-power emanates from the confidence, which in its turn arises from the knowledge. Sometimes the will acts independently and sometimes it needs some help: for example, writing a certain charm with a certain ink in a certain place at a certain time (for the amulets of love or hate); or fixing a mirror before a certain child (in the seances of spiritualism); or chanting a certain incantation a certain number of times, and so on and so forth. When the conditions are fulfilled the will is strengthened to bring the desired effect into being. When the knowledge becomes one with the knower, it influences his senses to such an extent that he sees the end product, that is, the desired effect, with his eyes. You may verify this statement yourself. Just tell yourself that a certain person is present before you and that you are looking at him; then put your imagination to work to bring his form before your eyes; this should be raised to such a high level of certainty that you become oblivious of all contrary thoughts and ideas. And then you will actually see him standing before you – as you had imagined. Many is a doctor who, acting on this principle, restored to health his incurable patients – simply by creating in them the confidence that they would soon get their health back.

Taking this principle a step further, if someone's will-power is extraordinarily strong, it might create an impression on other's psyche too – as it had created on his own self in the foregoing example. That impression might, or might not, depend on fulfillment of some conditions, as indicated earlier.

From the above discourse, we may deduce the following three principles:

First: The appearance of such extraordinary events depends on the firm "knowledge" and strong conviction of the doer. But it is irrelevant whether that "knowledge" is true to the fact or not. That explains why the conjurations of the priests of the sun-god and the moon-goddess etc. seemed to work – although they believed that the heavenly bodies had souls, which they claimed to bring under their control by their magic. Probably the same applies to the angels and satans whose names are "discovered" and invoked by many practitioners of the magic art. The same is true for spiritualism and its séance and spirit communication – and the spiritualists' belief that the spirits attend their sittings. Utmost that may be claimed regarding those sessions, is that the spirit appears in their imagination or, let us say, before their senses – and this "perception" emanates from their firm belief in their art. But it can never be said that the spirit actually presents itself at those sittings – otherwise all the participants in the sitting should have perceived its presence, because everyone of them has the same senses as the medium has.

By accepting this principle, we may solve many problems related to the séance and spirit communication. For example:

1 – Sometimes the spirit of a living man is called to present itself at a séance, and supposedly it comes there. But at that very moment, that man is busy attending to his affairs, and he never feels his spirit leaving him even for an instant. The question is: As a man has only one spirit, how was it possible that his spirit presented itself to that séance without his being aware of it?

2 – The spirit is an immaterial essence which has no relation whatsoever with space and time. How can it present itself at a certain place at a certain time?

3 - Why is it that often a single spirit appears before different mediums in different forms?

4 – Why is it that sometimes when the spirits are called to a séance, they tell lies and give wrong answers? And why do the various spirits sometimes contradict each other?

All these problems will be solved if the principle is accepted that it is not any spirit that presents

itself to the séance; it is only the firm belief and conviction of the spiritualist and his medium that is at work, making the medium see, hear and feel the spirit. It is all a play of his imagination and will; and nothing more.

Second: Some of the people, holding the strong and effective will-power, rely on their own power and their own being, in bringing about the desired effect, the intended super-natural events. Such events are bound to be limited in strength, confined in their scope – in their own imagination as well as in reality.

On the other side, there are some persons, like the prophets and the friends of Allah who, in spite of their most effective will- power, totally rely on their Lord. They truly worship Him and have full trust in Him. They do not wish any thing but from their Lord, and by His permission. Theirs is a pure and clear will, untainted by any personal feeling of their own. It does not depend except on Allah. This is a Divine Will – not limited in any way, nor restricted in any manner.

The super-natural events that are brought into being by the first group may be of many kinds: If they are based on enquiry of, or help from, *a jinn* or a spirit etc., then it is called "*al-kihanah*" (تَنَاهِكَا) divination, sooth-saying, fortune-telling); and if it comes about by means of a charm, amulet, telesm or other such instruments or portions, then it is called magic.

The super-natural events shown by the prophets and friends of Allah are also of many kinds: If it is produced as a challenge, in order to prove the truth of the claim of prophethood, then it is called miracle; and if it is not offered as a challenge, then it is named "*al-kara mah*" (تَمَارِكَا) which literally means nobility, mark of honour; and in Islamic terminology is used for a miraculous event shown without a challenge; and if it happens as a result of the prayer to Allah, then it is called, "answer to the prayer."

Third: As the whole thing depends on the will-power of the doer, its strength varies according to the strength (or weakness) of the will. That is why some of them may nullify the others, as, for example, the miracle annihilates the sorcery.

Also, a weak agent fails to impose his will on a stronger psyche, as is often seen at the sessions of mesmerism, hypnotism and seances.

We shall further explain this subject somewhere else.

An Academic Description of Various Kinds of Magic

There are many fields of study dealing with various awe- striking feats and extraordinary deeds; and it is very difficult to classify them so as not to leave any thing out. However, we give here a list of the more commonly used branches of this art:

a) *as-Simiya'*: It deals with the ways of combining the will-power with particular physical and material forces for manipulating the natural order and, thus, producing extraordinary effects. Under this head comes the manipulation of thought, also known as the eye-enchancement.

It is the most deserving candidate for the title of magic.

b) *al-Limiya'*: It teaches how one may establish a connection between his psyche and the higher and stronger spirits, in order that one may bring them under one's control, for example, the spirits of the stars, or the *jinn*, etc.

It is also called the knowledge of subjugation of the spirits.

c) *al-Himiya'*: It explains how the powers of the higher spiritual world may be combined with the base elements of this world to produce awe-inspiring effects. It is also called talisman. The stars and their configuration have some relation to the material happenings of this world, in the same way as the elements and compounds and their physical qualities affect those phenomena. Supposedly if the heavenly forms, pertaining to a certain event, for example, A's life or B's death, could be combined with the relevant material forms, the desired effect would take place without fail.

d) *ar-Rimiya'*: It trains one how to control and manipulate the qualities of various things, to produce seemingly super-natural effects. It is also called "*ash-Sha'badhah*" (عَدْبُعْشَلَا) (sleight of hand, jugglery, magic).

These four fields of knowledge, together with the fifth, called "*al-Kimiya'*" (ءَايْمِيكَلَا) (alchemy, the forerunner of chemistry, primarily the attempt to transmute base metals into gold or silver) formed what the ancients called the five secrets, mysterious branches of knowledge.

ash-Shaykh al-Baha'i has said: "The best book written on these subjects was the one I saw in Harat, '*Kulah-e sar*' (the head's cap) by name. Its name was an acronym, made of the first letters of the five subjects, that is, *al-Kimiya'*, *al Limiya'*, *al-Himiya'*, *as- Simiya'* and *ar-Rimiya'*."

The standard books of these subjects are the epitome of the books of Minds, *Rasa'il*, al-Khusraw Shahi, *adh-Dhakhirah*, al- Iskandariyyah, *as-Sirru'l-maktum* (by ar-Razi), *at-Taskhirat* (by as-Sakkaki) and *A'malu'l-kawakib as-Sab'ah* (by al-Hakim Tamtam al-Hindi).

Supplementary to the above are the following subjects:

e) The knowledge of numbers (numerology): It shows the relation of numbers and letters with the desired effect. The relevant letters or numbers are filled in a magic square or triangle etc. in a particular sequence.

f) *al-Khafiyah*: (تَيْفَاخَلَا) (the hidden knowledge): It breaks down the name of the desired effect or other relevant names, and finds out the names of the angels or the satans managing the said effect; and then composes the invocations made of those names.

The books written by ash-Shaykh Abul-'Abbas al-Buni and as-Sayyid Husayn al-Akhlati are the standard works of the above two subjects.

Then there are various modern arts covering this field, which have gained wide currency nowadays; for example, mesmerism, hypnotism and spirit communication. As described earlier, these are based on the impression created on the imagination by the will-power. There are numerous well-known books and magazines dealing with these subjects.

We have given all this detail here, so that it may be ascertained which of them could be classified as magic or sorcery.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 104-105

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقُولُوا رَاعِنَا وَقُولُوا انظُرْنَا وَاسْمَعُوا وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ 2:104
 مَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَلَا الْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ
 الْعَظِيمِ 2:105

2:1040 you who believe! do not Say, "Have regard for us", and say, "Wait for us"; and listen; and for the unbelievers there is a painful chastisement.

2:105 Those who disbelieve from among the People of the Book do not, like, nor do the polytheists, that any good should be sent down to you from your Lord; and Allah chooses especially whom He pleases for His mercy, and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.

Commentary

QUR'AN: *O you who believe!*: it is the first place in the Qur'an where the believers have been addressed in this way, "O You who believe!" This mode of address has been used. in some eighty-five places in the Qur'an.*

Addressing the believers as "O you who believe!", or describing them as "those who believe", is a special distinction accorded to this *ummah*. Otherwise, the previous nations are variously described as "the people" (e.g., "*the People of Nuh*", and, "*the People of Hud*", "*He said. 'O my people! have you considered if I have a clear proof from my Lord... ' (11:88)*); and "*the dwellers*" (e. g., "*the dwellers of Madyan*", "*the dwellers of the Rass*"); and "*the children*" (e.g., "*the Children of Israel. 'O Children of Israel!*"). The epithet, "those who believe", is, therefore, a mark of honor awarded to the believers of this *ummah*.

It appears from deep meditation of the Qur'an that the import of the words, "those who believe", is somewhat different from that of the words, "the believers." (For an example of the latter, see the verse: *and turn to Allah all of you, O believers! (24:31)*)

Allah says in the Qur'an *Those who bear the throne and those around it celebrate the praise of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who believe: "Our Lord! Thou embracest all things in mercy and knowledge, therefore grant forgiveness to those who turn (to Thee) and follow Thy way, and save them from the punishment of the hell. Our Lord! and make them enter the gardens of perpetuity which Thou hast promised to them and those who do good of their fathers and their wives and their offspring, surely Thou are the Mighty, the Wise" (40:7-8).*

It shows that the angels and the bearers of the throne ask forgiveness for "those who believe"; then the same group has been referred to as "those who turn (to Thee) and follow Thy way." ("turn" actually means, return.) The prayer continues to "make them (i.e., those who believe) enter the garden" and then joins to them the doers of good from among "their fathers and their wives and their offspring." If the epithet, "those who believe", were to include all those who believed in the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) irrespective of the quality of their belief, then it would have covered their fathers,

wives and children as well (who do good); and there would have been no need to mention them separately; all would have equally benefited from the prayer for those who believe.

Also, have a look at the verse: *And (as for) those who believe and their offspring follow them in faith, We will unite with them their offspring and We will not diminish to them aught of their work; every man is responsible for what he has wrought (52:21)*: If the offspring who followed them in faith, were included in the epithet, "those who believe", there would be no sense in saying that the offspring would be united with them. Even if we were to say that the verse refers to the generation after generation of the believers, that every succeeding generation will be united to the preceding one (provided both believed in the Apostle of Allah s.a.w.) the meaning would not seem very proper in the context. If that were the import of the verse, then why this "uniting"? Also, what purpose would be served by the sentence, "and We will not diminish to them aught of their work"? Such an interpretation may prove correct for one generation only, that is, the last one before the Day of Resurrection - that they would be united with the preceding generation. But nobody has suggested this meaning as it goes clearly against the context. What such an interpretation would boil down to is as follows:

All the believers are united, one of them being from another; all of them are of one rank; none has any excellence over the others; nor has an earlier believer any superiority over the later ones; their main qualification is the true belief, and all of them, are equal in it. Such a meaning would not fit the wording of the verse which clearly shows that the preceding believers have a sort of superiority over their offspring, who would be raised to the rank of their progenitor as a token of honor to the latter.

The phrase, "and their offspring follow them in faith", proves that the preceding word, "those who believe" refers to a particular group of the believers - the foremost and the first of the Emigrants and the Helpers who followed the Apostle in the hour of straitness. The epithet, those who believe, is a title of honor bestowed on that distinguished group.

Other two verses too point to this fact:

(It is) for the poor who fled... and those who made their abode in the city and in the faith before them ... and those who came after them say: "Our Lord! forgive us and those of our brethren who had precedence of us in faith, and do not create any spite in our hearts towards those who believe; our Lord! surely Thou art Kind, Merciful" (59:8-10). This verse uses two phrases, "who had precedence of us in faith", and "those who believe." If the import of both were the same, a pronoun would have looked better in place of the second phrase. By not using a pronoun, Allah has made it clear that each phrase has its own significance.

Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah, and those with him are severe against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves, you will see them bowing down, prostrating themselves, seeking grace from Allah and pleasure; ... Allah has promised those among them who believe and do good, forgiveness and a great reward (48:29).

All this shows that the phrase, "those who believe", is a title of honor reserved for the first and foremost of the believers. Most probably, the opposite phrase, "those who disbelieve", has the contrasting significance, and refers to the polytheists of Mecca and others who were the first and foremost of those who disbelieved in the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.). For example, *Surely those who disbelieve alike is to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe. (2:6)*

Objection: This interpretation means that when the Qur'an says, "O you who believe!", it addresses a special group that was present in the Prophet's time, to the exclusion of all other believers. But all the Muslims agree that such verses are general in their import and that what is said therein applies to all the believers, whether they were present in the Prophet's days or not; and that this mode of address includes all the believers in reality, not metaphorically.

Reply: Yes! It is a title of honor reserved for a selected few. But it does not mean that what is said in those verses is in any way restricted to those few. Whatever order or prohibition is given in such verses is general and applies to all the believers. The matter of legislation - whether a given order is general or exclusive - is quite different from that of a speech - whether it is addressed to all the believers or to a few of them. Also, it makes no difference whether a verse ordaining a law is addressed to the believers (O you *who believe!*) or to the Prophet in person (O Prophet!; O Apostle!), or is revealed without any address at all. The ordained law in all these cases is applicable to all the Muslims, and covers all the believers; although the verse may be addressed to the Prophet or to those who believe as a mark of respect to him or them.

Nevertheless, - one should not indiscriminately interpret the phrase, "O you who believe!" and "those who believe", as referring to the first and foremost believers of the Prophet's time; rather one should look at the context, before deciding the true connotation of these phrases in a given verse. For example, look at the verse: *Surely (as for) those who believe then disbelieve, again believe and disbelieve, then increase in disbelief, Allah will not forgive them nor guide them in the (right) path* (4:137); and the verse which quotes Nuh (a.s.) as saying: *and I am not going to drive away those who believe; surely they shall meet their Lord* (11:129). Obviously, the phrase, those who believe, used in the above verses cannot refer to the above-mentioned group.

QUR'AN: *do not say, "Have regard for us", and say, "Wait for us"; and listen:* That is, use the phrase, Wait for us, instead of saying, Have regard for us. And if you failed to comply with this command, it would be tantamount to disbelief, and for the disbelievers there is a painful chastisement. It is a very strong admonition against saying, "*ra'ina*" (Have regard for us). This phrase has also been mentioned in another verse, which gives an indication of its connotation: *Of those who are Jews (there are those who) alter words from their places and say: "We have heard and we disobey"; and: "Hear, may you not be made to hear!" and "ra'ina", distorting (the word) with their tongues and taunting about religion* (4:46). Obviously, the Jews used the phrase, "*ra'ina*" for something similar to the phrase, "Hear, may you not be made to hear!" And that is why such a mode of addressing the Prophet was prohibited. This explanation agrees with what the tradition says: When the Prophet talked with the Muslims, they used to tell him: "*Ra'ina* (have regard for us) O Apostle of Allah" - that is, wait for us, so that we may properly understand what you are saying.** But this word carried a connotation of abuse in the Jews' language. The Jews seized upon this opportunity, addressing the Prophet with this phrase, pretending to show respect to him while their intention was nothing short of abuse. And in their usage it meant, "Hear, may you not be made to hear." Thereupon, Allah revealed: *Of those who are Jews (there are those who) alter words from their places and say: "We have heard and we disobey"; and: "Hear, may you not be made to hear!" and: "ra'ina", distorting (the word) with their tongues and taunting about religion; and if they had said (instead): "We have heard and we obey", and "hearken" and "unzurna" (wait for us), it would have been better for them and more upright* (4:46). The believers too were told not to use this phrase and say instead, "*unzurna*" the Qur'an guided them: "do not say, 'Have regard for us' and say, 'Wait for us'."

QUR'AN: *and for the unbelievers there is a painful chastisement:* that is, for those who disobey this rule. It is one of the occasions when disobedience of a law of religion has been termed as disbelief.

QUR'AN: *Those who disbelieve from among the People of the Book... : Obviously,* the phrase, "the People of the Book", refers here exclusively to the Jews, because the preceding verses too dealt with them. If so, then the phrase would serve as a pointer to the cause why they did not like that any good should be sent down to the believers from their Lord. The Jews were given a Book before and

they were not happy when the Qur'an was sent down to the Muslims, as it deprived them of their distinction as being the People of the Book. They showed avarice about a thing they did not own; they wanted to stand against Allah when He bestowed His mercy and grace on His servants and Allah chooses especially whom He pleases for His mercy; and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace."

On the other hand the phrase, as used in this verse, may include all the People of the Book - the Jews and the Christians both. If so, then the verse would serve to widen the scope of the admonition; it would be a generalization after exclusiveness. Both groups shared many characteristics - and especially their enmity to Islam. Some verses coming afterwards strengthen this interpretation. For example: *And they say: "None shall enter the garden except he who is a Jew or a Christian" (2:111) And the Jews say, "The Christians do not follow anything (good)", and the Christians say, "The Jews do not follow anything(good)." (2:113)*

Traditions

Abu Nu'aym has narrated in *Hilyatu'l-awliya'* from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "The Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) said: Allah has not revealed any verse (beginning) with, "O you who believe!" but that 'Ali is its head and leader.'" (ad-Durru 'l-manthur)

The author says: This tradition supports what we shall be quoting in various places that a certain verse was revealed about 'Alf (a.s.) or *Ahlu l-bayt* for example: *You are the best of the nations raised for(the benefit of) men (3:110); ... that you may be witnesses over the people... (2:143); ... and be with the true ones (9:119).*

Eighty-eight, to be exact. Vide *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras*, (by Muhammad Fu'ad 'Abdul 'l-Baqi) (tr.)

It is more or less equivalent to the English idiom "I beg your pardon." But with a slight change of accent it may come to mean, stupid or cattle tenderer. (tr.)

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 106-107

مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ 2:106

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ 2:107

2:106 *Whatever signs We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it. Do you not know that Allah has power over all things?*

2:107 *Do you not know that Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that besides Allah you have no guardian or helper?*

Commentary

The verses deal with the subject of abrogation. The word, abrogation, when used as a term of Islamic *fiqh*, means as follows: To show that the time of an order has come to its end; that it is no more valid, is no longer in force. This definition is based on the above verse; and is one of the manifestations of its connotations.

QUR'AN: *Whatever signs We abrogate... : "an-Naskh" is removal, to remove, to annul. The Arabs say: Nasakhati 'shshamsu 'z-zilla (the sun removed the shadow). Allah says: And We did not send before you any apostle or prophet, but when he desired, the Satan made a suggestion respecting his desire; but Allah annuls that which the Satan casts, then does Allah establish His signs; and Allah is Knowing, Wise (22:52). Also, they say: Nasakhtu'l-kitab (I copied the book); it is as though the writing was removed and its place changed. That is why another verse uses the word "at-tabdil" (to change) in place of abrogation: And when We change (one) sign for (another) sign, and Allah knows best what He reveals, they say: "You are a forger." Nay, most of them do not know (16:101).*

Abrogation, however, does not entail obliteration of a verse, turning it into a non-being. Its only effect is the cancellation of the order which the verse had promulgated. It should be noted that the Qur'anic verse has been described as a "sign", that is, a mark that points to another thing - a verse is a sign pointing to a Divine Command. The second verse, "Do you not know that Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth..." gives the reason as to why Allah abrogates some Qur'anic verses. All these factors indicate that abrogation removes a verse as far as its quality as a sign, as a symbol, is concerned. When abrogated, the verse remains in existence as before, but loses its quality as a sign - no longer does it point to an order, as the order is now cancelled. The next phrase, "or cause to be forgotten", clearly supports the foregoing explanation. "*al-Insa*" is to make one forget, to erase out of memory, to eradicate from knowledge. By putting the two phrases side by side, the Qur'an makes it clear that abrogation entails erasure of a verse's effect, while "*al-insa*" causes eradication of the verse itself from the memory.

Symbolism - the quality of being a sign of something varies with various signs having various aspects and directions. The Qur'anic verses are the signs of Allah because the *jinn* and the men are jointly and severally unable to bring its like; the rules ordained by Allah are His signs inasmuch as

they create piety in man and bring him nearer to his Lord; every created thing is His sign, because it, by its existence, proves the existence of its Creator, and by the qualities of its being, leads to His attributes and names; the prophets and the friends of Allah are His signs inasmuch as they, with their words and deeds, call the humanity to Allah, and so on and so forth. Consequently, a sign may be great or small, strong or weak; that is why Allah says: *Certainly he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord (53:18)*.

Also, a sign may contain only one aspect of symbolism, and another may comprise of various such aspects. The former, when abrogated, is obliterated in its entirety, is completely destroyed. But in the case of the latter, it is possible to abrogate only one aspect of its symbolism, leaving the other ones intact; for example, a Qur'anic verse could be abrogated as far as its law was concerned, and yet continue as a Divine Sign because of its eloquence and miraculous qualities.

This generalized meaning of abrogation has been inferred from the reasoning given in the second verse: "Do you not know that Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth... " There are only two objections possible against the factuality of abrogation; or, as the reports say, these were the two arguments advanced by the Jews against it.

First: A sign given by Allah contains an actual benefit which cannot be obtained from any other thing. If that sign is abrogated, its inherent benefit would be lost; nothing could take its place to preserve that benefit. Allah is not like His creatures, nor is His knowledge like theirs. His knowledge does not change with the changes in external factors. It is not that one day He knew one thing and issued an order according to that knowledge; then next day the knowledge changed and He became aware of another factor which He did not know before, and therefore He had to cancel the previous order, replacing it with a fresh-one. Such inconsistency is not worthy of Divine Sublimity. Of course, it is all right for us mortals, because we cannot comprehend all the aspects of an affair; and as a result of this incomplete knowledge, our decisions are frequently changed and amended. But we should not compare Divine Knowledge without limited and defective perception.

Here it is necessary to point out that such an objection arises from a notion that the power of Allah is neither comprehensive and all-encompassing nor unrestricted and unconditional.

Second: Accepted that the Divine Power is all-encompassing and limitless. But once a thing is created it goes beyond the sphere of that power, and cannot be changed. Even in our case, we have power to do or not to do a certain work - so long as we have not done it; but once we have done it, it becomes an essential being, and goes beyond the limits of our power.

This argument is based on the rejection of the all-encompassing ownership of Allah; it presupposes that once Allah has managed a certain affair in a certain way, He cannot change that arrangement in another way. This Jewish belief is portrayed in the verse: *And the Jews say: "The hand of Allah is tied up"(5:64)*.

Allah replies to the first objection with the question: "Do you not know that Allah has power over all things?" He certainly has power over all things. Therefore, He may replace a sign with an equally good or even a better sign. The second objection is dealt with by the next question: "Do you not know that Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that besides Allah you have no guardian or helper?" Allah is the Owner of the heavens and the earth; He can do whatever He likes with His property. No one besides Him owns any thing; otherwise, that owner could interfere in the management of Allah or put restriction on His authority and control. None else owns any thing neither in his own rights nor even when Allah gives to him a partial ownership. When we transfer the ownership of a property to another person, the transferee gets all the rights which we had in that property and our rights are rendered null and void. But when Allah gives a property into someone's

possession, Allah's ownership of the property is not disturbed in any way - it does not come to an end, is not even diminished. He continues to be the real Owner and Controller of the property which He has given to others. His is the unrestricted ownership and unconditional management.

If we look at what He has put under our ownership - without our having any independent authority over it - then He is our Guardian. And if we look at the apparent independence enjoyed by us, with His grace - although it is a poverty in the shape of plenty, a dependence disguised as independence then too we cannot manage our affairs without His help; and He is our Helper.

The above explanation is based on the sequence and style of the two verses. First, there is the exclusivity of the declaration: "Allah's is the kingdom..." Then there is the sequence: "Do you not know that Allah has power over all things? Do you not know that Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth...?" The two sentences have not been joined with any conjunctive, a sure indication that each is independent of the other, and that the first sentence deals with one objection and the second with another. The last sentence, "and that besides Allah you have no guardian or helper", gives a finishing touch to the above replies: Even if you are oblivious of Allah's all-encompassing power and ownership, and are looking at this nominal ownership of yours, you will know that it is not a permanent or independent ownership; you cannot manage it independently; you need a guardian to look after your interests and Allah is that guardian. He can and does manage your affairs and your property as He likes.

On the other hand, if your eyes are so fixed on this possession as to make you forget your dependence; if you think that you are the independent and absolute owner of your property, even then you will have to admit that you cannot manage your own affairs, cannot obtain the results you want, without the help and assistance of a super power. And Allah is your real Helper; it is He who manages your affairs and your property for you. From whatever angle you look at this matter, Allah's power over all things and His ownership of every thing remain unchallenged and undisputed.

"and that besides Allah you have no guardian or helper": Apparently it should have been 'besides Him.' Then why did the Qur'an use the noun instead of the pronoun? It was to indicate that the foregoing sentences contain the complete replies, and this sentence is not their integral part; rather it is an independent declaration to strengthen those replies.

This discourse leads us to the following conclusions:

First: Abrogation is not a thing confined to only the religious laws; it holds its place in the sphere of creation too.

Second: Abrogation cannot take place without two sides: (i) The abrogated thing or verse, (ii) the abrogative, that is, the thing or verse that abrogates.

Third: The abrogative contains all the benefits and the perfection that was found in the abrogated thing.

Fourth: Although the abrogative differs from the abrogated in its form, both have one thing in common - the perfection and the benefit. When a prophet dies and another is sent in his place - and both of them are the signs of Allah, one abrogating the other - it takes place in total conformity with the natural system. Life, death, sustenance and other such things often replace each other, the succeeding factors abrogating the preceding ones. It all depends on the varying needs of the society's welfare, on ever-changing level of the man's perfection. Likewise, when a religious law is replaced by another, the abrogating one has the same power as the abrogated one had, to lead to the spiritual and temporal well-being of the individual and the society; each perfectly suitable for the time it was, or is, in force; each more beneficial in the context of its time. For example, the order to "forgive" in the beginning of the call when the Muslims had neither the manpower nor the armaments, and the

command to "fight" when Islam had gained some strength, when the Muslims had gathered enough force and the disbelievers and the polytheists were frightened of them. However, seldom is an abrogated verse devoid of some phrase showing that it was a transitory order which would be abrogated in due course. For example: The verse: *But pardon and forgive (them) until Allah should bring about His command (2:109)*, which was abrogated by the verse of fighting; and: ... *confine them until death takes them away or Allah makes some way for them(4:15)*, which was abrogated by the verse of flogging. The phrases, "until Allah should bring about His command", and, "or Allah makes some way for them", give clear indication that the order given therein was temporary and transitory which would soon be abrogated

Fifth: The relation between the abrogative and the abrogated is quite different from that which is found between a general statement and a particular, between an unconditional clause and a conditional, or between an unspecified proposition and a specified.

What removes the apparent contradiction between the abrogative and the abrogated, is the society's and the individual's good and well-being which is found in both of them. But the apparent contradiction between a general statement and a particular, between an unconditional clause and a conditional, or between an unspecified proposition and a specified, emanates from the strong (or weak) manifestation of the intended meaning. The true intention of the speaker is reflected much more strongly and clearly in a particularized statement, a conditional clause and a specified proposition; and that strength and clarity removes the above-mentioned apparent contradiction - by explaining the general in the light of the particular, the unconditional with the help of the conditional and the unspecified in the frame of the specified. These things are the subject of the Principles of Jurisprudence. The same applies to the decisive and the ambiguous verses, as we shall explain under the verse: ... *of it there are some verses decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are ambiguous... (3:7)*

QUR'AN: *or cause to be forgotten: "Nunsiha"* is derived from "*al- insa* (to cause to be forgotten; to erase from memory or knowledge), as we have described earlier. It is a general and unconditional statement. It is not restricted to the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.); nay, it does not include him at all. Allah had said about him: *We will make you recite so you shall not forget, except what Allah pleases (87:6-7)* It is a Meccan verse, while the verse of abrogation is of Medina period.

Obviously the Apostle could not forget anything after the promise of Allah "so you shall not forget."

Question: This cAllah is untenable because the promise has the proviso, "except what Allah pleases." It means that the Apostle (s.a.w.) could forget what Allah was pleased to make him forget.

Reply: Such exceptional clauses serve only to emphasize the power of Allah; they do not necessarily mean that the thing mentioned in that clause would actually take place. Look for example at the verse: ... *they shall be in the garden, abiding in it as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord pleases... (11:108)*. It just shows that Allah does have power to change the arrangement made; but all the Muslims agree that the people of the paradise will never be taken out of it. The same is the import of the exceptional clause, "except what Allah pleases", in this verse.

Moreover, if the said clause were to prove that the Prophet (s.a.w.) could actually forget the things taught by Allah, depending on the pleasure of Allah, there would be no sense in putting him under obligation by promising him, "you shall not forget." My human being who remembers any thing, or forgets it, does so by the pleasure of Allah. The same is true about the animals who remember and forget by His pleasure and decree. And the Prophet too, before this promised grace of Allah, remembered by the pleasure of Allah, and forgot by the pleasure of Allah. What new grace was added

here if the promise meant only a quality which the Prophet had already had? If that promise were to make any sense, it would have to mean that the Prophet could never forget anything, although Allah had full power to make him forget.

Some people have recited the word as "*nansa'aha*" derived from "*an-nas*" (to delay). According to this recitation the meaning would be as follows: Whatever Signs We abrogate by nullifying it, or put it off by delaying its appearance, We bring one better than it or like it, and the Divine management in advancing something or putting it off, does not diminish its perfection or benefit.

The fact that the Divine Management always brings out a thing's perfection and benefit, is inferred from the clause, "We bring one better than it or like it." The goodness emanates from the perfection of a thing or benefit of a laid down rule.

The abrogated thing or rule was surely good; and the abrogating thing or rule too is at least as good, if not better. So, every Divine Management is the ideal of goodness, perfection and benefit.

Traditions

Innumerable traditions have been narrated by both sects, from the Prophet (s.a.w.), his companions, and the Imams of his *Ahlu l-bayt*, that there are abrogated and abrogating verses in the Qur'an.

The Commander of the faithful (Ali - a.s.) said, after enumerating various abrogated and abrogating verses: "And the word of Allah: *And I did not create the jinn and the human beings except that they should worship Me (51:56)* was abrogated by His word: *and they shall continue to differ, except those on whom your Lord has mercy; and for this did He create them (11:118-119)*, that is, for the mercy did He create them." (*at-Tafsir*, an-Nu'mani)

The author says: In this tradition the Imam has used the word, abrogation, in a wider sense than its terminological meaning. The latter verse mentions a reality which restricts the reality described by the former. The first verse affirms the Divine Worship as the purpose of creation. While doing a work, Allah keeps a purpose in view; and He cannot be defeated in His purpose. On the other hand, he has decreed that they should choose their own path, and consequently some of them progress on the right path, while others go astray. Those who by their own choice choose the path of guidance are covered by the mercy of Allah and it is for this mercy that He has created them. In this way, the second verse affirms another purpose for the creation: The mercy which accompanies the worship and guidance. This goal is reached by only a selected few, while the first verse had affirmed a goal for all the *jinn* and the men, and that is the Divine Worship. Some people are created for some others, and those others for yet others; this chain continues till it reaches the group which sincerely worships Allah. Looking from this point of view, it is easy to understand why all the *jinn* and men have been said to be created for the worship. We plant a garden and nurse the trees for their fruits. The real purpose is the fruits, but the trees and their branches and leaves are planted, protected and looked after because they are the means to get the fruits. And it will be quite right to say that the garden's purpose was its fruits.

In the same way, the second verse "abrogates" the generality of the first verse, focusing its sight on the true worshippers who are the recipients of the mercy of Allah.

The same book narrates from the same Imam that he said: "And the word of Allah: *And there is not one of you but shall come down to it; this is a decided decree of your Lord (19:71)*, was abrogated by His word: *Surely (as for) those whom the good has already gone forth from Us, they shall be kept far off from it; they will not hear its faintest sound, and they shall abide in that which their souls long for. The great fearful event shall not grieve them (21:101-103)*."

The author says: It must be noted that the relation between these two verses is not that found

between a general declaration and a particular one. The first verse says that it is a decided and unavoidable decree of Allah and such a decree cannot be rendered null and void, it cannot be cancelled. What the "abrogation" mentioned in this tradition means will be explained, God willing, in the exegesis of the verse 21:101, mentioned above.

al-Baqir (a.s.) said: "Among the (various types of) abrogation is "*al-bada*"* contained in the word of Allah: *Allah effaces what He pleases and establishes (likewise), and with Him is the basis of the Book (13:39)*; and (demonstrated in) the saving of the People of Yunus." (al-'Ayyashi)

The author says Its reason is clear.

Some traditions of the Imams of the Ahlulbayt (a.s.) count the death of an Imam and his being succeeded by another Imam as an example of the abrogation.

The author says: We have already explained this matter. The number of the traditions containing this theme reaches to nearly *mutawatir*.

'Abd ibn Hamid, Abu Dawud (in his *an-Nasikh wa'l-mansakh*) and Ibn Jarir have narrated from Qatadah that he said: "(During the lifetime of the Prophet) a verse used to abrogate (another) verse; and the Prophet of Allah used to recite a verse, and a chapter, and as much as Allah wished of a chapter, then it was raised (i.e. erased) and Allah caused His Prophet to forget it. So, Allah said narrating it to His Prophet: *Whatever signs We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it*; He says: There is (some) ease in it, some allowance in it, some order in it, (and) some prohibition in it." (*ad-Durru l-manthur*)

The author says: The same book quotes numerous traditions on the theme of "causing to be forgotten"; but all of them have to be discarded because they go against the teaching of the Book of Allah, as we have explained in the meaning of this word.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 108-115

- 2:108 *أَمْ تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَسْأَلُوا رَسُولَكُمْ كَمَا سُئِلَ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ۗ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُمْ مِن بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ أَنفُسِهِمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ فَاعْتُوا وَاصْفَحُوا حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۗ*
- 2:109 *وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ۗ وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَىٰ تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ۗ بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ۗ وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتِ النَّصَارَىٰ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَىٰ لَيْسَتِ الْيَهُودُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَهُمْ يَتَّبِعُونَ الْكِتَابَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ فَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ۗ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ مَنَعَ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ وَسَعَىٰ فِي خَرَابِهَا أُولَٰئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ أَنْ يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلَّا خَائِفِينَ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ ۗ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ۗ*
- 2:108 *Or, do you wish to put questions to your Apostle, as Musa was questioned before? And whoever adopts unbelief instead of faith, he indeed has lost the right way.*
- 2:109 *Many of the People of the Book wish that they could turn you back into unbelievers after your faith, out of envy on their part, (even) after the truth has become manifest to them. But pardon and forgive (them) until Allah should bring about His command. Surely Allah has power over all things.*
- 2:110 *And keep up prayer and pay the zakat and whatever good you send before for yourselves you shall find it with Allah; surely Allah sees what you do.*
- 2:111 *And they say: "None shall enter the garden except he who is a Jew or a Christian." These are their vain desires. Say: "Bring your proof if you are truthful."*
- 2:112 *Yes! whoever submits his self entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good, he has his reward with his Lord, and there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve.*
- 2:113 *And the Jews say: "The Christians do not follow anything (good)", and the Christians say: "The Jews do not follow anything (good)", while they recite the Book. Even thus say those who have no knowledge, like to what they say; so Allah shall judge between them on the Day of Resurrection in what they differ.*
- 2:114 *And who is more unjust than he who prevents (men from) the mosques of Allah, that His name shall not be remembered in them, and strives to ruin them? (As for) those, it was not for them that they should have entered them except in fear; they shall meet with disgrace in this world, and they shall have great chastisement in the hereafter.*
- 2:115 *And Allah's is the East and the West; therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah's face; surely Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.*

QUR'AN: *Or, do you wish to put questions to your Apostle.* It appears from this sentence that some of the Muslims although believing in the Prophet (s.a.w.) had put some questions to him not unlike the questions put to Musa (a.s.) by the Jews. That is why they have been placed here in line with the Jews for admonition. The tradition too supports this interpretation.

QUR'AN: *the right way:* that is, the straight path.

QUR'AN: *Many of the People of the Book wish...* : Reportedly it refers to Huyayy ibn alAkhtab and other Jews who were with him.

QUR'AN: *But pardon and forgive (them):* According to the exegetes this order was abrogated by the verse of fighting.

QUR'AN: *until Allah should bring about His command:* As indicated above, this clause alludes to a command that was to be revealed in not too distant a time about the Jews. The case is similar to the verse: (As for) *those, it was not for them that they should have entered them except in fear (2:115)*, when read together with the verse: *the idolaters are nothing but unclean, so they shall not approach the Sacred Mosque after this (very) year... (9:29)*. The clause, "except in fear", had hinted to the intended ban that was promulgated later.

We shall explain the meaning of "*alamr*"(command) under the verse: *And they ask you about the soul. Say: "The soul is from the command of My Lord"(17:85)*.

QUR'AN: *And they say: "None shall enter the garden except he who is a Jew or a Christian":* The verse explicitly joins the Christians with the Jews; from now on the sins and crimes of both will be enumerated together.

QUR'AN: *Yes! whoever submits his self entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good, he has his reward with his Lord:* It reiterates for the third time the basic principle that the spiritual felicity does not depend on name or nomenclature, that no one can get honor with Allah except by true faith in, and total surrender to, Him. The first declaration was in the verse: *Surely those who believe and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabaens, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward... (2:62)*; the second one was in the verse: *Yea! whoever earns evil... And (as for) those who believe and do good deeds, these are the dwellers of the garden... (2:8182)*; the third is this verse under discussion.

A comparison of this verse with the previous two shows that the true belief entails submitting one's self entirely to Allah; and "*alihsan*" (to do good) is synonymous to the good deeds.

QUR'AN: *while they recite the Book:* that is, while they follow the Book revealed to them. They should not say such things because they have the Book with them and it clearly shows them where the truth is.

This explanation is supported by the next sentence, "Even thus say those who have no knowledge, like to what they say." The word, "those who have no knowledge", refers to the unbelievers (other than the People of the Book) and the polytheists of Arabia. They used to say, "The Muslims do not follow anything good", or "The People of the Book do not follow anything good."

QUR'AN: *And who is more unjust than he who prevents...* Apparently it refers to the unbelievers and polytheists of Mecca. These two verses were revealed not long after the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) emigrated to Medina.

QUR'AN: *it was not for them that they should have entered them except in fear:* The verb, "was", shows that the sentence describes a past event. It perfectly fits the pagans of Mecca and their misdeeds. The traditions say that "he who prevents" refers to the unbelievers of Mecca, it was they who prevented the Muslims from praying in the Sacred Mosque (*Masjidu lHaram*) and in other mosques within the precinct of the Ka'bah.

QUR'AN: *And Allah's is the East and the West*: The east and the west - any direction, whatsoever really belong to Allah. His is the true mastership that cannot be altered or transferred; it is not like the possession known to us in our society's framework. Allah's ownership permeates the possessed thing itself as well as its benefits and effects, unlike our ownership that covers only the benefits and effects, and not the thing itself.

A property, possession, *per se*, cannot stand except with its owner. Therefore, the east and the west, nay, all the directions whatsoever, exist because of Allah the Owner. Allah preserves and manages the directions, and encompasses them. Anyone turning to any of the directions turns in reality to Allah.

The east and the west are relative terms. They cover almost all the directions, except the two imaginary points of the true north and the true south. That is why Allah left the clause, "whither you turn", unconditional, and did not say, 'whither you turn of these two directions'. To whatever direction one turns one's face, it is bound to be either east or west. The sentence, "And Allah's is the East and the West", therefore, implies that all the directions belong to Allah

The east and the west were selected for special mention because man fixes the directions with the help of rising and setting of the sun and other heavenly bodies.

QUR'AN: *therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah's face*: It puts the cause in place of the effect. What the sentence implies is as follows: To whichever direction you turn, it is allowed to you, because Allah's face is in that direction too.

The concluding clause, "surely Allah is ample-giving, Knowing", supports this interpretation. "*alWasi*" translated here as "ample-giving" literally means extensive, abounding, farreaching. It implies that Allah's ownership is extensive and allpervading and every direction belongs to Him. He is Allknowing too; therefore, He knows what your aim and intention is, no matter whichever action you turn your face to. He is not like human beings or other creatures - if we want to see some physical object, we have turn to a particular direction in order to bring it into focus. But Allah is not, confined to a particular direction; turn to any direction, you are turning to Allah, and Allah knows it.

The verse gives latitude about the *qiblah*, as far as its directions is concerned, but not apropos its location as may be inferred from the clause, "And Allah's is the East and the West", inasmuch as it mentions the directions only.

Traditions

Muhammad ibn alHusayn said: "It was written to al'Abdu 's-Salih: 'A man prays in a cloudy day in an open space and he does not know the (direction of)*qiblah*, he prays; and when he finished his prayer, the sun appears and (he finds that) he had prayed against*qiblah*. Should he regard his prayer (as valid) or should he repeat it?' He wrote: 'He should repeat it if the time (of prayer) is not over. Does he not know that Allah says – and His word is true: *therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah's face?*'" (*atTahdhib*)

alBaqir (a.s.) said about the word of Allah: *And Allah's is the East and the West... : Allah has revealed this verse especially for the voluntary prayer; therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah's face; surely Allah is Amplegiving, Knowing*. And the Apostle of Allah prayed on his camel by making gestures (for the actions of the prayer) wherever it turned to, when he proceeded to Khaybar, and also when he returned from Mecca - and the Ka'bah was behind his back." (al'Ayyashi)

The author says: al'Ayyashi has narrated another tradition of nearly the same meaning through

Zurarah from asSadiq (a.s.); and so have done alQummi and ashShaykh from Abu'l Hasan (a.s.) and asSaduq from asSadiq (a.s.).

If you study the traditions of the Imams of the *Ahlu lbayt*, related to the exegesis of the Qur'anic verses the general and the particular; the unconditional and the conditional you will see that often they infer one rule from the general verse, and another rule from the same when read together with the particular one. For example, the general verse implies a voluntary rule; but read with the particular one it promulgates an obligatory law. The same applies to the cases of disliked and forbidden things. And so on.

The above is a key factor in understanding the traditions narrated from the Imams and on it depends the knowledge of a multitude of their traditions.

You may infer from it two important principles of the Qur'anic knowledge:

First: Every Qur'anic clause or sentence, taken alone, describes an established reality or rule; when it is joined to another revealed qualifying clause, it indicates another reality or rule; add to it another qualification or condition and you get a third set of confirmed reality or law; and so on. For example, look at the verse: *say: "Allah; then leave them sporting in their vain discourses"* (6:91). It indicates four separate meanings depending on the word we stop at: First, "Say: Allah"; second, "Say: Allah; then leave them"; third, "Say: Allah; then leave them in their vain discourses"; fourth, "Say: Allah, then leave them sporting in their vain discourses." Many such examples may be found in the Qur'an.

Second: If two stories or two themes are joined in one sentence or clause, both of them must be having a common base.

These two esoteric principles of exegesis open the way to many Qur'anic secrets and Allah is the true Guide.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 116-117

2:116 وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ بَلْ لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلُّ لَّهُ قَانِثُونَ

2:117 بَدِيعُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

2:116 *And they say: "Allah has taken to himself a son." Glory be to Him; rather, whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His; all are obedient to Him.*

2:117 *The Originator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees an affair, He only says to it, "Be", and it is.*

Commentary

QUR'AN: *And they say: 'Allah has taken to himself a son':* Obviously the pronoun "they" refers to the Jews and the Christians; the former said that 'Uzayr was the son of God; the latter claimed the same thing for Jesus Christ. The verse takes the admonition of the People of the Book a step further.

The People of the Book initially used the phrase, son of God, for their prophets etc. as a mark of respect for them in the same way as they used the words, sons of God and His chosen people, for themselves. Gradually, the metaphorical sense gave way to the real one, and 'Uzayr and Jesus Christ were believed to be the sons of God in the real sense of the word.

Allah refuted their claim in these two verses. They contain two proofs against them.

The first proof is given in the words: "whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His; all are obedient to Him." How does one beget a son? A physical being removes some of his parts from himself and develops and nurtures it into another member of the species, similar to himself. Now, nothing can be similar to Allah He is far above such things; whatever is in the heavens and in the earth belongs to Him, is His property; every thing is made existent by Him, is managed by Him; it is by nature obedient to Him, subservient to Him. Things being as they are how can any thing be similar to Allah? Does God belong to a species? How can He beget someone of the same "species"?

The second proof is given in the second verse: "The Originator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees an affair, He only says to it, 'Be', and it is." *alBadi* (translated here as the Originator) is used for the one who invents and originates a thing without any previous model, without any existing blueprint. Only Allah is the Originator in the true sense of the word. He originates every thing; no creature of His resembles any fellow creature. His creation is not like others' production inasmuch as He does not make any thing by imitation; He does not create gradually, nor with the help of the secondary causes; when He decides an affair, He only says to it, "Be", and it is - without any need of any previous model or gradual development. How can such an Originator be said to take to himself a son?

After all, begetting a son entails gradual development. These are the two incontestable proofs which expose the fallacy of the belief that God has begotten a son. The verses also prove the following two facts:

First: The command to obey Allah and to worship Him is all pervading; it is binding to all that is in the heavens and in the earth.

Second: The actions of Allah are not gradual. It follows that every thing that comes into being gradually must have another nongradual existence which emanates from the Divine Command. Allah says: *His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it, 'Be' and it is (36:82). And Our command is but one, as the twinkling of an eye (54:50).* A detailed discussion of this Qur'anic reality will be given, God willing, under the verse 36:82, quoted just above.

QUR'AN: *Glory be to Him: "subhan" is an infinitive verb, synonymous to "attasbih" (glorification of God).* It is always used as a first member of genitive construction the second member always being the name, 'Allah' (or a pronoun referring to Him). Grammatically it is in accusative case pointing to a deleted verb. Originally it was, *sabbahtuhu tasbihan* (glorified Him as He should be glorified); but the verb was deleted and the infinitive verb was joined to the pronoun 'Him' in genitive construction, to stand in place of the verb. By using this phrase here, Allah has taught the believers the manner of declaring His glory whenever something unworthy of His sacred name is ascribed to Him.

QUR'AN: *all are obedient to Him: "al-Qunut" (to worship; self abasement).*

QUR'AN: *The Originator of the heavens... : Originating* implies that the thing so created is not like any other thing.

QUR'AN: *and it is:* The sentence branches out from the word, "Be." The preceding clause is not a conditional one; that is why this verb is not in apocopate form, that is, its last vowel has not been cut off.

Traditions

Sudayr as-Sayrafi said: "I heard Humran ibn A'yan asking Abu Ja'far (a.s.) about the word of Allah: *The Originator of the heavens and the earth.* Abu Ja'far (a. s.) said: 'Verily Allah, Mighty and Great is He! originated all things by His (Own) Knowledge, without there being any previous model. So, He originated the heavens and the earth, and there were no heavens or earth before them. Do you not listen to His word, *and His throne was on the water?'" (al-Kafi; Basa'iru 'ddarajat)*

The author says: The tradition points to yet another fine point. It shows that "the water", mentioned in this verse, is something different from the water known to us. The Imam has quoted this verse to prove that Allah's creation is based on originality. And the Divine authority and power, before the creation of these heavens and this earth, was firm on the water. Obviously, the water mentioned here was not the water of this earth, or like this earthly water.

We shall explain it further under the verse: *and His throne was on the water (12:7).*

A Philosophical Discourse on the Originality of Creation

The experience as well as the philosophical argument proves that any two things are different from each other in their respective particulars even if they are united in their common and general characteristics. Even if the two are so alike as to make it difficult for the senses to discern any dissimilarity between them, when seen or tested with the help of scientific instruments clear differences come before the eyes. It means that every creation is unique and original; no two things are made of one model.

Now we should look at this matter from the philosophical point of view. Let us take any two things and see why they are distinct from each other. If the basis of distinction is not a thing within them, then it must be an outside factor. In that case, their selves must be absolute and indivisible entities. But an absolute and indivisible entity cannot be duplicated nor repeated. In other words, the two distinct entities would become one and the same. And it is a contradiction in terms. Therefore, we have to admit that every being is different in its own self from all other beings. It follows that every thing is unique; and does not have any similarity or likeness to any other thing. And it is Allah who has given every thing its uniqueness, distinction and originality, as He is the Originator of the heavens and of the earth.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 118-119

لَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللَّهُ أَوْ تَأْتِينَا آيَةٌ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ تَشَابَهَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ 2:118
 إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَا تُسْأَلُ عَنْ أَصْحَابِ الْجَحِيمِ 2:119

2:118 *And those who have no knowledge say: "Why does not Allah speak to us or a sign come to us?" Even thus said those before them, the like of what they say; their hearts are all alike. Indeed We have made the signs clear for a people who are sure.*

2:119 *Surely, We have sent you with truth as a bearer of good news and as a warner, and you shall not be questioned as to the companions of the flaming fire.*

Commentary

QUR'AN: *And those who have no knowledge say:* It refers to the polytheists and the unbelievers other than the people of the Book. It is set in contrast with the verse 113: *And the Jews say, "The Christians do not follow anything (good)",* and the Christians say, "The Jews do not follow anything (good), while they recite the Book. Even thus say those who have no knowledge, like to what they say. In this verse, the People of the Book were joined to the polytheists and unbelievers of Arabia; and the verse under discussion joins those polytheists and unbelievers to the People of the Book: "And those who have no knowledge say: 'Why does not Allah speak to us or a sign come to us?' Even thus said those before them (i.e. the People of the Book, including the Jews) the like of what they say", because the Jews had disputed with their prophet, Musa (a.s.) and demanded from him the like of what these pagans say.

The People of the Book and the pagans of Arabia are alike in their way of thinking; the former say what the like of the latter say, and vice versa: *their hearts are all alike.*

QUR'AN: *Indeed We have made the signs clear for a people who are sure:* It is the rebuttal of the demand of those who have no knowledge. The signs they are demanding have already come to them, already have been made clear to them. But they cannot benefit from them because only those who are sure of those signs may get their benefit. As for these people who have no knowledge, their hearts are submerged into ignorance, sick with the disease of prejudice and envy. That is why they have lost the ability to benefit from the signs sent by Allah.

The above explanation makes it clear why they have been described as "those who have no knowledge."

After exposing the falsity of their demand, Allah directs His speech to the Apostle, declaring in clear terms that he has been sent by Allah "with the truth as the bearer of good news and as a warner." The verse was meant to bring comfort to the Prophet's heart and to make him realize that these adversaries were the people of the Fire, and they would not come to the path of guidance.

QUR'AN: *and you shall not be questioned as to the companions of the flaming fire:* Its import is similar to that of the verse: *Surely those who disbelieve alike is to them whether you warn them or*

do not warn them, they will not believe (2:6).

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 120-123

وَلَنْ تَرْضَىٰ عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا

لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ 120:

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ 121:

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ 122:

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا تَنفَعُهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ 123:

2:120 *And the Jews will not be pleased with you, nor the Christians until you follow their religion. Say, "Surely Allah's guidance, that is the (true) guidance." And if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, you shall have no guardian from Allah, nor any helper.*

2:121 *Those to whom We have given the Book read it as it ought to be read. These (it is who) believe in it; and whoever disbelieves in it, these it is that are the losers.*

2:122 *Children of Israel, call to mind My bounty which I bestowed on you and that I made you excel the nations.*

2:123 *And be on your guard against a day when no soul shall avail another in the least neither shall any compensation be accepted from it, nor shall intercession profit it nor shall they be helped.*

Commentary

QUR'AN: *And the Jews will not be pleased with you, nor the Christians...* : The Speaker turns again to the two groups, after a cursory glance at the others. These two verses give the sum and substance of the foregoing talk. After all those admonitions and reprimands of the Jews and the Christians, Allah turns to His Apostle and says: They will never be pleased with you until you follow their religion which they have invented according to their desires, composed of their own opinions. Then He orders him to confute their views and tell them: "Surely Allah's guidance, that is the (true) guidance." Why should a man follow the other for guidance? And the only guidance is the guidance of Allah; that is the truth which must be followed. There is no guidance in any thing else; and certainly not in your religion. And what is that religion? Just an amalgam of your desires glorified as religion.

"Allah's guidance" stands for the Qur'an - revealed by Allah and, therefore, attributed to Him. The sentence, "Surely Allah's guidance is the (true) guidance", restricts the guidance to that of Allah. Conversely, it means that their religion is devoid of guidance; in other words, it is just a set of their desires.

It follows that what the Prophet has got is knowledge, and what they hold in their hands is ignorance. Therefore, Allah says to the Prophet: "And if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, you shall have no guardian from Allah, nor any helper."

One cannot help admiring this verse: How logical, solid -and well-grounded is the argument it

offers; how many fine points of eloquence it holds, in spite of its brevity; how lovely is the language and how clear is the style!!

QUR'AN: *Those to whom We have given the Book*. The restriction of the clause, "These (it is who) believe in it", gives rise to the belief that this verse is a reply to an unspoken question. The preceding words, "And the Jews will not be pleased with you, nor the Christians ... " gave an indication that there was

no hope of their believing in the Prophet. If so, then how any of them could be expected to believe? Was it not in vain to invite them to Islam? This verse clears the air, and says: Those to whom We have given the Book (i.e., the Torah or the Injil) and who read it as it ought to be read, these it is who truly believe in their Book and as such they shall believe in you.* Or that, they believe in a revealed book; and therefore shall believe in any other book revealed by Allah. Or that, these it is who shall believe in the Qur'an

(According to some of the above interpretations, the pronoun, 'it', in the phrase, "believe in it", would stand for more than one noun by turns.)

The phrase, "Those to whom We have given the Book", refers to a group of the Jews and the Christians, who did not follow their desires, who wanted to follow the truth. "the Book" refers to the Torah and the Injil.

Another possible explanation: "the Book" might be referring to the Qur'an, and, "Those to whom We have given the Book", to the believers. In that case the meaning would be as follows: Those to whom We have given the Qur'an and who read it as it should be read, these it is who believe in the Qur'an, and not the Jews and the Christians who follow their desires.

The restriction, in this case, would give a converted proposition.

QUR'AN: *O Children of Israel!... nor shall they be helped*: These two verses are almost similar to the verses 47 and 48. Here the present talk with the Children of Israel comes to its end. The Qur'an, by repeating the prologue in the epilogue neatly ties the two ends together.

Traditions

As-Sadiq(a.s.) said, explaining the word of Allah, *Those to whom We have given the Book read it as it ought to be read*: "They recite its verses slowly, and understand it, and act according to its orders, and hope for its promise, and are afraid of its threat, and take lesson from its stories, and obey its commandments, and desist from what it prohibits. By God, it does not mean memorizing its verses, and studying its letters, and reciting its chapters, and learning its one-tenths and one-fifths. They remembered its words and neglected its boundaries. And what it means is meditating on its verses and acting according to its orders. Allah, the High, has said: (It is) *a Book We have sent down to you abounding in good, so that they may ponder over its verses*" (38:29). (*Irshadu'l-qulub*, ad-Daylami)

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the word of Allah, *read it as it ought to be read*, that: "(It is) stopping at (the description of) the Garden and the Fire." (al-Ayyashi)

The author says: What the Imam means is the meditation on the Qur'an

The same Imam said about the verse, *Those to whom We have given the Book that*: "They are the Imams" (*al-Kafi*)

The author says: This explanation is based on the principle of the "flow of the Qur'an", and gives the best example of those to whom Allah has given the Book.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSE 124

وَاذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ 2:124
 2:124 *And (remember) when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, then he fulfilled them. He said: "Surely I am going to make you an Imam for men" (Ibrahim) said: "And of my offspring?" He said: "My covenant will not include the unjust"*

Commentary

Beginning with this verse, the Qur'an throws light on some aspects of the life of Ibrahim (a.s.); these verses prepare the minds for the ones promulgating the change of *al-qiblah* (direction of prayer) as well as the rules of the *hajj*. These stories also explain the reality of the pure Islamic religion - with its different grades and levels - looking at its fundamental beliefs, moral teachings and some rules of the *shari'ah*; among other things they show how Allah bestowed on him *al-imamah* (leadership) of the people, how he built the Ka'bah, and how he prayed to Allah to send an Apostle among them.

QUR'AN: *And (remember) when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words then he fulfilled them:*

It refers to the occasion when Ibrahim (a.m.) was given the *imamah*. It had happened during the end period of his life; it was the time when he had become very old, after Ismail and Ishaq both had been born, and he had brought Ismail and his mother to reside in Mecca, as some other exegetes also have taken note of this fact. This timing is clearly pointed at by his words, "And of my offspring?", when Allah told him: "I am going to make you an Imam for men." Obviously he did not know, nor did he even expect, that he would get any offspring, until the angels brought to him the good tidings of Ismail and Ishaq. Even when the angels told him that he was to get children, he responded to those tidings in such words as could apparently be construed to have sprung from despair and pessimism. Allah says: *And inform them of the guests of Ibrahim: When they entered upon him, they said: "Peace." He said: "Surely we are afraid of you." They said: "Be not afraid, surely we give you the good news of a boy, possessing knowledge. "He said: "Do you give me good news (of a son) when old age has come upon me? - of what then do you give me good news!" They said: "We give you good news with truth; therefore, be not of the despairing" (15:51-55).* The same was the reaction of his wife when she was given that good news, as Allah says: *And his wife was standing (by), so she laughed; then We gave her the good news of Ishaq, and after Ishaq, of (a son's son) Ya'qub. She said: "O woe to me! Shall I bear a son when I am an (extremely) old (woman) and this my husband an (extremely) old (man)? Most surely this is an amazing thing." They said: "Do you wonder at the decree of Allah? The mercy of Allah and His blessings be on you, O people of the house, surely He is Praised, Glorious" (11:71-73).*

As you see, the talks of both Ibrahim and his wife show that by that time they had lost all hope of

getting any child. That is why the angels replied to them in those words to give them hope and make them happy. Clearly neither he nor his wife knew before that time that they would be given any offspring. But on this occasion, we see that as soon as Allah told him, "I am going to make you an Imam for men", he pleaded, "And of my offspring?" This prayer brings before our eyes the image of a man who is sure of having an offspring. How can a man, and particularly one like Ibrahim, the friend of Allah (who very well knew the nuances of the language), speak before his Lord about a thing he knew nothing about? If he had uttered these words before getting any children, it would have been necessary for him to add some proviso, like "if Thou givest me any offspring." This event, therefore, must have taken place in the end period of Ibrahim's life some time after he had been given the good news.

Moreover, the words, "And (remember) when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, then he fulfilled them. He said: 'Surely I am going to make you an Imam for men'", show that his *imamah* was bestowed to him after Allah had tried him with certain trials. These consisted of various sufferings and tests, which Ibrahim (a.s.) underwent in his life. And according to the Qur'an, the clearest and hardest of all was the trial of the sacrifice of Ismail. Allah says: *And when he reached (the age of) working with him, he said: "O my son! surely I am seeing in dream that I am sacrificing you; consider then what you see." He said: "O my father! do what you are commanded; if Allah please, you will surely find me of the patient ones." So when they both submitted and he threw him down upon his forehead, and We called out to him (saying): "O Ibrahim! You have indeed proved the vision true; surely thus We reward the doers of good. Most surely this is a manifest trial" (37:102-106).* This manifest trial had taken place in the extreme old age of Ibrahim, because even the birth of Ismail had taken place when Ibrahim had become very old, as Allah quotes him as saying: - *"Praise be to Allah, Who gave me in old age Isma'il and Ishaq; most surely my Lord is the Hearer of prayer" (14:39).* And the *imamah* was given to him after these trials.

Now we come back to the verse under discussion:

"And (remember) when his Lord tried Ibrahim": "*al-Ibtala'*" and "*al-bala'*" both have the same meaning: to try, to put to test. You give someone an order, or put him in a difficult situation, in order to find out his inner strength, his spiritual sublimity; thus you bring out his hidden qualities like obedience, bravery, generosity, chastity, knowledge, faithfulness (or their opposite traits); it is only then that you may say, "I have tested him", "I have put him to trial." One cannot be tested except through action; it is the action, which brings out the hidden qualities of a man, and not the word; words may lie but not the actions. Allah says: *Surely We have tried them as We tried the owners of the garden... (68:17);... Surely Allah will try you with a stream... (2:249).*

Now Allah says that He tried Ibrahim with certain words. This sentence looks at the "words" inasmuch as they are related to actions - they are the vehicles to carry the commands of the speaker to the listener. For example, Allah says: *... and speak to men good (words). (2:83),* that is, behave with them properly.

"With certain words, then he fulfilled them": "*al-Kalimat* is plural of *al-kalimah* (word). Of course, the word, "word", has sometimes been used in the Qur'an for a substance, a corporeal being (instead of a talk or speech) as Allah says: *... a Word from Him whose name is the Messiah, 'Isa son of Maryam... (3:45).* But this usage is based on the fact that 'Isa, like Adam, was created by a word from Allah as the Qur'an says: *Surely the likeness of 'Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: "Be", and he was (3:59).*

Otherwise, whenever the Qur'an attributes the "word" to Allah, it means speech and saying. For example:

and there is none to change the words of Allah (6:34).there is no changing the words of Allah (10:64).

and Allah desired to manifest the truth of what was true by His words (8:7).

Surely those against whom the word of your Lord has proved true will not believe (10:96)

But the word of punishment proved true against the unbelievers (39:71).

And thus did the word of your Lord prove true against those who disbelieved that they are the inmates of the Fire (40:6).

and had not a word gone forth from your Lord till an appointed time, certainly affair would have been decided between them (42:14).

and the word of Allah, that is the highest (9:41).

He said: "The truth then (it) is and the truth do I speak" (38: 84).

Our word for a thing when We intend it, is only that We say to it: "Be", and it is (16:40).

These and similar verses use "word" in the meaning of "talk" because the talk conveys to the hearer the proposition which the speaker intends to communicate, or the command which he wants him to obey. It is for this reason that sometimes the Qur'an describes the "word" as being complete! It is as though a "word" emanating from the speaker remains incomplete until it is implemented, and then it becomes complete, is proved true. Allah says: And the word of your Lord has been accomplished (completed) truly and justly; there is none to change His words (6:115); and the good word of your Lord was fulfilled (completed) in the Children of Israel (7:137).

The above explanation does not go against the fact that Allah's word is Allah's action. His word and His action are not two different things; they are one and the same. Realities and facts have their own rules, and literary demands and semantic values are governed by other rules. Whatever realities Allah wishes to disclose to one of His prophets or other servants, and whatever command He wants to impose on someone, it is His talk and speech, inasmuch as it fulfils the same purpose which a talk or speech does - it conveys information, and proposition as well as His order and prohibition. Not frequently, the word, "word", is used for ideas, intentions and actions if they have the same import as "word" has. We say: "I will surely do this because I have already said so, and have given my word." In fact, you have never before uttered a single word about it; all that your "given word" actually means is that you do have a firm intention to do it, without any wavering will, without listening to any intercessor. The Arab poet, 'Antarah, said:" And (it was) my word (to my soul) whenever it was in turmoil or excitement: Be at ease; you will either earn the accolade or will go to (final) rest." Obviously, he had not talked with his soul or spirit; what he means by "word" is that he had made up his mind to fight bravely, and to face the enemy without retreating from his stand; because if he was victorious, his people would sing his praise, and if he was killed, he would get the rest and tranquility.

In this light it is easy to see that the phrase, "when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words", refers to the difficult situations he had to face, and the Divine covenants he had entered into, for example, his conflict with his people regarding the stars and the idols, his test by fire and emigration, his supreme trial of sacrificing his son, and other such things. Allah has not specified which tests those "certain words" refer to, because this information had nothing to do with the theme of the verse. But one thing is certain: As it was only after the fulfillment of those words that Allah said to him, "Surely I am going to make you an Imam for men", the words must have been such as to prove his capability for the status of the *imamah*.

This much about the "words." Now comes the next phrase: "then he fulfilled them." If the pronoun "he" refers to Ibrahim (a.s.), then it would mean that he fulfilled the task, which was expected of him;

he obediently did what he was told to do. If on the other hand the pronoun refers to the Lord (as it obviously does) then it would mean that his Lord helped him to do what was expected of him.

Somebody has said that the phrase, "certain words", refers to the Divine Speech, "Surely I am going to make you an Imam for men... My covenant will not include the unjust." But it is an explanation, which does not carry any weight, because nowhere in the Qur'an the word "words" has been used for "sentences."

The Meaning of Imamah and its Basic Factors

QUR'AN: "*Surely I am going to make you an Imam for men*": That is, I am going to make you a leader for men; they will adhere to you and follow in your footsteps, in words and deeds. *al-Imam* (leader) is the one whom the people follow. That is why many exegetes have said that *al-imamah* (leadership) in this verse means prophethood, because a prophet is followed and obeyed by his *ummah* in their religion; Allah has said: *And We did not send any apostle but that he should be obeyed by Allah's permission*(4:64). But this interpretation has no leg to stand upon. Because:

First: The word *imamah* (Imam, leader) is the second accusative of the causative *ja'iluka* (literally, maker of you; translated here as "going to make you"), which is a *nomen agentis*; and a *nomen agentis* is never used in place of a past tense; if used in place of a verb it always gives the meaning of present or future tense. When Allah used these words in His talk with Ibrahim (a.s.), He in effect gave him a promise to make him an Imam in future - in other words, to give him a status which he did not have at that time. And Ibrahim (a.s.) was already a prophet. Remember that this talk itself was a revelation sent to him in his capacity as a prophet. He was a prophet long before he was given the status of the *imamah*. Therefore, the *imamah* in this verse cannot mean prophethood. (This reply is given by another exegete.)

Second: We have described earlier that Ibrahim (a.s.) was given the *imamah* in his later days after getting the good news that he would be given offspring, Ishaq and Ismail; and the angels had given him that news while they were on their way to destroy the *ummah* of Lut; and Ibrahim at that time was a prophet and an apostle. He was a prophet and apostle before he got the *imamah*; therefore, his *imamah* was different from his prophethood and apostleship.

Why are such interpretations offered by exegetes from time to time? The reason lies in the banality - because of repeated use during all these centuries - which has degraded the sublime meanings of the Qur'anic words in people's minds.

The word, *imamah*, has been debased in similar way. Some people say that it means prophethood, precedence, being in authority; others interpret it as *asal-khilafah* (successorship), *al-wisayah* (regency) or headship in spiritual and temporal affairs. But all this is wrong. "Prophethood" means receiving news from Allah; "messengership" means conveying that message to people; "authority" implies that others have to follow one's example and obey one's orders. Now this authority is a concomitant of prophethood and messengership; *khilafah* and *wisayah* both mean successorship to a prophet; likewise, headship in spiritual and temporal affairs is a sort of the above-mentioned authority; and all of it is different from the correct meaning of the *imamah*. The *imamah* implies that a man has an intrinsic quality because of which people should follow him faithfully, making their words and deeds to conform to his words and deeds; but none of the above-mentioned interpretations brings out this meaning. Ibrahim (a.s.) was already a prophet whose obedience was obligatory for all men. What would be the sense in telling him that Allah was going to make him a prophet for men? Or, to make his

obedience compulsory in all that he said and did? Or, a head of his *ummah* to order or forbid in matters of religion? Or, a successor? Or, a *khalifah* in the earth to decide between the people by the order of Allah?

The difference between the *imamah* and all the above-mentioned words is not only verbal; it is the realities behind those words that differ from one another. When a man is given prophethood, it becomes obligatory for the people to obey him. Therefore, it would be wrong to say to that prophet, "I am going to make your obedience compulsory for men although I have already made it compulsory." Nor will it be correct to convey the same idea in other words, because the same problem will arise again. When Allah gives someone some status, he does not get merely a new title or name; bounties of Allah are not empty words; there are real things behind those words. Therefore, the *imamah* has its own reality, different from other words' realities.

We find in the Qur'an that whenever it mentions *imamah* it puts guidance side-by-side - it looks as though Allah was using the latter to explain the former. Allah says in the story of Ibrahim: *And We gave him Ishaq and Ya'qub as a further gift; and We made (them) all righteous ones; and We made them Imams, to guide (people) by Our command...* (21:72 - 73); and He says in another place: *And We made of them Imams to guide by Our command as they were patient, and they were certain of Our signs* (32:24). Here the *imamah* is explained, or rather defined, in terms of guidance, and then further qualified with the proviso, "by Our command." Clearly, the *imamah* does not mean any type of guidance; it is a guidance, which emanates from the command of Allah. And the reality of that command is described in these words: *His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it: "Be", and it is. Therefore glory be to Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of every thing...* (36:82-83); *And Our command is but one, as the twinkling of an eye* (54:50). We shall explain, when writing about these verses, that the Divine Command (which the former verse also calls "the Kingdom") is the sublime side of the creation, with which they face towards Allah; it is pure, free from fetters of time and space, and untouched by change and variation. It is also the real meaning of the word "Be", because the Divine Command "Be", is nothing other than the actual existence of the thing concerned. This "command" is in contrast to *al-khalq* (creation) which is the other side of the things - it is subject to changes and variations; it grows by and by and deteriorates in the same way; it works within the framework of time and space. (We shall fully explain this theme in its proper place, Allah willing.)

To sum it up, *Imam* is a leader who guides by a Divine Command, which is closely associated with him. The *imamah*, in its esoteric sense, is *al-wilayah* (guardianship, authority) over the people in their actions and activities; and its guidance entails conveying them to the final destination by the command of Allah. It is different from that guidance which only shows the way - and which is usually done by the prophets and messengers of Allah as well as by other believers who guide the people towards Allah with sincere exhortation and good advice. This second type of guidance is mentioned in the following verses:

And We did not send any apostle but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them clearly; then Allah makes whom He pleases err and He guides whom He pleases... (14: 4).

And he who believed (i.e., the believer from the family of Pharaoh) said: "O my people! follow me, I will guide you to the right course" (40:38).

Why should not then a company from every party from among them go forth that they may acquire (proper) understanding in religion, and that they may warn their people when they come back to them, so that they may be cautious? (9:122)

(We shall further explain it later on.)

Then Allah describes the reason why He gave them the *imamah*, in these words, *as they were patient, and they were certain of Our signs*. (See 32:24, quoted above.) The criteria, therefore, are patience and absolute certainty. They were steadfast and patient in the cause of Allah. Patience, in this verse, is unconditional; therefore it means remaining patient and steadfast in all matters and all conditions with which Allah may choose to test the submission and servitude of a servant. And they possessed highest degree of certainty. Going through the stories of Ibrahim (a.s.), we find the following words of Allah in the Qur'an: *And thus did We show Ibrahim the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and so that he might be of those who are sure* (6:75). The verse clearly indicates that showing of the kingdom to Ibrahim was the prelude to the bestowal of absolute certainty on him. It proves that certainty is an inseparable concomitant of looking at the kingdom. This is also the theme of the following verses:

Nay! if you had known with a knowledge of certainty, you should most certainly have seen the hell (102:5-6).

Nay! rather, what they used to do has become (like)rust upon their hearts. Nay! most surely they shall on that day be shut out away from their Lord... . Nay! most surely the record of the righteous shall be in the 'illiyyin. And what will make you know what 'illiyyin is? It is a written book; see it those who are near (to Allah) (83:14 -15; 18-21).

These verses prove that the "near ones" are those who are not shut out away from their Lord; on their hearts there are no rust or coverings of sin, ignorance and doubt; they are the ones who have absolute certainty about Allah, and they see the *'illiyyin* as they see the hell.

In short, it is essential for an Imam to be a man of absolute certainty, who sees the world of the "kingdom" of Allah, which is based on the "words" of Allah. And we have explained earlier that the kingdom is the command of Allah, which, in its turn, is the esoteric side of the universe.

Now let us have a fresh look at the verse 21:73 (and 32:24) quoted earlier. "And We made them Imams, to guide (people) by Our command:" it very clearly proves that whatever is the subject of guidance (i.e., the hearts and the deeds), the Imam has its inner reality; he is constantly in touch with its another side, the side of the command, which is never hidden from him. It is known that the hearts and the deeds, like any other thing, have two sides, one of the "command" and the other of the "creation"; therefore, the reality of the deeds of the men - both good and bad - is always within the vision of the Imam always under his observation; and he has authority over both ways - the one of happiness and bliss and the other of unhappiness and distress. Also, Allah has said: (Remember) *the day when We will call every people with their Imam* (17:71). (We shall explain when writing about this verse that the "Imam" here means the true leader, and not the scroll of deeds, as some people think.) Therefore, the Imam is the one who shall lead the people to Allah *on the day when hidden things shall be tried*, as he leads them to Him in the manifest and esoteric lives of this world. The last quoted verse also shows that there cannot be a single period, a single moment, without an Imam, because Allah says, "every people." (The detailed proof of this statement will be given under that verse.)

The *imamah* is such an exalted and sublime position that it cannot be given except to one who is extremely virtuous by his own self. If someone's soul is polluted, even in a minute degree, by any injustice or sin, then he needs someone else to guide him back to the right way. And Allah has said: *Is he then who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed, or he who himself does not go right unless he is guided?*(10:35). Here Allah puts two groups opposite to each other: one is that which guides to the truth; and the other, that which does not go right unless guided by someone else, in other words, the one which needs a helping hand to be guided aright. This contrast means that the one who

guides to the truth, is rightly guided by himself; conversely, the one rightly guided by another person cannot guide to the truth.

It follows from the above discourse that:

First: The Imam must be *al-ma'sum* (sinless; protected from error and sin). Otherwise, he would not be rightly guided by himself, as explained above. Also, the following verse proves their *al-'ismah* (sinlessness): *And We made them Imams to guide (people) by Our command, and We revealed to them the doing of good (deeds) and the establishing of prayer and the giving of zakat, and Us (alone) did they worship* (21:73). According to this verse, all the deeds of the Imam are good, he is guided to them, not by any other person, but on his own by Divine help. The phrase translated above as "the doing of good (deeds)" is *fi'la 'I-khayrat* (to do good deeds); it is *al-masdar* (roughly translated as infinitive verb), used as the first construct of a genitive construction; and such a *masdar* proves that the action has surely taken place. Let us explain it in another way: If Allah would have said, 'We revealed to them: Do good deeds', it would not have shown that they actually obeyed the command and did good; but when He says, *We revealed to them the doing of good*, it means that whatever they did was good and it was by Divine inspiration and heavenly help.

Second: Conversely, whoever is not *ma'sum*, can never be an Imam, a guide to the truth.

Now, it is clear that the adjective, "the unjust", (in the Divine declaration, "My covenant will not include the unjust") covers everyone who might have done any injustice, for example, polytheism, idol-worship or any other sin, in any period of his life, even if he may have repented and been good afterwards.

One of our teachers (may Allah have mercy on him!) was asked as to how this verse could prove that the Imam must be *ma'sum*. He replied:

Logically, we may divide mankind into four groups: (1) One who remains unjust throughout his life; (2) One who was never unjust in any period of his life; (3) One who was unjust in the beginning, but became just later on; and (4) One who was just in the beginning, but became unjust afterwards, Ibrahim was too sublime in position to ask for the *imamah* for the first or the fourth group. This leaves two groups (the second and the third), which could be included in his prayer. And Allah rejected one of them - the one who was unjust in the beginning but became just later on. Now, there remains only one group who could be given the *imamah* - the one who was never unjust in any period of his life; that is, who was *ma'sum*.*

To sum it up, the verse shows that:

First: *Imamah* is a Divinely-made status.

Second: The Imam must be *ma'sum*, by Divine *'ismah*; in other words, he must be protected by Allah from sins and errors.

Third: The earth cannot remain without a rightful Imam, as long as there is a man on it.

Fourth: It is essential for an Imam to be supported by the Divine help.

Fifth: The deeds of the people are not hidden from the Imam.

Sixth: The Imam must have knowledge of all that is needed by the people for their good in this world and the next.

Seventh: It is impossible for any other person to surpass the Imam in any virtue.

These seven are among the basic factors of the *imamah*, and this verse, read with other relevant verses, leads us to them, and Allah is our Guide.

Objection: As the *imamah* means to guide by the command of Allah, and as that guiding to the truth is concomitant with the Imam's being rightly guided by Allah (as has been inferred from the verse: *Is he then who guides to truth more worthy to be followed...*), then all the prophets should certainly

be called Imams. Obviously, prophethood of a prophet comes into being only when he is rightly guided by Allah through revelation; a prophet is not guided by any other person through teaching or advice etc. Therefore, bestowal of prophethood would be synonymous with that of the *imamah*. And the objection you had put against the interpretation of the *imamah* with prophethood would be turned *in toto* against your explanation.

Reply: What we have inferred from the foregoing description is that if one guides to Allah by His command, he must be guided aright not by any other person but by Allah Himself. But the Qur'anic verses have not shown that its contrary proposition is also true, that is, it has not been proved that whoever is rightly guided by Allah should also be a guide to Allah. Therefore, it is not necessary that every prophet should be called an Imam. In one place, Allah declares about various prophets that they were rightly guided by Him, and yet does not join it with the statement that they guided their people to the truth. He says: *And We gave to him (i.e., Ibrahim) Ishaq and Ya'qub; each did We guide, and Nuh did We guide before, and of his descendants, Dawud and Sulayman and Ayyub and Yusuf and Harun; and thus do We reward those who do good; and Zakariyya and Yahya and 'Isa and Ilyas; every one was of the righteous(ones) and Isma'il and Ilyasa' and Yunus and Lut; and every one We did exalt over the worlds; and from among their fathers and their descendants and their brethren; and We chose them and guided them to the straight path. This is Allah's guidance, He guides thereby whom He pleases of His servants; and if they had set up others (with Him), certainly what they did would have become ineffectual for them. These are they to whom We gave the book and the wisdom and the prophethood; therefore if these disbelieve in it, We have (already) entrusted with it a people who are not disbelievers in it. These are they whom Allah guided, therefore follow their guidance. Say: "I do not ask you for any reward for it; it is but a reminder to the worlds" (6:86 - 90).*

The context of the above verses shows that this Divine Guidance is an unalterable firm decree; it will continue in this *ummah* even after the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), and will remain confined within the progeny of Ibrahim (a.s.), as the verses 43:26-28 prove: *And when Ibrahim said to his father and his people: "Surely, I am clear of what you worship; (I worship) but (only) Him Who created me, for surely He will guide me." And He made it a word to continue in his posterity, so that they may return (to God).* When Ibrahim (a.s.) declared to his people that he was clear of what they worshipped and that he worshipped only Him Who had created him, he had already achieved that guidance which contemplation and logical reasoning can produce. Then he told them of his expectation that Allah would surely guide him. This subsequent guidance was obviously different from the earlier one; it was guidance by the command of Allah. Thereafter, Allah says that He made this Divine Guidance "a word to continue" in Ibrahim's posterity. This is one of those verses in which "word" has been used not for speech but for a substance it refers to the guidance as "a word." The same is the interpretation of "word of piety" in the verse: *and made them keep the word of piety, and well were they entitled to it and worthy of it (48:26).*

The above explanation makes it clear that the *imamah* after Ibrahim (a.s.), is confined to his descendants. The sentences, "(Ibrahim) said: 'And of my offspring?' He said: 'My covenant will not include unjust'", point to this fact. Obviously, Ibrahim (a.s.) had asked for the *imamah* not for all but only for some of his descendants, and he was told that it would not be given to the unjust of his descendants. Needless to say that not all of his descendants were unjust; therefore, this reply disqualifies only one group and not all. In other words, it grants the request for a selected group of his offspring and further sanctifies it as a covenant, and on that basis it says that the covenant of Allah will not include the unjust ones.

QUR'AN: *"My covenant will not include the unjust"* This expression shows how far removed are the unjust from the circle of the Divine Covenant; ** therefore, it is an example of *isti'arah bi 'l-kinayah*.

Traditions

As-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Verily Allah (to Whom belong Might and Majesty) accepted Ibrahim as a servant before making him a prophet; and verily Allah made him a prophet before appointing him as a messenger; and verily Allah appointed him as a messenger before taking him as a friend; and verily Allah took him as a friend before making him an Imam. When He combined for him all (the above - mentioned) things, *He said, 'Surely I am going to make you an Imam for men.'*" The Imam further said: "It was because of the greatness of it (i.e., *imamah*) in the eyes of Ibrahim (a.s.) that he said: *'And of my offspring?'* He said: *'My covenant will not include the unjust.'*" The Imam explained: "A fool will not be Impugn of a pious." (*al-Kafi*)

The author says: The same meaning has been narrated from the same Imam through another chain of narrators, and from al-Baqir (a.s.) through yet other chain; and al-Mufid has narrated it from as-Sadiq (a.s.).

The Imam has said that Allah accepted Ibrahim as a servant before making him a prophet. This theme is inferred from the Qur'anic verse: *And certainly We gave to Ibrahim his rectitude before, and We knew him fully well. When he said to his father and his people: "What are these images to which you (as devotees) cleave?" They said: "We found our fathers worshipping them." He said: "Certainly you have been (both) you and your fathers, in manifest error." They said: "Have you brought to us the truth, or are you one of the triflers?" He said: "Nay! your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Who brought them into existence, and I am of those who bear witness to this" (21:51 - 56).* This story shows how Allah took Ibrahim (a.s.) as a servant in the beginning of his spiritual journey.

It is one thing that someone is a slave or servant of Allah, and a quite different thing that he is taken or accepted by Allah as His slave. Being a slave of Allah is a concomitant of existence and creation; anyone who is created and has perceiving faculties is inescapably a slave of Allah; this servitude does not depend on Divine acceptance. Man, for example, owes his existence to his Lord, is created and made by Him; he may behave in his personal life according to this servitude's dictates by surrendering himself to his Lord the Almighty, or he may act rebelliously, but his submission or rebellion does not alter the fact that he is a born slave of Allah. Allah says in the Qur'an: *There is no one in the heavens and the earth but will come to the Beneficent Allah as a servant (19:93).*

But if he does not act as a slave should do, if he behaves in the earth with arrogance and rebellion, then he does not deserve to be called a slave or servant of Allah, because he does not fulfill the conditions of servitude. A servant surrenders himself to his Lord, and leaves all his affairs in his Master's hands. Therefore, only he deserves to be called a servant of Allah who is His slave in his person as well as in his action - only such a man can truly be called a slave of Allah. Allah says: *And the servants of the Beneficent God are they who walk on the earth in humbleness... (25:63).*

Accordingly, when Allah accepts a man as His servant, He takes masterly interest in that servant's affairs; in other words,

Allah becomes his *waliyy* and guardian, and takes his affairs in His Own hands. Such servitude is the key to *al-wilayah* (guardianship). The verse 7:196 points to this reality: *"Surely my*

guardian is Allah, Who revealed the Book, and He takes in hand (the affairs of) the good." The adjective good refers to those who are worthy of Divine guardianship and friendship. Allah has referred to the Prophet in several places in the Qur'an as His servant, for example, ... *Who revealed the Book to His servant...* (18:1); ... *Who sends down clear signs upon His servant..* (57:9); ... *when the servant of Allah stood up calling upon Him...* (72:19). In short, to say that Allah accepted someone, as His servant is another way of saying that Allah took him under His *wilayah* and guardianship.

The Imam said: "... and verily Allah made him a prophet before appointing him as a messenger." The difference between a prophet and a messenger, as shown by the traditions narrated from the Imams of the *Ahlu'l-bayt*, is as follows:

A prophet sees in his dream what Allah intends to reveal to him; and a messenger sees the angel and talks to him. The same gradual progress is seen in the history of Ibrahim (a.s.). Allah says: *And mention Ibrahim in the Book; surely he was a truthful (man), a prophet, when he said to his father: "O my father! why do you worship what neither hears nor sees, nor does it avail you in the least" (19:41 - 42).* The verse shows that he was a prophet when he said this to his father. It was a confirmation of what he had told his people as soon as he arrived among them: *"Surely I am clear of what you worship; (I worship) but (only) Him Who created me, for surely He will guide me" (43: 26 - 27).* Then we read the verse 11:69, which says: *And certainly Our messengers (i.e., angels) came to Ibrahim with good news. They said: "Peace." "Peace," said he.* This event, in which Ibrahim saw the angels and talked to them, had taken place in his old age long after he had left his father and his nation.

The Imam said: "And verily Allah appointed him as a messenger before taking him as a friend." It is inferred from the words of Allah: *And who is better in religion than he who... follows the faith of Ibrahim, the upright one? And Allah took Ibrahim as a friend (4:125).* Apparently it shows that Allah took him as a friend because of the same upright faith and religion which he had promulgated by the command of his Lord; the theme of this verse is to describe the distinction and excellence of that upright religion which so much raised the status of Ibrahim that he was taken as a friend of Allah.

al-Khalil is more exclusive than *as-sadiq* although both are generally translated as "friend." When a friend is sincere and truthful (*as-sadiq*) in his dealings with the other friend, he is called *as-sadiq*; thereafter, if he turns away from all else, confining his needs and requirements to that friend only, he is called *al-khalil*, because *al-khullah* means need and requirement.

The meaning of the Imam's sentence, "and verily Allah took him as a friend before making him an Imam," may be understood from the foregoing commentary.

The words of the Imam: "A fool will not be Imam of a pious," point to the verse 2:130-131: *And who forsakes the religion of Ibrahim but he who makes himself a fool, and most certainly We chose him in this world, and in the hereafter he is most surely among the righteous. When his Lord said to him, Submit (yourself), he said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds."* In this verse Allah says that whoever turns away from the religion of Ibrahim - in other words, whoever is unjust - is a fool; then he contrasts this foolishness with Divine selection - a selection that has been explained in the next sentences as "Islam" or submission to God. (Ponder on the clause, *When his Lord said to him, Submit yourself*) Then we see that *al-Islam* (submission) and *at-taqwa* (piety, fear of Allah) have been made one, or applicable to one meaning, in the verse: *O you who believe! fear Allah as is due to Him, and do not die but as Muslims (3:102).* (Think deeply on it.)

al-Mufid has narrated from Durust and Hisham from the Imams (of the *Ahlu'l-bayt*): "Ibrahim was a prophet, and he was not an Imam until Allah, Blessed and High is He, said (to him): *"Surely I am*

going to make you an Imam for men" (Ibrahim) said: "And of my offspring?" Then Allah, Blessed and High is He, said: "My covenant will not include the unjust" Whoever had (ever) worshipped an idol or a sculpture or an image, cannot be an Imam"

The author says: Its meaning is clear from the above explanations.

It is narrated in *al-Amali* of at-Tusi (with complete chain of narrators) and in *al-Manaqib* of Ibn al-Maghazili (as a *marfu'* tradition) from Ibn Mas'ud from the Prophet that he said (explaining the words of Allah to Ibrahim in this verse): "Whoever prostrated before an idol, leaving me, I will not make him an Imam" Then the Prophet said: "And that prayer was fulfilled in me and my brother 'Ali; neither of us ever prostrated before any idol."

Waki' and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated from 'All ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) that the Prophet said (in explanation of the words of Allah *My covenant will not include the unjust*): "There is no obedience except in good." (*ad-Durrul-manthur*)

'Abd ibn Hamid narrated from 'Imran ibn Husayn that he said: "I heard the Prophet saying: 'There is no obedience of a creature in disobedience of Allah (i.e., a man should not be obeyed if he tells you to disobey Allah).'" (ibid.)

The author says: The meanings of those traditions are easily understood from the earlier explanations.

al-'Ayyashi has narrated in his *Tafsir* through several chains, from Safwan the camel-driver, that he said: "We were at Mecca; and the talk gradually reached the words of Allah *And (remember) when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, then he fulfilled them.*" (The Imam) said: "That is, he completed them with Muhammad and 'Ali and the Imams from the descendants of 'Ali, as Allah says: *Offspring, one from the other*" (3:34).

The author says: This tradition takes the "word" in the meaning of the *imamah*; a similar explanation is given to "word" in the verses: ... *for surely He will guide me. And He made it a word to continue in his posterity...* (43:27-28). According to this tradition, the verse would mean as follows: And remember when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, that is, his own *imamah* and that of Ishaq and his progeny; then He completed it with the *imamah* of Muhammad and of the Imams from his family members, who were from the progeny of Ismail; then Allah made it known to Ibrahim telling him: "*Surely I am going to make you an Imam for men.*" Ibrahim said: '*And of my offspring?*' Allah said: "*My covenant will not include the unjust.*"

* It is a simplified version of the argument given by al-Qadi Nurullah Tustari (ash-Shahid ath-Thalith in his *Ihqaqul-haqq*. (Vide the new ed. with footnotes by Ayatollah Sayyid Shahabuddin Mar'ashi Najafi, Matba'ah Islamiyyah, Tehran, vol. 11, pp. 367 - 369.) (tr.)

** Its literal translation: My covenant will not reach the unjust. Note that Allah did not say: The unjust will not reach My covenant, because it would have implied that it was within the power of man - albeit a just one - to reach the status of the *imamah*. The present sentences does not leave room for any such misunderstanding; it clearly shows that getting the *imamah* is not within human jurisdiction, it is exclusively in the hand of Allah and He gives to whom He pleases. (tr.)

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 125-129

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنًا وَاتَّخِذُوا مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى وَعَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَن طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ
وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ 2:125

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُم بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ
أَضْطَرُّهُ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ 2:126

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ 2:127

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الرَّحِيمُ 2:128

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ 2:129

2:125 And (remember) when We made the House a rendezvous for men and a (place of) security, and take (for yourselves) a place of prayer on the standing-place of Ibrahim. And We enjoined Ibrahim and Isma'il (saying): "Purify (you two) My House for those who make circuit and those who abide (in it for devotion) and those who bow down (and) those who prostrate themselves."

2:126 And (remember) when Ibrahim said: 'My Lord! make it a secure town and provide its people with fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the last day' He said: "And whoever disbelieves, I will grant him enjoyment for a short while, then I will drive him to the chastisement of the Fire; and it is an evil destination."

2:127 And (remember) when Ibrahim and Isma'il were raising the foundations of the House: "Our Lord! accept from us; surely Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing."

2:128 Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and (raise) from our offspring a group submitting to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion and turn to us (mercifully), surely Thou art the Oft-returning (with mercy), the Merciful.

2:129 Our Lord! and raise up in them an Apostle from among themselves who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them; surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise."

Commentary

QUR'AN: And (remember) when We made the House a rendezvous for men and a (place of) security:

It refers to the legislation of the *hajj* and the sanctuary offered by the House. "*al-Mathabah* (rendezvous; a place to which one returns) is derived from *thaba*, *yathubu* (he returned, he will return)

QUR'AN: and take (for yourselves) a place of prayer on the standing-place of Ibrahim:

The conjunctive "and" joins this order with the preceding sentence turning that also into order.

In that case the complete sentence would have the following connotation: And when We told the people, return to, and do the *hajj* of the House and take (for yourself) a place of prayer... Other alternative, suggested by some exegetes, is to imply a deleted word "We said." Accordingly, the

meaning would be: and We said, take (for yourselves) a place of prayer...

al-Musalla is deverbal noun of place, derived from *as-salah* (to pray, to invoke); the sentence means: take (for yourselves) a place of prayer and invocation at the place where Ibrahim (a.s.) had stood.

Apparently, the preceding sentence is a sort of introduction, pointing to the reason why prayer in that place was prescribed; that is why this sentence does not put emphasis on "prayer" in other words, it does not say, and pray in the standing-place of Ibrahim; it literally says, and take on the standing-place of Ibrahim (a.s.) a place of prayer.

QUR'AN: *And We enjoined Ibrahim and Isma'il(saying): "Purify (you two) My House... "*:

al- 'Ahd (to enjoin, to obligate). The order to purify the House may mean to keep it exclusively reserved for the worship by those who go around it making circuits, those who abide in it for devotion, and those who pray in it. In this sense, it would be an *isti'arah bi 'l-kinaya* and would imply: keep My House exclusively reserved for My worship. Alternatively, the order may be to keep it clean; to be on guard lest careless people dirty it.

ar-Rukka' and *as-sujud* are plurals of *ar-raki'* (one who bows down) and *as-sajid* (one who prostrates, one who does *sajdah*) respectively, the phrase refers to those who pray.

QUR'AN: *And (remember) when Ibrahim said: "My Lord! make it a secure town... "*:

In this way Ibrahim (a. s.) called on his Lord to bestow security and safety as well as sustenance on the residents of Mecca; and the prayer was granted. Far be it from Allah to quote in His speech an unaccepted prayer without hinting at its rejection; if He were to do so, His talk would amount to a vain ridicule - far beneath the sublime dignity of His truthful speech. He says: ... *and the truth do I speak* (38:83); *Most surely it is a decisive word, and it is no a jest* (86:13-14).

The Qur'an has quoted numerous prayers which this great prophet had pleaded before his Lord for; for example, his prayer for himself in the beginning of his life; his prayer at the time of his emigration to Syria; his invocation to keep his good name alive; his prayer for himself, for his progeny and parents, and for the believing men and women; his invocation, after building the House, for the residents of Mecca; his prayer and pleading for a Prophet to be sent from among his progeny. His prayers and the favors he asked from Allah are a canvas that graphically shows his hopes and expectations, creates before our eyes a clear picture of his endeavors and efforts in the way of Allah, and provides a glimpse of his sublime spiritual virtues. In short, these prayers show his status before Allah and his nearness to Him. One may write a detailed history of his life, basing it on his stories and the laudatory phrases used for him in the Qur'an; and we shall write something on these lines in Chapter 6 (The Cattle).

QUR'AN: *such of them as believe:*

Ibrahim (a.s.) asked his Lord to give the residents of Mecca security and provide them with fruits. At the same time he realized that not all of the residents would be believers, that some of them would be unbelievers; also he understood that his prayer for their sustenance was general - it covered the believers as well as the unbelievers; and he was aware that he had already declared himself to be separate from the unbelievers and their idols (as Allah says about him: *but when it became clear to him that he, that is, his father, was an enemy of Allah, he declared himself to be clear of him* [9:114]. Here Allah bears witness that Ibrahim [a.s.] had declared his separation from every enemy of Allah, not excepting even his father). In this background, as soon as he realized that his prayer included both the believers and the unbelievers, he added the proviso, "such of them as believe ... " although he was well aware that, according to the social structure of this world, sustenance could not be given only to the believing group, to the exclusion of the unbelievers; yet he

qualified his prayer. Even so, Allah knows better how He should decide about His creatures and what He should decree concerning them. Therefore, Ibrahim's prayer was granted for the believers, and was extended to cover the unbelievers also. The reply given to Ibrahim (a.s.) implies that Allah would give them sustenance according to the system He has created in this world; in other words, believers and unbelievers both would be given their livelihood, because restricting it to the believers would entail unnecessarily breaking the usual and established system.

Ibrahim (a.s.) could have said: and provide the believers of this town with fruits; but he did not, because what he wanted to ask was an attraction, a dignity, for the town, which would be centered around the Sacred House of Allah. That House was built in a valley devoid of every agricultural produce; and if it were not provided with fruits and foodstuff, nobody would settle in it, and the place would remain uninhabited.

QUR'AN: *"And whoever disbelieves, I will grant him enjoyment for a short while:*

The word translated, "I will grant him enjoyment", has been read *umti'uhu and umatti'uhu* from the verbal noun's paradigms *al-if'al and at-ta'fil* respectively. Meaning of both readings is the same.

QUR'AN: *then I will drive him to the chastisement.*

It further shows the great dignity of the House and is meant to give even more pleasure to Ibrahim (a.s.). The import of the verse is as follows: I have granted your prayer (to increase this House's honor by giving sustenance to its believing residents) and have decided to include even the unbelievers in that livelihood; but the unbelievers should not be deluded by that; they should not think that the sustenance comes to them because they have got any honor in the eyes of Allah; it is actually in honor of this town, because I have accepted your prayer and given you more than you had asked. As for the unbeliever, I will surely drive him to the chastisement of the Fire and it is an evil destination.

QUR'AN: *And (remember) when Ibrahim and Isma'il were raising the foundations of the House:*

al-Qawa'id is plural of *al-qa'idah* which literally means 'that part of building which "sits" in the earth'; hence it has been translated as foundation, upon which the rest of the building is raised. "Raising the foundations" is an allegorical expression, it counts the walls (which were raised upon foundations) as a part of the foundation; another allegorical aspect is to ascribe the rise to the foundations alone without mentioning the walls, although it were the walls which were raised. The words "of the House", point to the intended allegory.

QUR'AN: *"Our Lord! accept from us; surely Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing:*

The prayer comes direct from Ibrahim and Ismail, without any introductory clause like "They said" or "They prayed"; such a clause is not even implied here. When we read the words, "when Ibrahim and Ismail were raising the foundations of the House", the scene is flashed before our eyes; it is as though we see them busy building the walls, and then we dramatically hear their voices and their prayer directly from them - there is no need of any intermediary to report to us what they said or did. Such dramatic presentation is often used in the Qur'an and it is among its most beautiful styles - and all its styles are beautiful. It presents the story in the most effective way, bringing it within the purview of our senses. It is a style, which surpasses all manners of narration and reporting.

Ibrahim and Ismail did not mention the thing or action, which they prayed to Allah to accept, that is, they did not say, accept from us this construction of Thy House. It shows their humbleness and humility before their Lord; they thought that it was a very insignificant work on their part and was not worthy of their Lord. This omission of the object has given the following connotation to their prayer: Our Lord! accept from us this insignificant deed, although it is not worthy of Thy name; surely Thou art hearing our prayers, knowing our intentions.

QUR'AN: *Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and (raise) from our offspring a group submitting to Thee.*

The words translated here as submissive and submitting are *muslim* and its feminine *muslimah* respectively. Obviously, the definition of Islam, with which we are familiar, and which comes to our minds as soon as we hear the word, Islam, is just the elementary grade of servitude; it distinguishes a professed convert from the one who openly rejects the faith. This elementary Islam means professing the matters of faith and doing necessary deeds, no matter whether it is done with true belief or hypocritically. Now, Ibrahim (a.s.) was a prophet, a messenger and one of the five *ulu 'l-'azm* apostles, who gave us the upright faith. It is unthinkable that such a great prophet had not attained, at the time when he was praying, this most elementary grade of Islam. Likewise, his son, Ismail (a.s.), was a messenger of Allah and had been offered as sacrifice in His way. Can it be said that they had got that much Islam but were unaware of it? Or that, although they were aware of having attained to that Islam but wanted to continue on it? Just look at the context of the prayer: Those who prayed were so near to Alton; they were praying while building His Sacred House; they knew whom they were praying to, and who He was and how great His splendor is. Could they, in that position, ask for such a trivial grade from the Lord Almighty? Moreover, this grade of Islam is among those things which are within the power of man himself; and that is why man can be ordered to accept it; as Allah says: *When his Lord said to him: "Be a Muslim", he said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds" (2:131)*. Obviously, such a quality or action cannot be attributed to Allah; likewise, it is meaningless to ask from Allah to do a work which has been placed within the power of the man himself. (Of course, it may be done if there is some special condition which makes Divine interference justifiable.)

Therefore, the Islam they had asked for was not that Islam whose definition we are familiar with. Islam has many grades, as may be seen in the verse quoted above: *When his Lord said to him (i.e., Ibrahim): "Be a Muslim" ' he said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds" (2:131)*. Ibrahim (a.s.) was ordered to be a Muslim at a time when he was already a Muslim. Clearly, the Islam which he was told to attain was other than the Islam he had already attained. There are many such examples in the Qur'an

This sublime grade of Islam - which we shall explain in detail later on, means total servitude, unconditional surrender of all a servant has got to his Master. No doubt it is within a man's power to prepare the conditions facilitating its attainment. Yet, when we look at an average man and the usual condition of his heart and mind, such a high standard seems beyond his power to attain. In other words, it is not possible for him - in the conditions surrounding him - to get to that sublime Islam. From this point of view that Islam is not different from other positions of *al-wilayah* (friendship of Allah) and its lofty stages, or from other grades of perfection - all of them are beyond the reach of an average man, because he cannot fulfill their necessary conditions. In this sense, it is possible to count that Islam as a Divine gift, which is beyond a man's power to attain by himself. Consequently, it is perfectly right for a man to pray to Allah to bestow on him that sublime quality and make him a Muslim of that high rank.

Moreover, there is another deeper connotation: It is only actions which are attributed to man and emanate from his free will and power; as for his attributes and deep-rooted traits (which are etched on his psyche by repeated actions), they are in fact beyond his power. Therefore, they may be - or let us say, should be attributed to Allah, especially if they are good and virtuous attributes, which should better be attributed to Allah rather than to man. This observation is based on the style used in the Qur'an. For example:

"My Lord! make me keep up prayer, and from my offspring (too)" (14:40);

" ... and join me with the good ones" (26:83);

"My Lord! grant me that I should be grateful for Thy bounty which Thou has bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I should do good such as Thou art pleased with, and make me enter, by Thy mercy, into Thy servants, the good ones" (27:19);

"Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and(raise) from our offspring a group submitting to Thee"(2:128).

It is now clear that the Islam, which Ibrahim and Ismail had asked for, was something different from the Islam to which the verse 49:14 refers: *The dwellers of the desert say: "We believe." Say: "You do not believe but say: 'We submit (we accept Islam)';and faith has not yet entered into your hearts."*

The Islam they prayed for was of a high rank and sublime grade, which we shall explain later on.

QUR'AN: *and show us our ways of devotion and turn to us (mercifully), surely Thou art the Oft-returning(with mercy), the Merciful:*

This also points to the sublime meaning of Islam, just referred to *al-manasik* (translated here as ways of devotion) is plural of *al-mansak* which means "worship" or "act of worship", as Allah says: *And to every nation We appointed (acts of) worship... (22:34)*. It is a *masdar* used as the first construct of a genitive case. We have explained earlier that a *masdar* used in this way proves the existence of that work or action. Therefore, the phrase, "our ways of devotion", refers to those acts of worship, which they were doing or had already done; it does not refer to any action, which they intended to do in future. In this context, the phrase show us" does not mean, "teach us" or "help us to do"; rather it means "strengthen us by showing us the realities of our acts of worship", as we pointed out earlier while writing the verse: *and We revealed to them the doing of good (deeds) and the establishing of prayer and the giving of zakat (21:73)*. And later on we shall explain that the revelation mentioned in this verse means to strengthen the doer of that deed; it does not mean teaching them their responsibilities and obligations. Probably, it is to this reality that the verses 38:45-46 refer: *And remember Our servants, Ibrahim and Ishaq and Ya'qub, men of strength and insight. Surely We purified them by a pure quality, the remembering of the (final) abode.*

The above explanation makes it clear that this prayer was for an Islam and an insight into worship completely different from ordinary meanings of these terms. The same is the case with their prayer, *tub 'alayna* (usually translated as, forgive us);

Ibrahim and Isma'il both were prophets, protected by Allah from every error and sin; they could not make any mistake or error; they did not need Allah's forgiveness and pardon as we do when we commit sins, (that is why we have translated it in literal way: turn to us mercifully).

Question: It is all right to interpret Islam, showing the ways of devotion and forgiveness in the way you have done maintaining the dignity of Ibrahim and Ismail (peace be on them both). But it is not necessary to apply the same meanings when these words are used for their offspring. Ibrahim (a.s.) did not include his offspring with himself and Ismail, except in the prayer for Islam, and that also in a separate sentence. They did not say: Make us and a group of our offspring submissive to Thee; instead they prayed for themselves, and after that separately pleaded for their offspring, saying, "and (raise) from our offspring a group submitting to Thee." There should be no difficulty in believing that what they had in mind was Islam in its general meaning covering all its ranks and grades - even the most elementary one. Even this elementary grade of Islam gives good results and is instrumental in creating good environment in the society. It would not be wrong if Ibrahim (a.s.) asked his Lord for this Islam; even the Prophet invited people to just that type of Islam - if they testified that there was none to be

worshipped except Allah and Muhammad (s.a.w.) was His Messenger, they were accepted as Muslims, their lives were protected, marriage with them was allowed and they became entitled to inherit from their Muslim relatives. Therefore, it should be perfectly right to say that the two sentences refer to two separate ranks of Islam: "Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee", would mean the highest rank of Islam in conformity with the prestige of Ibrahim and Isma'il "and (raise) from our offspring a group submitting to Thee", would refer to the elementary grade of Islam befitting a nation which included hypocrites and people of weak faith as well as those with firm belief and all are called Muslims.

Reply: Position of legislation for the guidance of people is totally different from the position of praying to Allah, and each has its own rules; what is valid on one plane is not necessarily good on the other. The Prophet prescribed a minimum standard for his *ummah*, that is, to utter the two testimonies of the Oneness of Allah, and his own prophethood; it was done with a view to widen the circle of Islam and to protect the healthy religious system - that manifest Islam protected the essence of Islam as a shell protects the kernel.

But the plane of invocation and prayer to Allah is much higher than that. At this level, appearances lose their value; it is the reality that matters here; the objective here is actuality and truth, and the desire is for nearness to Allah. At this level, the prophets are not influenced by appearance. It was not because of any worldly love of his offspring that Ibrahim (a.s.) prayed for his progeny. Had it been so, he would have prayed first of all for his father and would not have declared his separation from him as soon as he came to know that he was an enemy of Allah. Also, if he would have been concerned with appearances, he would not have prayed in the following words: *And disgrace me not on the day when they are raised, the day on which neither property will avail, nor sons, except him who comes to Allah with a heart submissive* (26:87-89); nor would have he said: *And make for me a truthful tongue among the posterity* (26:84), instead he would have said, make for me a remembering tongue among the posterity.

Keeping all this in view, it is easy to understand that when he asked from his Lord to raise a Muslim group from among his offspring, he did not mean the elementary rank of Islam; he wanted for them the reality of Islam. The Qur'anic words, "a group submitting to Thee", support this interpretation. If he wanted only the appearance of Islam and not its essence, it was enough to say, "a group submitting", there was no need to add, "to Thee." (Ponder on this point.)

QUR'AN: *Our Lord! and raise up in them an Apostle from among themselves... "*

He was praying for the Prophet; and the Prophet used to say: "I am the prayer of Ibrahim."

Traditions

al-Kattani said: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) about a man who forgot to pray two *rak'ahs* near the standing-place of Ibrahim in *at-tawaf* (circuit, circumambulation) of the *hajj and 'umrah*. He (a.s.) said: 'If he is still in the town (Mecca),

he should pray the two *rak'ahs* near the standing-place of Ibrahim because verily Allah says: *and take (for yourselves) a place of*

prayer on the standing-place of Ibrahim; and if he has departed (from it) then I will not order him to return." (al-Kafi)

The author says: *Almost similar traditions have been narrated by ash-Shaykh in at-Tahdhib and by al-'Ayyashi in his at-Tafsir with*

several *asnad* (i.e., chains of narrators). Particulars of this rule (i.e., prayer should be offered near or behind the standing-place - as is narrated in some traditions that: "No-one should pray the

two *rak'ahs of at-tawaf* except behind the standing-place... ") are inferred from the word *min* (from; here translated as *on*) used in the order, *and take... a place of prayer on (or, from) the standing-place...*

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said explaining the words of Allah: Purify (you two) My House... "Keep the polytheists away from it." (at Tafsir, al-Qummi)

as-Sadiq (a.m.) said: " Verily Allah, Mighty and Great is He! says in His Book: 'Purify (you two) My House for those who make circuit and those who abide (in it for devotion) and those who bow down (and) those who prostrate themselves. 'Therefore, it is proper for a servant not to enter Mecca except that he is clean, (and) has washed away his sweat and dirt and has purified himself. "

The author says: This meaning has been narrated in other traditions also. The idea, that if the place of arrival is clean then the one who arrives should make himself clean, may be inferred from other verses too. See, for example, the verse: *and the good things are for good ones and the good ones are for good things*(24:26).

Ibn 'Abbas said: "When Ibrahim brought Isma'il and Hajar, he settled them at Mecca; and a time passed; and the people of (the tribe of) Jurhum came to settle there and Isma'il married a woman from that tribe; and Hajar died; and Ibrahim asked permission of Sarah (to visit Ismail); so she allowed him but imposed a condition on him that he would not come down (from his riding animal). Thus Ibrahim arrived (at Mecca) and Hajar had died, so he went to the house of Ismail; and he asked his wife: 'Where is your husband?' She told him: 'He is not here, he has gone hunting.' And Isma'il used to go outside al-Haram (the boundary) to hunt and then return. Ibrahim said to her: 'Do you have anything to entertain a guest?' She said: 'I have nothing and there is nobody with me.' Then Ibrahim said to her: 'When your husband comes, tell him (my) salam and tell him to change the threshold of his door.' And Ibrahim went away. Then Isma'il came and felt the scent of his father. So he asked his wife: 'Had anyone come to you?' She said: 'An old man had come to me with such and such features (describing him scornfully).' (Isma'il) said: 'Then what did he say to you?' She said: 'He said to me to give you (his) salam and to tell you to change the threshold of your door.' So, Isma'il divorced her and married another (woman). Thereafter, Ibrahim remained (at his place) as long as Allah wished him to remain (there). Then he asked permission of Sarah to visit Ismail; and she allowed him, but (again) imposed the (same) condition that he should not come down (from his riding animal). Then Ibrahim came until he reached the door of Ismail. And he asked his wife: 'Where is your husband?' She said: 'He has gone for hunting and, Allah willing, he will come back just now; you come down, may Allah have mercy upon you!' He asked her: 'Do you have anything to entertain a guest?' She said: 'Yes.' Then she brought milk and meat. (Ibrahim) thereupon prayed and blessed her. Had she brought on that day bread, wheat, barley or date, (Mecca) would have become ' the most plentiful of all the world in wheat, barley or date. Then she said to him: '(Please) come down so that I may wash your head.' But he did not come down. So she brought (the stone which thereafter was known as) the standing-place (of Ibrahim) and put it on his (right) side, and he put his foot on it, and his footmark was impressed on it; (in this way) she washed the right side of his head; then she shifted the stone to his left side and washed the left side of his head, and (again) his footmark was imprinted on it. Thereupon (Ibrahim) said to her: 'When your husband comes, give him (my) salam and tell him that the threshold of his door is now in order.' When Ismail (a.s.) came back, he felt the scent of his father, and asked his wife: 'Had anyone come to you?' She replied: 'Yes, a venerable (old) man, of loveliest features and most pleasant fragrance; he said to me this and this and I told him this and this; and I washed his head and this is the imprint of his feet on (his) standing-place.' (Hearing this), Ismail said to her: 'That was Ibrahim.'" (*Majma'ul-bayan*)

The author says: al-Qummi has narrated in his at-Tafsir a nearly similar tradition.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Verily, Ibrahim settled in a valley of Syria. When he got his son Ismail from Hajar, Sarah was extremely grieved because she herself had no child. And she used to hurt Ibrahim and make him unhappy with respect to Hajar So Ibrahim complained to Allah about it, and Allah sent a revelation to him: 'The likeness of woman is like the curved rib; if you leave it (as it is), you will benefit from it, but if you (try to) make it straight, you will break it.' Thereafter, (Allah) ordered him to remove Isma'il and his mother (from that place). He said: 'O Lord! to which place?' (Allah) said: 'To My holy place, and My sanctuary, and the part of the earth which I created first (of all the earth); and it is Mecca.' Then Allah sent Jibril down to him with al-Buraq; and (Jibril) made Hajar, Ismail and Ibrahim ride on it. And whenever Ibrahim passed a good place with trees, cultivation and date-palms, he used to say: 'O Jibril! here? here?' And Jibril used to reply: 'No, go on, go on.' (It continued) until they reached Mecca and (Jibril) made them alight in the place where the House is. And Ibrahim had given Sarah a promise that he would not come down until he came back to her. When they alighted in that place, there was a tree there; Hajar spread on that tree a sheet she had with her, and thus they found a shade under it. When Ibrahim arranged their affairs and settled them there, he wished to leave them to return to Sarah. Hajar said to him: 'O Ibrahim! Are you leaving us in a place where there is neither human being to keep company nor water nor cultivation?' Ibrahim said: 'Allah, Who has ordered. me to settle you in this place, will suffice you.' Then he took leave of them. When he reached Kada' (a mountain in Dhu Tuwa), Ibrahim turned around and said: "O our Lord! surely I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley uncultivable near Thy Sacred House, our Lord!, that they may establish prayer; therefore make the hearts of some people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits, haply they may be grateful" (14:37). Then he went away, and Hajar remained (there). When the sun rose high, Isma'il became thirsty; Hajar stood at the running-place**, and she ascended the Safa, and a mirage glittered before her in the valley and she thought that it was water; so she descended to the valley and ran (to it). When she reached Marwah, she could not see Ismail, therefore, she returned until she reached Safa and again she looked (around, with the same effect); until she did likewise seven times. When she was on Marwah, in the seventh round, she looked at Isma'il and lo! water had appeared from under his feet. She returned and gathered sand around the water - the water was flowing and she "reined" (Arabic: *zammāt*) it with (the sand) which she put around it, and that is why it was called *zamzam*. And the (tribe of) Jurhum had come down at *Dhul-majaz and 'Arafat*. When water appeared at Mecca, the birds and wild animals gathered around it; the Jurhum saw this gathering of the birds and animals at that place and followed them until they found a woman and a child settled there - they were sitting in the shade of the tree and the water had appeared for them. They said to Hajar: 'Who are you? And what is the matter with you and this child?' She said: 'I am the mother of the son of Ibrahim, the friend of Allah, and this is his son; Allah has ordered him to settle us here.' They asked her: 'Would you allow us to remain near you?' She told them: 'Until Ibrahim comes.' When Ibrahim came to visit them the third day, Hajar said: 'O friend of Allah! there are some people of Jurhum here; they request you to allow them to settle near us; so will you allow them?' Ibrahim said: 'Yes.' Then Hajar allowed them and they settled near them, and erected their tents. In this way Hajar and Isma'il got on friendly terms with them. When Ibrahim came to see them the second time, he looked at the large number of people around them, and he was extremely happy. When Isma'il grew up - and each one of the Jurhum had presented one or two goats to Isma'il - so Hajar and Isma'il supported themselves with them. When Isma'il came of age, Allah ordered Ibrahim to build the House... When Allah ordered Ibrahim to build the House, he did not know where to build it; so Allah*

sent Jibril and he drew a line at the site of the House... So, Ibrahim built the House and shifted Isma'il from Dhu Tuwa And he raised (the House) nine hands in height. Then (Jibril) led him to the place of the (Black) Stone, and Ibrahim took it out and fixed it in the place where it is at present. When he built it, he made two doors for it, one in the east and the other in the west; and the door that was in the west is (now) called al-Mustajar. Then he put on it tree (-trunks) and *al-adhkhar* (a sweet smelling grass) (as roof). And Hajar put on the door a sheet she had with her and under which they used to sit. When he built and completed it, Ibrahim and Isma'il performed their *hajj*. Jibril came to them on the day of *at-tarwiyah*, that is, 8th *Dhu'l-hijjah*, and said: 'O Ibrahim! stand up and quench your thirst from water' (because there was no water in Mina or 'Arafat); that is why it was named the day of *at-tarwiyah* (to quench thirst). Then (Jibril) took him out to Mina and he stayed there in the night, and Jibril did with Ibrahim what he had done with Adam. Thus, when Ibrahim completed the construction of the House, he said: 'MyLord! make it a secure town and provide its people with fruits, such of them as believe in Allah.'" The Imam explained the fruits as the fruits of the hearts, that is, make people love them, so that they may befriend them and return to them (year after year). (*at-Tafsir*, al-Qummi)

The author says: This is the gist of this story, and it covers many of the traditions narrated about this subject. Some other traditions say that there had happened many miraculous things in the history of the House. For example, some traditions say that the House in the very beginning was a dome of light; it had descended on Adam and settled in the place where in later days Ibrahim built the Kabah; and that dome remained in the place till the deluge of Nuh; when the earth was submerged in water, Allah took that dome up; and its site was not submerged, that is why the Kabah is called the Ancient House.

Other traditions say that Allah sent the foundation of the House down from the Garden.

Yet others say that the Black Stone came down from the Garden - and it was whiter than snow - then it turned black when it was touched by the unbelievers.

Also it is narrated from al-Baqir or as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said: "Verily Allah ordered Ibrahim to build the Ka'bah and to raise its walls and to show the people their ways of devotion (i.e., hajj). Thereupon, Ibrahim and Isma'il built the House, every day (the height of) a knee until it reached the place of the Black Stone." And al-Baqir (a.s.) said: "Then the (mountain) Abu Qubays called to him: 'I have something in trust for you;' and it gave him the (Black) Stone, and he put it in its place." (*al-Kafi*)

ath-Thawri says: "I asked Abu Ja'far (a.s.) about the Stone. He said: 'Three stones came down from the Garden: the Black Stone which was put in place by Ibrahim, and the Standing-place of Ibrahim, and the stone of the Israelites.'" (*al-Ayyashi*)

And a tradition says that the Black Stone was an angel.

The author says: There are very many such traditions narrated by both the Shi'ah and the Sunni narrators; and although these traditions are *ahad* and do not reach, in words or meanings, the standard required for a *mutawatir* narration, still they are not unique in the field of religious descriptions, nor is there any reason to discard them altogether.

As for the narration that the dome was sent down to Adam or that Ibrahim rode *al-Buraq* for his journey to Mecca and other such miraculous happenings which have a super-natural character, there is no reason to say that they were impossible. Moreover, Allah had given His prophets many such miracles and supernatural signs, and the Qur'an mentions many such events.

So far as the coming down of the foundations of the House, the Black Stone and the Standing Stone (which is said to be fixed in the structure now known as the Standing-place of Ibrahim) and other such

things are concerned, there are many such examples found in the Qur'an and *hadith*. Many vegetables and fruits etc. are said to be from the Garden, or from the Fire and its out-burst. Of the same genre are the traditions of "substance" saying that the substance of the good people is from the Garden and that of the evil ones is from the Fire; or that they are from *al-'illiyin* (lofty place; the Book of the deeds of the virtuous) and *as-sijjin* (prison; the Book of the deeds of the evil ones), respectively. Of similar nature are the traditions to the effect that the Garden of *al-barzakh* (the period between death and the Day of Judgment) is in some specified place on this earth, and the Fire of *al-barzakh* in some other place in it; and that the grave is either a section of the Garden's or a pit of the Fire's. There are many such information which one is sure to come upon while studying the traditions. And, as we said earlier, they are so huge in number that the whole lot cannot be discarded, nor is it possible to question its authenticity. They are parts of the Divine realities expounded by the Qur'an and followed by the traditions. The fact is that all the things seen in this material world have been sent down by Allah; whatsoever is good and lovely, or is a means to or a receptacle of good, has come down from the Garden and will return to it; and whatsoever is bad and evil, or is a means to or a receptacle of evil, has come down from the Fire and will return to it. Allah says: *And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure* (15:21). It shows that everything exists with Allah, and it is an existence without any limit or measure; when it is sent down - a gradual descent - then it becomes subject to limits and measures. This verse describes the descent of all things in general. But there are also in the Qur'an specific examples of this descent. Allah says: *... and He has sent down for you eight of the cattle in pairs...* (39:6); *... and We have sent down the iron...* (57:25); *And in the heaven is your sustenance, and what you are promised* (51:22). We shall further explain the meanings of these verses in their proper places, Allah willing. They however prove that every thing descends to this world from Allah. Other verses show that they are also to return to him, as He says: *And that to your Lord is the end goal* (53:42); *Surely to your Lord is the return* (96:8); *... to Him is the eventual coming* (40:3); *... now surely to Allah do all affairs eventually come* (42:53). There are many verses in the Qur'an of the same connotation.

Also, Allah has made it clear that every thing - and all things presently are in middle of their journey - follows a course demanded by its origin, and that origin has some effect on its success and failure, its good and evil, as the Qur'an says: Say: *"Every one acts according to his own manner..."* (17:84); *And every one has a direction to which he should turn...* (2:148). We shall explain all these verses in their places; here they have been quoted just to complete the picture, and make the subject of our discussion clearer. What these verses prove is this: There is reason to believe that the traditions which say about a material thing that it came down from the Garden or from the Fire (when that thing has some connection with the next life's happiness or unhappiness) are on the whole correct, because they are, generally speaking, in conformity with the Qur'anic principles - although it does not mean that each and every such tradition is correct or trustworthy. Ponder on this point.

Someone has said: "The Divine words: *And(remember) when Ibrahim and Isma'il were raising the foundations of the House... , manifestly* show that the two prophets built this House for the worship of Allah in that country of the idol-worshipers. But the storytellers and those exegetes who followed them have embroidered what Allah had said. They have added a lot of fanciful details, as, for example, that the House was from the very beginning and Adam did its *hajj*; that it was taken to the heaven during Nuh's flood; that the Black Stone was one of the stones of the Garden. Their main purpose was to present the religion in an attractive garment, adorning it with fascinating narratives. Such myths may impress the masses; but the people who have knowledge and wisdom know that spiritual excellence depends on Divine bestowal - it is Allah Who makes one thing to excel the

others. The Ka'bah has excellence because it is the House of Allah, that is, attributed to Him; the Black Stone is excellent because people have been ordered to kiss it - in this respect it represents the hand of Allah. It has no bearing on its excellence whether originally it was a ruby or a pearl or some other rock; nor do such tales add to its real glory. In reality it makes no difference in the eyes of Allah whether a stone is black or white. The Ka'bah has got its distinction and honor because Allah has called it His House, and has appointed it as the centre for various acts of worship which cannot be performed in any other place - its glory does not lie in the fact that its stones are more valuable than other stones, or that its site is the most attractive of all, or that it was sent down from the lofty heavens. Likewise, the excellence of the prophets is not based on any distinctive feature of their bodies nor on the quality of their apparel. They got excellence because Allah chose them especially, and selected them for His prophethood which is a spiritual thing; otherwise many people in the world were far superior to them in their adornments and enjoyed greater worldly bounties."

He continues to say: "These traditions are untrustworthy because they contradict each other and some are self-contradictory; they are unauthentic because their chains of narrators are not correct; they are unacceptable because they go against the apparent meaning of the Qur'an."

He further says: "These traditions are Israelite myths, propagated among the Muslims by unbelieving Jews to make Islam look ridiculous, in order to keep the People of the Book away from it."

The author says: There is a grain of truth in some things he has said: But he has gone far beyond the limit in disputation, and consequently has lost his bearings and arrived at a hypothesis much more atrocious and repugnant, Let us have a critical look at his arguments:

Objection: "These traditions are untrustworthy and unacceptable because they contradict each other and are against the Qur'an."

Reply: The fact that some of them contradict the others could be a matter of worry if we were to accept them one by one as separate independent units. But when we accept the whole in their collective capacity (i.e., when we say that the whole lot should not be discarded because, taken all together, they do not tell us anything that is against reason or against the Qur'an or accepted traditions), then it is of no importance if there are some minor discrepancies between individual traditions. But one point must be made clear here: What we have said just now, concerns the traditions narrated from the infallible sources like the Prophet and his sinless family members. So far as other exegetes among the Companions and their disciples are concerned, they, in this respect, are just like any other people; for us it makes no difference whether their talk is free from contradiction or riddled with it.

In short, there is no justification to discard a tradition, or a group of traditions, unless it goes against the Qur'an or other authentic traditions, or the marks of forgery and lie are stamped on it. (However, when it comes to the basic religious knowledge and fundamental beliefs, the only thing accepted as proof is the Book of Allah and the authentic traditions of the Prophet and his sinless progeny; nothing else counts in this area.)

It is now clear that there are some things which must be accepted, that is, the Qur'an and the authentic traditions; and there are others which must be rejected, that is, all that goes against the Qur'an and the authentic traditions. Then there is a third group: the traditions concerning which there is neither any proof compelling us to reject it, nor forcing us to accept it. These are the traditions which are neither impossible in reason nor unacceptable according to the Qur'an and authentic traditions and there is no reason why they should be discarded altogether.

Objection: These traditions are unauthentic according to their chains of narrators.

Reply: The above given explanation also dispels this doubt, because weakness of the chains of narrators does not oblige us to reject the whole group, unless it is against the reason, the Qur'an or the authentic traditions.

Objection: They are against the words of Allah; *And(remember) when Ibrahim and Isma'il were raising the foundation of the House...*

Reply: I wish I knew how this verse proves that the Black Stone was not from the Garden! Or, that the dome did not come down to that place in Adam's time (and there was, therefore, -no question of its being taken up at the time of the flood)! The only thing the verse says is that this construction, made of stone and mud, was built by Ibrahim. What has this got to do either for or against - the traditions mentioned earlier. The only difficulty with those traditions is that the objector does not like them. And this dislike is based, not on the principles of religion, but on his biased views. He does not believe that the prophets had any spiritual realities within them; he does not think that the exoteric side of religion is based on its esoteric aspect; he unconsciously is so much over-awed by today's natural sciences that he tries to find a material cause not only for material happenings but even for spiritual things - if they have even a slight connection with matter. For him, the matter rules over all happenings, not excepting the sociological principles.

This man should have pondered on this point: The natural sciences deal with the matter; its properties and its various compounds; they look at the relationship of a natural effect with its cause. Likewise, the various sociological disciplines study the social relationships among various event taking place in society.

But the natural and sociological sciences have no concern at all with the realities which are beyond the sphere of matter, outside its field of action; they have no jurisdiction even over immaterial connections existing between a material thing and an event taking place in the visible world. The natural sciences and disciplines have no authority or right to confirm or reject these immaterial realities. It is within the jurisdiction of natural science to say that construction of a house depends on things like mud, stone and mason; it may explain how black stones may take the shape of a room. Likewise, sociological disciplines may describe the factors which led to the building of the Ka'bah - it may explain a part of Ibrahim's biography, Hajar's life, Isma'il's story, history of Tahamah, arrival of the tribe of Jurhum and things Re that. But these sciences and disciplines have no right to discuss what was the relation between a certain stone on one hand and the Garden or the Fire on the other; nor have these branches of knowledge any right to express any affirmative or negative opinion about such narratives.

And you have seen that the Qur'an clearly says that even material and physical things have been sent down from the treasure which is with Allah, and that they would ultimately return to Him - either to the Garden or to the Fire. Also, the Qur'an says that the deeds and actions, which are but physical movements and positions - ascend to Allah and arrive at His presence: *To Him do ascend the good words, and the good deed lifts them up (35:10)*; again it says: *to Him reaches the piety on your part (22:37)*, and piety is but action or a characteristic acquired through repeated actions. It is essential for a student of religion to meditate on these verses and to understand that the religious realities do not have any relationship with material or sociological matters *per se*; they depend on the facts which are beyond the reach of material disciplines.

Objection: The excellence of the prophets, and of the things attributed to them like the Ka'bah or the Black Stone, is not based on a material quality; it is a spiritual excellence bestowed by the Divine Grace.

Reply: What he says is right. But he should understand what is the real meaning of what he says.

What is that spiritual reality which creates excellence? Is it a mentally posited abstract idea created by social needs, like the designations and offices found in every nation, for example, presidency, leadership of the party, the high price of gold and silver, respect of the parents, sanctity of the laws of the land? All these are subjective and imaginative abstract forms which the societies have laid down to meet their own needs; but they have no existence outside the imagination, beyond subjective consideration. Such honors and distinctions cannot be found outside the social life which created them to fulfill its needs; and Allah is too sublime for such needs to reach His presence. Therefore, such social distinctions have no relevance to an excellence given by Allah to any of His creatures.

If the objector thinks that the excellence of the prophets is just like the above-mentioned imaginary and unreal honors, then why should a house or a stone be denied a similar excellence? And if he believes that an excellence given by Allah is the real one, as is found in light vis-à-vis darkness, in knowledge vis-à-vis ignorance, and in wisdom vis-à-vis idiocy, then of course it would be a real and actual excellence. In that case, the quiddity of the existence of a prophet would be different from the quiddity of other human beings - even if our senses are unable to grasp it. And such real excellence and distinction is in keeping with the sublimity and sanctity of the Divine actions and wisdom. Allah says: *And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in sport. We did not create them both but with the truth, but most of them do not know*(44:38-39). Such a distinction is real, spiritual, metaphysical and beyond the reach of physical nature. And if such real excellence may be given to the prophets, why can it not be bestowed on some other things, like the Ka'bah and the Black Stone etc.? And, may be, it is this real immaterial excellence which has been described in such words that the people could easily understand.

Would that I knew what would such people do about those Qur'anic verses which say that the people of the Garden will be given cups, ornaments and dresses of gold and silver. These two metals have no inherent excellence except that their price remains high because of their scarcity. If so, then why should they be used for exalting the people of the Garden? What wealth will they represent in the Garden? After all, the economics of this world will not be valid there!

These and other such Divine words and exoteric expressions are the curtains which hide the esoteric realities; they are the veils covering Divine secrets. And if such expressions are acceptable for the realities of the next world, they can as easily be used for some facts of this one.

az-Zubayri says: "I said to Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.): 'Tell me about the *ummah* of Muhammad (s.a.w.), who are they?' He said: 'The *ummah* of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) are the Children of Hashim in particular.' I said: 'And what is the proof that the *ummah* of Muhammad are his family members you have mentioned, to the exclusion of the others?' He said: '(It is) the words of Allah: *And (remember) when Ibrahim and Isma'il were raising the foundations of the House: "Our Lord! accept from us; surely Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing. Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and (raise) from our offspring a group (ummah)submitting to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion and turn to us (mercifully), surely Thou art the Oft-returning (with mercy), the Merciful.* " When Allah answered the prayer of Ibrahim and Isma'il and did (promise to) raise from their offspring a submissive *ummah* and raised up in them an Apostle from among themselves, that is, from among that *ummah* itself, to recite to them His communications, and to teach them the Book and the wisdom, Ibrahim beseeched Allah for another bounty; and asked for that *ummah* purity from polytheism and idol worship in order that the affair of that Apostle might remain firm and strong among them and they might not need to follow anyone other than themselves. That is why Ibrahim said: *"and save me and my sons from worshipping idols: My Lord! surely they have led many men astray; then whoever follows me, he is surely Of me, and whoever disobeys me, Thou surely art*

Forgiving, Merciful" (14:35-36). It proves that the Imams, and the submissive *ummah* in which Muhammad (s.a.w.) was raised, cannot be except from the offspring of Ibrahim (a.s.), because he had said: *"save me and my sons from worshiping idols"* (al-'Ayyashi)

The author says: The argument of the Imam is absolutely clear. Ibrahim (a.s.) had asked this submissive *ummah* to be from his offspring in particular; and the next sentence, *"Our Lord! and raise up in them an Apostle from among themselves..."*, show that the same submissive group is the *ummah* of Muhammad (s.a.w.) - and the word, *ummah*, as used here, does not refer to the people whom Muhammad (s.a.w.) was sent to; nor to those who answered his call and believed in his prophethood, because that *ummah* is not confined to the offspring of Ibrahim and Ismail; the word in the present context refers to a particular submissive *ummah* from the offspring of Ibrahim (a.s.). Thereafter, Ibrahim (a.s.) prayed to his Lord to protect him and his sons from idol worship, to keep them away from polytheism and error - and this Divine protection is *'ismah* (infallibility; sinlessness). Also we know that there were a lot of people among the offspring of Ibrahim and Ismail - the Arabs of the Mudar, or particularly the Quraysh - who had gone astray and worshiped idols. It proves that when Ibrahim (a.s.) prayed for his "sons" to be protected from idol-worship, he did not mean all his sons; he was praying only for his infallible offspring, that is, the Prophet and his purified progeny. These, then, are the *ummah* of Muhammad (s.a.w.) in the prayer of Ibrahim (a.s.). Probably, it was for this fine distinction that Ibrahim (a.s.) changed the word, "offspring", to "sons"; this view is strengthened by the phrases following this prayer, *"then whoever follows me, he is surely of me, and whoever disobeys me, Thou surely art Forgiving, Merciful"* Note the opening word, "then", which shows that what follows is based on what has preceded; thereafter, he confirms that those who would follow him would be from him, a part of him; but then he stops and does not say anything about the opposite group, as though he does not recognize them, they are strangers to him. (Think it over.)

The Imam said that Ibrahim (a.s.) "asked for that *ummah* Purity from polytheism and idol-worship." Actually, he had asked protection only from worshipping the idols; but then he mentioned why he had asked for that protection: surely the idols have led many men astray. In this way, the original prayer for protection from idol-worship became an all-encompassing prayer for protection from all types of straying and error, ranging from idol-worship to small sins - because every sin is a sort of polytheism, as we have already explained under the verse: *The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours..* (1:7).

The Imam said: "It proves that the Imams, and the submissive *ummah* in which Muhammad (s.a.w.) was raised, cannot be except from, the offspring of Ibrahim (a.s.)." That is the Imams are the submissive *ummah*, and they are from the offspring of Ibrahim (a.s.), as explained above.

Objection: You say that the word, *ummah*, in this verse refers to a small group of the Muslims, and not to the whole nation; you use the same interpretation in some other verses, for example, *You are the best nation raised up for (the benefit of) men...* (3:110). But this obliges us to interpret the word in a metaphorical way - without any justifiable reason. Moreover, the Qur'an addresses itself to the whole *ummah* who believed in the Prophet; it is a self-evident fact which does not need any proof.

Reply: It was long after the revelation of the Qur'an and the spread of Islam that the phrase, *ummah* of Muhammad, was popularly used for "all those who believe in his prophethood." It is a later usage.

The original meaning of this word is "people", "nation", "group", as Allah says: *and blessing on, you and the people (umam plural of ummah) from among those who are with you; and there shall be people (umam)...* (11:48). This word is sometimes used even for one person; *Surely Ibrahim was a "People" (devoutly) obedient to Allah* (16:120). Therefore, it is the context or

the intention of the speaker which decides how big or small a circle this word describes in a sentence. Now the words, *Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and (raise) from our offspring a group submitting to Thee*, were spoken in prayer, and as explained earlier, they could refer to only a selected group out of the multitude who believe in the Prophet. Likewise, the verse, *You are the best nation raised up for (the benefit of) men*, was revealed to show the favor of Allah on the people thus addressed; its import is to increase their prestige and enhance their dignity. Surely, these words could be addressed to the whole *ummah* who call themselves Muslims. How could it apply to the Pharaohs and Dajjals of this *ummah* who did not leave any vestige of the religion without destroying, and who did not come across any religious virtue without crushing it? (We shall explain it in detail when writing on this verse.) In short, this verse is like the talk of Allah with the Children of Israel: *and that I made you excel the nations* (2:47); we should not forget that a man like Qarun was one of them, and surely this talk does not include him. Likewise, the complaint of the Prophet, *"O my Lord! surely my people treated this Qur'an as a forsaken thing"* (25:30), cannot cover all his *ummah* - there are among them the lovers of the Qur'an, the men whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of Allah. On the other hand, there is the verse 2:134, which is addressed to the whole *ummah*, and covers all those who believed in the Prophet and even those to whom he was sent: *This is a people that have passed away; they shall have what they earned and you shall have what You earn, and you shall not be called upon to answer for what they did.*

An Academic Discourse

Ponder on the story of Ibrahim (a.s.); study his life; see how he took his son and wife to the land where now Mecca stands, and settled them there; how their lives progressed until finally the "sacrifice" of Isma'il took place and, in the last moment, he was ransomed by Allah; read how they together built the Ka'bah. You will find that it is a complete cycle of devotional journey. It shows how a servant proceeds from his "self" to his Lord, from a far away station to the center of "Divine Nearness"; how the journey is accomplished avoiding the vanities of this world, shunning its protection, keeping away from its desires prestige, wealth, women and children -freeing oneself from the intrigues of satans, not letting them pollute the purity of intention, and turning with total surrender and progressing with complete devotion to the Lord, the Great, the High.

These apparently unrelated events are in fact of an unbroken series. They are historical narratives, but they describe the stages of the spiritual journey of a servant from self to the Lord. They teach us the discipline of that journey, instruct us in the rules and manners of seeking nearness to Allah, of reaching His presence. The more you meditate on his story, the deeper will be your spiritual understanding - you will come to know the demands of Divine love and sincere devotion.

Allah ordered His friend, Ibrahim, to promulgate thehajj for the people, and He says: And proclaim among men the hajj; they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every remote path... (22:27). We do not know the details of the laws of thehajj as promulgated by Ibrahim (a.s.). But we know that the hajj continued as an event of great religious importance even among the Arabs of the days of ignorance. Then Allah sent the Prophet and he gave us the rules of the hajj as we know them. One thing is certain: He did not go against the rules laid down by Ibrahim (a.s.); what he did was to complete and perfect them. This fact may be inferred from the words of

Allah: Say: "Surely, (as for) me, my Lord has guided me to the straight path; (to) a most right religion, the faith of Ibrahim, the upright one... "(6:161); He has prescribed for you of the religion what He enjoined upon Nuh and that which We have revealed unto you, and that which We enjoined upon Ibrahim and Musa and 'Isa... (42:13).

In any case, all the devotional acts of the *hajj* - the *ihram*, staying at 'Arafat, staying overnight at Mash'ar, sacrificing an animal, throwing pebbles at the pillars, running between the Safa and the Marwah, going around Ka'bah, praying near the Standing place - all these acts commemorate the events that had happened to Ibrahim, and represent the stands taken by him and his family; and how admirable stands they were - the pure and sublime Divine stands to which they were led by Divine mercy and urged on by the humility of servitude.

The prescribed acts of worship - on their promulgator be the best of *salams!* - are the symbols of the stands of the perfect ones, the prophets, vis-à-vis their Lord; every act of worship is a photo which shows to us a stage in their spiritual journey to the station of nearness to Allah, as Allah says: *Certainly (there) is for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent example...* (33: 21). This is a basic reality. And there is much evidence pointing to this theme in the traditions which have come down to us regarding the philosophy of various acts of worship and the esoteric aspects of their legislation and prescription, as any diligent scholar may find out.

* al-Buraq is the name of the animal which was also sent to the Prophet (s.a.w.) to ride during al-Mi'raj (Ascension). (tr.)

** The place between Safi and Marwah where the hajis (pilgrims to Mecca) run seven times. (tr.)

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 130-134

وَمَنْ يَرْغَبْ عَنْ مِلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ وَلَقَدْ اصْطَفَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ 2:130

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْ قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ 2:131

وَوَصَّي بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبَ يَا بَنِيَّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَى لَكُمْ الدِّينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ 2:132

أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِي قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلَهَكَ وَإِلَهَ آبَائِكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَهًا

وَاحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ 2:133

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلكُمْ مَّا كَسَبْتُمْ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ 2:134

2:130 And who turns away from the religion of Ibrahim but he who makes himself a fool; and most certainly We chose him in this world, and in the hereafter, he is most surely among the good ones.

2:131 When his Lord said to him, Submit (yourself) he said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds."

2:132 And the same did Ibrahim enjoin on his sons and (so did) Ya'qub: "O my sons! Surely Allah has chosen for you (this) faith, therefore die not unless you are Muslims."

2:133 Or, were you witnesses when death approached Ya'qub, when he said to his sons: "What will you worship after me?" They said: "We will worship your God and the God of your fathers, Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ishaq, one God only, and to Him do we submit."

2:134 This is a people that have passed away; they shall have what they earned and you shall have what you earn, and you shall not be called upon to answer for what they did.

Commentary

QUR'AN: *And who turns away from the religion of Ibrahim but he who makes himself a fool:* "ar-Raghabah followed by the preposition 'an (away from; off) means "to turn away", "to dislike"; when followed by fi (in), it denotes "to incline towards", "to desire." The verb, safiha (made a fool; became a fool) is used both as transitive and intransitive. Some exegetes have taken this word here as a transitive verb - according to them, the word nafsahu (himself; his self) is its object; others have taken the verb in the intransitive sense and in that case nafsahu will be at-tamyiza (specification), not an object. In any case, the meaning will remain the same: Whoever turns away from the religion of Ibrahim is a fool; he does not recognize what is beneficial to him from that which is harmful. From this verse we may infer what we have been told in the hadith: "Surely wisdom is that by which the Beneficent (God) is worshipped."

QUR'AN: *and most certainly We chose him in this world: "al-Istifa' means to choose, to separate best parts of a thing from other parts (if they were mixed together). Looking at the positions of al-wilayah (love of Allah), this choosing, this selection fits the sincerity of servitude. A person so chosen behaves in all his affairs as a sincere slave and servant, totally surrendering himself to his Lord. In other words, religion is embodied in all his affairs. After all, what is religion if not total*

servitude to Allah in all matters whether of this world or of the hereafter, accepting gladly whatever the Lord decides for His servant in any given situation, as He says: *Surely the religion with Allah is Islam* (3:19). Clearly it shows that the position of "selection" is not different from that of "Islam", that is, surrender. As a further proof, look at the next verse: "When his Lord said to him, Submit (yourself) he said: 'I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds' ." Obviously, the adverb "when" is related to the preceding verb "We chose him." It means that Ibrahim was chosen when his Lord said to him to submit and he responded by submitting himself to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. In other words, the verse 131 (*When his Lord said to him, Submit, he said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds"*) is like an explanation of the words, "most surely We chose him."

In these verses, the pronouns have been changed from the first person to the third, and again from the second to the third. After saying, "We chose him", it would have been more usual to say: "When We said to him"; but Allah says, "When his Lord said to him, Submit (yourself)"; then in reply, Ibrahim (a.s.) should have said: "I submit myself to Thee"; instead he said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds." The reason is as follows:

"When his Lord said to him": It points to the fact that the talk was a secret between Ibrahim and his Lord, at a level where there was no one else to listen to that confidential conversation. Had Allah said, "When We said to him", it would have implied that the hearers of this verse were present at that sublime station and could be addressed to by Allah - after all, the audience has a direct relationship with the speaker. Therefore, Allah referred to Himself in the third person, cutting the connection between Himself and the hearers of the verse, showing that at the level where He spoke with Ibrahim, no one else was present; the conversation between Allah and Ibrahim was a confidential matter veiled in secrecy. In short, it was a talk between two close friends which others were excluded from.

"I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds." As mentioned above, the preceding phrase shows that Allah bestowed His grace exclusively on Ibrahim and enhanced his rank by this friendly confidential conversation. But Ibrahim knew how to speak in Divine presence; he was a servant of Allah; he should not forget the dictates of humility; it was a sign of his excellence ' of his humbleness, that he did not start talking with Allah in a friendly way, did not consider himself as worthy of that exclusive proximity, of that sublime friendship. He continued to see in himself a humble and powerless servant who is sustained by his Master's grace. That is why he submitted to the Lord to Whom all the worlds surrender, and said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds."

"*al-Islam*", "*at-taslim*" and "*alistislam*" all are from the same root *s-l-m* and have the same meaning, that is, to submit, to surrender. These verbs are used when a man or a thing submits to another thing, in such a way that the first never disobeys the second, never goes against it. Allah says: *Yes! whoever submits himself entirely to Allah...* (2:112); *Surely I have turned my face, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth...* (6:79). It is with the face that one turns towards someone. So far as Allah is concerned, the whole being, the whole existence, of the thing turns to Him. When a man surrenders to Allah, he obeys and accepts whatever comes to him from Allah - the creative matters like the measure and the decree, as well as the legislative ones like order and prohibition.

As men differ in degrees of their submission to Divine Decrees or legislations, so does their Islam. The first stage of Islam is to accept and obey the exoteric commandments, orders and prohibitions, by reciting *ash-shahadatayn* (the two testimonies, that is, testifying to the Oneness of God and Messengership of Muhammad, (s.a.w.)), no matter whether the belief has entered into the heart or not. Allah says: *The dwellers of the desert say: "We believe." Say: "You do not believe but say, 'We submit'; and faith has not yet entered into your hearts... "* (49:14)

This Islam is followed by the first stage of *al-iman*(faith, belief); and that is the sincere belief in the above-mentioned *shahadatayn*, - such a believer faithfully obeys most of the rules of the *shari'ah*.

This first stage of *al-iman* is followed by the second stage of Islam. It is the sincere acceptance of all true beliefs in detail, with its necessary concomitant, that is, good deeds - although occasional slips are not impossible. Allah says praising the pious ones: *Those who believed in Our signs and were submissive* (43: 69). Also, He says: *O you who believe! enter into submission one and all* (2:208). These verses show that there is an Islam, which comes after *aliman*; obviously this Islam is other than the previously mentioned one.

This Islam is followed by the second stage of *al-iman*; and it is the believing, with full details and reasoning, in the realities of the religion. Allah says: *The believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Messenger then they doubt not and struggle hard with their wealth and their lives in the way of Allah; they are the truthful ones* (49:15). Again, He says: *O you who believe! shall I lead you to a merchandise which may deliver you from a painful chastisement? You shall believe in Allah and His Messenger, and struggle hard in Allah's way with your properties and your lives* (61:10-11). This verse directs the believers to believe; obviously the second *Nan* is other than the first one.

This second stage of *al-iman* paves the way for the third stage of Islam. When the soul is sufficiently imbued with the above-mentioned *Nan*, and acquires its characteristics, then man's all animalistic and beastly faculties are subdued to the sublime powers of his intellect and spirituality. He keeps all his desires - pulling him to the material attractions and transient trinkets of this world - under firm control. Thereupon, he reaches a stage where he worships Allah as though he was seeing Him and if he was not seeing Allah, then Allah was seeing him. There is nothing in his hidden life and inner-self that is not submissive to Allah's orders and prohibitions; he is never annoyed with any decree or measure of Allah. Allah says: *But no! by your Lord! they do not believe until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them, and then do not find any straitness in their selves as to what you have decided, and submit with total submission* (4:65).

This Islam is followed by the third stage of *al- iman*.Allah says: *Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers and who keep aloof from what is vain...* (23:1-3). It is this stage that the words of Allah refer to: "When his Lord said to him, Submit (yourself), he said: 'I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds.'"

Sometimes the second and the third stages are counted as one. The sublime virtues, for example, being pleased with Divine Decree, submitting to the commands of Allah, forbearance and patience for the love of Allah, self-denial, piety, and love and hate for the sake of Allah are concomitants of this stage of *al-iman*.

The fourth stage of Islam follows the third stage of *al-iman*. In the abovementioned stage of *al-iman* the condition of a man vis-à-vis his Lord is like that of a slave with his master when a slave faithfully follows the dictates of his bondage - when he totally surrenders to the will of his master and accepts his likes and dislikes. Obviously there is no comparison between the ownership and authority a master has over his slave and the ownership and authority the Lord of the worlds has over His creatures. His is the real possession, the real ownership; nothing else has any independent existence - neither in person or characteristics nor in actions.

Sometimes, when a man reaches the third stage of surrender and submission, the Divine Grace takes him under its wing; he is shown the reality, and sees with his heart's eyes that the Kingdom belongs to Allah, nothing else owns anything at all - except when Allah bestows it to someone; there

is no Lord other than He.

This realization, this unveiling of reality, is a Divine Gift, a bestowal by Allah, to whom He pleases; a man cannot reach this sublime stage by his own will or effort. Probably it is to this Islam that the prayer of Ibrahim and Isma'il refers: *Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and (raise) from our offspring a group submissive to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion...* (2:128). Compare this to the verse: "When his Lord said to him, Submit (yourself), he said: 'I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds' ." Obviously the latter is a legislative, not a creative, order. Ibrahim was Muslim by his own will and choice, responding to the Divine Invitation, obeying the orders of Allah. It was an order he received in his early life. Now the former verse shows him, in the twilight of his life, praying with his son, Isma'il, for Islam and for being shown their ways of devotion. Undoubtedly, he was asking for something, which was not in his hand; or was praying to be kept firm on something, which was not in his power. In short, the Islam, which Ibrahim and Isma'il prayed for, was of this fourth and sublime stage.

This Islam is followed by the fourth stage of *al-iman*. It happens when the above-mentioned conditions permeates the believer's whole being, and submerges all his conditions and actions. Allah says: *Now surely the friends of Allah - they have no fear nor do they grieve; those who believed and were pious* (10:62-63). The believers mentioned here must be having the certainty that nothing is independent of Allah, and no "cause" has any causative power except by His permission. It is this certainty, which insulates them from grief when a tragedy strikes them, and protects them from fear if a danger looms ahead. It is only because of this factor that they have been praised in these terms.

This *iman* comes after the above-mentioned Divine Gift of Islam. Ponder on this point.

QUR'AN: *and in the hereafter he is most surely among the good ones: "as-Salah"* literally means: capability, ability. In the Divine Speech, this word and its derivatives, have been used sometimes for the man himself, and, at other times, for his actions and deeds. Allah says: *... he should do good deeds...* (18: 110); also, He says: *And marry those among you who are single and those who are good (i.e., fit) among your male slaves and your female slaves...* (24:32)

No clear explanation is found in the Book of Allah as to what constitutes goodness of deeds. But the Book attributes to it some effects, which may be helpful in understanding its meaning. For example:

1. A good deed is good for the pleasure of Allah: *And those who are patient, seeking the pleasure of their Lord...* (13:22); *and you do not spend but to seek Allah's pleasure...* (2:272)

2. It is good for the reward of Allah: *Allah's reward is better for him who believes and does good...* (28:80)

3. It lifts up the good words, which ascend to Allah: *To Him do ascend the good words; and the good deed lifts them up...* (35:10)

These descriptions show that, so far as actions are concerned, a "good deed" means an action that is fit to receive honor from God, is capable of lifting the good words to Allah. Allah says: *... but to Him reaches the piety on your part...* (22:37); *All do We aid - these as well as those - out of the bounty of your Lord; and the bounty of your Lord is not confined* (17:20).

As for the persons, the following verses show what constitutes their goodness: *And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger, these are with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favors from among the prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the good ones; and excellent are these as companions!* (4:69);

And We caused them to enter into Our mercy; surely they were of the good ones (21:86). Again Allah quotes Sulayman (a.s.) as saying: *... and make me enter, by Thy mercy, into Thy servants, the*

good ones (27:19). Also, He says: And (as for) Lut, We gave him wisdom and knowledge... and We took him into Our mercy; surely he was of the good ones (21:74-75). The mercy referred to in these verses is not the general Divine Mercy which encompasses everything; nor does it mean that mercy which is ordained for the pious believers, as Allah says: ... and My mercy encompasses all things; so I will ordain it (especially) for those who are pious... (7:156). The great personalities mentioned in the verses earlier referred to were "the good ones", and they were a selected group from among the pious believers; they were "fit " for the exclusive mercy mentioned in those verses. We know that some of the mercies of Allah are reserved for some special groups to the exclusion of others. Allah says: *and Allah chooses especially whom He pleases for His mercy* (2:105).

Also, this expression does not refer to the general honor of *al-wilayah* in other words, it does not say that Allah managed or manages their affairs for them. Of course, the good ones had that honor too; certainly they were among the honored *al-awliya'*(friends of Allah), as we have explained in the exegesis of the verse 1:5 (*Guide us to the straight path*); but this *wilayah* is an attribute which is also shared by the prophets, the truthful ones and the martyrs. If they had only this honor to their credit they could not be counted as a separate group distinguished from the other three.

So, what is the distinctive feature of the "goodness"? The answer is that Allah takes a "good one" into His especial mercy and grants him comprehensive protection from chastisement. These two effects are mentioned in the Qur'an: *Then as to those who believed and did good, their Lord will make them enter into His mercy* (i.e., into the Garden) (45:30); *They shall call therein* (i.e., in the Garden) *every fruit in security* (44:55).

Now ponder on the following verses: *And We took him into Our mercy* (21:75); *and We made* (them) *all good ones* (21:72). Note how Allah attributes these actions to Himself, not to the people concerned. Also look at the fact that according to the Divine declarations, reward is always given in lieu of actions and efforts. Keeping all this in view, you will realize that the "personal goodness" is a especial honor which cannot be earned as a reward of good deeds or by one's own will. Probably, it is to this reality that the verse refers: *They have therein what they wish and with Us is more yet* (50:35). Possibly, the first clause(*They have therein what they wish*) refers to the reward of their deeds; and the second one (*and with Us is more yet*) concerns what they shall be given not in lieu of action, but purely by Divine Mercy. We shall elaborate it, Allah willing, in the exegesis of this verse.

Now look at the life of Ibrahim (a.s.). He was a prophet, a messenger of God, one of the *ulul-azm* prophets and an Imam; many of the prophets and messengers coming after him were his followers; and he was of the good ones, as the words of Allah clearly say: *and We made* (them) *all good ones* (21:72). This verse also shows that he was made, in this very world, one of the good ones. Consider also the fact that many prophets of lesser rank were made, in this very world, among the good ones. Then why does he pray to Allah to join him to the good ones?

It is clear from this prayer that there was a group of the "good ones" who had gone ahead of him, and now he was praying to Allah to join him to them. Allah granted him his prayer "in the hereafter", as is mentioned in the Qur'an in three places - one of which is the verse under discussion: *and most certainly We chose him in this world, and in the hereafter he is most surely among the good ones*(2:130). Other two verses are: ... *and We gave him his reward in this world, and in the hereafter he is most surely among the good ones* (29:27). *And We gave him good in this world, and in the hereafter he will most surely be among the good* (16:122).

If you ponder on the foregoing details, you will know that the "goodness" has many ranks, one above

the other. Therefore you should not be astonished if you are told that Ibrahim (a.s.) had asked to be joined to Muhammad (s. a. w. a.) and his purified progeny (a.s.), and that Allah granted him his prayer in the hereafter, not in this world. Ibrahim (a.s.) had prayed to Allah to join him with the good ones, while Muhammad (s.a.w.) unambiguously claims this honor for himself: *Surely my guardian is Allah, Who revealed the Book, and He takes in hand (the affairs of) the good ones*(7:196). It is obvious that Muhammad (s.a.w.) claims the *wilayah* for himself. In other words, the Prophet, according to his claim mentioned in the verse, had already got the "goodness"; and Ibrahim (a.s.) was praying to be joined to a group of "good ones" who had already been given that rank, and that group was Muhammad (s.a.w. a.) and his progeny.

QUR'AN: *And the same did Ibrahim enjoin on his sons: that is, the same religion.*

QUR'AN: *... therefore die not unless you are Muslims:* Death is something beyond one's control; and *"at-taklif*

(commandments of the *shari'ah*) covers only those things which are under one's control. Then why did Ibrahim and Ya'qub (peace be on them!) tell their progeny not to die unless they were Muslims? The fact is that this admonition concerned a matter, which was fully under their power. The real meaning is like this: Beware lest the death comes to you and you are not Muslims; always remain Muslims; keep on Islam, so that whenever death comes to you, you are Muslims.

The verse gives a hint that the religion means Islam, as Allah says: *Surely the religion with Allah is Islam*(3:19).

QUR'AN: *"We will worship your God and the God of your fathers, Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ishaq"*: The verse uses the word "father" for the grandfather, the uncle and the father - and it has been used without any reason of *"at-taghlib"* that is, all groups are equal in number; there were not more "fathers" than the grandfather and the uncle to justify the use of this word for the whole group. It proves that the word "father" may correctly be used for uncle, as we shall show, Allah willing, that Ibrahim (a.s.) addressed his uncle Azar, as "father."

QUR'AN: *"one God only"*: This sums up the preceding detailed description, "your God and the God of your fathers... "; It serves to remove any possible misunderstanding that his God was other than the God of his fathers as the idol-worshippers thought that there were many gods.

QUR'AN: *"and to Him do we submit"*; It refers to the subject of their talk, that is, worship. They made it clear that their worship of Allah would be totally in accordance with the dictates of Islam. The reply shows that the religion of Ibrahim was Islam. Accordingly, the religion which was inherited by his offspring, for example, Ishaq, Ya'qub and Isma'il, and which continued in the Children of Israel and Isma'il, was Islam, and nothing else. It was this religion, which Ibrahim (a.s.) brought from his Lord; and nobody had any right to turn away from it or to call to any other religion.

Traditions

Sama'ah narrates from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said: "The position of *iman* (faith) vis-a-vis Islam is like that of the Sacred

Ka'bah *vis-a-vis* the Sanctuary; sometimes one may be in the Sanctuary without being in the Ka'bah, but he cannot be in the Ka'bah without being in the Sanctuary." (al-Kafi)

Also he narrates from the same Imam that he said: "Islam is, to bear witness that there is no god except Allah, and to accept the truth of the Messenger of Allah; it is by this that the bloods are spared

(i.e., lives are protected) and marriages and inheritance are validated; and the multitude of people are on its apparent (meaning); and the *iman* (i.e., faith and belief) is the guidance, and (it is) that characteristic of Islam which is firmly placed in the hearts." (ibid.)

The author says: There are other traditions of the same meaning; and they explain the above-mentioned first stage of the Islam and *iman*.

al-Barqi has narrated from 'Ali (a.s.) that he said: "Islam is submission and submission is conviction." (ibid.)

Kahil said that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "If a people worshipped Allah - the One, there is no partner to Him - and established prayer, and paid the *zakat* and did the *hajj* of the House, and kept the fast of the month of *Ramadan*, and then said about something done by Allah or done by the Messenger of Allah, 'Why did he not do it in another way?', or (even if) they felt (like) it in their hearts, they would become polytheists because of it..." (ibid.)

The author says: The foregoing two traditions refer to the third stages of the Islam and *iman*.

ad-Daylami narrates in his *al-Irshad* - and he gives two *sanads* for this *hadith* which is one of the traditions of Ascension - that Allah said: "O Ahmad! Do you know which way of living is happier and which life more durable?" (The Messenger of Allah) said: "No, O Allah!" (He) said: "As for the happy way of living, it is that in which the (living) person is not tired of remembering Me, and does not forget My bounties, and does not ignore My rights (on him); he seeks My pleasure day and night.

And as for the ever-lasting life, it is (realized) when (the person) works for his (spiritual) benefit until the world loses its significance for him, and looks small in his eyes; and the hereafter becomes great for him; and he gives preference to My pleasure over his own desire, and seeks My pleasures, and thinks the right of My bounty (as) great (on him); and keeps in mind what I have done for him (i.e., for his benefit); and watches Me day and night whenever he is tempted to commit any wrong or sin; and keeps his heart clean from all that I dislike; and hates Satan and his whisperings, and does not let Satan establish a hold over, or a passage to, his heart. When he acts (like) this, then I put (My) love into his heart - until I make his heart, as well as his leisure and engagement, and his thought and speech, a part of (My) favors which I have bestowed on those of My creatures who love Me; and I open his heart's eye and ear, so that he hears with his heart, and looks with his heart to My Majesty and Greatness; and I make the world straitened for him; and make him hate it with all its pleasures; and I caution him of the world and all that it contains, as a shepherd protects his sheep from dangerous pasture lands. When it happens, then he flees from people, and transfers from the house of termination to the abode of eternity, and from the house of Satan to the seat of the Beneficent (God), O Ahmad! and I adorn him with dignity and majesty. So, this is the good way of living and the eternal life; and it is the station of those who are pleased (with Me). So, whoever acts for My pleasure, I give him three characteristics: I teach him gratitude which is not polluted by ignorance, and remembrance that is not adulterated with forgetfulness, and love - so that he does not prefer the love of creatures to My love. Then when he loves Me, I love him, and I open the eye of his heart to My Majesty, and do not keep My (very) special creatures hidden from him. And I converse with him secretly in the dark of night and the light of day, until he ceases talking with the creatures and sitting with them; and I make him hear My talk and the speech of My angels; and I make My secret known to him - which I have kept hidden from (all) My creation. And I dress him in modesty, until all the creation is awed of him. And he walks on the earth (and all his sins are) forgiven. And I make his heart hearing and seeing; and do not hide from him anything of the Garden or the Fire; and I make known to him what terror and affliction are going to happen to the people on the Day of Resurrection, and the things I will question the rich and the poor, as well as the learned and the ignorant, about. And

I will make him sleep (in peace) in his grave, and I will send Munkar and Nakir to him for questioning him; and he will not see the sorrow of death, nor the fright of the prelude (of the next world). Then I will erect his weighing scale for him, and will unroll his book (of deeds), then I will put his books in his right hand, and he shall read it unfolded; then I will not keep any interpreter between Me and him. So these are the attributes of the lovers. O Ahmad! make your concern one concern, and make your tongue one tongue, and make your body (i.e., your person) alive that is never oblivious (of Me). Whoever is oblivious of Me, I do not care in which valley he perishes." (Biharu'l-anwar)

al-Majlisi quotes the following tradition from *al-Kafi*, *Ma'ani 'l-akhbar* and *anNawadir* of ar-Rawandi, with various chains of narrators, from as-Sadiq and alKazim (a.s.) - and the text given here is from *al-Kafi* - that the Imam said: "The Messenger of Allah met Harithah ibn Malik ibn an-Nu'man al-Ansari, and said to him: 'How are you? O Harithah ibn Malik an-Nu'mani! He said: 'A believer in reality, O Messenger of Allah The Messenger of Allah then said to him: 'There is a reality for everything; so what is the reality of your word?' He said: 'O Messenger of Allah I turned myself away from the world, so I kept my night awake (in worship) and my days thirsty (in fast); and (it is) as though I am looking at the throne of my Lord which has been set up for (taking) the (people's) account; and as though I see the people of the Garden visiting one another in the Garden, and as if I hear the howling of the people of the Fire in the Fire.' Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah (s. a. w. a.) said: 'A servant that Allah has enlightened his heart. You have seen, so be firm.'" (ibid.)

The author says: The two traditions describe the fourth stage of the Islam and *iman* mentioned above. There are many

traditions explaining particulars of these two; and, Allah willing, we shall quote some of them in various places of this book; and they are supported by the Qur'anic verses.

Also it should be kept in mind that for each stage of the Islam and *iman*, there is an opposite stage of *al-kufr* (disbelief) and *ash-shirk* (polytheism). And it is known that the higher and subtler the meaning of the Islam and *iman*, the more difficult it is to protect oneself from its opposite *kufr* or *shirk*.

Obviously, a lower stage of the Islam or *iman* does not exclude the possibility of a subtler *kufr* or *shirk*.

These two principles should be kept in mind. It follows that the verses of the Qur'an have some esoteric meanings, which are applied to the situations, which its exoteric meanings cannot be applied to. Please keep this hint in mind until we explain to you its details.

al-Qummi writes about the words of Allah, *and with Us is more*, that the Imam said: "Looking towards the mercy of Allah." (at-Tafsir)

The Prophet said: "Allah says: 'I have prepared for My good servants that which no eye has ever seen, nor any ear ever heard, nor has it ever passed from the heart of any man.'" (Majma'ul-bayan)

The author says: The meaning of the two traditions may easily be understood from what we have written about the meaning of "good ones"; and Allah is the Guide.

al-Baqir (a.s.) said about the words of Allah, *Or, were you witnesses when death approached Ya'qub... :*" It is applied to *al-Qa'im* (the one who stands - i.e., with sword to establish the way of Allah). (al-Ayyashi)

The author says: The author of *as-Safi* writes: "Perhaps the Imam meant that it was about the Qa'im from the progeny of Muhammad, because every Qa'im of them asks his children the same question at the time of his death, and they reply him as the children of Ya'qub had replied."

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 135-141

- وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُوا قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ 2:135
 قُولُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَا أُوتِيَ
 النَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ 2:136
 فَإِنْ آمَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ فَقَدْ اهْتَدَوْا وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ 2:137
 صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدُونَ 2:138
 قُلْ أَتَحَاجُّونَنَا فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ وَلَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُخْلِصُونَ 2:139
 أَمْ تَقُولُونَ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطَ كَانُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَىٰ قُلْ أَلَأَنْتُمْ أَعْلَمُ أَمِ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً
 عِنْدَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ 2:140
 تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ 2:141
- 2:135 *And they say: "Be Jews or Christians, you will be rightly guided" Say: "Nay! (we follow) the religion of Ibrahim, the upright one, and he was not of the polytheist."*
- 2:136 *Say: "We believe in Allah and (in) that which has been revealed to us, and (in) that which was revealed to Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ishaq and Ya'qub and the tribes, and (in) that which was given to Musa and 'Isa, and (in) that which was given to the prophets from their Lord, we do not make any distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit."*
- 2:137 *If then they believe in like of what you believe in, they are indeed on the right course, and if they turn back, then they are only in great dissension; so Allah will suffice you against them, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing.*
- 2:138 *(We have received) the dyeing of Allah, and who is better than Allah in dyeing? and Him do we worship.*
- 2:139 *Say: "Do you dispute with us about Allah? and He is our Lord and your Lord; and for us our deeds and for you are your deeds; and we are sincere to Him.*
- 2:140 *Or, do you say that Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ya'qub and the tribes were Jews or Christians?" Say: "Are you better knowing or Allah? And who is more unjust than he who conceals a testimony that he has from Allah? And Allah is not at all heedless of what you do."*
- 2:141 *This is a people that have passed away; they shall have what they earned and you shall have what you earn, and you shall not be called upon to answer for what they did.*

Commentary

QUR'AN: *And they say: "Be Jews and Christians, you will be rightly guided"*: The preceding verses made it clear that the true religion followed by the children of Ibrahim - Isma'il and Ishaq as well as Ya'qub and his descendants - was the same Islam which was -the religion of Ibrahim, the upright one. It means that the differences and divisions, the schisms and sects, which the proponents of Judaism and Christianity call to, have actually originated from their own desires; they are just a few toys manufactured by them. They are in great disputations, schisms and disagreements, they are

divided into numerous sects and religious groups, they have dyed the religion of Allah - the religion of Unity, the religion of Oneness - with colors of their bias and prejudice, their desires and ambitions. But the religion is not divided; it is one, in the same way as God, Who is to be worshipped, is One; it is the religion of Ibrahim; the Muslims should firmly keep hold of this original religion, discarding the differences and dissensions of the People of the Book aside.

Although the life in this world looks like a constant phenomenon, in reality it is continuously changing. The same applies to the entire natural world. Even the rites, customs and manners of various nations and groups are not immune from this propensity to change. More often than not, it causes changes and deviations even in religious matters. Sometimes extraneous things are inserted in religion; at other times, an essential part is declared anathema; worldly goals and ideals replace the Divine and religious goals and aims. What a tragedy is it for religion! When it happens, the religion is dyed in national or tribal color, and starts calling to a goal other than the original one; it focuses its sight on innovations, forgetting its original purpose. In a short while, the evil (i.e., the innovation) becomes virtue. People support and defend it, because it agrees with their desires and cravings. And the virtue is treated as evil; it has no protector or defender to stand for it. Ultimately, the things deteriorate to unbelievable extent, as we are seeing with our own eyes today.

However, the sentence: "And they say: 'Be Jews or Christians'", stands for the sentences, "The Jews say: 'Be Jews, you will be guided aright'; and the Christians say: 'Be Christians, you will be rightly guided.'" They make such divergent claims because of their divergences and differences.

QUR'AN: *Say: "Nay! (we follow) the religion of Ibrahim, the upright one, and he was not of the polytheists"*: It is the reply of their claims. The Prophet should tell them: Nay! we follow the religion of Ibrahim, the upright one; because it is the one religion which was followed by all your prophets - Ibrahim and all those who came after him. Ibrahim, who brought this religion, was not a polytheist. Had there been so many divisions in his religion - the divisions which were attached to it by the innovators - he would have become a polytheist: That which is not a part of Allah's religion cannot invite towards Allah, it will surely call to something other than Allah - and this is what polytheism means. The religion of Ibrahim is the religion of unity; it does not contain anything that is not from Allah.

QUR'AN: *Say: "We believe in Allah and (in) that which has been revealed to us, and (in) that which was revealed to Ibrahim..."*: After mentioning the claim of the Jews and the Christians, Allah describes the truth - and He always tells the truth. The truth consists of the testimony of belief in One God and belief in all that was brought by the prophets - without making any distinction between them. This is what is called the Islam. Belief in Allah was the fundamental part of that which was revealed to the prophets; yet it has been mentioned here separately. The reason is that the belief in the Creator is a natural instinct; it does not depend on prophetic proofs and arguments.

After that fundamental belief, Allah mentions "that which has been revealed to us", that is, the Qur'an or the knowledge contained in it. Then He mentions "that which was revealed to Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ishaq and Ya'qub." Thereafter is described "that which was given to Musa and 'Isa'; these two have been especially mentioned because the speech is addressed to the Jews and the Christians who call only to these two prophets, respectively. Finally the testimony includes "that which was given to the prophets." This sentence covers all the prophets and thus paves the way for the next declaration: "we do not make any distinction between any of them."

Note the variation in style: That which is with us and that which was with Ibrahim, Isma'il, Ishaq and Ya'qub, is listed as "revealed" to us and them, respectively; while that which was with Musa, 'Isa and other prophets is referred to as "given" to them.

Probably the reason is this: The basic idea may be conveyed by the word, "giving", as Allah says after mentioning Ibrahim and other prophets who came before or after him: *These are they to whom We gave the book and the wisdom and the prophethood*(6:89). But this word does not clearly and necessarily mean "revelation"; for example, Allah says: *And certainly We gave wisdom to Luqman* (31:12); *And certainly We gave the book and the wisdom and the prophecy to the Children of Israel...* (45:16). Now both the Jews and the Christians counted Ibrahim, Isma'il, Ishaq, Ya'qub and the tribes as following their religions respectively - the Jews claimed that those prophets were Jews; the Christians claimed that they were Christians. They believed that the true religion was the Judaism or the Christianity that was given to Musa or 'Isa respectively. In this background, if Allah had said, 'that which was given to Ibrahim... ', it would not have clearly shown that those prophets themselves had brought a religion, which was revealed to them by Allah; the Jews or the Christians could have claimed that what was given to them was the same thing which was given to Musa or 'Isa - peace be on them all - and that their names have been mentioned, like that of the Children of Israel, just because they followed the selfsame religion! It was to remove this possible misunderstanding that Ibrahim and those named prophets (peace be on them all) were separately mentioned and it was clearly said that they had got that religion by Divine revelation. As for the prophets who came before Ibrahim (a.s.), the Jews and the Christians did not lay claim on their religion, and there was no chance of any misunderstanding; therefore, their religion was referred to as "given" to them.

QUR'AN: *and the tribes: "al-Asbat"* of the Israelites has the same meaning as "*al-qaba'il*" of the Isma'ilites, and that is, the tribes. *Sibt*, like *qabilah*, refers to the descendants of one forefather. There were twelve tribes in the Israelites, each one descended from one of the twelve children of Ya'qub; thus each became a distinct group in itself.

If the word "tribes" refers to the whole groups, then it is used metaphorically, because the prophets who received the revelation were from those tribes. On the other hand, it may refer to the individuals, that is, the prophets themselves. In any case, it does not include the brothers of Yusuf (a.s.) because they were not prophets.

A similar verse is found in the Chapter of 'The Women': *and We revealed to Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ishaq and Ya'qub and the tribes, and 'Isa and Ayyub and Yunus and Harun and Sulayman...* (4:163).

QUR'AN: *If then they believe in like of what you believe in, they are indeed on the right course*: What Allah actually means is this: If they believe in what you believe in, then they are on the right course. But He has added here the word "like" (*If then they believe in like of what you believe in...*), to cut the root of disputation and argumentation. Had they been invited to believe in what the Muslims believed in, they could have replied - as they used to say - No, we believe in that which has been revealed to us and we reject what is besides that. Therefore, this verse teaches the Muslims a different way of expressions: We believe in that which contains nothing but pristine truth; therefore, you too should believe in that which contains only pristine truth like it. Addressed in this way, they will not find any loophole, nor will they be able to resort to their obstinate wrangles. And then they will realize that what they have had is not the unadulterated truth.

QUR'AN: *in great dissension: "ash-Shiqaq"* means hypocrisy, disputation, dissension.

QUR'AN: *so Allah will suffice you against them*: It was a promise to the Messenger of Allah to help him against them; and Allah fulfilled this promise. And the same favor shall be completed for the Muslim nation when Allah wills.

This verse is a parenthetic statement between the preceding and the following verses.

QUR'AN: *the dyeing of Allah, and who is better than Allah in dyeing?* "*as-Sibghah*" means a

kind of dyeing. The verse means: The above-mentioned belief is a Divine color in which Allah has dyed us; and it is the best of the colors - it is not a dye of the Judaism nor of the Christianity, which emanate from dissensions in religion, when people fail to keep on the right track.

QUR'AN: *and Him do we worship*: Grammatically the sentence describes the condition; it gives the reason of the preceding phrase: "the dyeing of Allah... "

QUR'AN: *Say: "Do you dispute with us about Allah?"*: It is a rebuke to the People of the Book regarding their disputation with the Muslims. The next sentences show how and why their argumentations were wrong and in vain: "and He is our Lord and your Lord; and for us are our deeds and for you are your deeds; and we are sincere to Him." When the followers dispute with each other concerning their leader, the dispute may emanate from one or more of the three causes:

First: They follow different leaders; and each wants to show the superiority of his leader over the other's, for example, a dispute between an idol - worshipper and a Muslim.

Second: They follow the same leader, but each claims a close relationship with the leader, denying a like privilege to the other.

Third: One party wants to show that the other party, because of his unbecoming behavior and immoral character, has lost the right to be counted among the followers of the leader; his claim of being a follower of the leader is an insult to the latter.

Now, why should the Muslims and the People of the Book dispute with each other? The first reason does not apply, because both worship the same God. The same goes for the second reason, because one group's deeds do not clash with those of the other "for us are our deeds and for you are your deeds." Coming to the third cause, the Muslims are sincere in their devotion to Allah. So why should the People of the Book dispute with them, when they have got no reason at all.

In this way, Allah first rebuked them for their disputation with the Muslims, and then dismisses all three causes of disputation one by one.

QUR'AN: *"Or, do you say that Ibrahim were Jews or Christians?"*: Both groups say that Ibrahim and the other prophets named in the verse were from them; implying that they were Jews or Christians. Or, they clearly claimed that they were Jews or Christians, as may be understood from the words of Allah: *O People of the Book! why do you dispute about Ibrahim, when the Torah and the Injil were not revealed till after him? Do you not then understand?*(3:65)

QUR'AN: *Say: "Are you better knowing or Allah?"*: Because Allah has informed us and you in the Book that Musa and 'Isa and their books came after Ibrahim and the prophets mentioned in this verse.

QUR'AN: *"And who is more unjust than he who conceals a testimony that he has from Allah?"*: That is, he who conceals a testimony, a fact known to him, that Allah has informed in His Books that the *shari'ah* of Judaism and Christianity were sent after Ibrahim and the other named prophets. The "testimony", thus, refers to a fact known to one.

The verse may alternatively refer to him who conceals the testimony of Allah that Ibrahim and those prophets had passed away long before the Torah and the Injil were revealed. In this case, the "testimony" would refer to giving evidence, to bearing witness.

But the first meaning is more appropriate in the context of this verse.

QUR'AN: *This is a people that have passed away*. It will do you no good to dispute about other people as to which group they belonged to; nor will silence on this matter do you any harm. You must spend your time in those things, which you will be asked about tomorrow.

This verse has been repeated here because the Jews and the Christians talked (and they still do) too much on this subject which would be of no avail to them on the Day of Judgment; especially when they knew very well that Ibrahim had passed away long before Judaism and Christianity came into

being.

In other contexts, discussion about the prophets and messengers is a very beneficial thing; the Qur'an exhorts us to look into, and learn about, their teachings and their spiritual virtues; and it is with this aim that it repeatedly narrates their stories and orders us to meditate on them.

Traditions

As-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the verse: *Say: Nay! (we follow) the religion of Ibrahim.* "Verily, the upright religion is the Islam." (al-Ayyashi)

al-Baqir (a.s.) said: "The upright religion (of Ibrahim, a.s.) did not leave anything (unguided), so much so that it includes the trimming of the moustache, and cutting of nails, and circumcision." (*ibid.*)

"Allah revealed the upright (religion) to Ibrahim, and it is cleanliness; and it is (made up of) ten (things), five (of them) in the head and (the other) five in the (rest of the) body. As for those, which are in the head, they are: Trimming of the moustache, and letting the beard grow, and dressing the hair, and brushing the teeth, and (using) the tooth-pick; and as for those which are in the (rest of the) body, they are: removing the hair from the body, and circumcision, and cutting the nails, and the bath of *al-janabah* (the ritual uncleanness resulting from sexual intercourse or ejaculation), and cleansing (the body) with water. And this is the pure upright (religion) which Ibrahim (a.s.) brought; it was never abrogated, nor will it ever be abrogated until the Day of Resurrection." (*at-Tafsir*, alQummi)

The author says: Dressing the hair means to trim it and grow it. There are a lot of traditions of the same or similar meaning, narrated by both sects in their books.

al-Baqir (a.s.) said about the words of Allah: *Say: We believe in Allah...* : "Allah has meant 'Ali, and Fatimah and al-Hasan, and al-Husayn, in this verse; and after them it has continued in the Imams..." (al-Kafi; al'Ayyashi)

The author says: This theme may be inferred from the words, *and (raise) from our offspring a group submitting to Thee* (2:128), which were used in the invocation of Ibrahim (a.s.). There is no contradiction between this tradition and the fact that the verse is addressed to all the Muslims and obliges all of them to believe in the things mentioned therein; because the circle of such verses may be widened or shortened in different contexts, according to various stages of application - as we have explained with reference to various stages of the Islam and *iman*.

al-Qummi narrates in his *at-Tafsir* from al-Baqir or as-Sadiq (a.s.), and as-Saduq narrates in *Ma'ani 'I-akhbar* from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said explaining the words of Allah, *the dyeing of Allah...* : "The dyeing is the Islam."

The author says: It is clear from the context of the verses.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "(Allah) dyed the believers with *al-Wilayah* (love and obedience of the Prophet and his *Ahlul-bayt*) in (i.e., at the time of) *al-mithaq* (the covenant taken from the souls)." (*al-Kafi; Ma'ani 'I-akhbar*)

The author says: It refers to the esoteric meaning of this verse, as we shall explain later on; we shall then also explain the meaning of *al-wilayah* and *al-mithaq*, Allah willing.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 142-151

سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلَاهُمْ عَنِ قِبَلَتِهِمُ الَّتِي كَانُوا عَلَيْهَا قُلِ اللَّهُ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ 2:142
وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ
يَتَّبِعُ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرُؤُوفٌ

رَّحِيمٌ 2:143
قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ وَإِنَّ

الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ 2:144
وَلَيْنُ أَنْتَبَأَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ بِكُلِّ آيَةٍ مَا تَبِعُوا قِبْلَتَكَ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِتَابِعٍ قِبَلَتِهِمْ وَمَا بَعْضُهُمْ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَةَ بَعْضٍ وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ مِنْ

بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِنَّكَ إِذًا لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ 2:145

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ 2:146

الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ 2:147

وَلِكُلِّ وِجْهَةٍ هُوَ مُوَلِّيهَا فَاسْتَقِيمُوا الصِّرَاطَ الْأَيْمَانَ مَا تَكُونُوا يَأْتِ بِكُمْ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ 2:148

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِنَّهُ لَلْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ 2:149
وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ

ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ فَلَا تَحْسَبُوهُمْ وَآخِشُونِي وَلَا تَمَّ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ 2:150

كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا مِنْكُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ 2:151

2:142 The fools among the people will say: "What has turned them from their qiblah which they had?" Say: "The East and the West belong only to Allah; He guides him whom He likes to a straight path."

2:143 And thus We have made you a medium nation so that you may be witnesses for the people and the Messenger may be a witness for you. And We had not made the qiblah which you had but that We might know him who follows the Messenger from him who turns back upon his heels; and though this was surely hard except for those whom Allah has guided aright; and Allah was not going to make your faith to be fruitless; most surely Allah is Affectionate, Merciful to the people.

2:144 Indeed We see the turning of thy face to heaven, so We shall surely turn thee to a qiblah which thou shalt be pleased with; turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are, turn your faces towards it; and those who have been given the Book most surely know that it is the truth from their Lord; and Allah is not at all heedless of what they do.

2:145 And even if you bring to those who have been given the Book every sign they would not follow your qiblah, nor can you be a follower of their qiblah, neither are they the followers of each other's qiblah; and if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, then you shall most surely be among the unjust.

2:146 Those whom We have given the Book recognize him as they recognize their sons; and a party of them most surely conceal the truth while they know (it).

2:147 The truth is from your Lord, therefore you should not be of the doubters.

2:148 And every one has a direction to which he would turn; therefore, hasten to (do) good works; wherever you are, Allah will bring you all together; surely Allah has power over all things.

2:149 *And from whatsoever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and surely it is the very truth from your Lord, and Allah is not at all heedless of what you do.*

2:150 *And from whatsoever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are turn your faces towards it, so that people shall have no argument against you, except such of them as are unjust; so do not fear them, and fear Me; and so that I may complete My favor on you and that you may walk on the right course.*

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

Commentary

Ponder on these verses and you will find them well-connected with each other, a common context joining them together like a strand running through the beads. These verses together talk about the appointment of the Ka'bah as the *qiblah* (the direction of prayer etc.) for the Muslims. Therefore, no attention should be paid to those who say that there was a change of sequence in the arrangement of these verses, or that some of them have abrogated the others. Although then narrate some traditions to this effect, but then do not deserve any comment because all of them go against the clear meaning of these verses.

QUR'AN: *The fools among the people will say: "What has turned them from their qiblah which they had?"*: It is the second introductory sentence for the soon-to-be-promulgated order to make the Ka'bah as the *qiblah* of the Muslims. Also, it teaches the reply of the objection which the "fools among the people", that is, the Jews and the pagans of Mecca, were expected to raise: The Jews because of their partisanship of their own *qiblah*, Baytu'l-Maqdis; and the pagan Arabs because then were always on the look out for any new thing which then could object to.

Allah prepared the minds for change of *qiblah*, first by revealing the story of Ibrahim (a.s.) and various honors bestowed on him by Allah, as well as the honor accorded to his son, Isma'il; their prayers for the Ka'bah and Mecca, as well as for the Prophet and the Muslim group; their construction of the House and the order then received to cleanse it for the worship of Allah.

It is recognized that the change of *qiblah* from Baytu'l-Maqdis to the Ka'bah was an event of greatest religious significance, one of the most important commandments given to the Muslims after the *hijrah* of the Prophet to Medina, when the roots of Islam were firmly taking place and its knowledge and realities were being spread. Understandably, the Jews were not going to remain silent in face of this legislation: According to their thinking this change negated one of their greatest religious prides, that is, *qiblah*; hitherto the Muslims were following them in their *qiblah*, and the Jews could claim a precedence over the Muslims in this religious symbol. Moreover, this new legislation was a manifest advancement in the Muslims' religion - it made all of them to face a single point in their worship and other religious rites. It saved them from looking towards divergent directions - physically; and from difference of opinions - spiritually. Facing towards the Ka'bah had rather more influence and deeper impression on the souls of the Muslims than the rules of cleanliness and invocation etc.; and their enemies, and particularly the Jews, understood it, and they resented it. Their stories, as narrated in the Qur'an, prove that they were a nation which did not give any credence to anything in this world which was beyond the reach of the five senses. As spiritual things were not of any importance in their eyes, they used to accept the spiritual rules without any protest - they did not consider it worth arguing about. But whenever they were given a Divine Commandment which

had any connection with the physical world, which had a material form - like war, emigration, *sajdah*, polite speech etc. - they stood up against it, and opposed it very vehemently.

In short, Allah informed His Messenger what the enemies of Islam were going to say against the change of *qiblah*, and taught him how they should be replied, how their arguments should be refuted.

Their objection: The first *qiblah* was prescribed by Allah for the previous prophets. Why was it changed to another House which had no such distinction? Was this change affected by the order of Allah? How could Allah contravene His Own previously ordained rule, or abrogate His Own law? (We have mentioned under the verse of "Abrogation" that the Jews do not believe in abrogation.) Or, was it done, without any order from Allah? If so, then the Muslims have deviated from the right path and have left guidance for misguidance. (This objection has not been mentioned in so many words in the Qur'an, but the suggested reply points to it.)

Reply: When Allah prescribes a house like the Ka'bah as *qiblah*, it is not based on any specialty of that house or stone; there is no unalterable and inseparable quality in that building which could demand that honor as a right. Being chosen as *qiblah* is not an inviolable and natural characteristic of any building. Every article, every building and every direction is equally capable of being selected for this purpose; and none has any especial claim for it. Everything belongs to Allah, He issues orders about it, whatever He likes, in any way He likes, and whenever He likes. Whatever He decrees, it is for the guidance of the people, for their individual and collective good and perfection. He does not order but for guidance, and He does not guide except to the way which leads directly to their perfection and well-being.

QUR'AN: *The fools among the people will say:* It means the Jews and the polytheists of Arabia; and that is why they have been referred to as "the people." They have been called "fools" because their mentality was not right, and their ideas about the Divine Law were unsound. And that is what foolishness is: crookedness of mind and unsoundness of opinion.

QUR'AN: *What has turned them...* When the verb, "*at-tawliyah*" is joined to its object (without preposition), it means, to turn your face towards that thing, to keep it facing you; as Allah says: "so We shall surely turn thee to a *qiblah* which thou shalt like." When it is followed by the preposition '*an*', it gives the opposite meaning, that is, to turn away from, to turn one's face from. The verse means: What has turned them away, or turned their faces, from the *qiblah* which they were using hitherto, that is, Baytu'l-Maqdis towards which the Prophet and the Muslims used to pray during his stay at Mecca and for a few months after his emigration to Medina.

QUR'AN: *from their qiblah:* The *qiblah* is attributed to the Muslims, although the Jews were using it centuries before the Prophet. Obviously, their turning from their own *qiblah* looks more surprising, and gives more room for objection. And it was for the same reason that the opening phrase says: "What has turned them", instead of saying, "What has turned the Prophet and the Muslims." It would not have looked objectionable in the least if they had said: "What has turned the Prophet and the Muslims from the *qiblah* of the Jews?"

QUR'AN: *Say: "The East and the West belong only to Allah":* Only these two directions were mentioned, because it is through them that all other cardinal and compound directions are fixed, like the North, the South and all the intermediate directions between any two cardinal ones. The East and the West are relative directions which are fixed by the rising and setting of the sun and the stars; they cover all places of the earth (except two imaginary points of the true North and South Poles). Perhaps, it was for this reason that only these two were chosen to represent all the directions.

QUR'AN: *Heguides him whom He likes to a straight path:* The word "*sirat*"(path) is mentioned here without a definite article "*al*" since it is a common noun, and does not specify a definite path,

because nations differ in their paths due to their differences in ability to attain perfection and happiness.

QUR'AN: *And thus We have made you a medium nation that you may be witnesses for the people and the Messenger may be a witness for you:* Apparently it means as follows: As We are going to change very soon the *qiblah* for you in order that We may guide you to a right path, in the same way We have made you an intermediary nation.

Relationship Between Prescription of Qiblah and Ummah Being Witnesses for the People and the Messenger Being Witness for the Ummah

Someone has explained it in the following way: And like this wonderful making, We have made you a medium nation. Such an explanation deserves no comment.

Another explanation given by another exegete is as follows:

They were made a "medium nation" to "be witnesses for the people." What does it mean? "Medium" is a thing in the centre, neither to this side nor to that. This "*ummah*" has the same position *vis-a-vis* "the people" - that is, the People of the Book and the polytheists. The polytheists and the dualist emphasize the physical aspects of life. Their whole attention is fixed to this worldly life; their plans are centered on its trinkets and comforts. They do not believe in the Resurrection or the hereafter; spiritual perfection and esoteric virtues are not so important to them. On the other extreme are some groups, like the Christians, who put utmost emphasis on the spiritual aspects to the detriment of the physical ones. They teach monasticism and rejection of the world. They seem heedless to the fact that the Creator has made the physical perfection a means by which man may reach the goal for which he has been created. In short the latter - the "people of spirit" - nullified their goal by nullifying the means; and the former - the "people of body" - nullified their goal by focusing their whole attention to the means as though it was the goal in itself. Allah has made this *ummah* a "medium", by giving them a religion which leads them to the straight and upright path, in the middle - inclined neither to this side nor to that. It strengthens both sides - the body as well as the soul - according to what each of them needs and deserves; it is a religion which encourages and invites man to combine the virtue of both. Man is, after all, a combination of body and soul; he is neither body alone nor spirit alone. If his life is to be a happy one, he must unite physical perfection with the spiritual one.

This *ummah* then is the medium and well-balanced one; it is a criterion to judge and weigh both sides of extremes. It is, therefore, the witness for all the people who have deviated from the middle way going to this side or that. And the Prophet - the most perfect and the ideal example of this *ummah* - is the witness for this *ummah*. The Prophet is the criterion to judge the condition of this *ummah's* individuals; and the *ummah*, in its turn, is the criterion to judge the condition of other people; it is the point to which the two extremes are expected to return.

COMMENT: What this exegete has said is true in itself, but it does not explain the wordings of this verse. The *ummah*, by virtue of its position in the middle, may be called a criterion to judge the extremes, as well as a point to which the people of the two extremes should return. But it does not make it a "witness" for the two extremes, nor it gives the *ummah* ability to observe the said extremes. Apparently, there is no correlation between being a medium (in the above-mentioned sense) and being a witness. Also, there is no reason why the Messenger of Allah should be made a witness for them; there is no correlation between the two witnessing. But the verse clearly says that the Messenger of

Allah shall be a witness for the *ummah*, because the *ummah* shall be a witness for the people, and it shall acquire that status because it is a medium *ummah*.

Moreover, the witnessing, referred to in this verse, is one of the Qur'anic realities, which has been mentioned repeatedly in the Divine Speech; and looking at various contexts where it has been referred to, we find that its connotation differs completely from the above-quoted meaning. Allah says: *How will it be, then, when We bring from every people a witness and bring you as a witness for these?* (4:41); *And on the day when We will raise up a witness out of every nation, then shall no permission be given to those who disbelieve, nor shall they be made to solicit favor* (16:84); ... *and the Book shall be laid down and the prophets and the witnesses shall be brought up...* (39:69). Note that witnessing in these verses is unconditional, and the obvious meaning is that they shall be witnesses for the deeds of their nations, and will also testify that the messengers of Allah did convey the Divine Message to those nations, as is made clear in the verse: *Most certainly then We will question those to whom (the messengers) were sent, and most certainly We will question the messengers* (7:6). No doubt they will give the evidence in the hereafter; but they must have seen the events in this life, as may be inferred by the words of 'Isa (a.s.) quoted in the Qur'an: ... *and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst take me (away) completely, Thou were the watcher over them, and Thou art witness of all things* (5:117); ... *and on the Day of Resurrection he (i.e., 'Isa) shall be a witness against them* (4:159).

Obviously, our normal senses, with all their powers, cannot perceive except the exterior forms of deeds and actions, and that also of a thing which is present, which is within the reach. They cannot perceive a non-existent or a non-present item. And it is completely beyond their power to know, comprehend or identify the realities of those actions and deeds; nor can they observe the immaterial ideas like belief or disbelief, and success or failure. In short, no man can witness a thing which is hidden from the five senses, nor can he observe the esoteric ideas and characteristics that are locked into another person's heart. But it is these hidden realities which will be taken account of, and looked into, on the Day of Resurrection, as Allah says: . . . *but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned* (2:225). Obviously, these things cannot be seen even by those who are present, let alone those who are absent. It can be done only by a man whose affairs are managed directly by Allah, and whom Allah makes to "see" the hidden realities. This fact may be inferred from the words of Allah: *And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for intercession, but he who bears witness of the truth (i.e., of the reality) and they know* (43:86). Surely, 'Isa (a.s.) is included in this exception, because, Allah has testified that he is one of those who shall bear witness (as is seen from the above-mentioned two verses). Thus, he is one of those who had "seen" the realities and known the hidden factors of the deeds of their *ummah*.

In short, the witnessing mentioned in the verse under discussion does not mean that this ummah follows a religion which combines physical perfection with spiritual sublimity. Certainly, this explanation has nothing to do with the meaning of "witness" nor does it fit the apparent meaning of the above-quoted verses.

Actually, they have been called "witnesses" of the people, because they see and observe in this world the realities of the people's actions - felicity and infelicity, rejection and acceptance, submission and arrogance. And they shall give evidence for or against those people on the Day of Judgment, the day when Allah will make every thing to testify for or against a man, not excepting his own limbs and organs; the day when the Messenger will say: "O my Lord! surely my people treated this Qur'an as a forsaken thing (25:30).

Also, it is known that the whole *ummah* could not attain to this position; it is a special status given

to only the pure friends of Allah. Even those who are only slightly below them in the ranks of felicity, and other just and pious believers are not included in this verse - let alone the rubble of the nation, or the Nimrods and Pharaohs of the *ummah*. You will see in the Commentary of the verse 4:49 (*And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger, these are with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favors from among the prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the good ones; and excellent are these as companions*), that the least that can be said about the martyrs - the witnesses of the deeds - is that they are under the guardianship of Allah, enjoying His favors, and proceeding on the straight path. Also, it has been described in short in the explanation of the verse: *The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favors...* (1:7).

When Allah told this *ummah* that it was made witness for the people, the meaning was that the "witnesses" would be from among this *ummah*. In this respect, it is not different from those verses which tell the Children of Israel that they were made to excel over the worlds. Such verses show that there were among the Children of Israel such personalities who were given that distinction; not that every individual of them was superior to the worlds. A distinction enjoyed by a group is attributed to the whole nation, because the group is a part of the nation. Likewise, this *ummah* has been said to be "witnesses over the people", because there are, in this *ummah*, people who shall be witnesses of the people, and the Messenger shall be witness of them.

Objection: Allah says in the Qur'an: *And (as for) those who believe in Allah and His messengers, these it is that are the truthful and the witnesses near their Lord(57:19)*. It shows that all the believers, in general, are "the witnesses."

Reply: The phrase "near their Lord " proves that Allah will include them among the witnesses on the Day of Resurrection, a rank which they had not got in this life. It is like the verse which says: *And (as for) those who believe and their offspring follow them in faith, We will unite with them their offspring...* (52:21). Apart from that, this verse is general and shows that all the believers from all the nations will be witnesses near Allah; it does not speak about this *ummah* especially; therefore, it is of no use to the objector.

Objection: If the *ummah* has been made a "medium" in this meaning, it does not necessarily follow that the *ummah*, or a certain group among the *ummah*, should be witnesses of the people's deeds, nor that the Messenger of Allah should be witness of those witnesses. Therefore, the problem which had arisen in the previous explanation, remains unanswered even by your exegesis.

Reply: The verse says that those people were made witnesses because they were made a medium nation. It means that this "mediumship" is something which brings the "evidence" and "witnesses" in its wake. And Allah says: *O you who believe! bow down and prostrate yourselves and worship your Lord, and do good that you may succeed. And strive hard in (the way of) Allah, (such) a striving as is due to Him; He has chosen you and has not laid upon you any hardship in religion; the faith of your father, Ibrahim; he named you Muslims before and in this, so that the Messenger may be a witness for you, and you may be witnesses for the people; therefore, establish prayer and pay zakat and hold fast to Allah; He is your Guardian; how excellent the Guardian and how excellent the Helper!(22:77-78)*. Note that the distinction that the Messenger should be a witness for them and they should be witnesses for the people, is based on two things: First, that they were chosen by Allah; and, second, that Allah had not laid upon them any hardship in religion. Then the religion is defined as *the faith of your father, Ibrahim, who had named you Muslims before*. He had used this name for you when he prayed to Allah on your behalf, in these words: *and (raise) from our offspring a group submitting (Muslims) to Thee*. Allah granted his prayer and made you Muslims, you have surrendered to His order and command; you neither disobey Him nor behave arrogantly before Him;

that is why you feel no hardship in the religion, nor rule looks difficult for you to follow. You have, therefore, been chosen by Him, and guided on the straight path, submitting to your Lord in all affairs. We have made you like this, in order that the Messenger may be a witness for you and you may be witnesses of the people. Accordingly, you shall be a medium between the Messenger and the people; you shall be connected to the Messenger on one side and to the people on the other. In this way, the wish of Ibrahim has been fulfilled about you and the Messenger, as he had prayed: *Our Lord! and raise up in them an Apostle from among themselves who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them*(2:129). You are that Muslim *ummah*; the Messenger has transmitted the knowledge of the Book and wisdom to your hearts; and you have been purified by him. Purification has cleansed your hearts from impurities and freed it for My worship and obedience (and as mentioned earlier, it is what Islam means). Therefore, you are the Muslims, sincere in your worship. Of course, the Messenger has precedence over you, because it is he who has guided and trained you. He has precedence over the whole *ummah*, and you are the medium group - joined to the Messenger on one side, and to the people on the other.

There are many associations at the beginning and the end of the verse which point to this meaning; one may understand them on meditation; and we shall further explain it in a proper place, Allah willing.

However, the foregoing explanation shows that:

First: The fact that they have been made a medium *ummah* has a direct bearing on the two objectives. In other words, the facts that "you may be witnesses for the people", and that "the Messenger may be a witness for you", both are the direct result of their being "a medium nation."

Second: They have been called a medium *ummah* because they are placed between the Messenger and the people - not because they are a medium between two extremes, or between the "people of spirit" and the "people of body."

Third: The verse in its connotation has connection with the verses of the prayer of Ibrahim (a.s.); and this witnessing is a privilege of the said Muslim *ummah*.

One thing more: It appears from the Qur'an that witnessing about the deeds is not exclusively reserved for the human witnesses. Everything which has any connection with a deed - angels, time and place, religion and Book, limbs and organs, senses and hearts, for example - will testify about it.

It may be inferred from the above that the same place and limbs etc. which we have in this life will be present on the Day of Judgment. Also, it appears that all the above-mentioned things have a sort of a life and perception with which they can perceive the particulars of deeds - those particulars are imprinted on them. It is not necessary that every life should be like our own; there is no reason why life should be of only one type. It cannot be said that because time or space does not have a life like ours, therefore, it has no life.

This topic has been mentioned here just to complete the picture. Details about each point will be given in more suitable places.

QUR'AN: And We had not made the qiblah which you had but that We might know him who follows the Messenger from him who turns back upon his heels: The words: "We might know", may be explained in two ways:

First: It may mean, 'My Messenger might know'. Great people generally use this style to speak on behalf of themselves and their subordinates. For example, a ruler says: 'We killed him', or, 'We imprisoned him', although it is his employees, not himself who kill or imprison.

Second: It may refer to that knowledge of Allah which accompanies the creation or existence of a

thing, and not to that knowledge which Allah has of everything before that thing comes into being. "Turning back upon one's heels" is an allegorical expression, which denotes evasion or dissension. When a man, who is standing, turns from one direction to another, he turns on his heels. It is like the words of Allah: *And whoever shall turn his back to them on that day...* (8:16).

Obviously, this verse aims to remove any possible misgivings which the believers would have had because of the change of *qiblah*: Why *qiblah* was changed? Why the previous *qiblah* was abrogated? What will happen to the prayers which they had prayed facing Baytu'l-Maqdis?

Also, it is clear that "the *qiblah* which you had" refers to Baytu'l-Maqdis, and not to the Ka'bah (as someone has said). If his explanation is accepted, it would imply that both Baytu'l-Maqdis and Ka'bah were prescribed as *qiblah* twice, not once. But there is nothing to support this suggestion.

However, it was but natural that the believers should feel some uneasiness because of this change.

First of all, as Allah had already decided that He would ultimately make the Ka'bah as the *qiblah* of the Muslims, then why did He make Baytu'l-Maqdis as their *qiblah* for so many years in the beginning?

The verse says that all these rules and legislations are made for the benefit of the people themselves. The laws of religion aim at training the people and perfecting them; separating the believers from others; distinguishing the obedient from the disobedient, the submissive from the arrogant. And it was for the same reason that the previous *qiblah* was prescribed for you. It was done in order that "We might know him who follows the Messenger", that is, We might distinguish him who follows the Messenger "from him who turns back upon his heels." In usual way, the sentence should have said, "who follows thee", but the Qur'an has used the noun "the Messenger" instead of pronoun, it is to remind us that his status of Messengership has a direct bearing on this separation between obedient and disobedient ones.

"We had not made the *qiblah* which you had": That is, We had not made Baytu'l-Maqdis as *qiblah* for you but for the reasons described.

Their second worry could be about the prayers which they had prayed facing Baytu'l-Maqdis. What would be its legal status, as it was prayed towards a building that was no longer valid?

Allah says that Baytu'l-Maqdis was a valid *qiblah* as long as it was not abrogated. When Allah abrogates a rule, it loses its validity from the time of its abrogation, not from the original legislation; and it is a result of Allah's affection and mercy to the believers.

The above misgiving and its reply is inferred from the words: "and Allah was not going to make your faith to be fruitless; most surely Allah is Affectionate, Merciful to the people." "*ar-Ra'fah*" and "*ar-rahmah*" both basically denote mercy and compassion; but the former usually has the connotation of pity for an afflicted one, while the latter is general.

QUR'AN: *Indeed We see the turning of thy face to heaven, so We shall surely turn thee to a qiblah which thou shalt be pleased with:* The verse shows that the Messenger of Allah, before the revelation of the verse of *qiblah* - that is, this very verse - used to turn his face to heaven, as he waited - or hoped - that Allah would send some commandment regarding *qiblah*. He did so because he wished that Allah would honor him with a *qiblah* especially prescribed for him. It does not mean that he was not pleased with Baytu'l-Maqdis as his *qiblah* - for be it from the Messenger to do so! Allah says: "We shall surely turn thee to a *qiblah* which thou shalt be pleased with." To be pleased with a thing does not necessarily mean to be displeased with its alternative.

The traditions, describing the occasion of revelation of this verse, say that the Jews reviled the Muslims and boasted against them, all because the Muslims prayed towards Baytu'l-Maqdis - the Jews' *qiblah*. It made the Messenger of Allah sad; so he came out in the dark of the night looking

towards heaven waiting for a revelation from Allah, hoping that it would cheer him up. Then this verse was revealed.

Now, suppose he would have received revelation to continue praying towards the previous *qiblah*, that is, Baytu'l-Maqdis, it would have been his proof against the Jews that he followed the *qiblah* by the order of Allah and not in imitation of the Jews. The fact is that there never was, nor there ever is, anything to be ashamed of, if the Prophet and the Muslims prayed facing Baytu'l-Maqdis, because the servant has no choice but to accept and obey the order of the Master. But the verse promulgated a new *qiblah*, It removed the cause of the Jews' revile and boast, in addition to defining the new *qiblah*. In this way, it was doubly welcomed - it was a proof against the Jews as well as a source of pleasure for the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.).

QUR'AN: *turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are, turn your face towards it.* "ash-Shatr" translated here as "towards", literally means "part of." "Part of the Sacred Mosque" refers to the Ka'bah. Allah used this expression, instead of saying, towards the Ka'bah, or, towards the Sacred House, to keep the new rule parallel to the previous one. They used to pray to a part of the Remote Mosque, that is, its well-known Rock; so it was changed to a part of the Sacred Mosque, that is, the Ka'bah. It is quite apart from the fact that the addition of the word, "part of" to "the Mosque" and its qualification with the adjective "Sacred" gives many details of this legislation which would have been lost if this phrase were changed to "the Ka'bah" or "the Sacred House."

Allah begins this verse by giving the order personally to His Messenger (*turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque*), and ends it by including all the Muslims in it (*and wherever you are, turn your face towards it*). It supports the traditions that the *qiblah* was changed when the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) was praying and the Muslims were praying behind him. Therefore, he was personally told to turn towards the Ka'bah during that prayer; then the verse went on describing a general order which covered him and all the Muslims, for every time and in every place.

QUR'AN: *and those who have been given the Book most surely know that it is the truth from their Lord:* Their Book contains the prophecies showing the truth of the prophethood of Muhammad (s.a.w.), or that this True Prophet would pray facing towards the Sacred Mosque. In any case, the verse shows that the Jews' Book had some verses which confirmed - explicitly or implicitly - the truth of this legislation; *and Allah is not at all heedless of what they do*; He knows how they hide the truth and conceal the knowledge which they had been given.

QUR'AN: *And even if you bring to those who have been given the Book every sign they would not follow your qiblah:* The verse rebukes them for their obstinacy and stubbornness. Their refusal is not because truth is hidden from them. No, they know very well that it is the truth - they have no doubt about it. Yet they create mischief and invent objection after objection, because they hate the religion and reject the truth. No proof would satisfy them; no sign would make them change their attitude. Even if you bring to them every sign they would not follow your *qiblah*, because they are obstinate and refuse to accept the truth; *nor can you be a follower of their qiblah*, because you have a clear proof from your Lord. This Qur'anic sentence may also be interpreted as a prohibition given in the form of a proposition. *Neither are they the followers of each other's qiblah.* The Jews face towards Baytu'l-Maqdis wherever they may be; and the Christians face towards the East wherever they may be. Neither the former would follow the *qiblah*, of the latter, nor the latter would accept the *qiblah* of the former - because all of them follow their own desires.

QUR'AN: *and if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, then you shall most surely be among the unjust:* The admonition (in singular pronoun) is addressed to the Prophet, but it is really meant for his *ummah*. It also indicates that the Jews, in their recalcitrance,

follow their desire and have become unjust.

QUR'AN: *Those whom We have given the Book recognize him as they recognize their sons:* The pronoun "him" refers to the Messenger of Allah, not to "the Book"; the simile, "as they recognize their sons", fits recognition of a man, not of a book. Nobody says: He recognizes this book as he recognizes his son. Moreover, the subject of the speech is the Messenger of Allah and the revelation he received regarding the *qiblah*, it has nothing to do with the Book which was given to the People of the Book. The verse says: The People of the Book recognize the Messenger of Allah by the prophecies which their Book contains, as they recognize their sons, and a party of them most surely conceal the truth while they know (it).

The previous verses were addressed to the Prophet (in second person singular pronouns); then in this verse he has been mentioned in third person, and the talk is addressed to the believers; then the next verse again reverts to the previous style and is addressed to the Prophet. The style was changed here to show that the truth of the Prophet was clear and well-known to the People of the Book. This change reminds one of a speaker who is talking before a group, one of whom surpasses all in virtues and excellence. The speaker, therefore, addresses him especially (in recognition of his excellence), although the talk is meant for the whole group. Then for some reason, he wants to describe the virtues and excellence of that person; now he turns towards the audience and treats him as absent, mentioning him by pronouns of third person. When that topic is finished, he again assumes the previous style of addressing him directly.

QUR'AN: *The truth is from your Lord, therefore you should not be of the doubters:* It emphasizes the preceding statement and strongly interdicts doubting. The talk in singular pronouns is addressed to the Prophet but is actually intended for the *ummah*.

QUR'AN: And every one has a direction to which he would turn; therefore, hasten to (do) *good work*: "*al-Wijhah*" on paradigm of, as well as synonymous to, *al-qiblah*, has the same meaning 'that to which one faces'. The verse sums up the foregoing statements and draws their attention to another more important reality. Every nation has its own *qiblah*, prescribed for them according to their own needs and atmosphere. Being *qiblah* is not an inherent and inseparable characteristic of any place or direction; it is not a natural or personal feature of a thing which could not be changed. It is therefore not good for you to waste your time and energy in disputation and argumentation about it. You should rather hasten to do good work and try to excel others in virtuous deeds; Allah is surely going to gather you on a day about which there is no doubt; and *wherever you are, Allah will bring you all together; surely Allah has power over all things*.

This verse is applicable to the subject of qiblah, as it comes between the verses dealing with that subject. Also, it may be applied to the creative affairs as it points to the Divine Measure and Decree and to the related legislation. We shall explain this topic, Allah willing, in another place.

QUR'AN: *And from whatsoever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque:* According to some exegetes it means: And from any place you come forth and at any place you come down, turn your face to the Sacred Mosque. Others say that it means: And from whatever town you come out.

The phrase, "from whatsoever place you come forth", literally means as follows: 'from whatsoever place thou hast come forth'. Possibly it may refer to Mecca from which the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) had to come out, as Allah says: ... *the town of thine which has driven thee out...* (47:13).

However, the verse says that the law to face the Ka'bah is a firm order which you have to observe in Mecca as well as in other towns and places. Then Allah emphasizes it in these words: *and surely it is the very truth from your Lord, and Allah is not at all heedless of what you do*.

QUR'AN: And from whatsoever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are turn your faces towards it: The first sentence is repeated here word by word, to show that this law is to be followed in every condition. For example, one says: Fear Allah when you stand up; fear Allah when you sit down; fear Allah when you speak; fear Allah when you are silent. The speaker wants to emphasize that you should fear Allah in all conditions and in every situation. This point would be lost if the above sentence were reconstructed in the following way: Fear Allah when you stand up, when you sit down, when you speak, and when you are silent. The meaning is as follows: Face towards the Sacred Mosque of Mecca whence you had to come out, and wherever you happen to be in the world, turn your faces towards it.

QUR'AN: So that people shall have no argument against you, except such of them as are unjust; so do not fear them, and fear Me; and so that I may complete My favor on you and that you may walk on the right course: These sentences describe the following three benefits of this commandment, and at the same time put the utmost emphasis on obeying this law:

First: The Jews knew from their books that the promised Prophet would face towards the Ka'bah, turning away from Baytu'l-Maqdis, as Allah has pointed to this fact in a foregoing verse, *and those who have been given the Book most surely know that it is the truth from their Lord* (2:144). If the *qiblah* were not changed, the Jews could have used it as a proof against the Muslims that the Prophet was not the one whose advent was foretold in the previous books. But now the promulgation of this order has not left them any room for disputation - except those of them who are unjust. This exception gives the following meaning: Of course, those of them who are unjust - because they follow their desire - will never be satisfied; they will continue arguing against it; "so do not fear them", because they are unjust and they follow their desires - and Allah does not guide aright the unjust people - "and fear Me."

Second: Obedience of this rule will lead the Muslims to the completion of Divine favor on them, by perfecting their religion. We shall explain the meaning of the "completion of favor", when we write the verse: *This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favor on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion* (5:4).

Third: There is the hope that through this rule the Muslims will be guided to the straight path. We have explained the meaning of guidance under the verse: *Guide us to the straight path* (1:5).

An exegete has written: "The verse of *qiblah* contains the words, 'and so that I may complete My favor on you and that you may walk on the right course'. Similar words have been used in the 'Chapter of Victory', while mentioning the victory of Mecca: *Surely We have given to you a clear victory, so that Allah may forgive you your* (i.e., your *ummah* their) *past faults and those to follow and complete His favor to you and keep you on a straight path* (48:1-2). This almost identical expression shows that the verse of *qiblah* too alludes to the victory of Mecca."

According to that exegete, "the Ka'bah in the beginning of Islam was occupied by the idols, which were put there by the polytheists - the power in those days was in the hands of the pagans. Islam was weak, it had no authority or power. Therefore, Allah told the Prophet to face towards Baytu'l-Maqdis, the *qiblah* of the Jews, who were nearer than the polytheists, to Islam. Then the Prophet emigrated to Medina, and Islam began to gain strength. The time was coming nearer when Mecca would be conquered and the House of Allah cleansed of the idols' pollution. Allah therefore ordered the Prophet to change the direction of *qiblah*. It was a great bounty favor which Allah has reserved for the Muslims. And Allah gave a promise, included in this verse of *qiblah*, that He would complete His favor on them and guide them to the right course. It was implied in these words that the Ka'bah would soon be cleansed of the idols and images; the Muslims would be exclusively connected to the Ka'bah

as it would remain exclusively under their care. This verse actually gave the good tidings of the conquest of Mecca. Thereafter, when Mecca was conquered, Allah reminded them of that promise by using almost similar words in its description: ... *and complete His favors to you and keep you on a straight path.*"

COMMENT: This explanation, although apparently well-founded, is in fact not based on deep reflection; because the words of the Qur'an do not support it. How do we know that the verse of qiblah contains a promise to complete the favor? The answer is: Because of li (= a preposition used here for the final cause; so that, in order that) in li-utimma (= so that I may complete...). And the verse in Chapter 48 (Victory), which, according to him, was revealed in fulfillment of that promise, also begins with the same proposition: so that Allah may forgive you your (i.e., your ummah their) past faults and those to follow and complete His favor to you and keep you on a straight path (48:2). Clearly, both verses contain the same promise to complete the favor in future; neither gives the good news of its fulfillment yet. Moreover, the verse of qiblah gives this promise to all the Muslims while that of the Victory uses singular pronouns and is addressed to the Prophet personally. Clearly they have been revealed in different contexts.

If there is any verse showing the fulfillment of the promise given in both these verses, then it can only be the verse: *This day I perfected for you your religion and completed My favor on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion (5:3)*. We shall explain the meaning of *an-ni'mah* (favor, bounty, blessing) in the explanation of this verse, and there we shall describe what was the favor and bounty that was completed on that day, and by which Allah has put the Muslims under His obligation for ever.

There are two other verses which, like the above-mentioned two, contain the promise of completion of favor; *but He wishes to purify you and that He may complete His favor on you so that you may be grateful (5:6); even thus does He complete His favor upon you, that haply you may submit (16:81)*. We shall write under these verses some things related to this topic.

QUR'AN: Evenas We have sent among you a Messenger from among you who recites to you Our communications and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know: The verse begins with the word *kama* (like, as, even as), which is obviously a compound of *ka* (like, as) and *ma* which changes the verb into *masdar*. The connotation, therefore, is as follows: 'We have bestowed Our favors on you by appointing the Ka'bah as your *qiblah*. It is the House that Ibrahim built, and he prayed to Us for its good and blessings. We have done this in the same way as We have favored you by sending to you a Messenger from among you who recites to you Our communications and teaches you the Book and the wisdom and purifies you. We did so in answer to the pleading of Ibrahim, when he and his son, Isma'il, prayed to Us: *Our Lord! and raise up in them a Messenger from among themselves, who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them.*' This verse, in short, says that it was Allah's favor on this *ummah* that he sent the Prophet among them, as it was a favor to appoint the Ka'bah as their *qiblah*.

Who are the people referred to by the second person pronouns in "among you a Messenger from among you"? The application may be restricted or extended, depending on the level of explanation whether it is interpreted esoterically, literally or legislatively. Esoterically, it is addressed especially to the earlier mentioned: Submissive group (2:128), that is, those who were given authority over religion and followers of religion; literally all the Muslims from the progeny of Isma'il (i.e., the Arabs of Mudar tribe) are included; legislatively, it covers all the Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs alike.

QUR'AN: *recites to you Our communications: "al-Ayat"* (verses, signs - translated here as communications) obviously refers to the verses of the Qur'an, because it is the words (not the meanings) that are recited; *"at-tazkiyah"* (to purify) is to remove dirt, filth and blemish. The Prophet cleansed them thoroughly - from wrong beliefs like polytheism and rejection of true faith, from vile and base character like pride and avarice, and from evil and immoral actions and things like murder, fornication and intoxicants.

QUR'AN: *and teaches you the Book and the wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know:* It encompasses all primary and secondary aspects of religious knowledge.

These verses have variously changed the pronouns used for Allah, using third and first persons, singular and plural; and for others, using first, second and third persons. The reason of every such change may be understood by a little meditation.

Traditions

Al-Qummi narrates in his at-Tafsir that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allah, The fools among the people will say... "The qiblah was changed to the Ka'bah after the Prophet prayed towards Baytu'l-Maqdis for thirteen years in Mecca; and (also) after his emigration to Medina he prayed towards Baytu'l-Maqdis for seven months." (He said:) "Then Allah turned him towards Mecca. And it was because the Jews used to revile the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), saying that he was their follower (as) he prayed to their qiblah. The Messenger of Allah (s. a. w. a.) became very sad because of it; and he came out in the middle of the night looking to the horizons of the heaven, waiting for an order in this regard from Allah. When it was day and the time of the noon prayer arrived, (the Prophet, s.a.w.) was in the mosque of Banu Salim. And he had (already) prayed two rak'ahs of zuhr, when Jibril came down; and he held the Prophet's upper arms and turned him towards the Ka'bah. And he brought down to him (the revelation): Indeed We see the turning of thy face to heaven, so We shall surely turn thee to a qiblah which thou shalt like; turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque. Thus, the Prophet had prayed two rak'ahs towards Baytu'l-Maqdis, and (prayed the remaining) two rak'ahs towards the Ka'bah. Then the Jews and the fools said: 'What has turned them from their qiblah which they had?'" (Majma 'u'l-bayan)

The author says: There are numerous traditions of similar meaning narrated by the Sunni and Shi 'ah narrators, which are recorded in the books of traditions. The reports differ about the time when the qiblah was changed. Most of them say that it happened in the month of Rajab in the second year of hijrah - the seventeenth month after the emigration; and this timing looks more correct. Allah willing, we shall describe some other related topics in a separate discourse.

There are traditions from Sunni narrators, which explain the witnessing of this *ummah* concerning the people and the witnessing of the Prophet for them, in these terms: "The nations will deny, on the Day of Judgment, that the prophets had conveyed any message to them. Then Allah will ask the prophets to bring their proof that they had really conveyed the message - and Allah knows it better. So, the *ummah* of Muhammad (s. a. w. a.) will be brought in and they will testify (for the prophets).

Then the (other) nations will say: 'How do you know?' They will say: 'We knew it from the information which Allah revealed in His Book on the tongue of His truthful Prophet.' Then Muhammad (s.a.w.) will be brought there and he will be asked about the condition of his *ummah*. So he will testify for their purity, justice and probity. And this is the meaning of the words of

Allah: *How will it be, then, when We bring from every people a witness and bring you as a witness for these?* (4:41)

The author says: This theme is supported by other traditions narrated by as-Suyuti in *ad-Durru'l-manthur* and others. But how is it that the Prophet would testify about his *ummah* that they were pure and just? It can be accepted only if it is taken to mean that he will testify for a selected group, not for the whole *ummah*. Otherwise, such traditions have to be rejected, as is self-evident from the Qur'an and the *sunnah*. How can the Prophet sanction or approve all those oppressions, cruelties, tyrannies and massacres perpetrated by this *ummah*, and whose like was never seen in any of the previous nations? How can he testify that all those Pharaohs and *taghuts* of this *ummah* were pure, just and upright? What is this tradition, if not a calumny against this upright religion? A joke with the realities of this illustrious faith? Moreover, it is based on the wrong idea that a hearsay testimony is acceptable!

The correct meaning of the verse may be seen in a tradition narrated from al-Baqir (a.s.) that he said: "Only the Imams and the Messengers will be witnesses for the people. And as for the (general) *ummah*, it is unthinkable that Allah would call them as witnesses - and there are among them those whose testimony is not accepted for a bundle of vegetable." (*al-Manaqib*)

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the verse, *that you may be witnesses...* : "(It is) then (wrong) if you think that Allah in this verse means all the monotheists, the people of *qiblah* (i.e., the Muslims). Do you think that a person whose evidence is not acceptable in this world about a *as-sa'* (a weight about 3 kilogram) of date, Allah will call him as a witness on the Day of Judgment and will accept his evidence in presence of all the previous nations? Certainly not. Allah does not mean (here) such of his creatures; He means only that *ummah* in which the prayer of Ibrahim was granted; *you are the best ummah raised up for the (benefit of) men* (3:110); and they are the medium *ummah* and they are the best *ummah* raised up for the men." (al-'Ayyashi)

The author says: We have described it under that verse with the help of the Qur'an itself.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) narrates from his father, from the Prophet, that he said: "It is among the (bounties) which Allah gave to my *ummah* and (by which) He made them excel all other nations, that He gave them three attributes which (previously) were not given but to a prophet... And when He sent a prophet, made him a witness for his nation; and surely Allah, Blessed and High is He, has made my *ummah* a witness for the creatures, as He says: *so that the Messenger may be a witness for you, and you may be witnesses for the people* (22:78). (*Qurbu'l-asnad*)

The author says: This *hadith* is not in conflict with the above explanation, because the word *ummah* refers to that submissive *ummah* in which the prayer of Ibrahim (a.s.) was accepted.

Amirul-mu'minin (a.s.) says, *inter alia*, in a *hadith* describing the Day of Judgment: "They will gather in a place where every one will be required to speak; (but) no one shall speak: *except he whom the Beneficent Allah permits and who speaks the right thing* (78:38). Then the Messenger shall be asked to stand (and speak); and that is (the meaning of) His word to Muhammad (s.a.w.): *How will it be, then, when We bring from every people a witness and bring you as a witness for these?* (4:41). And he is the witness of the witnesses, and the witnesses are the Messengers." (al-'Ayyashi)

Abu Basir, narrating from the fifth or the sixth Imam, says: "I said to him: 'Did (Allah) order him (i.e., the Prophet, s.a.w.) to pray towards Baytu'l-Maqdis?' He said: 'Yes. Don't you see that Allah, Blessed and High is He!, says: *And We had not made the qiblah which you had but that We might distinguish him who follows the Messenger from him who turns back upon his heels*'" (*at-Tahdhib*)

The author says: This *hadith* shows that the words: *which you had*, are related to: *the qiblah*, and

that the whole phrase refers to Baytu'l-Maqdis; and it was the *qiblah* which the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) had. As we have mentioned earlier, this explanation is in conformity with the context. Also, it supports what has been narrated in a *hadith* from al-'Askari (a.s.)

"The Meccans were attached to the Ka'bah. Therefore Allah wished to distinguish the followers of Muhammad (s.a. w. a.), from his opponents, by following the *qiblah* which he disliked. And because the people of Medina were inclined towards Baytu'l-Maqdis, He ordered them to go against it and to turn towards the Ka'bah, in order that He may show who follows Muhammad (s.a.w.) (even) in that which is not to his liking; such a man, then, believes in his truth and agrees with him ... "

It also shows the incorrectness of the interpretation, to which we had made a passing reference in the Commentary, and which runs as follows: The phrase, *which you had, is* the second object of the verb, *We had not made*. Accordingly, the verse means: And We did not make the *qiblah*, that is, the Ka'bah, which you had before Baytu'l-Maqdis. In support of this interpretation, they quote the words, *but that We might distinguish him who follows the Messenger from him who turns back upon his heels*. The absurdity of this interpretation and of this argument is self-evident.

az-Zubayri, narrating from as-Sadiq (a.s.) says: "I asked him: 'Will you not tell me about the faith, whether it is word with deed or (only) word without deed?' He said: 'The faith is deed, all of it; and (utterance of) the word is one of those deeds; (it is) obligatory from Allah, described in His Book; its light is clear, its proof well-established; the Book bears witness for it and calls to it. And when Allah turned his Prophet towards the Ka'bah, away from Baytu'l-Maqdis, the Muslims said to the Prophet: 'What do you see (about) our prayers which we used to pray towards Baytu'l-Maqdis? What shall be our position about these? And what shall be the position of those of us who have passed away and they were praying towards Baytu'l-Maqdis? ' Then Allah revealed (the verse): *and Allah was not going to make your faith to be fruitless; most surely Allah is Affectionate, Merciful to the people*. Thus Allah named the prayer as "faith." Whoever therefore fears Allah, guarding his limbs (from sins), fulfilling (obligation of) each of these limbs which Allah has laid down for it, he shall meet Allah with perfect faith, (and he shall be) from the people of the Garden. And whoever acted falsely about any of these (limbs), or transgressed what Allah had ordered about it, he shall meet Allah (as one) having an incomplete faith.'" (al-'Ayyashi)

The author says: It has been narrated also by al-Kulayni. Although it says that the verse, *and Allah was not going to make your faith fruitless...*, was revealed after the *qiblah* was changed, yet it does not go against the explanation given in the Commentary.

"The Prophet prayed towards Baytu'l-Maqdis for thirteen years in Mecca, and nineteen months in Medina.* Then the Jews reviled him, saying: 'You are a follower of our *qiblah*.' He was very much saddened because of it. Then one night he came out turning his face towards the horizons of the heaven. When it was morning, he prayed the dawn (prayer). Then when he had prayed two *rak'ahs of zuhr*, Jibril came and told him (the message of Allah): *Indeed We see the turning of thy face to heaven, so We shall surely turn thee to a qiblah which thou shalt like...*; then he took hold of the Prophet and turned him towards the Ka'bah, and those who were (praying) behind him turned their faces (likewise), until the men stood in place of the women, and the women in place of the men. Thus, the early part of his prayer was towards Baytu'l-Maqdis, and the latter part towards the Ka'bah. Then the news reached another mosque in Medina, and its people had already prayed two *rak'ahs of asr* (to Baytu'l-Maqdis), and they turned towards the (new)*qiblah*. So the early part of their prayer was to Baytu'l-Maqdis and the latter part towards the Ka'bah; so that mosque was named the Mosque of the Two Qiblahs." (al-Faqih)

The author says: al-Qummi has narrated a similar *hadith*, with one variation that the Prophet was in

the mosque of Banu Salim.

al-Baqir (a.s.) said explaining the words of Allah, *turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque*: "Face towards the *qiblah*, and do not turn away from the *qiblah*; otherwise your prayer will be void. For, Allah says to His Prophet concerning the obligatory prayer, *turn then your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are, turn your face towards it.*" (al-'Ayyashi)

The author says: There are numerous *al-mustafidah*** traditions which say that this verse was revealed about the obligatory prayer.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the verse: *Those whom We have given the Book recognize him as they, recognize their sons*: "This verse was revealed about the Jews and the Christians. Allah, Blessed and High is He! says: *Those whom We have given the Book recognize him*, that is, recognize the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), as they recognize their sons. For, surely Allah, Mighty and Great is He!, had revealed to them, in the Torah and the Injil and Zabur, the attributes of Muhammad (s.a.w.), and the attributes of his companions, as well as (the story of) his emigration. And this is (the meaning of) the words of Allah: *Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those with him are severe against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves; you will see them bowing down, prostrating themselves, seeking grace from Allah and pleasure; their marks are in their faces because of the effect of prostration; that is their description in the Torah and their description in the Injil...* (48: 29). And this was the description of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and of his companions in the Torah. Thereafter, when Allah raised him up, the People of the Book recognized him. (But they rejected him) as Allah, Great is His Majesty!, says: but when there came to them that which they did recognize, they disbelieved in him (2:89). (al-Qummi)

The author says: A similar hadith has been narrated in al-Kafi from 'Ali (a.s.).

Many Shi'ite traditions say that the words of Allah, wherever you are, Allah will bring you all together, has been revealed about the companions of al-Qa'im (a.s.). Some of those traditions say that it is applied to them according to the principle of the "flow of the Qur'an."

A tradition, narrated by the Sunni narrators says that 'Ali (a.s.) said about the words of Allah, so that I may complete My favor on you: Completion of favor is the death in the state of Islam (i.e., to die as a Muslim)."

Another Sunni hadith says that the completion of favor is entering into the Garden.

An Academic and Historical Discourse on Ways of Finding the Direction of Qiblah

The Muslims have to face towards the *qiblah* in prayer - and it is an act of worship which each of them has to perform several times a day - and at the time of slaughtering an animal as well as at some other times. It compelled the Muslims to find out the direction of the *qiblah* wherever they might be.

In the beginning it was based on guess and rough estimates. Then the overwhelming need prompted the Muslim geographers and mathematicians to devise more accurate methods to find its direction. They based their reckoning on the longitude and

latitude of a place - they calculated the degree of inclination between its location and that of Mecca with the help of trigonometry and astronomy. They fixed the direction of *qiblah* in every town with the help of the well-known Indian Circle which fixed the meridian of a place and showed the degree of its inclination from the *qiblah*.

Then they started using the compass. Its hands pointed to the North and the South; and if the degree of inclination to Mecca was known beforehand, it was easy to fix the direction of the qiblah.

It gradually replaced the Indian Circle, being a lot quicker and easier to use.

But both these endeavors of theirs - may Allah reward them for these - were not free from defect and miscalculation.

First: The Indian Circle: The latter geographers found out that the early scholars were not very accurate in their calculation of the longitude - and this had led to confusion in calculation of the degree of inclination, and consequently in the fixing of the *qiblah's* direction. The early scholars were more accurate in finding the latitude of a place, than its longitude. They used to fix the latitude of a place by measuring the altitude of the North Pole there. But fixing a longitude depended on measuring the distance between two places, and it was done by noting the time when a certain celestial event, like a solar or lunar eclipse, occurred in one place, and then calculating as to how much time had elapsed before it appeared in the other place. Obviously, neither the old instruments were dependable enough, nor the means of communications fast enough, to give this calculation the desired accuracy.

With advancement of scientific apparatus and development of new means of communication, the need was felt to find a more accurate way of fixing the *qiblah*. The well-known scholar, Shaykh (Haydar Quli) Sardar Kabuli - Allah's mercy be on him! - looked into this matter, and calculated the inclination of various places with the help of the modern sciences. He wrote on this subject his book *Tuhfatu'l-ajillah fi ma'rifati'l-qiblah*. It is a fine work, in which he explains scientifically, how to find out the direction of *qiblah* for a place; also he has given charts fixing the *qiblah* of various towns.

Allah helped him in his endeavour - may He reward him for it - in such a fine way that his calculations showed a clear miracle of the Prophet.

When the early Muslim scholars calculated the position of Medina, they found that it was situated at 25°n lat. 75°20' long. The trouble was that *al-mihrab* (niche) of the Mosque of the Prophet (based on the original direction) was not exactly to the direction which the newly calculated position was indicating. The religious scholars were always arguing on this subject, and they invented some reasons to justify that "deviation", although none was based on reality. But Sardar Kabuli - may Allah have mercy on him! - showed clearly that Medina is situated on 24°57' lat. 39°59' long; and that the inclination towards Mecca is 0°45'. And the niche of the Prophet's Mosque has exactly the same inclination. By this calculation, one more miracle of the Prophet came to light; it was the direction to which he turned his face while he was praying, and about which he later said that Jibril took hold of his hand and turned him towards the Ka'bah. Truth was what Allah and His Messenger said.

After him, came the great mathematician, 'Abdu 'r-Razzaq al-Bagha'iri - Allah's mercy be on him - and he calculated the direction of the *qiblah* of most of the towns of the world, and published it in his book; his charts fix the *qiblah* of more than 1,500 towns. In this way, the favor of Allah was completed about the direction of the *qiblah*.

Second: The Compass: It has been established that the Earth's magnetic Poles are not identical with its geographical Poles. First of all, the magnetic Poles have been changing from time to time. Second, the magnetic North Pole is at a distance of about one thousand miles from the geographical North Pole. Obviously, the compass does not show the exact direction of the qiblah; in some places the deviation may reach a degree that cannot be allowed.

Now, the leading mathematician, Husayn 'Ali Razm Ara, undertook these days (i.e., the 1332nd year of the solar hijri calendar) to solve this problem. He calculated the difference between the magnetic and geographical Poles at various places, and determined the degrees of inclination of the *qiblah* from the magnetic Pole in respect of about one thousand towns. Then he invented his compass which fixes the *qiblah* of those places very accurately.

This compass is now in general use in the Muslim world. May Allah reward him for his endeavors.

A Sociological Essay on the Meaning of Qiblah and its Benefits

Let us look at the social structure of humanity. Ponder on society *per se*, and you will admit that it was the human nature which brought it into being and developed it with its many-sided aspects. It did so because of the inspiration it received from Allah - the divinely-gifted instinct which made a man realize that he depends on collective efforts of other men for his survival and development. That is why human beings rely on society and keep their activities within the bounds of the social laws.

Then he acquired knowledge - mental images - related to his surrounding matter, and about his own needs and activities. What creates a relation - positive or negative - between a man and his activities is the knowledge of their various properties; like the knowledge that something is good or bad, this should be done, that should be avoided. In fact, all the fundamental concepts of sociology come under this category. It covers leadership and subordination, ownership and jurisdiction, collective and individual affairs, and in short, all the common rules and values as well as the national or tribal traditions and customs. Even the last mentioned rites which change from nation to nation, from region to region and from era to era, have been produced by the human nature which worked according to the divinely bestowed instinct.

All these exoteric aspects of society are symbols of esoteric ideas and ideals; human nature sees in them fulfillment of its inner craving, and thus moves towards it in appropriate way - by taking it, discarding it, doing it, leaving it or perfecting it.

Now, Allah is free from matter and its concomitants; He can never be perceived by any physical sense. How can people turn towards Him, especially if they want their inner devotion manifested in their actions - because actions are confined within material limits. It can only be done by representing the esoteric ideas with manifest actions. Various feelings and emotions are represented with various appropriate physical postures: Man prostrates to show his self-abasement; and bows down to glorify the Creator. Circumambulation around the Ka'bah represents self-sacrifice. Standing in prayer portrays the Creator's greatness, and *wudu'* and ritual bath are intended to make one spiritually clean, to prepare oneself for Divine Presence.

Undoubtedly, complete attention towards God during the prayer is the soul of the worship. Without total undiverted attention worship has no life, no vitality. And the attention depends on such representations for its existence, continuation and perfection.

The worshippers of idols, celestial bodies or other material things (like trees, animals and/or human beings) stand face to face with their deities and idols, turning towards them with their bodies maintaining close proximity with them.*** Islam came to verify the previous religions brought by the prophets; it is the most comprehensive and complete Divine Religion. It has appointed the Ka'bah as the *qiblah* -the direction to which people should turn during prayer (and no one is excused from prayer in any condition) wherever they may be in the world. They are further obliged (or encouraged) to turn towards it in certain conditions, and forbidden to face it or keep it behind their backs in some other conditions. Thus, a Muslim is obliged to keep his attention to the House of Allah. He is not to forget his Lord in private or in public,' in his working hours or in sleep, while standing up or sitting down in prayer, or in other actions - not even in his meanest condition.****

The above discourse looked at the benefits which an individual derives from the *qiblah*. If we ponder on this rule from sociological point of view, then its effects are even more important and far-reaching. It has united all the Muslims - of diverse places and different times - fixing their attention to one point. The *qiblah*, therefore, portrays that they are one in their belief, connected to each other in

their social structure, and brothers in Islam. If such a fine spirit permeates the material and ideological lives of the individuals and groups, the society shall reach its highest point of perfection; and the most comprehensive and all-encompassing unity shall manifest itself in the Muslim society. Allah has especially bestowed this favor on His Muslim servants. By this favor He has protected their religious unity - even now when they have fallen apart in so many groups, have been divided into so many sects and are following so many diverse ideologies.

We are thankful to Allah for His favors.

* The Prophet emigrated to Medina in the month of *Rabi 'u'l-awwal*. The nineteenth month after *hijrah* was *Ramadan* of the second year. (tr.)

** *al-Mustafidah* = A tradition narrated by a great many narrators, but to a degree less than that required for *mutawatir*. (tr.)

*** But that method, invented by human mind, was rejected by Divine religions brought by the prophets of God, because instead of fixing the attention to God, it actually diverted the attention towards those idols etc., making them into partners of God in worship. Yet, the original aim - a physical manifestation of undiverted attention towards God - was good and in conformity with demands of the human nature, provided it could be achieved without any risk of falling into polytheism. (tr.)

**** It is unlawful to face towards the *qiblah*, or to keep the *qiblah* on backside, while urinating or relieving the bowels. Therefore, a Muslim has to remember the direction of *qiblah* even at that time. (tr.)

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSE 152

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُون 2:152

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

Commentary

Allah first mentioned His favor on the Muslims that He sent to them a Prophet from among them a favor that cannot be measured in any way. Then he pointed to another great favor in that He guided them to the straight path and led them to the highest perfection. Then came the third favor of giving them a *qiblah* of their own through that rule, their religion began its journey to perfection, their worship was unified and their religious and social virtues were enhanced. Reminding them of these threefold favors, He calls them to remember Him and to be thankful to Him. They should remember Him with their devotion and obedience, so that He remembers them with His favor He will increase for them His bounty and grace, if they are thankful to Him, and if they are not ungrateful for His favors. He had already said to them: *and remember your Lord when you forget and say: 'May be my Lord will guide me to a nearer course to the right than this'* (18:24); *If you are grateful, I would certainly give you more; and if you are ungrateful, My chastisement is truly severe* (14:7). These two verses were revealed before the verse of the *qiblah* in this chapter.

"*adh Dhikr*" (remembrance) is sometimes used as opposite of "*al ghaflah*" (inattention and heedlessness). Allah says: *and do not follow him whose heart We have made inattentive to Our remembrance* (18:28). Inattention is "not knowing that one knows although the original knowledge is present in memory." "Remembrance", as its opposite, means "knowing that one knows "

The word "remembrance" at other times is used as opposite to "*an nisyan*" (forgetfulness). Forgetfulness is "cessation of knowledge from mind"; and as its opposite, remembrance means "presence of knowledge in mind." It is to this meaning that the words of Allah refer in the verse: *and remember your Lord when you forget...* (18:24). This remembrance, like its opposite "forgetfulness", is a concept which has its own special effects and exclusive characteristics. Sometimes when those effects and characteristics are found, we say that one remembers, although there is no actual remembrance; or that one has forgotten, although there is no actual forgetfulness. For example, if you do not come to the aid of your friend when you know that he needs your help then people say that: "You have forgotten him", although in fact you remember him very well.

The word "remembrance" is also used in the same way. Apparently, the use of this word for "verbal remembrance" (e.g., reciting or repeating the names of Allah comes in this category, because you cannot express something in words unless you remember it in mind. Allah says: *Say; 'I will recite to you an account (a remembrance) of him'* (18:83). There are many other examples like it. But if verbal remembrance is counted as a real meaning of the word 'remembrance' then it will be one

of its (lower) degrees.

However, remembrance is of many degrees. Allah says: now surely by Allah's remembrance are the hearts set at rest (13: 28); And remember your Lord within yourself humbly and fearing and in a voice not loud in the morning and the evening, and be not of the heedless ones (7:205); then remember Allah as you remember your fathers, rather a more intense remembrance (2:200). Now, it is the thought or feeling which becomes intense, not the words. Also, we have quoted the above verse.: and remember your Lord when you forget and say: "May be my Lord will guide me to a nearer course to the right than this" (18: 24). The last sentence, beginning with Say: "May be... ", tells the servant to hope for a rank higher than his present one. Its connotation will be as follows: If you slip down to a lower rank, that is, if you forget what you knew before, then remember your Lord and then you may hope for a higher rank that is nearer to the right course than the present one. It shows that the remembrance of the heart, per se, is of many degrees. It also proves the validity of the saying, "Remembrance is the presence of an idea in the mind"; because even "presence" has various degrees and ranks.

Remember Me: In this sentence, the object "Me" refers to Allah. As we explained above, remembrance is the knowledge of knowledge; and knowledge is defined as "attainment of the form and idea of a thing in the mind of the Knower." Knowledge confines the thing so known and encompasses it within the knower's mind. Obviously, Allah cannot be known, or remembered (i.e., known to be known) in any way like this. He is beyond the description of describers. He Himself says: *Hollowed be Allah from what they describe, except the servants of Allah freed* (from sins) (37:159 160); they do not comprehend Him in knowledge (20:110). (We shall write later on, Allah willing, somethings related to these two verses.) In view of this established fact, if we were to say that the words, "Remember Me", have been used here in their real, and not metaphorical sense, then we will have to say that man has, or can have, a knowledge whose definition would be quite different from the one known to us.

Traditions

Numerous traditions, on the virtue of remembrance of Allah, have been narrated by the Shi'ah and Sunni narrators. For example, it has been narrated through various chains of narrators that: "Remembrance of Allah is good in all conditions."

It has been narrated that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) came up to his companions, and said: "Feast you in the meadows of the Garden." They said: "O Messenger of Allah! And what are the meadows of the Garden?" He said: "The gatherings of remembrance; go there in the mornings and in the evenings and remember (Allah). And whoever likes to know (what is) his position near Allah, he should see what is the position of Allah near him (i.e., in his heart); because surely Allah gives a servant the same position which the servant gives to Allah vis-à-vis, his own self. And know that your best deeds (near your King) and the purest and the highest of them in ranks, and the best of all that the sun shines on, is the remembrance of (Allah). the High, because Allah the High, has said concerning His Own Self: 'I am the companion of him who remembers Me'; and He, the High One, has said: *Therefore remember Me; I will remember you with My bounty; you remember Me with obedience and worship, I will remember you with bounties, and beneficence, and comfort, and (My) pleasure.*" (*Uddatu 'd da'i*)

as Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Surely Allah, the Blessed, the High, says: 'Whoever is too preoccupied with

My remembrance to be able to ask Me (for his needs), I give him the best of what I give to him who asks Me." (*al Mahasin; ad Da'awat, ar Rawandi*)

al Husayn al Bazzaz said: "Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) told me: 'Should I not tell you the most difficult (thing) which Allah has made obligatory for His creatures?' I said: 'Yes, certainly.' He said: 'To do justice to the people (even) against yourself, and your beneficence to your brother, and remembrance of Allah in every place. Why, (by remembrance) I do not mean (recitation of): "Glory be to Allah and praise be to Allah and there is no god except Allah and Allah is Great" although this is from that (i.e., it is one aspect of remembrance); but remembrance of Allah in every place (means that you should remember Him) when you rush to His obedience or to His disobedience." (*Ma'ani 'l akhbar*)

The author says: This theme has been narrated through numerous chains from the Prophet and his Ahlulbayt (peace be on them all); and there is, in some of them, the following addition: "And it is the words of Allah: *Surely those who fear (Allah), when a visitation from the Satan afflicts them they become mindful (they remember), then lo! they see.*" (7:201)

The Prophet said: "Allah says: 'When I know that the predominant trait of My servant is to be engrossed in Me, I transfer his desire to My invocation and My secret conversation. When My servant becomes like this (i.e., when he attains this position), then if he wants to (i.e., if he is about to) forget, I come between him and his forgetfulness (i.e., I protect him from it). They are truly My friends; they are truly the heroes; it is they that when I want to destroy the people of the earth in chastisement, I remove it (the chastisement) from them because of those heroes.' (*Uddatu 'd da'i*)

as Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Allah, the High, has said: 'O son of Adam! Remember Me in your mind, I will remember you in My Self; O Son of Adam! Remember Me in seclusion, I will remember you in seclusion; remember Me in a gathering, I will remember you in a gathering better than your gathering.'" And he said: "No servant remembers "Allah in an assembly of the people but "Allah remembers him in the assembly of the angels." (al Mahasin)

The author says: Both groups, that is, the Shi'ah and the Sunnis, have narrated this theme with numerous *asnad*.

as Suyuti writes in *ad Durru'l manthur*: "at Tabarani, Ibn Marduwayh and al Bayhaqi (in his *Shu'abu'l iman*) have narrated from Ibn Mas'ud that he said: 'The Messenger of "Allah said: "Whoever is given four (things) is (also) given (other) four (things). And its explanation is (found) in the Book of Allah. Whoever is given remembrance, "Allah remembers him, because "Allah says, '*Remember Me, I will remember you*'; and whoever is given *ad-du'a* (invocation) is given response (i.e., its acceptance), because "Allah says; '*Call on Me, I will answer you*'; and whoever is given thankfulness, is given increase, because "Allah says, 'If you are grateful, I will certainly give you more'; and whoever is given to ask forgiveness, is given pardon, because "Allah says, '*Ask forgiveness of your Lord, surely He is the most Forgiving.*' " " " "

It is written in the same book: "Sa'id ibn Mansfir, Ibnul Mundhir and al-Bayhaqi (in his *Shu'abu'l iman*) narrate from Khalid ibn Abi 'Imran that he said that the Messenger of Allah said: 'Whoever obeys Allah he indeed has remembered Allah even if his prayer and his fast and his recitation of the Qur'an are small in quantity. And whoever disobeys Allah, he indeed has forgotten Allah even if his prayer and his fast and his recitation of the Qur'an are abundant.'"

The author says: This tradition indicates that man commits sin only when he forgets Allah and becomes inattentive to Him. Had he remembered what was the reality behind his sin and what effect it would produce, he would not have gone near it. If some one disobeys Allah and does not care even if he is reminded of Him and gives no importance to his Lord and Creator, then he is a transgressor (who) does not know the dignity and the sublime majesty of his Lord, nor does he understand how

Allah encompasses every thing. This theme is also found in another tradition, which has been narrated in *ad Durru'l manthur* from Abu Hind ad Dari who said that the Prophet said: Allah says: 'Remember Me by obeying Me, I will remember you with My forgiveness. And whoever remembers Me and he is obedient then it is My duty to remember him with My forgiveness. And whoever remembers Me and he is disobedient then it is a right on Me to remember him with hate... "' The last sentence of this *hadith* has used the word, remembrance (at the time of disobedience), in its opposite meaning; the verse under discussion and other traditions used the word 'forgetfulness' to convey that same idea.

We shall give some more details of this subject in some other place.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 153-157

- 2:153 يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ
- 2:154 وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْواتٌ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ
- 2:155 وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ
- 2:156 الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ
- 2:157 أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ
- 2:153 *O you who believe! seek assistance through patience and prayer; surely Allah is with the patient.*
- 2:154 *And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead; nay, (they are) alive, but you do not perceive.*
- 2:155 *And We will most certainly try you with somewhat of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits; and give good news to the patient,*
- 2:156 *Who, when a misfortune befalls them, say: Surely we are Allah's and to Him we shall surely return.*
- 2:157 *Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course.*

General Comment

A single theme joins the five verses like a pearl-string; the sentences from a sequence and the topic is developed harmoniously; the beginning leads to the end, and the end points to the beginning. It shows that they were revealed together, not separately. The context indicates that they must have been revealed shortly before the law of *al-jihad* (war in the way of Allah) was promulgated and the Muslims were ordered to fight in the cause of religion.

The verses prepare the believers for some trials which they will have to undergo, some misfortunes which will befall them. Not the usual type of trial and hardship, but some extraordinary misfortunes which will afflict the whole community and will continue, recurring every now and then. Man, like any other creature in this world, always faces some hardships and troubles which disturb and disrupt the pattern of his personal life. Death, sickness, fear, hunger, grief, poverty and deprivation are but a few examples of such personal misfortunes. It is the course which Allah has laid down for His servants. This world is a place of struggle and competition; the life is a chain of never ending changes and transformations. And you shall not find any alteration in the course of Allah and you shall not find any change in the course of Allah (35:43).

Although personal afflictions and misfortunes are hard to bear for the man so affected, yet they are not as crushing, bewildering and frightening as those which affect the whole community. When an individual is afflicted by a misfortune, he seeks help of others, complementing his own wisdom, determination and steadiness with those of his relatives, friends and compatriots. But when a

misfortune or hardship afflicts the whole community, it stuns them all; it numbs their minds, and clouds their vision; it looks as if the whole society has lost its collective wisdom. It disrupts not only the individual, but even the collective life. Fear terrorizes, panic overwhelms, and minds boggle down; courage deserts and dread reigns supreme. A collective misfortune is, in short, much harder to bear and much more bitter in taste. And it is these that the verse point to.

But not every collective affliction, like epidemic or famine. What the verses describe is in all encompassing affliction which shall be brought about as a consequence of the believers' faith itself. They have accepted the belief of monotheism; they have answered the call of the truth. The whole world and especially their own kith and kin are united against them. The enemies are trying, with all the forces at their command, to extinguish the light of Allah, to erase the word of justice, to nullify the call of truth. The conflict has reached a stage where both parties realize that fighting is the only way out. Both parties have exhausted all other resources they had. The unbelievers first had tried to achieve their goal by arguments and mischief mongering, by whispering campaigns and unsettling rumors. But all was in vain. All their endeavors failed to give them any satisfaction they did not harm the Muslims in the way they wanted. Now, from their point of view, nothing was left but to wage war against the Muslims and to annihilate them. Only then, the path of truth could be blocked and the bright light of Islam extinguished.

As from the believers' point of view, only the fighting could now help them in their endeavor to propagate the creed of monotheism ' to spread the true religion and just rule, to cut at the root of falsehood. The past experience has proved that truth gains strength only when falsehood is removed and now it cannot be removed except by force.

In short, the verses indicate that the great trial is near at hand it mentions martyrdom in the way of Allah, and praises it laudably, saying that it is not a death, it is life and what a life indeed! Accordingly death in the way of Allah, is a distinction which is desirable not a thing to dislike or fear.

The verses encourage the believers to fight for Islam. They are told that there is coming to them a trial, a hardship. Only if they bear it patiently, they shall reach the high ranks of spiritual perfection, receiving the blessings and mercy of Allah, and being guided aright by Divine Guidance. Also, it tells them how they may get help in bearing those burdens they should seek assistance through patience and prayer. Patience will protect them from fear and anguish, and will save their plans from disruption. As for prayer, it will turn their attention to their Lord, and All help them in putting all their affairs in the hands of the Almighty Allah, because all power belongs to Him.

Commentary

QUR'AN: O you who believe! seek assistance through patience and prayer; surely Allah is with the patient ones:

We have explained briefly about patience and prayer, under the verse: *And seek assistance through patience and prayer; and most surely it is a hard thing except for the humble ones (2:45)*. Patience is one of the most important characteristics, which the Qur'an praises very highly. It repeatedly tells the believers to be patient there are about seventy verses on this theme. It praises it in such laudable ways as ... *and bear patiently that which befalls you; surely it is of the acts which require determination (31:17); And none are made to receive it but those who are patient, and none are made to receive it but those who have a mighty good fortune (41:35); only the patient will be paid*

back their reward in full without measure(39:10).

Likewise, prayer is one of the greatest acts of worship and devotion which the Qur'an always exhorts the believers to do. It has been praised in these words: *surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil (29:45)*. Wherever Allah exhorts the people to some good deeds, prayer is always placed at the head of the list.

Then Allah praises patience that Allah is with those who have got this virtue: In this respect this verse differs from the verse 2:45 which had focused attention on prayer; *and most surely it is a hard thing except for the humble ones*. But this verse singles out the patience, because here the talk is about facing the difficulties and fighting against the enemies; and in this context patience acquires a greater importance. Surely Allah is with the patient ones. It is a special proximity unlike the company mentioned in the verse: *and He is with you wherever you are (13:4)*. This latter verse says that Allah controls your affairs and His knowledge encompasses you; while the verse under discussion means that Allah helps and aids the patient ones. Patience, therefore, is the key to get relief from distress.

QUR'AN: *And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead; nay, (they are) alive, but you do not perceive:*

Some exegetes have said that when the verse says that the martyrs are alive, it actually means that their good names will continue for ever and their heroism will always be remembered with gratitude. Their argument is as follows:

"The verse is addressed to the Muslims, who already believe in Allah, His Messenger and the Day of Judgment; they are also sure of the life hereafter. They have accepted the call of truth, and have already heard a lot of verses which speak of the Resurrection. They know that a man's life does not end with death. How could they speak of the martyrs as dead? Moreover, this verse affirms only about the martyrs that they are alive; and describes it as their especial excellence vis-à-vis other believers and the unbelievers. But we know that life after death is not confined to one group, it is a general phenomenon, which covers the whole mankind. Therefore, the life mentioned here must be something special, which is reserved for those who are slain in the way of Allah, and that is their eternal name and everlasting fame."

But this interpretation is unacceptable, because of the following reasons:

First: The life which they have mentioned is not real life; it is an imaginary thing, which has no relation with reality. Such unreal and imaginary things do not deserve to be included in Divine Speech. Allah, calls to reality, to truth; and says: *and what is there after the truth but error? (10:32)*. Of course, Ibrahim (a.s.) had prayed to Allah, *And make for me a truthful tongue among the posterity (26:84)*. But what he meant by "a truthful tongue" was continuation of his true mission after him; he did not mean only that his good name be remembered and his praise be sung by coming generations.

Of course, such imaginary exegesis, such false interpretation is more in line with materialists' thinking. They believe that soul is a material thing, life is a development of matter; once a man dies the life comes to an end, there is nothing to continue after death; as such, there is no life hereafter. But applying that idea to sociology, they encountered a great difficulty:

The fact is that man by nature believes in continuation of life after death, his instinct tells him that there is happiness and unhappiness in the other world where he goes after death; and if he wants to enjoy happiness there, he will have to sacrifice many comforts of this life. This is specially true about great affairs and ideals which cannot be established except when their supporters and adherents are willing to die for them, to sacrifice their lives for the cause. They have to die so that others may live.

Now, the dilemma of the atheists and materialists was this: If death is the end of life, if man, after his death, is lost for ever, then why should he sacrifice his life so that others may live? Why should he

deprive himself of the comforts and enjoyments which he can easily get through injustice and tyranny? Just to let others live in peace? What has he got to gain by his sacrifice? Nothing. No sensible man gives something if he is not getting something in return. Human nature rejects the concept of giving without receiving, of leaving something without getting something in exchange. It rejects the idea of dying to enable others to live, the notion of denying oneself the enjoyment of this short life so that others may enjoy it.

When the materialists realized the trouble they were in, they tried to make up this shortcoming by inventing these imaginary gains which had no existence except in their own minds. They said: A man, emancipated from fetters of superstitions and myths, must sacrifice his life for his country and for other noble goals; this sacrifice will make him immortal because his good name and widespread fame will remain alive for ever. Likewise, he should deny himself some enjoyments of life so that others may benefit from those things. In this way, society and civilization will remain on right track and the social justice will reign supreme. And that man, because of his sacrifice, will get a noble and sublime life. Would that I knew who will enjoy that noble life when the man himself is dead, when his physical body has perished, and with it have gone all traces of life including perceptions and feelings? Who will then feel and enjoy that "noble life"? Isn't it just a delirious raving?

Second: The last phrase of the verse, "but you do not perceive," does not agree with that explanation. If that was the meaning of "life", Allah should have said: nay, they are alive because their good name will remain for ever, and people will always sing their praises generation after generation. Obviously, such description would have proved much more satisfying and encouraging, and would have cheered them up to a greater degree than the phrase, "but you do not perceive."

Third: A similar verse which in a way also explains it describes the promised life in such a way as not to allow that interpretation: *And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead; nay, they are alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord; Rejoicing in what Allah has given them out of His grace, and they rejoice for the sake of those who, (being left) behind them have not yet joined them, that they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. They rejoice on account of favor from Allah and (His) grace, and that Allah will not waste the reward of the believers (3:169-171).* Clearly, it is a description of a real, not imaginary, life.

Fourth: It is not difficult to accept that some Muslims, in the middle of the Prophet's era, were unaware of the life after death. What was very clearly mentioned in the Qur'an was the Resurrection on the Day of Judgment. But so far as the life of *al-barzakh* (the period between death and the Day of Judgment) is concerned, it has been described in the Qur'an but not so clearly as not to leave any room for ambiguity. That is why not all the Muslims are agreed on this subject even today some of them do not accept it. (These are those who believe that soul is not immaterial; that man perishes on death; and Allah will raise him again for judging him on the Day of Judgment.) This verse, therefore, could have been revealed to affirm that the martyrs were alive in *al-barzakh*. May be, there were some believers who were not aware of it, even if others knew it.

In short, the verse speaks of a real, not imaginary, life. Allah in several places, has counted the life of an unbeliever after his death as a destruction and perdition. For example: ... *and (they) made their people to alight into the abode of perdition (14:28)*. So, it is the life of bliss that is true life, and it is only the believers who will live that life, as Allah says: *and as for the next abode, that most surely is the life did they but know (29:64)*. They did not know it because their senses could perceive only the material aspects of this world's life. As they did not perceive what was beyond their limited perception, they could not differentiate between extinction and life after death. They thought that there was nothing after death but extinction. That delusion, that conjecture was common to believers and

unbelievers alike. That is why Allah said: "nay, (they are) alive, but you do not perceive," that is, by your senses. The same is the import of the last phrase in the verse: *that most surely is the life did they but know* (29:64), that is, with certainty, as He says in the verse: *Nay! if you had known with a knowledge of certainty, you should most certainly have seen the hell* (102:5-6).

The meaning of the verse, then, is as follows and Allah knows better! And do not say about those who are slain in the way of Allah that they are dead. You should not think that they have become extinct, have perished. Of course, you generally think that death is extinction; in your language death is used as opposite of life; and this delusion is supported by your senses. But it is not correct. The martyrs are not dead, in that they are not extinct; they are alive although you do not perceive that life by your senses, by your perceptions.

This talk was addressed to the believers, although majority of them if not all knew that man's life continues after his death. It was done to draw their attention to a fact known to them. The aim was to cheer them up by reminding them of this reality, in order that they should not grieve, should not be perturbed, should not loose their hearts, when death faces them or their dear ones in the way of Allah. The only thing that the relatives would be afflicted with, in such cases, is separation from their martyr for a few days, as long as they themselves are alive in this world. And this temporary separation is not a big problem especially if compared to the pleasure of Allah. and to the bounties bestowed on the martyr, like the pleasant life and everlasting grace. And the pleasure of Allah is the greatest bounty and bliss.

In this respect, the verse is not unlike the previously explained one where Allah tells His Prophet: *The truth is from your Lord, therefore you should not be of the doubters* (2:147). We know that the Prophet was the first and foremost of those who were sure of the Divine signs and communications. Yet he was told not to be of the doubters. This mode is generally used to show that the subject is so clear, so well known and so well established that there is no room for any conflicting thought to come into mind.

The Life of al-Barzakh

This verse clearly proves that man remains alive in *al-barzakh* (the period between one's death and the Day of Resurrection). The same is the import of the other verse on this subject: *And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead; nay, they are alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord* (3:169). Many other verses prove this reality and we shall mention some of them at the end of this essay.

A very strange interpretation has been given to this verse by some people. They say that it was revealed about the martyrs of Badr, and therefore it is reserved exclusively for those martyrs; it cannot be applied to others who are slain in the way of Allah.

A scholar has made an interesting comment on this explanation. Writing about the preceding verse, "seek assistance through patience and prayer," he prays to Allah to give him patience and forbearance to suffer such interpretations! Would that I knew what do they mean by that explanation. On one hand, they say that man perishes after death or murder; when his body disintegrates, he becomes extinct. If so, then how could the martyrs of Badr remain alive after being slain? Was it as a miracle? Was it because Allah had given them a distinction and excellence, which was denied to all the prophets, messengers and friends of Allah, not expecting even the Holy Prophet of Islam? If there is no life after death, then keeping them alive after their martyrdom is not a miracle - it is an impossibility.

And a miracle does not cover an impossible thing. If it is asserted that such a self-evident preposition was negated for those martyrs, then no confidence can be put in any self-evident truth - let alone other principles.

Or, do they mean that people's perceptions were mistaken about the condition of those martyrs? The martyrs were alive, were getting sustenance from their Lord, were eating, drinking and enjoying all the comforts of life - far away from the range of people's perceptions. And what the people had seen and perceived with their senses - that the martyrs were killed, their bodies mutilated, their senses gone, and their physique disintegrated - was just a delusion, and nothing of this sort had happened in reality. If this is what they mean, if people's senses could be so deluded - perceiving correctly in one case and wrongly in another, without any differentiating cause

- then no trust can be put in any of the senses at all. Then, may be, we will perceive a non-existent as existing and an existing thing as non-existent. How can a sensible person speak like that? It is nothing but sophistry.

However, that explanation somewhat follows the line adopted by a large group of the scholars of traditions. The latter believe that the things mentioned in the Qur'an and traditions, which are beyond our perception - like angels and souls of believers and other such things - are material and physical. They are ethereal bodies which may enter and penetrate dense and solid bodies, appearing thus in the form of man, for example, doing all that humans do; they possess powers and properties like ours, except that they are not governed by physical laws: they do not suffer any change or alteration, nor any composition or disintegration; they are not subject to natural life and death. When Allah wants them to appear, they manifest themselves to our senses; and when He does not want so, or wants them not to appear, they do not appear. It depends entirely on a special will of Allah; there is nothing in their senses, or in their "bodies", to tip the scale on this side or that.

Such an idea is based on rejection of the system of cause-and-effect in the world. If such assertions were true, then all the intellectual realities, all the academic principles, will be null and void - not to speak of the fundamentals of religion. Even those "sublime ethereal bodies" (which are supposedly beyond the reach of cause- and-effect) will be negated.

The above description, however, proves that the verse speaks about the life of *al-barzakh*; it is also called the world of the grave, the period between one's death and the Day of Resurrection; it is the world where the dead person is rewarded or punished until the Day of Resurrection.

Some other verses speaking about *al-barzakh* are as follows:

1. There are the three verses already quoted: *And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead; nay, they are alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord; Rejoicing in what Allah has given them out of His grace, and they rejoice for the sake of those who, (being left) behind them, have not yet joined them, that they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. They rejoice on account of favour from Allah and(His)grace, and that Allah will not waste the reward of the believers* (3:169 - 171). We have already shown how these verses, being similar to the one under discussion, prove the life of *al-barzakh*. Those who think that these verses were revealed exclusively for the martyrs of Badr, should ponder on the wordings of these three, because they indicate that not only the martyrs but also other believers enjoy the life after death, and rejoice by favour and grace of Allah bestowed on them.

2. *Until when death overtakes one of them, he says: "Send me back, my Lord, send me back: Haply I may do good in that which I have left." By no means! it is a(mere) word that he speaks; and before them is al-barzakh until the day they are raised* (23:99 - 100). It very clearly shows that there is an intermediate life between this world's and the one which

they will live after the Resurrection. Further explanation will be given when we shall write about this verse, Allah willing.

3. *And those who do not hope for Our meeting, say: "Why have not angels been sent down upon us, or(why)do we not see our Lord?" Now certainly they are too proud of themselves and have revolted a great revolt. On the day when they shall see the angels;* (clearly it refers to the time when they will see the angels for the first time, that is, the time of death - as is described in many other verses;) *there shall be no joy on that day for the guilty, and they shall say: " I t is a forbidden thing totally prohibited; And We shall proceed to what they have done of deeds, so We shall render them as scattered floating dust. The dwellers of the garden shall on that day be in a better abiding place and a better resting place. And on the day when the heaven shall burst asunder with the clouds;* (now it speaks about the Day of Resurrection;) *and the angels shall be sent down a sending. The kingdom on that day shall rightly belong to the Beneficent God, and a hard day shall it be for the unbelievers (25:21-26).* It very clearly proves the life of *al- barzakh*. Further details will be given in its proper place, Allah willing.

4. *They shall say: "Our Lord! twice didst Thou give us death, and twice hast Thou given us life, so we do confess our faults; is there then a way to get out?"(40:11).* They will say it on the Day of Resurrection. It means that by that time there would be two deaths and two lives. It can be explained only if we accept the life and death of *al-barzakh*. Otherwise, there shall be only one death between this life and that of the Day of Resurrection. We have explained it to some extent under the verse: *How do you deny Allah and you were dead and He gave you life? Again He will cause you to die and again bring you to life; then you shall be brought back to Him (2:28).*

5. *... and the most evil punishment overtook Pharaoh's people: The Fire, they are brought before it(every) morning and evening; and on the day when the hour shall come to pass: Make Pharaoh's people enter the severest chastisement (40:46).* It is known that the Day of Resurrection shall have no morning or evening. Clearly, *the day when the hour shall come to pass*, that is, the Day of Resurrection is other than the day of *al-barzakh* which has the mornings and evenings.

There are many other verses which indicate, or from which we may infer, this reality. For example: *By Allah, most certainly We sent (messengers) to nations before, but the Satan made their deeds fair-seeming to them, so he is their guardian today, and they shall have a painful punishment (16:63).*

The Immateriality of the Soul

And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead; nay, (they are) alive, but you do not perceive. (2:154)

The above verse, as well as other verses, points to another more comprehensive reality and that is the immateriality of the soul. The soul is something other than matter and body; it is beyond the jurisdiction of the rules governing matter and body, or those affecting various material compounds and mixtures. Yet, it has a special relationship with the body keeping it alive, managing its multifarious functions and activities and enabling it to perceive and feel. Ponder on the earlier quoted verses and you will see this reality. The verses imply that man, per se, is not the body; he does not die when the body dies, he does not perish when the body perishes. The body disintegrates, its parts are scattered, but the "man" continues. Even after the death of his body, he continues to live, either in eternal bliss and everlasting felicity and grace, or in never ending misery and painful chastisement.

That bliss or misery is based on his traits, trends, characteristics and actions, which he had acquired and done in this world's life not in his bodily accomplishments or social achievements.

These themes are understood from the above mentioned verses. Obviously, these traits are totally different from those of the body, and are diametrically opposed to worldly and material characteristics. Thus, the human soul is different from his body.

Also, the verse 39:42 points to this fact: *Allah takes completely the souls at the time of their death, and those that die not during their sleep; then He withholds those on whom He has passed the decree of death and sends the other back till an appointed term. "at Tawaffiyy" and "al istifa"* both have the same meaning to take and realize one's right fully and completely. The words used here in reference to the soul "takes", "withholds" and "sends back" clearly prove that the soul is something different from the body.

Another verse: *And they say: "What! when we have become lost in the earth, shall we then indeed be in a new creation?" Nay! they are disbelievers in the meeting of their Lord. Say: "The angel of death who is given charge of you shall take you completely, then to your Lord you shall be brought back" (32:10-11).* In this verse, Allah mentions one of the misgivings of those who do not believe in the Resurrection; and then tells His Messenger how to clear their doubt. They said: When we die, our body disintegrates, our limbs and organs are destroyed, nothing remains of our original form, and all our parts are scattered here and there in the earth. No one can then perceive us nor can anyone feel us. How is it possible for us, after such a total destruction, to be created a second time? This doubt is based on a feeling of improbability. Allah shows the Messenger (s.a.w.) how to remove that misgiving: *Say: "The angel of death... be brought back."* There is an angel who has been given charge of you; he shall take you completely; he will not let you be lost, as you shall be under his protection, his control; what is lost in the earth is your body, not your soul or person (the reality which is referred to by the word "you"), because the angel of death shall take "you" completely.

One more verse: Allah says, mentioning the creation of man: *Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit... (32:9).* Read it in conjunction with the verse: *And they ask you about the soul. Say: "The soul is from the command of my Lord" (17:85).* The soul, therefore, is from the command of Allah and that command has been explained and defined in these words: *His command, when He intends anything is only that He says to it: "Be", and it is. Therefore, glory be to Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of everything... (36:82- 83).* The soul is from the kingdom and it is the word, "Be." In another place, the command is further explained in these words: *And Our command is but one, as the twinkling of an eye (54:50).* The phrase, as the twinkling of an eye, shows that the command, that is, the word "Be", is an instantaneous, not a gradual, being. It comes into being at once, and is not bound with the chain of time and space.

It is thus evident that the command including the soul is different from body, is something immaterial. We know that the material things come into being gradually and are fettered with time and space. Obviously, the human soul is not a material thing and is different from the body, although it has a special relationship with the body.

There are some verses which show the nature of that relationship. Allah says: *From it (the earth) We created you... (20:55); He created man from dry clay like earthen vessels... (55:14); ... and He began the creation of man from dust, then He made his progeny from an extract of water held in light estimation(32:7-8); And certainly We created man of an extract of clay, then We made him a small life germ in a firm resting place, then We made the life germ a clot, then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made (in)the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We caused it to grow into another creation; so blessed be Allah, the best of*

creators(23:12-14).

The verses show that man, in the beginning was but a material body, changing into various forms; then Allah made that body into another creation a creation that has got perception and feeling; now he perceives and wills, thinks and acts according to his thoughts and ideas; he manages and manipulates the things around him as he likes. These activities and authority are beyond the power of body and matter. Obviously, neither of these activities emanate from body and matter nor does their doer.

We may say that the soul has the same relation to the body from which it emanates as a fruit has to its tree. or a lamp flame has to its oil. But these similes are a bit far fetched. However, these illustrations serve to show the nature of the relation between the soul and the body how it is attached to the body in the beginning and how that connection is severed on death.

In short, the soul, in the beginning, is the body itself, then it grows into another creation, and lastly it becomes completely independent and separate from the body on death. These facts are understood from the above mentioned Qur'anic verses; there are many other verses which allude to and imply this reality, and one may find them on reading the Qur'an with open eyes. And Allah is the Guide.

QUR'AN: *And We will most certainly try you with somewhat of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits:*

Allah told them to seek assistance through patience and prayer and forbade them to say about those who are slain in His way that they are dead because those martyrs were in fact alive. Now, He explains why He has informed them of these realities. It is because the believers were soon to be tried and tested by fighting in the way of Allah. It was by *al-jihad* that they would reach the pinnacle of their virtues; their noble lives would not be worth living except with *al-jihad*. The upright religion could not gain strength but with fighting. And while engaged in fighting, their efforts would not be crowned with success unless they were helped by those two helpers, that is, patience and prayer, and were further strengthened by a third factor, that is, the belief that their martyr is neither dead nor lost, and that their endeavors with their wealth and souls is neither forfeited nor fruitless. If they kill their enemy, they will remain alive while their enemy is destroyed; in this way they would be safe from the rule of injustice and falsehood which the enemy wanted to impose on them. And if they are killed in this endeavor, again they will remain alive for ever and equally safe from that unjust and wrong rule. In either case, they shall enjoy one of the two most excellent things.

Generally, the afflictions consist of fear, hunger and loss of properties and lives. As for the loss of fruits, apparently it means loss of children. When fighting occurs, its most telling result is not the loss of fruits but that of progeny, as the men and especially the youths are killed.

Some exegetes have said that the word "fruits" refers to the dates, and the "property" to other possessions, for example, camels, goats and sheep.

QUR'AN: *and give good news to the patient ones who, when a misfortune befalls them, say: "Surely we are Allah's and to Him we shall surely return." Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course:*

The patient ones are again mentioned in these verses so that Allah may give them good news to begin with, and then may teach them the way of good patience, and thirdly, may explain to them why patience is essential it is because Allah owns the man and fourthly, may declare what is its overall recompense, that is, blessing, mercy and being guided aright.

Allah first told His Prophet to give them good news; but did not disclose what was that good news about. This was to show the greatness of the subject matter it is from Allah, therefore, it must be about something specially good, great and beautiful. Moreover, it is something which Allah, Himself has guaranteed.

Thereafter, He said that the patient ones are those who say these words when misfortune befalls them. "*al-Musibah*" (translated here as misfortune) is any happening that occurs to a man; but it is always used for a distressing happening. "Who... say: 'Surely we are Allah's...': The word "say" as used here does not mean mere utterance of the sentence without keeping its meaning in mind. Even understanding its meaning is not sufficient, unless one penetrates to the depth of its reality. And that is that man is owned by Allah in real ownership and that he is surely to return to Allah his Master. If this feeling takes deep root in his heart, the man will observe the highest degree of patience; sorrow, fear and anguish will be totally eradicated, and the rust of heedlessness will be removed from the heart. How?

Man and all his faculties, actions and other concomitants of existence, are there because of Allah He is his Creator and Originator. Man exists because of Allah, and is dependent on Him in all his affairs and conditions. He does not have any existence, or continuity independent of Allah. The Master has the right to manage His slave's affairs in any way He likes; the slave has authority whatsoever in his own affairs, because he has no authority no independence at all. Allah, owns him; He is the real Owner of man's existence, faculties and actions.

Then Allah allowed man to ascribe his "self" to himself as a property is ascribed to its owner. That is why it is said that "man has existence." In the same way, He permitted him to ascribe his faculties and actions to himself. Accordingly, it is said that "man has faculties like hearing and sight", or "he does some actions like: walking, speaking, eating and hearing." Without the Divine permission neither man nor anything else could own any such ascription or attribution, because nothing exists without the Divine permission, or independent of Allah's will.

Allah has also informed us that ultimately all things will revert to their original status the state before Allah allowed them to be attributed to one or the other creature and then no ownership will remain there except that of Allah, as He says: *To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To Allah the One, the Subduer* (of all) (40:16). It shows that man together with all that "belongs" to him or is with him is to return to Allah.

In short, there is a "real" ownership; it is reserved for Allah nobody be he a man or something else shares it with Him. And there is an "apparent" ownership, for example, man "owns" his own "self" as well as his children and properties etc. But the real ownership is of Allah, and man owns them in form and appearance only and that also because Allah has allowed such attribution. Thus, when man remembers the reality of Divine ownership, and then looks at his own "self", he knows that he is wholly and totally owned by Allah, Then, he realizes that his "apparent" ownership of his "self" as well as of his children and properties, etc. will soon cease to exist, will become null and void; it will return to his Lord. Then, he will understand that ultimately he owns nothing, either in reality or in appearance. In this background, there is no reason why he should grieve if he is afflicted with some misfortune. One may be affected only by something which one owns feeling happiness when it is found or sorrow if it is lost But when he believes that he owns nothing, he shall not be affected by finding it or losing it. How can he be afflicted by any loss when he believes that Allah is the real Owner of everything and He may manage His property in any way He likes?

The Ethics

The ethics entail betterment of morals and psychic traits - both in theory and practice. Man acquires the good morals and removes the evil traits by repeatedly doing good - and relevant - deeds, and their continuous observance. Repeated and continuous performance of an action etches its

particular knowledge on the psyche. Gradually, a picture is engraved on the mind which becomes impossible - or extremely difficult - to erase. Habits become second nature. For example, if a man wants to remove the trait of cowardice and acquire that of bravery, he should repeatedly plunge himself into difficulties and dangers. When-ever he would rush into a perilous and hazardous situation and finds himself coming out unscathed, he would acquire the taste of boldness and courage; and would understand the ignominy of flight, of taking to one's heels. Every such bold step would leave its mark on his psyche and ultimately bravery and courage would become an integral part of his character. Man has no power to acquire such traits by his own will; yet it may be counted as within his power inasmuch as its preliminary steps - those repeatedly performed deeds - emanate from his will and power.

There are two universally recognized systems to acquire high moral standards and noble manners.

First System: Many people base their moral science on good worldly foundations, that is, the knowledge, ideas and ideals which are thought praiseworthy and laudable in the society. They acquire a good trait because it is commendable in the eyes of the people. Chastity, contentedness with what is in one's hand and not looking at what others have - all these virtues create respect and honour in the people's eyes, and one's standing is enhanced in public. Avarice results in poverty and privation. Greed destroys one's prestige. Knowledge attracts people and bestows respect and dignity in the eyes of elite; it opens the eyes of the knowledgeable person, and protects him from unpleasant things. Ignorance, on the other hand, is blindness. Knowledge protects you while riches need your protection. Bravery makes you stead-fast and saves you from fickleness; this in its turn makes people sing your praise - no matter whether you win or lose. Cowardness and rashness both cause opposite effect. Justice gives peace of mind, and keep man alive even after his death inasmuch as his good name continues and his love pulsates in people's hearts generation after generation.

This is the well-known basis on which the moral science is founded. Ancients like Greek philosophers followed this very system.

The Qur'an does not endorse this system, because it depends on the like and the dislike of the public. It looks at what is good in the eyes of the people and what is bad - and accepts the former and rejects the latter. Even in a few verses where the Qur'an appears to use this method, it really refers to the next world's reward or punishment. Ponder, for example, on the following verses:-

... *and wherever you are, turn your faces towards it, so that people shall have no argument against you...* (2:150). Here Allah exhorts the Muslims to remain steadfast and firm, and for its reason, He says: "so that people shall have no argument against you."

... *and do not quarrel, for then you will be weak in hearts and your power will depart, and be patient...* (8:46). Allah tells the believers to be patient, as impatience and quarrelling among themselves would weaken their hearts, dilute their power and embolden their enemy.

And whoever is patient and forgiving, that most surely is an act of great resolution (42:43). Here Allah invites the believers to patience and forgiveness and explains its reason in terms of determination and resolution.

Second System: The second system is to keep in sight the other worldly goals. Allah has used it in many verses of the Qur'an:

Surely Allah has bought of the believers their persons and their properties for this, that they shall have the garden... (9:111)

... *only the patient ones will be paid back their reward in full without measure.* (39:10)

... surely it is the unjust that shall have a painful punishment. (14:22)

Allah is the Guardian of those who believe; He brings them out of the darkness into the light; and (as to) those who disbelieve, their guardians are the rebels, they take them out of the light into the darkness... (2:257)

There are many verses, on different subjects, which imply the same theme.

We may add here another set of the verses. For example, *No misfortune befalls on the earth nor in your own souls, but it is in a book before We bring it into existence; surely that is easy to Allah* (57:22). This verse exhorts man not to feel any sorrow (or joy) on whatever misfortune (or good thing) comes to him; what has come to him, could not be averted, and what-ever has been lost could not be obtained, because all happenings occur by a firm Divine Decree which is unavoidable. Sorrow and joy both seem, in this background, meaningless - a believer should not indulge in these vain practices because he believes in Allah and knows that all affairs are in His hands. Allah says: *No affliction comes about but by Allah's permission; and whoever believes in Allah, He guides aright his heart* (64:11). Such verses, like the earlier quoted ones, create high morals by pointing to the sublime goals of the next world. These other worldly goals are real, not imaginary, perfections. These verses reform the human character by fixing man's attention to the real already existing causes like the Divine measure and decree, adoption of the Divine characteristics and remembrance of the good names of Allah and His sublime attributes.

Question: Belief in causality of such things as the Divine measure and decree negates the rules governing this life in which we have been given freedom of will and power. This, in its turn, nullifies the noble morals and disturbs the system of this physical world. If man may rely, in acquiring such good traits as patience and steadfastness, and in refraining from sorrow and joy, on the fact that all things to happen are already firmly decreed and written in the "preserved tablet", then the same argument may be used if one does not endeavour to earn one's livelihood, to acquire good characteristics, or to refrain from bad habits. He will sit idle not caring to do any work, and not striving to defend the truth and right. His only reply to all exhortations will be that whatever was happening was already written and decreed. In this way he will neglect acquiring noble characteristics and discarding evil traits. It will be a negation of every perfection.

Reply: What we have written on the subject of "Decree", is sufficient to clear this misunderstanding. We have explained there that man's actions are integral parts of the causes of the events and effects. Effects cannot happen without their causes. It would be a manifest error to say: Satiation of hunger is either decreed to happen or decreed not to happen; and in either case, it is useless to eat. We know that satiation of hunger cannot occur unless one takes one's food - and eating is an action with-in one's power, and is a part of the causes of satiation. It is foolishness to expect an effect to appear when one has neglected or negated all or part of its causes.

It is wrong for a man to neglect and negate the principles of "free will and power", which is the king-pin of this worldly life, and to which are attributed its felicity and infelicity. It is a part of the causes of the events which happen to a man through his actions (or through the conditions and traits resulting from his actions). He cannot say that his will and power are not a part of the causes of events happening to him, or that they have no effect on those happenings. In the same way, it is wrong to claim that his power is the complete, or the only, cause of the events and that nothing else has any influence on those events. One should not forget that there are countless things happening in the world which have influence on one's circumstances, conditions and the related events, and that the Divine Will is the foremost among them. If one were to forget this reality, one would be entrapped in many

evil traits, like: conceit, pride, miserliness, joy, sorrow and grief, etc.

The ignorant man says: " I did this; I left that." Thus, he falls victim of conceit, shows arrogance to others or does not spend his money on necessary things. He is heedless to the fact that there are thousands and thousands of other causes - apart from his imperfect "power" - absence of any one of which would nullify the effects of his "power." He says: "Had I done this, I would have avoided this loss; had I done so, I would have gained that."

He does not realize that prevention of loss or death depends on thousands and thousands of causes, and even if one of them is absent, the dreaded loss or death is bound to occur, man's own power notwithstanding. Moreover, man's power itself depends on numerous causes which are beyond his power. In short, man's power is not by his power.

The above explanation is a Qur'anic reality, and, as mentioned earlier, it is derived from the Divine teachings. When you know this fact and ponder on the relevant verses, you will see that the Qur'an attributes only some of the good characteristics to the firm decree and the preserved tablet, while it does not attribute other traits to the above-mentioned Divine Decree. There are some actions, conditions and traits which, if attributed to the Divine Decree and Measure, would nullify the principle of free will; and accordingly the Qur'an never attributes them to the Divine Decree; rather, it refutes it with full force. For example:

And when they commit an indecency they say: "We found our fathers doing this, and Allah has enjoined it on us." Say: "Surely, Allah does not enjoin indecency; do you say against Allah what you do not know?"(7:28)

On the other hand there are some actions, etc. which, if not attributed to the Divine Decree, would imply that man had complete freedom, that his will and power were the sufficient cause of his actions, etc. and were independent of every outside cause. The Qur'an, therefore, pointedly ascribes them to the Divine Decree, and thus guides the man to the straight path - a path which does not confuse the walker. In this way, the Qur'an removes from him the base characteristics which would have resulted from that wrong ideas. For example, it attributes the happenings to the Divine Decree, in order that man should not ignorantly feel joy for what he gets or sorrow for what he loses. Allah says: *and give them of the wealth of Allah which He has given you (24:33)*; note that Allah exhorts man to be generous, by reminding him that his wealth has come to him from Allah. Also, He says: ... *and spend (benevolently) out of what We have given them (2:3)*; the verse calls him to spend by attributing the wealth to the sustenance given by Allah. Again, He says: *Then may be you kill yourself with grief, sorrowing after them, if they do not believe in this announcement. Surely, We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them (as to) which of them is best in deed (18:6-7)*. In these verses Allah tells His Prophet not to grieve because of the unbelievers' disbelief, reminding him that their disbelief does not mean that they have overpowered Allah; the fact is that what-ever is on the earth has been made and put there by Allah for the purpose of test and trial.

This system of ethics is the one used by the prophets, and a lot of its examples may be found in the Holy Qur'an and other Divine Books.

There is a third system, which is found exclusively in the Qur'an; it is neither seen in the Divine Books which have been transmitted to us, nor in the teachings of the previous prophets (peace of Allah be on them!); nor is it seen in the knowledge which has come to us from divine scholars. In this system, man is trained in character and knowledge, and the knowledge is used in a way that does not leave room for base and low traits. In other words, this system removes the vile characteristics, not by repulsing them, but by eliminating all motives other than Allah.

Let us explain it in this way: What is the motive of a work done for other than Allah? It may be honour and might of the 'other than Allah', which the doer of that work longs for. Or his power which he is afraid of. But Allah says: *Surely might is wholly Allah's* (10:65); *that the power is wholly Allah's* (2:165). And when one is imbued with this true knowledge, there will remain no question of doing any deed for letting others see, or hear about it; nor will there be any reason why he should fear, or look forward to, or rely on anyone other than Allah. Once these two realities are firmly known to a man, his psyche will be cleansed from evils of theory and practice. It will rather be adorned by the positive traits, that is, good character and Divine characteristics; for example, fear of and reliance on Allah, strength, self-respect, self-sufficiency and other such virtues.

The Qur'an has repeatedly said that the kingdom belongs to Allah, that the kingdom of the heavens and the earth is His, that to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth, as we have explained several times. Evidently, this kingdom does not leave any independence to anything, nor does it allow the creatures any freedom from want - except through Allah. Look at anything; you will see that Allah is the Owner of its person and of all its concomitants. When a man believes in that ownership and this belief becomes firmly-rooted in his heart, he does not admit that anything has got any independence at all - in its person, characteristics or activities. Such a man cannot look except at the face of Allah, nor can he bow down before, hope for, or have fear of, anything other than Allah. He will not enjoy or be pleased with any other thing, nor will he rely on, or surrender to, anyone but Allah. In short, he will not desire or wish for anything except Allah - the Eternal One Who will remain when everything will perish; he will surely turn away from all the falsehood, that is, from everything other than Allah; he will not attach any importance to his own existence nor will he care for himself in face of the Absolute Truth, that is, the eternal existence of his Creator - Great is His Glory.

The same is the import of the following verses:

Allah is He besides Whom there is no god; His are the very best names (20:8);
That is Allah, your Lord, there is no god but He; the Creator of all things (6:102);
... Who made good everything that He has created(32:7) ; *And the faces shall be humbled before the Living, the Self- subsistent God* (20:111);
... all are obedient to Him (2:116);
And your Lord has commanded that you shall not worship (any) but Him (17:23);
... is it not sufficient as regards your Lord that He is a witness over all things? (41:53);
... now surely He encompasses all things (41:54);
And that to your Lord is the end goal (53:42).

And the same is the import of the verses under discussion, that is, "and give good news to the patient ones, who when a misfortune befalls them, say: 'Surely we are Allah's and to Him we shall return.' Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course."

These and similar other verses contain a unique Divine Knowledge, and produce some real and especial results. Their system is not like any other which a moralist might employ, nor even like that used by previous prophets in their teachings. According to the moralists, virtue and evil are based on the public's likes and dislikes; and the prophets based their teachings on the general religious beliefs concerning the rules of the *shari'ah* and their recompense. But this third system is based on pure and perfect monotheism and it has been used exclusively by Islam - the best of blessings be on its Prophet

and his progeny !

A western orientalist has expressed a really strange and astonishing idea in his History where he discusses the Islamic civilization. A gist of his observation is as follows:

"A scholar should concern himself only with various aspects of civilization which were developed by Islam among its followers, and the excellence and superiority which were its legacy to the Muslims in the form of a developed society and high culture. As for the religious precepts which Islam teaches, they are merely the moral teachings which are common to all religions and which were popularized by all the prophets."

COMMENT: The explanation given by us shows how unfounded his opinion is and how confused his views are. The result emerges from its premises; the effects of training emanate from the knowledge acquired by the trainee. As mentioned earlier, there are three types of the teachers of ethics: one invites to a reality of a low grade, another to an average perfection and the third to the pristine reality and highest perfection. Can it be said that the results of all three will be the same? In other words, the scholars of ethics call the people to the sociological truth; the prophets call mankind to the actual truth and real perfection by which it may get the eternal bliss in the life hereafter; but the Islam invites the people to the Absolute Reality, that is, Allah Himself, and teaches them ethical values by reminding them that

Allah is One, and there is no partner in His divinity; this belief produces in man the purest servitude. Now you see how dissimilar are the systems employed by the three groups, and how different are the results.

This Islamic system created an admirable social structure, and produced a multitude of good servants, divine scholars and Allah's friends - men and women alike. And this single factor is sufficient to ensure the distinguished position of Islam.

Moreover, this system sometimes differ from the other two in its result also. It is based on the love a servant has for his Lord; it teaches him to give preference to his Lord's wishes over his own. We know that love and enthrallment sometimes lure the lover to do things which are not approved by social wisdom (which is the basis of the social ethics), nor are they commended by common sense on which is founded the general religious commandments. Reason has its own rules and love its own. We shall further explain it in some other place, Allah willing.

QUR'AN: *Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course.*

It appears from meditation on these words that blessings is to a certain extent different from mercy - look how "blessings" has been used in plural and "mercy" in singular. Allah says: *He it is Who sends His blessings on you, and(so do) His angels, that He may bring you forth out of utter darkness into the light; and He is Merciful to the believers* (33:43). The context shows that the sentence, "and He is Merciful to the believers", gives the reason of the preceding phrases, "He it is Who sends His blessings on you." The meaning therefore, is as follows: Allah sends His blessings on you; and it is as it should be, because He is Merciful to the believers, and you are believers; therefore, He sends His blessings on you, to show His mercy to you.

The position of blessing *vis-à-vis* mercy is like that of a premise in relation to its result, or of a glance in comparison to seeing, or of throwing into fire *vis-à-vis* burning. It is in conformity with the explanation, given by some writers of *as-salah* (= the blessing), that it really means turning towards, inclination.

Blessing from Allah means that He turns towards the servant with mercy; when attributed to angels

it connotes their turning towards a man and becoming a medium to convey Allah's mercy to him; and when ascribed to man, it means turning to the Lord calling Him with humility. However, it does not mean that blessing itself is not mercy or an example of mercy. Pondering on the usage of "mercy" in the Qur'an, we find that it is the comprehensive gift of Allah, the All-encompassing Divine Bounty. Allah says: *and My mercy encompasses all things (7:156)*; also, He says: *And your Lord is the self-sufficient one, the Lord of mercy; if He pleases, He may take you off, and make whom He pleases successors after you, even as He raised you up from the seed of another people (6:133)*. He may take you off because He is Self-sufficient, He does not need you; and He may make others succeed you, as He had raised you up, because He is Merciful. Even then both aspects are attributed to His mercy, and at the same time they may be attributed to His Self-sufficiency. Every creation - be it from matter or without matter - is a mercy, and also a gift and bounty emanating from His Self-sufficiency. Allah says: *and the bounty of your Lord is not confined (17:20)*. And one of His bounties is *as-salah* (the blessing); this too is a mercy, but of a especial type. Probably this is the reason why in the verse under discussion, "blessings" has been used in plural and "mercy" in singular.

QUR'AN: *and they are the followers of the right course*. It looks like the result of the preceding clause, "Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord." That is why Allah did not say, 'on whom are blessing and mercy from their Lord and guidance'; instead He described it in a separate sentence. Also, He did not say, 'and they are *al-mahdiyyun* (the rightly guided ones) guided ones'; instead their acceptance of guidance has been denoted with the word *al-muhtadun* (followers of the right course), because "following" describes the next stage, coming after and resulting from "guidance." Evidently, the mercy of Allah consisted of guiding them to Himself; the blessings were like the preliminaries of that guidance, and their following that right course was the result of that guidance. Thus, the blessings, the mercy and the following of the right course, all are different from one another, although looking from another angle all three were but Divine Mercy.

Allah gives good news to these believers of His bestowal of honours to them. To clearly understand the whole sequence, look at the following example: You see in the way a friend of yours who wants to come to your house to be your guest, and is making enquiries as to how to reach your home. You meet him with smiling face, take him to the proper path, walking with him, not leaving him alone lest he loses the way; this continues until you bring him to your house; while on the way, you tend to his needs and look after his meals and transport, and protect him from every hardship and trouble. All these things taken together are called "hospitality" accorded to him; and every care taken of him is a particular care and hospitality; for example, showing him the way is separate from hospitality and care - and even then it is a hospitality. Each of the above acts is a care, and each is a guidance and each is a particular hospitality - and all together come under one word, "hospitality." Applying this example to this verse, the one comprehensive hospitality is like the mercy, and every attention paid to the friend is like the blessings and his being your guest in your house is like the "following the right course."

Many syntactical devices of this sentence point to the prestige and rank of those believers: First, it is a nominal clause; second, it begins with a demonstrative pronoun used for distant objects; third, that pronoun has been reinforced with a separate personal pronoun; and fourth, the predicate begins with the definite article.

Traditions

About al-Barzakh and the Soul's Life after Death:

Suwayd ibn Ghaflah narrates from the Commander of the faithfuls ('Ali, a.s.) that he said: "Surely, when the son of Adam comes to (his) last day of this world and the first of the next, his property, his children and his actions are portrayed before him. So he turns to his property and says: 'By God! I was covetous of you (and) avaricious; so what have you (now) got for me?' (The property) says: 'Take your shroud from me'. Then he turns to his children and says: 'By God! Surely I was your loving (father), and I was your protector; now what have you got for me?' They say: 'We shall convey you to your pit (i.e., grave) and bury you in it.' Then he turns to his deeds and says: 'By God! I was indifferent to you, and you were distasteful to me; (now) what is with you (for me)?' So it says: 'I am your companion in your grave as well as on the Day of your gathering - until I am presented with you before your Lord.' Then (after his death), if he is a friend of Allah, there comes to him (a visitor), the most sweet-scented of all people, of the most beautiful appearance and (wearing) the most adorned apparel, and says to him: 'Rejoice with refreshment from Allah, and flowers and the garden of bounties; you arrived a good arrival' (i.e., welcome to you). Thereupon, he says: 'Who are you?' (The visitor) says: 'I am your good deed. Proceed from the world to the garden.' And he recognizes the one who washes his body, and earnestly appeals to his carrier (the bier-bearer) to hasten him (to the grave). Then when he enters his grave, two angels come to him - and they are the examiners of the grave - with elegantly-dressed hairs, writing on the earth with their teeth; their voices are like roaring thunder and their eyes like streaking lightning. They ask him: 'Who is your Lord? And who is your prophet? And what is your religion?' And he says: 'Allah is my Lord; and Muhammad is my prophet; and Islam is my religion.' So they say: 'May Allah confirm you in what you like and are pleased with!' And this is (the meaning of) the word of Allah: *Allah confirms those who believe with the sure word in this world's life and in the hereafter.*

.. (14:27). Then they make his grave spacious for him as far as his eye can see, and open for him a gate to the garden, and say to him:

'Sleep happily the sleep of a fine-looking youth.' And it is the word of Allah: *The dwellers of the garden shall on that day be in a better abiding place and a better resting place.* (25:24)

"And if he is an enemy of his Lord, then comes to him a (visitor), the ugliest of the creatures of Allah in attires and the foulest-smelling. And he tells him: 'Welcome to the entertainment of boiling water and roasting in Hell.' And he (the dead person) recognizes the one who washes his body, and earnestly appeals to his carrier (the bier-bearer) to hold him back. And when he is buried in his grave, the examiners of the grave come to him and remove his shroud from him. Then they ask him: 'Who is your Lord? And what is your religion? And who is your prophet? And he says: 'I do not know.' So they say to him: 'You did not know, nor were you on the right path.' Then they hit him with an iron-rod, a hitting which frightens every creature of Allah - except the *jinn* and the men. Thereafter they open for him a door to the Hell and tell him: 'Sleep in the worst condition.' So he is squeezed in a narrow space like a shaft in an arrow-head, until his brain comes out from between his nails and flesh; and Allah sets on him the serpents of the earth and its scorpions and insects which go on biting him until Allah will raise him from his grave - and he will long for the advent of the Hour, because of the trouble in which he finds himself." (*at-Tafsir*, al-Qummi)

Abu Bakr al-Hadrami narrates from Abu Ja'far (a.s.) that he said: "No one shall be questioned in the grave except he who shall be of pure belief or of total disbelief." I told him: "And (what about) the rest of the men?" He said: "They will be kept in oblivion." (*Muntakhab Basa'iri 'd-darajat*)

Ibn Zubyan says: " I was with Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.), and he said: 'What do the people say about the souls of the believers after they die?' I said: 'They say (that the souls are placed) in the craws of green

birds.' He said: 'Glory be to Allah! The believer is far more honourable near Allah than this! When it happens (i.e., when the believer dies) there come to him the Messenger of Allah and Ali and Fatimah and Hasan and Husayn (peace be on them), and with them (come) the angels of the Mighty and Glorious Allah (who are near to him). So, if Allah lets his tongue speak the witness of His Oneness and the prophethood of the Prophet and the *al-walayah*(love, obedience) of the *Ahlulbayt*, then the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and 'Ali and Fatimah and Hasan and Husayn (peace be on them) and with them the near angels become his witnesses for it. And if his tongue is tied, Allah confers on His Prophet the knowledge of what is in his (i.e., that believer's) heart of that (belief); so he (i.e., the Prophet) becomes his witness; and then bear testimony of Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn - because of the testimony of the Prophet - on their group be the best peace from Allah! and (so do) those angels who are present with them. When Allah takes him to Himself, He sends that soul to the garden, in a shape similar to his (worldly) shape. They eat (there) and drink. When a new- corner comes to them, he recognizes them by that shape which they had in the world." (*al-Amali*, ash-Shaykh at-Tusi)

Hammad ibn 'Uthman narrates from Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) that he described the souls of the believers and said: "They meet each other." I said: "They meet each other?" He said: "Yes! They ask each other and recognize each other, so that if you see one you will say, '(He is) so-and-so'." (*al-Mahasin*)

Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said: "Verily, the believer visits his family and he sees what he likes; and what he dislikes is hidden from him. And verily the unbeliever visits his family and he sees what he dislikes; and what he likes is hidden from him." And he said: "There are some of them who visit (their families) every Friday; and there are others who visit according to their deeds." (*al-Kafi*)

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Verily, the souls are, with the characteristic features of (their) bodies, in a tree of the garden; they know each other and enquire about each other. When a (new) soul comes to (those) souls, they say: 'Let it be, because it is coming from a great terrifying (experience).' Thereafter, they ask him: 'What has happened to so-and-so? What has so-and-so done?' If the soul tells them, 'I have left him alive', they hope for his (future arrival); and if it tells them, 'He had died', they say: 'He fell down (to Hell); he perished.'" (*al-Kafi*)

The author says: There are numerous traditions on the subject of *al-barzakh*. We have quoted above some comprehensive ones. There is a huge lot of nearly *mutawatir* traditions describing the above-mentioned meanings. These traditions prove that the life of *al-barzakh* is an immaterial one.

A Philosophical Discussion on Immateriality of the Soul

Is the soul immaterial? The word "soul" in this discussion means that thing which every man refers to when he says " I ." Its "immateriality" refers to the fact that it is not a material thing, it is neither divisible nor governed by time or space.

No doubt, I conceive in myself a concept which I refer to as " I "; and it is equally certain that every man has similar conception about himself. It is a conception which we are never oblivious of - as long as we are alive and conscious. It is not a limb of ours; nor is it a part of our body which we perceive by one of our senses or even through reason. In short, it is not like our external limbs which we feel with our senses of sight or touch, etc., nor is it like our internal organs which we know by senses or experiment. Sometimes we become oblivious of one or another of those limbs or organs - or even of the whole body. But we are never oblivious of the " I ." It proves that the " I " is other than the body and its parts.

One thing more. Body and its limbs and parts as well as the faculties and characteristics found in it,

are all material. One of the characteristics of matter is gradual change, dissolution and divisibility. If soul were body or a part thereof, it would have been material and subject to change and division - but it is not so. If a man looks at this vision of his "self" and then compares it with that which he used to look at since the beginning of his gnosis of the "self", he will find that it is the same vision, the same notion, without the least change or plurality. It is unlike his body or its parts and characteristics which all undergo continuous change, in substance and form as well as in their conditions and positions. Also, he will realize that it is a notion, simple, indivisible and non-compound, unlike the body or its parts and characteristics. And matter and every material thing is a compound and divisible. Obviously, the soul is not body, nor is it a part of the body; it is neither a development of the body nor one of its characteristics. Coming to matter again, it makes no difference whether we perceived it with a sense of ours or by reasoning, or did not perceive it at all - it is matter and material in any case. And matter is subject to change and divisibility. But we have seen that the vision which we call "soul" is not subject to any of the above characteristics of matter. Therefore, soul is neither matter nor material.

Also, this vision of "I" is a notion, simple and one; there is no plurality of parts therein, nor is there any extraneous item mixed with it; it is an absolute one. Every man finds it in him-self that he is he and not someone else. Therefore, this vision is a concept subsistent by itself, and distinct; it is beyond the definition of matter and is not subject to its characteristics and properties. It is *a al-jawhar* (lit. "jewel"; technically, a thing that exists in reality and which is the bearer of the accidents), separate from matter; it has a connection with the body which makes it identifiable with the body - and it is the connection of management.

The above discourse proves our claims in this respect.

All the materialists and a group of Muslim theologians as well as the Zahiristic traditionalists do not accept the immateriality of the soul. But what they have written in support of their view stretches the credulity too far.

Let us have a look at the arguments of the materialists.

They say: 1. The science has nowadays advanced to a previously-undreamt-of extent in its in-depth and minute researches of natural phenomena. It has found and pin-pointed a natural and material cause for every characteristic of the body. It has not found any psychological effect which could not be explained according to the material laws. This being the case, why should we believe in the existence of an immaterial soul?

2. The nervous system continuously conveys the perceptions to its centre (i.e., brain) with extreme rapidity. The vision thus perceived is a unified series, having a single position. The pictures formed in mind are substituted with such rapidity that one frame is not distinguishable from another; that is, mind does not realize that the preceding frame has gone and been replaced by another. It is this composite "one", this illusory "unit", which we see and call our soul, and which we refer to as "I." It is true that it is other than all our limbs and organs; but it does not necessarily mean that it is other than body and its characteristics. The fact is that it is a composite series which appears to be one, because of continuous and rapid substitutions - and we are never oblivious of it, because such an oblivion would result in nullity of the nervous system - in other words, death.

Also, it is true that my vision of my "I" is constant. But it is not because there is a thing which is constant and unchanged. In fact, it is only an illusion resulting from a series of constantly and rapidly changing visions. Suppose there is a water-tank with an inlet and an outlet of the same diameter; water comes in from one side and goes out from the other, with exactly the same speed - and the tank

seems always full. Our sense perceives the water as one, constant and unchanged unit, but in reality it is neither the same water nor is it constant and unchanged. Even if there is a reflection in the water, of a man, tree or some other object, it will look as unchanged, steady and constant, but actually it is not so - it is not one, it is gradually changing with the gradual change of the water. The same is the case of the apparent oneness, constancy and unchangeability which we see in our soul, self or " I ."

3. The soul, for whose immateriality arguments have been offered, based on the inner vision, is in fact a composite of natural faculties and characteristics. It is the sum-total of nervous perceptions, which in their turn emanate from mutual action and reaction between external matter and nervous system. It is a composite unity, not the real one.

COMMENT:

1. It is true that the science, based on senses and experiments, with all its minute, delicate and in-depth researches, has not come across a "soul." Also, it is correct that it has not found any phenomenon which irresistibly led one to the soul as its cause. But these two premises do not prove that there is not an immaterial soul - after all, we have written earlier the proofs of its existence. The natural sciences, which discuss the laws of nature and the properties of matter, are by definition limited to the researches concerning matter only, which is its subject. The apparatus and chemicals, etc. which sciences use to conduct and complete their tests and experiments, may throw light on matter and material affairs only. But by the same token these, sciences and their apparatus, etc. cannot pass any judgment - for or against - on metaphysical and immaterial concept and beings. Utmost that a natural science can say is that it did not find a soul. But "not finding" is not "non-existence." The natural sciences, by their definition, are not expected to find within their subject (i.e., within matter and its properties and characteristics) something beyond the limit of matter and physical nature. In fact, their above-mentioned assertion emanates from a gross misunderstanding. They think that those who believed in the existence of soul, did so because they look at some biological functions of their limbs which they could not explain within the framework of their incomplete knowledge, and so they said that there was something immaterial, that is, the soul, that was the source of those functions. But now the science has developed by leaps and bounds and has pin-pointed the natural causes of all such functions. Therefore, there is no need now to believe in the putative soul. (It is the same trend of thought which they have followed while denying the existence of the Creator.) Obviously, it is a wrong assumption. Those who believe in the existence of soul, do not do so because of that supposed difficulty; they do not ascribe some bodily function (of known causes) to the body, and some others (of unknown causes) to the soul. Rather, they ascribe all bodily functions to the body - directly - and to the soul - indirectly, through the body. They ascribe to the soul only one function which cannot be ascribed to the body in any way - man's gnosis of self and his vision of his person or " I ."

2. They have said that the reality seen by man as one is, in fact, a series of nervous perceptions coming to the central nervous system one after another with extreme rapidity but their oneness is only composite. But this assertion is quite irrelevant, and it has nothing to do with the vision of the self. We have argued on the strength of the vision of the self; they are talking about arrival of the sensual visions from the peripheral sense-organs to the central nervous system, and its results. Well, let us suppose, as they say, that actually there are many things, that is, perceptions which have no real oneness; and those perceptions are all material, there is nothing behind them except their own reality; and that the vision which is 'one soul' is in fact the sum-total of these numerous perceptions. If so, then where did this " one " come from - the one which is our only vision, whose "other" has never been perceived by us? Where did this perceived oneness come from?

The talk about "composite oneness" is more like a jest than a serious proposition. A "composite one"

is in reality a collection of numerous things without any oneness at all. Its oneness is imaginary, as we may say one house or one line, which is not one in fact. What they say amounts to this: The perceptions and sensations which are pluralistic and manifold in themselves are one perceptions in itself. It means that these perceptions are numerous in reality, having no oneness at all, and at the same time they are actually only one perception; there is nothing beyond these sensual perceptions to perceive them as one perception - unlike a sense or imagination which consecutively and collectively receives manifold sensory or imaginary perceptions, and perceives them as one. They claim that those manifold perceptions are in themselves one perception - there is no other faculty beyond them which treats this collective vision as a composite one. Also, it is not possible to say that that perceiving is done by a part of brain which perceives the pluralistic picture as "one" - because it will not remove our objection: The perception of that part of brain is itself a part of those consecutively and rapidly-perceived picture, and our objection covers that perception too. That part of brain does not possess a separate perception-power which would deal with these perceptions - as an external sense deals with the external matters and acquires through them sensory pictures. (Ponder on this point.)

Exactly the same arguments (as we have offered above against "oneness" of the sensual perceptions) apply with equal force against firmness and indivisibility of this vision which is always changing and divisible by its very nature.

Apart from that, the premises - that these manifold, consequently (and with extreme rapidity) perceived pictures are perceived by mental vision as one - is wrong in itself. What is brain or its faculties? What is perception and the perceived picture? All these things are material - and matter and material are in their quiddity manifold, changeable and divisible. But the gnosis of "self" is not subject to these material defects. Is it not strange that even then they claim that there is nothing beyond matter and material?

3. They have said that the senses or the perceiving faculties become confused and consequently perceive manifold, divisible and changing things as one indivisible and unchanging thing. But this assertion is manifestly wrong. Error or confusion is a relative - and not an absolute - effect which occurs when one thing is compared with another. For example, we perceive the celestial bodies as small bright dots. Of course, this perception is wrong as we know from academic proofs and our other perceptions. But this error is found out when we compare our sensory perception with the reality of these perceived luminous bodies. As far as that sensory perception itself is concerned, it is a reality - we are actually perceiving small bright dots. And to that extent there is no question of any error or confusion.

The subject under discussion is not different from the above-given example. When our senses and faculties look at numerous divisible and changing things and perceive them as one indivisible and unchanging thing, their confusion and error is found out only when that picture is compared with the real thing existing outside. But so far as the perceived picture found in that faculty or sense is concerned, it is undoubtedly one, unchanging and indivisible - and such a thing cannot be material because it lacks the properties of matter and material.

In short, the above discourse shows that the argument offered by materialists on the basis of senses and experiment, only proves that they could not find the soul. The fallacy is that they have proved 'not finding' and think that it proves 'non-existence'. Also, the picture painted by them to illustrate the vision of self or soul - the vision that is a single, simple and unchangeable reality - is irrelevant and wrong; that picture is in accord neither with established principles of materialism nor with the actual fact.

Now, we should have a look at the definition of soul or psyche as given by the psychologists.

According to them, it is the unified condition resulting from the actions and reactions of various psychological activities - like perception, will, pleasure, love, etc. - which give rise to that unified condition. We have nothing to say about this definition, because scholars of every branch of knowledge have right to postulate a subject for their scholarly pursuit and deliberation. And so have the psychologists. Our concern is about the existence (or inexistence) of the soul in reality, quite independent of the assumptions of the thinkers. And it is a question within the domain of philosophy, not psychology. There are some scholars of theology who believe that the soul is not immortal. They say: It has been established by the disciplines related to human life, like anatomy and physiology, that man's spiritual and biological characteristics emanate from live cells; those cells are the foundations of human and animal lives. Spirit or soul, therefore, is a characteristics and especial effect of those countless cells - each of which contains a life of its own. What the man calls his soul - and to which he refers as " I " - is a composite entity made up of countless souls. We know that these life conditions and spiritual characteristics cease to exist when the life-giving germs and cells die. In this background, there is no question of a single immaterial soul or spirit which is supposed to continue even after the body dies. True that the principles of materialism, established after scientific researches, are yet unable to unravel the mysteries of life. Therefore, we may say that the physical causes are unable to create the soul, and accordingly, it may have been brought into being by a metaphysical being. The attempt to prove the immateriality of the soul by purely rationalistic argument is unacceptable in the world of modern knowledge, which does not rely on anything other than the senses and experiments.

The author says: On meditation you will see that all the objections written against the materialists' arguments apply with equal force to this argument too. The following two objections are over and above that:

First: If the scientific research is upto now unable to unravel the mysteries of soul and realities of life, it does not necessarily mean that it cannot do so even in future; nor that these spiritual characteristics are in fact not based on material causes - although we may not know it. Therefore, the theologians' argument is nothing but a fallacy by which they have equalized inexistence of knowledge with knowledge of inexistence.

Second: They seem to ascribe some worldly affairs - that is, the physical phenomena - to matter, and some others - that is, spiritual affairs - to a metaphysical cause, that is, the Creator. But it implies that there are two creators in the world. It is a proposition which is neither acceptable to the materialists nor the theists. And all the arguments of monotheism rebut such assumption.

There are some other objections against immateriality of soul, described in books of philosophy and theology; all of them show that the writers concerned have not pondered on the proof given by us, nor have they understood its main theme. That is why we have refrained from quoting and commenting on them here. Anyone desirous to know them should look into the books concerned. And Allah is the Guide.

A Discourse on Ethics

Ethics is the science which looks into human traits, related to man's vegetable, animal and human characteristics, and differentiates the good traits from the bad ones, in order that man may complete his practical happiness by acquiring the good traits; and thus emanate from him such actions as attract to him general praise

from the human society. Ethics shows that human morality finally belongs to three comprehensive faculties of man. These faculties lead the psyche to acquire practical knowledge, from which emanate all actions of the human species. These are the desire, anger and rational faculty. Human actions are divided into three categories: Either they are intended to gain some benefit, for example: eating, drinking and wearing clothes, etc. They issue forth from the faculty of desire; or they are aimed at protecting, or repulsing harmful effects from, one's person, honour or property, etc. These actions emanate from the faculty of anger. Or they are related to mental conception and proposition, for example, arranging syllogism, preparation of argument, etc. Such mental activities are caused by rational faculty. Man's personality is composed of these three faculties, and they, by joining together, emerge as a composite unit and become the source of all human activities and actions. In this way, man attains his felicity and happiness, which is the final cause of this composition.

It is therefore necessary for man not to let any of these three faculties deviate from the middle path to either the right or the left, not to allow any of these to exceed the limit or to be deficient - as it would disturb the ratio of that particular ingredient, which would result in changing the entire nature of the composite unit, that is, man himself. This would negate the reason for which the man was created, that is, the felicity of the whole species.

The middle course for any of the faculties is to use it as it should be - both in quantity and quality. The middle course for the faculty of desire is called continence, and its two sides of excess and deficiency are greed and undue quiescence, respectively. The middle course for the faculty of anger is bravery, and the two sides are rashness and cowardice. The middle course of the faculty of rationality is called wisdom, and the two sides are deception and dull-mindedness.

When the three good characteristics - continence, bravery and wisdom - combine in a man, a fourth characteristic is born, just as a new quality emerges when different ingredients of a medicine or mixture are blended together. And that quality is called justice. Justice gives each faculty its due right and puts it in its proper place. Its two undesirable sides are inflicting injustice and surrendering to it.

These four - continence, bravery, wisdom and justice - are the roots of all virtuous characteristics, of good morality. Each of them has numerous branches which issue forth from it and belong to it. They have the same relationship with the above-mentioned roots as a species has with its genus. Examples of these branches are generosity and magnanimity, contentedness and gratitude, patience and gallantry, courage and modesty, sense of honour and sincerity, nobility and humility, and so on. These are the branches of virtuous characteristics, which are given in detail in the books of the Ethics.

And the Ethics defines each of them and distinguishes the middle course from its two sides of excess and deficiency; then it explains why a virtue is virtue, then shows how it can be acquired, until it becomes a firm trait, that is, by firm belief that it is good and virtuous trait and by repeatedly practising it until it becomes a firmly rooted characteristic of the soul.

For example: We say to a coward: Cowardice is born when the psyche is gripped by fear; and fear emanates from something which may happen or may not happen - in future; and such a thing, whose existence and inexistence both are equally possible, cannot be tipped to either side without a cause; a man of reason should not indulge in such fantasies; therefore, a man should not allow himself to be gripped by fear. When a man teaches himself this theoretical aspect, and then repeatedly enters into dangerous situations and resolutely proceeds towards alarming perils, he soon gets rid of the bad trait of fear. The same is the case with all the virtues and evils.

The above description is based on the first system, as was explained in the commentary. That system tries to reform the character and to create a balance, a moderation, in moral traits, in order that

the man may be praised and his virtues lauded by the society.

Somewhat similar is the approach of the second system brought by the prophets and the divine legislators. The only difference is in the aims and objects of the two systems. While the first system aims at acquiring a perfect trait because it is approved by the society and attracts praise from the people, the second one aims at achieving by it the genuine happiness for the man, that is, perfection of belief in Allah and His signs, and the felicity of the next world, which is the real happiness and perfection. Yet, both systems are similar in that, the ultimate goal of both is the perfection of man in his character and morals.

As for the third system (which was explained earlier), it differs from the above two, in that it aims at seeking the pleasure of Allah, not at achieving human perfection. Consequently, its goals sometimes differ from that of the earlier two systems. It is quite possible that what appears as the middle way from this point of view, may not look so from the other two angles. When the faith of a servant proceeds on this path of perfection, when it goes on from strength to strength, his soul is attracted towards meditation about his Lord; he keeps the beautiful Divine Names before his vision, and constantly looks at His lovely attributes which are free from every defect and deficiency; his soul is relentlessly attracted to Allah going higher and higher in his meditation, until there comes a stage where he worships Allah as though he (man) were looking at Allah, and Allah were looking towards him. At this stage he feels the Divine Presence in his attraction, meditation and love. The love increases from strength to strength, because man by nature loves beauty. Allah has said: *and those who believe are stronger in (their) love for Allah(2:165)*. Such a man begins following the Messenger of Allah in all his doings, in every situation, because love of a thing results in the love of its signs, and the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) is the wonderful sign of Allah. (In fact, the whole universe is a sign and token of Allah.) This love becomes stronger and stronger until a time comes when the servant cuts himself from every thing, in devotion of Allah; he loves nothing except his Lord, he bows before none other than Allah. Whenever such a man looks at a thing which has some beauty and attraction, he finds in it a sample - although imperfect

- of the Divine Beauty. He knows that it is but a reflection of the inexhaustible perfection, the unending beauty and incomprehensible splendour of Allah. Allah's is the beauty, grace, perfection and magnificence; every beauty and perfection found in other things, in reality belongs to Him, because every thing is a sign of Allah - it is its only reality, it is nothing more than that; it has no other disposition; it is but a reflection showing the image of the original. This man is, and remains, overwhelmed by love; and he does not look at anything but only because it is a sign of his Lord. In short, all strings connecting his heart to other things are snipped off, leaving it attached only to the love of Allah. Whatever he loves, it is only for the sake of Allah and in the cause of Allah.

At this stage, the mode of his perceptions and actions undergoes a drastic change. When he looks at a thing, he sees Allah before it and with it, every thing loses its independence and identity in his eyes. What he sees and perceives is different from what other people see and perceive; the people look at things from behind a curtain, while he sees them in their true form. This shows the difference in perception, and similar is the case of actions. As he does not love anything except Allah, he does not want anything except for Allah, seeking His Sublime Majesty. He neither seeks nor intends, neither hopes nor fears, neither chooses nor abandons, becomes neither despaired nor depressed, is neither pleased nor displeased - except for Allah and in the cause of Allah. Thus, his aims and goals differ totally from those of other people; his motive is diametrically opposed to that of his fellow beings. Previously, he acquired a virtue because it was a human perfection, and discarded an evil because it was a defect. But now his only interest is in seeking the Sublime Majesty of Allah; he does

not care about any perfection or defect, nor is he attracted to any worldly praise or cherished remembrance; he rises above this world as well as the next; he takes into consideration neither the Paradise nor the Hell - he discards every thing and rises above them. Now, his destination is his Lord; his provision, his humility of servitude; and his guide, his love. As a poet has said:

*Love narrated to me the traditions of amour,
Through its chain of narrators, from neighbourhood
of a distinguished personality, And narrated to me the breath of fresh breeze,
From the branching trees, from the valley of euphorbia
from the heights of Najd, From the tear, from my sour eye, from passion,
From sorrow, from my wounded heart, from ecstasy of love, That my ardor and love have sworn
together,
To my destruction till I am laid down in my grave.*

This discourse, although short and concise, explains our theme (if you study it carefully). It shows that in this third system of the Ethics the question of human perfection or defect becomes irrelevant; and the aim is changed from human perfection to the Sublime Majesty of Allah. As a result, the outlook is changed from those of the other two systems; and it may happen sometimes that what is counted as a virtue in other systems becomes evil in this one, and vice versa.

Now, we should turn our attention to one remaining topic. There is another theory of Ethics which differs from the above- mentioned three systems; and probably it may be counted as a separate system.

They say: Ethics and morality changes in its roots and shoots with the changes occurring in the society, because virtue and vice change with the changing society, they are not based on any permanent, unalterable, firm foundation. Allegedly it emanates from the theory of evolution of matter.

They say: Human society has come into being because of various needs and requirements of life, which man wants to fulfil through the agency of society. He tries to keep the society alive which, he thinks, preserves his own existence. The nature is governed by the law of evolution and gradual perfection. Consequently, society too undergoes constant changes and proceeds to a more perfect and more developed goal. If an action conforms with the aim of society - that is, perfection - it is called virtue; otherwise, it is vice. Therefore, virtue and vice cannot remain unchanged, they are not static or permanent. There is nothing like absolute virtue or absolute vice; they are relative ideas, which change with the changing societies, according to regions and times. As the virtue and vice - being relative factors - undergo changes, so do the ethical and moral values. In other words, Ethics is not absolute; its views on good and bad characteristics are liable to change with circumstances.

From the above, we may infer that Ethics follows the national or social aspirations - the aspirations which are a means of achieving the social perfection (which is the goal of the society); and virtue and vice are governed by it. Whatever promotes development, whatever helps the society in reaching its goal and achieving its aspiration, is good and virtue; and whatever hinders from that goal, whatever keeps the society backward, is evil and vice. Accordingly, lie, false allegation, indecency, hard-heartedness, robbery and shamelessness may become good and virtuous, if they promote the aspiration of the society. And truth, chastity and mercy may become bad and evil - if they hinder it from achieving its goal.

This is a gist of this strange theory which has been adopted by the materialist communists. This theory is not a new one, contrary to their claims. In ancient Greece, the Cynics reportedly had the same idea. Likewise, Mazdakites (the followers of Mazdak, who lived in Iran during the reign of Kisra and was the first to call to communism) were practising it;

and even today some primitive tribes in Africa and elsewhere follow this tenet.

However, it is a false theory, and the proof offered in its support is wrong both in its foundation and structure. Before exposing its falsehood, a few points should be made clear:

1. Every being - that which has external existence - has an inseparable personality of its own. Consequently, one being cannot be another being. For example, existence of Zayd has a personality and a sort of unity which prevents it from becoming the personality of 'Amr. Zayd is one person and 'Amr is another; they are two persons, two human beings, not one. It is a premise whose truth cannot be doubted. (There is a totally different proposition which says: "The physical universe is a being having one individual reality." This proposition should not be confused with the above-mentioned premise.)

2. It follows that the external existence is one and the same with personality.' But mental ideas are different from external beings and their existence is not their personality. Reason admits that an idea - whatever it may be - may be applied to more than one individual, for example, the idea of man, or that of a tall man, or that of the man standing before us. The logicians divide idea into general and particular. Also, they divide the particular into two categories of relative and real. But these divisions are done when an idea is seen *vis-à-vis* another idea, when it is put at the side of the other; or when it is seen in relation to external existence.

This property of the ideas - their applicability to more than one individual - is also sometimes called "generality"; its opposite being "individuality" or "unity."

3. An external physical being is governed by the law of change and general movement. Therefore, it has an expanse and that expanse is divisible into boundaries and pieces, each piece being different from other preceding or following ones. Yet, it is connected with them in its existence. Otherwise, without that connection, it could not be said to be changing or evolving. (If a thing is removed completely and is replaced by an entirely new thing, it cannot be said that the first evolved and changed into the second. If one thing is to change into another, there must be a common factor joining them together.)

4. It follows that that movement is a single thing having its own identity and personality. It looks numerous when it is seen in relation to the boundaries of a thing (as mentioned above). That relation distinguishes one piece from the others. But as for the movement itself, it is a single uninterrupted flow. This characteristic of the movement - this constant flow - is also called a "generality" in contrast to the relations it has with each boundary; we say "general movement", meaning a movement free of its relations with the boundaries and pieces. This "generality" is a thing existing in reality, unlike the "generality of the ideas" mentioned in (2) above, which is mental attribute of idea - an imaginary attribute of an imaginary being.

5. Undoubtedly, man is a physical being; humanity has many members, as well as its own laws and characteristics. What is created by nature is one individual, singly and separately. It does not create the collection of people which we call human society. Of course, the nature was aware that man needs somethings to perfect his existence which he could not obtain on his own. Therefore, the nature equipped him with organs, faculties and powers which would be useful in his endeavours to make up his deficiencies within the framework of society. Obviously, the single man is the goal of creation, primarily and principally, while society is a secondary goal, just a by-product.

6. The human nature demands a society and proceeds towards it, (if we can use the words of demand, causality and movement - in their real sense - about the society!). What is the real relation between man and this society? An individual man is a single and personal being (in the sense we have

described above). At the same time, he is constantly on move, changing, evolving, proceeding to his perfection. That is why every piece of his changing being is different from other pieces. Yet his is a nature, flowing, "general", preserved in all the stages of the changes; in short, his nature is a single personality. This nature found in this individual man is preserved by the means of procreation, by branching out of one individual into other individuals. It is this factor which is called "nature of the species." It is preserved through the individuals, even if they are changed, even if they undergo creation and destruction (in the same way as was explained about the individual's nature).

Individual's nature exists and proceeds towards personal perfection. Likewise, nature of species exists and proceeds towards the perfection of the species.

There is no doubt that this endeavour for perfection of species exists in the natural system. That is what we mean when we say, for example, that the human species proceeds towards perfection; or that today's man is a more perfect being than the primitive man. The same demand for perfection of species is in the minds of those scientists who speak about the evolution of species. Had there not been a nature of species, existing in reality, preserved in the individuals (or in species), such talks would not have had any value - it would have been just a metaphorical speech. As with the individuals, so with the society. There is an individual, or let us say particular, society, which is found amongst the people of a nation, of a time or of a region. Also, there is a general society found in the human species, continuing with its continuation, evolving with its evolution (if it be correct that society, like a social man, is an externally existing condition of an externally existing nature!).

7. Society moves and evolves with the movements and changes of man. This society is a single entity from the initial stage of the movement to wherever it proceeds to, with a general existence. This "one" (which changes because of its relation with each and every boundary) becomes divided into numerous pieces. And every "piece" is a part of the society, that is, a "man." The parts or members of the society rely in their being on the persons of mankind. In the same way the general civilization - in the sense described above - depends on the general human nature. The law governing a unit is a unit of the law; and the law governing a "general" is the general rule. ("General rule" does not mean an abstract rule, because we are not talking about "general ideas.") Undoubtedly an individual man, being a single entity, is governed by a rule, which continues with his continuation. Yet that rule undergoes partial changes, following the changes occurring in the man himself. For example, there is the rule that the physical man takes food, acts by his will, has feelings and imagination, thinks and perceives. These rules exist and continue as long as the man himself exists. Of course, minor changes may occur in those general rules consequent to the changes occurring in the man.

The same principle applies to the humanity in general, the general mankind, which exists with the existence of its individuals.

8. As establishment of society is a law of human nature and one of its characteristics, so the general society is a characteristic of the general human species. (By general society we mean the society, *per se*, the society established by human nature and which is continuing uninterruptedly from the day man came into being to this time.) This general society exists and continues with the humanity. And the laws of society which it has brought into being will remain intact as long as the general society exists. Of course, some minor changes may occur in it but the main principles will remain unchanged, like the mankind itself, which continues although its individual members go on changing. Now it is clear that there are some ethical principles which are unchangeable and are valid for ever - like general virtue and vice - as the general society is firm, constant and unalterable from the beginning. Society cannot turn into non-society (i.e., individuality) - although a particular civilization may give way to

another particular civilization. Likewise, general virtue (and vice) cannot turn into non-virtue (or non-vice) - although a particular virtue may evolve into some other particular virtue.

9. An individual man needs - for his existence and continuation - some perfections and benefits which he must achieve and acquire for his own self. That is why nature has equipped him with organs and faculties to help him in this compulsory quest, for example, alimentary canal for food intake and digestion, and sexual organs for reproduction and continuation of the species. It is obligatory for man to use these systems for the purpose they have been created for. He should not completely ignore them by leaving them unused, because it would be against the dictate of nature. Likewise, he should not over-indulge in these activities, he should not eat or cohabit more than necessary; for example, he should not go on eating until he becomes sick, or dies, or becomes unable to use his other faculties. He must keep to the middle course in achieving all his requirements, perfections and benefits. This middle course is called continence; and its two undesirable sides are greed and undue quiescence. Likewise, we see that every individual, in his existence and continuation, is faced with many such things which are harmful to him and which he is obliged to resist, and repulse from himself. And this "obligation" is proved by the fact that nature has equipped him with the organs and powers to defend himself with. Therefore, it is obligatory for him to defend himself and resist the harmful things - keeping himself on the middle course. He should not neglect and crush these powers nor should he overuse them. This middle course is called bravery, and the other two sides are rashness and cowardice. The same is the case with wisdom and its two sides, deception and dull-mindedness; as well as with justice and its two sides, injustice and surrender to injustice. These are, thus, the four faculties and virtues which are demanded by the nature of an individual man - the nature which is equipped with its necessary tools: continence, bravery, wisdom and justice. And all of them are good and virtues. Good is that which is in conformity with the ultimate goal of a thing and promotes its perfection and felicity; and, as explained above, all the four are in conformity with the felicity of the individual. And their eight opposites are bad and evil.

When an individual, by his nature and in himself, has this attribute, then he would be having it also within the framework of the society. Society, being a product of nature, cannot negate nature's rules; otherwise, it would be a contradiction in terms. After all, what is society if not the co-operation of the individuals to facilitate the perfection of their natures and achievement of their aspirations.

10. Human species in framework of the "general" society has the same characteristics as an individual has in his particular society, as mentioned above. Human species in its civilization tries to achieve its perfection by repulsing what is harmful and acquiring what is beneficial to it; by learning as much as is good for it and practising justice - that is, giving everyone his due right, without indulging into injustice and without surrendering to injustice. And all these four characteristics are virtues. The civilization, *per se*, decrees that they are absolute virtues and their opposites are absolute vices.

The above discourse clearly shows that in the constant and perpetual human society, there are absolute virtues and absolute vices - society cannot "be" without them. It also shows that the four fundamental ethical values are absolutely good and virtuous and their opposites absolutely bad and evils; as has been decreed by the social nature of humanity. And the case of their branches is not different from that of the roots.

They too are absolute and unchanging - although there may occur some differences sometimes in their applications, as we shall mention afterwards.

Now it is clear that what they have said concerning relativity in morality is not correct: -

They said: "Absolute virtue and vice do not exist. What exists is the relative virtue and relative

vice; and it is a changing thing which varies with regions, times and societies."

Reply: It is a fallacy, because they have confused the "generality of idea" with "generality (i.e., continuation) of existence." It is true that absolute good and vice - in the meaning of general ideas - do not have external (i.e., real) existence. But here we are not concerned with them. What we are concerned with are absolute virtue and vice - in the meaning of lasting social factors which continue as long as the society exists, by decree of nature. The aim of the society is the happiness of the species. And it is impossible to think that all happenings and possible events and actions would always be good for the society. Surely some would conform with its needs and some would not. Accordingly there would always be good and evil in the society. How can we suppose existence of a society - of any type - in which the members do not believe that every one should be given his due right, or that it is necessary to gain benefit to its proper limit, or that they must protect and defend the cause of the society as and when needed, or that the knowledge - by which man differentiates what is beneficial from what is harmful - is a good attribute? These four beliefs are the above-mentioned justice, continence, bravery and wisdom. As was said, every society, of any description whatsoever, decrees that these four characteristics are good and virtuous. Moreover, how can we think of a society that does not ordain that one must refrain from indecencies? And that feeling is modesty, a branch of continence. Or a society that does not exhort one to be enraged when rights are usurped or the sanctity of sacred things violated? And it is the earnest sense of honour which is a branch of bravery. Or that one should be happy with his due social rights? And it is contentedness. Or that one should preserve one's social status without snubbing other people, without putting them out of countenance by one's arrogance? And it is modesty and humility. We may go on enumerating in the same way each and every branch of the ethics and morality.

They say: "The views often differ from society to society on what virtue is. One thing is considered as virtue in one society, while another society treats it as vice."

Reply: Of course, there are some minor examples of this phenomenon. But it is not because one society believed in acquiring good traits while the other dismissed it as unnecessary. Whatever the difference, it only occurs because one society believes that trait to be good, while the other thinks it is evil. So the difference is not about the principle, it is only in its application.

For example: The societies ruled by autocratic rulers used to believe that the sovereign had total authority over his subjects, and absolute power to do whatever he wished and order whatever he liked. But that belief was not based on any negative attitude towards justice. It actually emanated from their belief that that absolute power was the due right of the ruler; they thought that what the ruler was doing was not injustice, he was only exercising his due authority and taking his just right.

Likewise, some societies thought that it was a shame if their kings studied to acquire knowledge, as is reported about French kings of the medieval ages. But it was not because they looked down at the virtue of knowledge; it was only because they thought that acquiring knowledge of politics and studying the ways of managing various government departments would conflict with the king's rightful royal activities and engagements.

In the same way, some societies do not acknowledge any excellence in chastity of women (i.e., not establishing sexual relation with any man other than their husbands), and their modesty. Nor do they believe that their men should feel enraged if their women indulged in licentiousness. The same is the case with some other virtues like contentedness and humbleness etc. But it is only because those societies do not think that these things fall under continence, modesty, self-respect, contentedness and humbleness. It is not that they do not accept these main virtues as virtues. After all, they praise a judge or a ruler if he practices continence in his rule and judgment. They appreciate it if one is ashamed of

breaking a law; they laud a man who, overcome by national zeal, defends the nation's independence, the cause of civilization, or the sanctity of other sacred values. They praise a man who remains content with what the law has allotted to him; and applaud the loyalty and obedience shown by the public to their leaders and rulers.

They say: "Whether a characteristic is good depends on its conformity with the goals of social aspirations." Then they come to the conclusion that the said characteristic's excellence depends on its conformity with the society's goals. But it is a clear fallacy. Society is an institution which comes into being when its members enforce, and act upon, all the laws decreed by nature. This society is bound to take them to their happiness and felicity (provided there is no disturbance in its arrangement and flow); and the society is bound to have some rules and regulations like virtue and vice, good and evil. On the other hand "society's aspiration" is just a set of some imaginary ideas, invented for creating a society on prescribed lines by imposing it on its members. In other words, society and society's aspirations are two completely different things: Society is an established fact, society's aspiration is only a potential which is yet to come into being; the former is an actual fact while the latter is only a plan yet to be implemented. How could one be equated with the other? The virtue and vice are brought into being by the general society on the demands of the human nature; how could such an actual fact be brought under the domain of some aspirations - the aspirations which are nothing but some imaginary notions?

Question: The general civilization, brought into being by nature, has no authority of its own; whatever authority there is, it belongs to its goals and aspirations - especially if it is a theory conforming to the happiness of the society's individuals.

Reply: The preceding discussion about virtue and vice and good and evil, shall be repeated in this case again - until the talk stops at a permanent, perpetual and unchanging decree of nature.

Apart from that, there is another difficulty. Let us suppose that virtue and vice as well as all the rules of civilization depend on the goals and aspirations of the society. And it is those aspirations on which the arguments of these people are based. But it is possible - nay a fact - that there may be different conflicting goals and aspirations within one society, or between different societies. Which aspiration would then prevail? Which one the people should give preference to? Which would be acceptable to the general society? The fact is that in this situation there will only be one criterion, and that is the power and domination; in other words, might is right. How can it be believed that the human nature led the human beings to a social structure whose parts are in conflict with one another? Can the society be governed by a rule which would negate the society itself? Is it not an ignominious contradiction in the rule of nature and the demands of its existence?

A Few Traditions on Some Related Topics:

Al-Baqir (a.s.) said: "A man came to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and said: 'I am keen (and) enthusiastic for *jihad*.' (The Messenger of Allah) said: 'Then *dojihad* in the way of Allah because if you are killed, you shall remain alive near Allah and sustained, if you die (before that), then your reward is indeed with Allah... '"

The author says: The Prophet's words, "and if you die... point to the word of Allah: *and whoever goes forth from his house emigrating to Allah and His Messenger, and then death overtakes him, his reward is indeed with Allah* .. (4: 100). It also shows that proceeding to *jihad* is emigration to Allah and His Messenger.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the prophet Isma'il, whom Allah has named "Truthful in promise": "He was named 'Truthful in promise' because he had promised a man (to wait for him) in a place. So he remained waiting for that man for one year. Therefore, Allah named him 'True of promise'. Then that man came to him after that (long) time and Isma'il said to him, 'I have been waiting for you...' " (al-Kafi)

The author says: It is a thing which average wisdom would probably say was a deviation from middle course, while Allah has counted it as an excellent virtue of the said prophet, increasing thereby his prestige and raising his status, as He has said: *And mention Isma'il in the Book, surely he was truthful in(his) promise, and he was a messenger, a prophet. And he enjoined on his family prayer and alms-giving, and was one in whom his Lord was well pleased*(19:54-5). The fact is that the criterion by which this action was judged is different from the one used by common wisdom. The average wisdom, the common sense, looks at the things according to its own views, and Allah looks after His friends by His Own help and support; and the word of Allah is the High. Many similar events have been narrated about the Prophet, the Imams and other friends of Allah

Question: How can rules of the *shari'ah* go against the dictates of reason, in situations where reason may have a say?

Reply: True that reason may judge the virtue or vice of an action wherever it is possible for it to do so. But that thing or action should first come within its jurisdiction before it can pronounce its judgment on it. And we have explained earlier that such actions (as described in the above tradition) are governed by the third system, and that system takes such actions out of the jurisdiction of human intellect and reason - reason does not have any say against or about them. It is the way of the Divine Knowledge. Apparently the prophet Isma'il (a.s.) had given that man unconditional promise by saying, 'I shall wait for you here until you come back to me.' Therefore, he stuck to that unconditional wording, to save himself from breaking the promise, and to fulfill what Allah had put in his mind and made his tongue utter. Of the same import is an event related about the Prophet that he was near the Sacred Mosque when one of his companions told him that he would come back to him, and the Prophet promised to wait for him until he would return. That man went away and did not return, and the Prophet remained there three days waiting for him in the same place which he had promised. That man passed by that place after three days and found the Prophet sitting there waiting for him and he himself had forgotten the promise.

as-Sayyid ar-Radi has narrated from the Leader of the faithfuls ('Ali - a.s.) that he heard someone saying: "*Surely we are Allah's and to Him shall we surely return.* " Thereupon, he ('Ali a.s.) said: "O man! Verily our word, *Surely we are Allah's, is* acknowledgment by us that we belong to Him, and, *to Him shall we surely return, is* acknowledgment by us that we are to die." (*al-Khasa'is*)

The author says: Its meaning is clear in the light of the earlier given explanation. The tradition has been narrated in detail in *al-Kafi*.

Ishaq ibn 'Ammar and Abdullah ibn Sinan have narrated from as_Sadiq (a.s.) that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (s.a. w.a.) has said: Allah the Mighty, the Great, has said: "I have given the world as loan to My servants. Then whoever gives Me a loan from it, I give him ten times to seven-hundred times in lieu of one. And whoever does not give Me a loan and I take something from him by force, then I give him three things that if I gave one of them to My angels they would be pleased of Me." "" Then Abu 'Abdillah said: "(It is) the words of Allah: *Who, when a misfortune befalls them, say: 'Surely we are Allah's and to Him we shall surely return.'* Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course." Then Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said: "It is for the man from whom Allah takes something forcibly." (al-Kafi)

The author says: This tradition is narrated by other chains, all having nearly the same theme.

as- Sadiq (a. s.) said: "*as-Salah*" from Allah is mercy, and from the angels is purification, and from the people is prayer." (*Ma'ani 'l-akhbar*)

The author says: There are other traditions of the same meaning.

At first glance, there appears to be a conflict between this and the preceding tradition. This tradition explains *as-salah* as mercy, while the preceding one counts *as-salah* as other than mercy; and this view is further strengthened by the wording of the verse itself which mentions *as-salah* and mercy separately, "blessings and mercy from Allah." But in fact there is no contradiction as we have explained in detail in the Commentary.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSE 158

الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنَ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوْ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا وَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلِيمٌ 2:158
 2:158 Surely the Safa and the Marwa are among the signs appointed by Allah; so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or pays a visit (to it), there is no blame on him if he goes round them both; and whoever does good spontaneously, then surely Allah is Grateful, Knowing.

General Comment

The Safa and Marwah are two places in Mecca between which a pilgrim has to perform *as-sa'y* (the ceremony of walking quickly seven times between Safa and Marwah, during the *hajj* and *'umrah*; literally to move quickly, to run). These are two hills, the distance between them reportedly being 760 1/2 arm. *as-Safa* (hard smooth rock); *al-Marwah* (hard stone). *ash-Sha'a'ir* is the plural of *ash-sha'irah* (sign); from it is derived the word *al-mash'ar* (the *hajj* station, east of Mecca); also they say, *ash'ara 'Thady* (he marked or branded the sacrificial animal). *al-Hajj* literally means repeated intention; in Islamic terminology it refers to the special rites collectively known as Pilgrimage of Mecca. *al-I'timar* means to visit; it is derived from *al-'imarah* (building) because buildings thrive by visits; in Islamic language it refers to the so-called "lesser pilgrimage" to the Ka'bah, which unlike the *hajj* need not be performed at a particular time and whose performance involves fewer ceremonies. *al-Junah* is deviation from truth and justice; it is used for sin and misdemeanor; thus, negation of sin or blame implies permission. *at-Tatawwuf* is derived from *at-tawf* that is, to make the rounds; it denotes a round trip, that is, a journey or walk that ends at its starting point; it need not necessarily be a circumambulation around something (although circumambulation is more obvious application of the word); it is the former meaning in which it has been used in this verse - it refers to *as-sa'y*, that is, walking between the Safa and the Marwah seven times consecutively. *at-Tatawwu'* is derived from *at-taw'* (to do a walk willingly and gladly). Some people, differentiate between *at-tatawwu'* and *al-ita'ah* and say that the former, unlike the latter, is exclusively used for voluntarily done good deeds. If correct, this assertion might be based on the view that the obligatory deeds - because of their obligatoriness - are probably not done willingly, unlike the voluntary and recommended actions which are done willingly by one's own accord. But it is a far-fetched interpretation. In fact, *at-taw'* is opposite of *al-kurh* (dislike), and is not irreconcilable with obligatory deeds. Allah says: so *He said to it* (i.e., the heaven) *and to the earth: "Come both, willingly or unwillingly"* (41:11) The characteristic meaning of the paradigm *at-tafa'ul* is to take to oneself, for example, *tamayyaza* (he took on distinguishing), *ta'allama* (he took on learning); in the same way *tatawwa'a* means, he took on doing good willingly. In short, *at-tatawwu'* is not reserved, from the linguistic point of view, for voluntary, non-obligatory good deed - unless credit is given to the usage of the common people.

QUR'AN: Surely the Safa and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah... to go round them

both:

The two hills are marked by the signs of Allah; they lead accordingly to Him and remind one of Him. They have been especially counted "among the signs of Allah" to the exclusion of other things; it shows that the word, "the signs" has not been used here in the sense in which every created thing is a sign of the Creator. They are the Divine Signs because Allah" has made them so, by appointing them as the places of His worship; thus they remind one of Allah" the Creator. They are the signs for which Allah" has prescribed especial rites of worship.

Then comes the next sentence: "so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or performs *'umrah* thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both. The word "so" in the beginning shows that it is an offshoot of the preceding sentence. Its import is to show that walking quickly between these two hills is a part of the Islamic *shari'ah* - it does not imply that the said walking is voluntary or non-obligatory. If Allah" had wanted to declare its voluntariness, it would have been more appropriate to praise and extol *as-sa'y*, rather than saying that there was no blame in it. The gist of the meaning is that - because the Safa and the Marwah were among the places of the worship of Allah" - it would do you no harm to worship Him therein. And it is the language of legislation. If Allah" had wanted to show only its desirability, He would have said that, because the two hills were among the signs of Allah" He likes you to go round them.

Frequently, when the Qur'an wants to ordain an obligatory law, it uses such expressions which by themselves do not show obligatoriness. For example, Allah" says regarding *jihad*; *that is better for you* (61:11); regarding fast: *and that you fast is better for you* (2:184), and regarding shortening of prayer: *And when you journey in the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten the prayer* (4:101).

QUR'AN: *and whoever on his own accord does good, then surely Allah is Grateful, All-knowing:*

The conjunctive "and" may be joining this sentence to any of the three phrases in the preceding one:

1. It may connect it with "so whoever makes a pilgrimage In that case it would show a more general reason for the legislation of the walking between the two hills, after giving the particular reason, that is, "Surely the Safa and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah." According to this interpretation, "doing good on one's own accord" would mean "obedience" in general term, and not a voluntary deed.

2. It may be starting a new sentence, joining it to the words in the beginning of the verse. In that case, "doing good on one's own accord" would refer to the "going round the two hills ." Thus it would show only the desirability of *as-sa'y* (walking quickly seven times between Safa and the Marwah).

3. Alternatively, the phrase "doing good on one's own according" may be referring to the *hajj* and the *'umrah*, and the phrase would show the desirability of these two rites of worship.

ash-Shakir (Grateful) and *al- A lim* (All-knowing) are two of the beautiful names of Allah. *ash-Shukr* (gratefulness, thankfulness). When a beneficiary returns the benevolence of the benefactor by announcing it in words and/or deeds, it is called gratefulness.

Someone gives you a property, and in return you praise him mentioning his benevolence, or use that property in a way he likes - and thus you show your gratefulness to him.

Now, Allah is the Beneficent; His beneficence is eternal and all beneficence begins from Him; none can oblige Him in any way so that He would be grateful to that person. Yet, He, in His benevolence, looks at His creatures' good deeds as though the creatures have been beneficent to Him by doing those deeds (although, in reality the case is diametrically different; the creatures' good deeds are actually His benefaction to them). And thus he repays those good deeds with gratefulness and benevolence, which in fact is a double benevolence. Allah says: *Is the reward of goodness aught but*

goodness? (55:60); *Surely this is a reward for you, and your striving shall be recompensed* (76:22). Thus, the name "Grateful" is used for Allah in its real, not allegorical sense.

Traditions

One of our companions has narrated this tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.). He says: "I asked him about walking between the Safa and the Marwah whether it was obligatory or voluntary. He said: 'Obligatory, ' I said: 'Does not Allah say: so *whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or performs 'umrah thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both?*' He said: 'It was in the *'umrah of Qada** that is, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) had stipulated with them (i.e., the pagans of Mecca) that they would remove the idols (for the period of *'umrah*); and one of his companions was engaged otherwise until the idols were returned (to their places).' (The Imam) said: 'Then Allah revealed: *Surely the Safa and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or performs 'umrah thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both*, i.e., even when there were idols on them.'" (al-Ayyashi)

The author says: A nearly similar tradition is found in *al-Kafi*.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) says describing the *hajj* of the Prophet: "After circumambulating around the House and praying its two *rak'ahs*, (the Prophet) recited: *Surely the Safa and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah* (Then he said:) 'So I shall begin with that which Allah the Mighty, the Great, has begun with (i.e., from the Safa).' And verily the Muslims used to think that walking between the Safa and the Marwah was something invented by the polytheists; so Allah revealed: *Surely the Safa and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah so whoever makes a pilgrimage or performs 'umrah thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both.*" (*al-Kafi*)

The author says: Obviously, there is no contradiction between the two traditions regarding the reason of the revelation of the verse. The words of the Prophet, "I shall begin with that which Allah, the Mighty, the Great, has begun with", show the basis of legislation. We have narrated, in the story of Hajar and her running seven times between the Safa and the Marwah, that the ritual of *as-sa'y* started from that.

'Amir ash-Sha'bi said: "There was an idol, called Asaf, on the Safa, and another, called *Na'ilah* on the Marwah. The people of (the days of) ignorance, after circumambulating the House, used to walk between the two (hills) and touch and wipe the two idols. When the Messenger of Allah, (peace be on him) arrived at Mecca, they (i.e., the Muslims) said: 'O Messenger of Allah, (As for) the Safa and the Marwah, surely the walking around them was done because of the two idols, and walking around them is not among the signs (of Allah, Then Allah, revealed: *Surely the Safa and the Marwah...* Thus, He (especially) mentioned the Safa because of the idol that was on it, and affirmed the Marwah because of the idol that rose from it." (*ad-Durru'l-manthur*)

The author says: Both sects have narrated numerous traditions having the above-mentioned themes. Their implication is that the verse was revealed in the year when the Muslims performed the *hajj*, while the Chapter of the Cow is the first one revealed at Medina. It may therefore be inferred that the verses are unconnected with the preceding verses (of the *qiblah*) which were revealed, as described earlier, in the second year of *hijrah*; nor are they related to the verses in the beginning of the chapter which were revealed in the first year of *hijrah*. It shows that the verses were revealed in various contexts, not in one.

* In the 7th year of *hijrah*. (tr.)

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 159-162

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّاعِنُونَ 2:159
 إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنُّوا فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَثُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ 2:160
 إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمُ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ 2:161
 خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ 2:162

2:159 Surely those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance that We revealed after We made it clear in the Book for men, these it is whom Allah shall curse, and those who curse shall curse them (too).

2:160 Except those who repent and amend and make manifest (the truth), these it is to whom I turn (mercifully); and I am the Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful.

2:161 Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the angels and men all.

2:162 Abiding in it; their chastisement shall not be lightened nor shall they be given respite.

Commentary

QUR'AN: *Surely those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance that We revealed:*

Obviously "the guidance" means that knowledge and *shar'ah* which the Divine Religion contains, and which lead the followers to the eternal bliss; and "the clear proofs" means the verses, signs and the arguments which are the clear evidence, proofs and attestations for the truth - the truth that is guidance. "The clear proofs", as used in the Divine Speech, is a special description for the revealed verses. Therefore, concealing the clear proofs may mean hiding the verses themselves from the people; or concealing their true meaning through misinterpretation and misapplication - as the leaders of the Jews did with the verses prophesying the advent of the Prophet. What the people did not know, they concealed; and what they knew, they misinterpreted and diverted it from the Prophet.

QUR'AN: *after We made it clear for men:*

It shows that they concealed the truth after Allah made it clear for all the mankind, not only for the Jews. It is not feasible, in the prevalent world system, to explain a thing to each and every person individually - not only in revelation but in every general announcement. As a general rule, only a few persons are informed of the matter directly, and it is through them that the rest of the people get the information; he who is present conveys the message to the absent persons; the learned one explains it to the ignorant. The knowledgeable man is counted as one of the links to convey the message, like the tongue and speech. When a learned man, bound by the pledge taken from him, explains the message to others, he makes the truth clear to the people. If he hides his knowledge, he keeps the truth concealed from the people, after it was made clear to them. And, as Allah has said, it is the only thing which has made people differ in matters of religion, and has diverted them from the path of guidance to that of misguidance. Otherwise, religion conforms with nature; human nature agrees with it and discerning

mind surrenders to it when it is properly explained. Allah says: *Then set your face uprightly for the (right) religion in natural devotion (to the truth); the nature 'Made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no alteration (by anyone else) in the creation of Allah; that is the right (established) religion, but most people do not know (30:30).* So, the religion is natural; nature can never resist it, if it appears before it with some clarity, either because of the purity of the recipient's heart, as is the case of the prophets, or because it is explained properly - the latter method invariably always depends on the former.

That is why the above-quoted verse combines the two premises: the naturalness of religion and lack of its knowledge. It says: *the nature made by Allah in which He has made men;* and then says: *but most people do not know.*

Again Allah says: *Mankind was but one people, so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed. And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves...*

(2:213). It shows that difference about the contents of the book emanates from the revolt of the scholars who already have its knowledge. Religious differences and deviations from the right path are caused by the revolt of the religious scholars as they conceal the revealed truth, misinterpret it and alter it; and because of their injustice. That is how "injustice" will be defined on the Day of Resurrection. Allah says: *Then a crier will cry out among them that the curse of Allah is on the unjust, who hinder (people) from Allah's way and seek to make it crooked... (7:44-5).* There are many verses of the same theme.

Clearly, the verse under discussion (*Surely those who conceal the clear proofs...*) is based on the above-quoted verse: *Mankind was but one people, so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they differed. And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves... (2:213).*

And it points to the recompense of that revolt in the next sentence, "these it is whom Allah does curse ... "

QUR'AN: *these it is whom Allah does curse, and those who curse do curse them (too).*

It describes the punishment of those who revolt against truth and hide the Book and the guidance which Allah has sent down. The punishment is the curse by Allah and the curse by those who curse. The word "curse" has been repeated because the curse of Allah is different from the curse of those who curse. The curse by Allah is removal from mercy and bliss, and that by those who curse is praying to Allah to remove the cursed one from that mercy and bliss.

There is no restriction at all on the curse of Allah or the curse of those who curse, nor is there any limitation on "those who curse." This generality shows that every curse by anyone who curses is actually directed to those revolters and concealers of the Divine Proof and Guidance. And reason supports this view: The aim of the curse is to remove the cursed one from happiness and bliss; and there is no real happiness and bliss except the religious one. As this real religious bliss is fully explained by Allah and accepted by nature, no one can be deprived of it except the one who rejects and denies it. This deprivation is confined to him who knows it and then knowingly rejects it. It does not affect him who did not know the said religious bliss and to whom it was not clarified. Allah has taken pledge from learned people to spread their knowledge and to publish whatever Divine proofs and guidance they had received. If they conceal it and hold it back, then in effect they have rejected it. Therefore, "these it is whom Allah does curse, and those who curse do curse them (too)." This

explanation is further supported by the following verse: "Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the angels and men all." Apparently, the particle *inna* (surely) coming at the beginning of the verse gives the reason, or intensifies the theme, of the verse under discussion, by repeating its meaning in other words, "Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers."

QUR'AN: *Except those who repent. . the Merciful:*

It is the exception from the preceding verse. It qualifies their repentance with amending and making manifest the truth. They must make their previous behavior known; they must announce their repentance. In other words, they must announce to the people what they were concealing of the truth, and also make it known that previously they had concealed it. Otherwise, it will be as though they have not repented yet -because they are still hiding the fact of their previous concealment of the truth.

QUR'AN: *Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the angels and men all.*

It alludes to their persistence in disbelief and their obstinate and stubborn refusal to accept the truth. (If a man does not accept the true religion, not because of obstinacy and arrogance, but because it was not made clear to him, then in reality he is not a disbeliever, he is *al-mustad'af* [= weak; according to Islamic terminology, a man who does not have true faith, but is not inimical to it]; his judgment is in the hand of Allah.) This theme is supported by the fact that most of the verses describing the disbelief qualify it with "belying." Look especially at the verses of the descent of Adam, containing the first law legislated for the mankind: *We said: "Get down you therefrom all together; and if there comes to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve. And (as to) those who disbelieve in and belie Our signs, they are the inmates of fire, in it they shall abide."* (2:39-40)

Likewise, in this verse the words, "Those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers," refer to those who obstinately belie the signs and guidance of Allah.) - those who conceal what Allah has revealed. And Allah describes their recompense in these words: "these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the angels and men all." It is a Divine Decree that every curse by anyone from among the angels or men, without any exception, shall be attached to them only. In this respect they are like the Satan, when Allah told him: *And surely on you is curse until the Day of Judgment* (15:35). Thus, Allah made him the target of every curse from whatever source it may emanate. Likewise, these learned persons who conceal their knowledge are partners of Satan in this general and unrestricted curse. See how hard is the tone of this verse, and how formidable its theme! We shall write something related to it, Allah willing, under the verse: *That Allah may separate the impure from the pure, and put the impure, some of it upon the other, and pile it up together, then cast it into the hell, these it is that are the losers.* (8:37).

QUR'AN: *Abiding in it (i.e., in the curse), their chastisement shall not be lightened nor shall they be given respite.*

The word "curse", has been changed here to "chastisement"; it shows that the curse shall be converted into their chastisement on that Day.

In these verses, the references to Allah have been changed several times from the first person to the third and vice versa. The verse begins with the first person pronouns: "We revealed", "We made it clear"; then the style changes, mentioning Allah by name, Allah does curse ." The change was affected because the theme demands show of intense displeasure, and the greater the name of the displeased person, the more severe the effect of the displeasure - and none is greater than Allah. Therefore, the action of the curse was attributed to Him by name, to give it the most vehement force. Then the

reference was again changed to the first person pronouns, "I turn (mercifully); and I am the Oft-returning (to mercy)... " It was done to show the highest mercy and benevolence of Allah - every adjective is discarded, all attributes are set aside and "I Myself return to them mercifully." You will appreciate the difference if you read this sentence thus: These it is to whom Allah turns mercifully; or thus: These it is to whom their Lord turns mercifully. Obviously, these sentences do not show that high degree of mercy that reflects from this sentence, "these it is to whom I turn (mercifully)." The next verse again discards the pronoun for the Divine Name, "these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the reason is the same as was explained for the change in the first verse.

Traditions

One of our companions has narrated from as-Sadiq (a.s.). He says: "I said to him: 'Tell me about the word of Allah. the Mighty, the High: *Surely those who conceal...* '. He said: 'We are meant by it - and to Allah is the resort for help. When (*imamah*) comes to one of us (i.e., the Imams), he has no authority (or, choice) but to make it clear for the men who will be (Imam) after him.'" (al-Ayyashi)

al-Baqir (a.s.) said about this verse: "(Allah) means us by it, and to Allah is the resort for help."

Muhammad ibn Muslim said: "(The Imam) said: 'These are the People of the Book.'"

The author says: All these traditions are based on the principle of the flow of the Qur'an and its application. Otherwise, the verse is general.

Some traditions quote 'Ali (a.s.) as saying: "Its interpretation is the learned people when they are deprived."

The Prophet said about this verse: "Whoever is asked about knowledge which he has got, and he conceals it, he shall be reined on the Day of Resurrection with a bridle of fire; and it is (the import of) His words, *these it is whom Allah does curse and those who curse do curse them (too)*." (*Majma'ul-bayan*)

The author says: These two traditions confirm what we have written in the Commentary.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said explaining the words of Allah *and those who curse do curse them (too)*: "We are those (who curse); and they say that it means the vermins of the earth." (al-Ayyashi)

The author says: The explanation given by the Imam reminds one of the import of the verse: ... *and the witnesses shall say: "These are they who lied against their Lord."* Now surely the curse of Allah is on the unjust (11:18). The Imams are the witnesses, allowed by Allah to speak on the Day of Judgment, who speak the right thing. The Imam also mentioned some people's explanation that *those who curse* refers to the vermins of the earth. This interpretation is attributed to the exegetes like Mujahid, 'Ikrimah and others; and some traditions ascribe it to the Prophet.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: about the verse, *Surely those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance*, (that it means the proofs and guidance) "regarding 'Ali." (*ibid.*)

The author says: It is the flow and application of the Qur'an.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 163-167

- وَالْهُكْمُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ 2:163
 إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ
 مَاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ
 يَعْقِلُونَ 2:164
 وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَنْدَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِذْ يَرَوْنَ الْعَذَابَ أَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ
 لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ 2:165
 إِذْ تَبَرَّأَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا وَرَأَوْا الْعَذَابَ وَتَقَطَّعَتْ بِهِمُ الْأَسْبَابُ 2:166
 أَلِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا لَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَتَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُمْ كَمَا تَبَرَّأُوا مِنَّا كَذَلِكَ يَرِيهِمُ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ حَسَرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَا هُمْ بِخَارِجِينَ مِنَ النَّارِ 2:167
 2:163 *And your God is one God! there is no god but He; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful.*
 2:164 *Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day, and the ships that run in the sea with that which profits men, and the water that Allah sends down from the cloud, then gives life with it to the earth after its death and spreads in it all (kinds of) animals, and the changing of the winds and the clouds made subservient between the heaven and the earth, there are signs for a people who understand.*
 2:165 *And there are some among men who take for themselves objects of worship besides Allah, whom they love as they love Allah, and those who believe are stronger in love for Allah and O, that those who are unjust had seen, when they see the chastisement, that the power is wholly Allah's and that Allah is severe in requiting (evil).*
 2:166 *When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed (them), and they see the chastisement and their ties are cut asunder. And those who followed shall say: Had there been for us a return, then we would renounce them as they have renounced us.*
 2:167 *Thus will Allah show them their deeds to be intense regret to them, and they shall not come forth from the fire.*

Commentary

These verses are connected together in one context, with a single theme. They remind the audience about the belief of monotheism offering proofs to support it, and describe polytheism and its ultimate result.

QUR'AN: *And your God is one God:*

We have explained the meaning of *al-ilah* (God) in the Commentary of the first verse of the first chapter, the Opening. Oneness is a self-evident idea, which needs no explanation. A thing is called one in view of one of its attributes, for example, one man, one scholar or one poet. These words show that the related attribute is indivisible, and not subject to plurality. For example, the manhood of one man, Zayd, is not shared between him and someone else. It is in contrast with manhood of two men - Zayd and 'Amr, for example which is shared by the two, and is therefore numerous. Thus Zayd, in

context of his attribute of manhood, is one and indivisible and not subject to plurality. But when he is looked at in this very context combined with his other attributes - like his knowledge, power, life, etc. -then he is not one; he is a multiple in reality.

Allah is One, in view of His attribute, like His divinity, which is not shared by anyone else. He is one in His divinity as well as in His knowledge, power and life. He has knowledge, unlike other knowledge, and power and life unlike others' powers and lives. Also, He is one because His attributes are not multiple, they are not separate from one another except in their verbal meanings; His knowledge, His power and His life, all is one thing, all is His very person; none of them is separate from the other. Allah knows by His power, and has power by His life, and is alive by His knowledge. He is not like other things where attributes are multiple and numerous not only in meanings but in reality also.

Sometimes a thing possesses the characteristic of oneness in its personality, that is, by its very nature and essence, it cannot accept multiplication or division in its self; it cannot be divided into various parts or into its person and name etc. This oneness is called oneness of person, and it is referred to with the word *al-ahad* (one); this word is never used except as a first construct of a genitive construction or in a negative, prohibitive or similar sentences, in the meaning of no one, any one, etc. For example, we say: No one came to me. This sentence negates the personality itself, irrespective of its oneness or plurality, because this oneness is related to its nature and essence, and not to its attribute. This connotation will be lost if we were to say, one man did not come to me. This sentence does not imply that two or more men did not come; it is because "oneness" in this sentence is an attribute of the comer, not of his person.

The reader should keep in mind this short explanation until we write about it in detail. Allah willing, under the verse: *Say: "He, Allah, is One."* (112:1)

The words, "And your God is one God," imply that divinity, godhead, is exclusively reserved for Allah, and that His oneness in divinity is such as becomes His sublime status.

The word *al-wahid* (one), as understood by the audience of the Qur'an gives the idea of oneness, of a general type

That meaning may be applied to various kinds of oneness. But only a few of those connotations may be applied for Allah. The word "one" may show oneness of number, of species, or of genes, etc. And the people were bound to take it in the meaning best suited to their beliefs and ideas. That is why the Qur'an did not say: And Allah is one God. Because this sentence does not establish monotheism; even the polytheists say that He is one God, in the same way as each of their deities is one god,

Nor would have the sentence, "And your God is one", established monotheism. Because it could be imagined that He is one in the species of divinity. People say, when they enumerate the species of animals: Horse is one; mule is one - although horse and mule are manifold in number.

That is why the Qur'an said: "And your God is one God." "One God" (in contrast to two or more gods) is made predicate of "Your God." In this form the sentence clearly establishes the belief of monotheism, by restricting the godhead to one of the gods in which they believed.

QUR'AN: *there is no god but He:*

It further emphasizes the clear declaration of the preceding sentence about monotheism and negates every possible misinterpretation or superstition. The negative particle "*la*" (no) is used here to negate the genes; *ilah* (god) denotes here real and actual God. The sentence has an implied predicate "existent", and the meaning will be as follows: There is no real and actual god existing "but He." The pronoun "He", used in place of the proper name, Allah, is in nominative, not subjunctive case. Therefore, the word "but" is not used here as particle of exception; rather it is an adjective in the

sense of "other than." The complete sentence, thus, means: There is no real god, other than Allah, existing.

The sentence therefore aims at repudiation of gods, other than Allah - the deities, which had no real existence outside the imagination of their worshippers. It does not aim at refuting other deities and proving the existence of Allah, as many scholars have thought. Our explanation is supported by the fact that the sentence needs only a negative mode, and not a negative followed by affirmative. Only repudiation of other imaginary deities is enough to confirm the Oneness of Allah in His godhead. Moreover, the Qur'an treats the existence of Allah as a self-evident truth, which needs no proof or argument. The Qur'an only cares to affirm and prove His attributes; for example, it only proves that Allah is One; that He is the Creator, the Knower, the Powerful and so on.

Question: You say that the sentence has an implied predicate existent (or some other word of the same meaning). If so, then it would only negate the actual existence of other deities but not the "possibility" of their existence.

Reply: First, it is meaningless to suppose that there could be a "possible" or transient being (having equal relation with existence and non-existence), which would be the ultimate cause of all the existing things and their affairs. Second, we could change the predicate to "true" or "actual"; then the meaning would be: There is no god in reality other than He.

QUR'AN: *the Beneficent, the Merciful:*

We have explained its meaning in the exegesis of the first verse of the first Chapter, the Opening. With these two names, the meaning of Allah's Lordship becomes complete. From Him emanates every general bounty pursuant to His Beneficence and every special favor, in the way of guidance and the next world's bliss pursuant to His Mercy.

QUR'AN: *Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth...*

As mentioned in the beginning, the verse aims at proving what the preceding verse has established: "And your God is one God": there is no god but He; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful." The verse under discussion may be analyzed as follows: There is a god for each of these phenomena; there is only one God for all of them; and that one God is your God too; He is the Beneficent who bestows general bounties; and the Merciful, who leads to the ultimate happiness - the blessings of the next world.

These are the established facts; and in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and all the phenomena mentioned in this verse, there are signs to prove these facts for a people who understand.

The verse offers arguments to prove that there is a god, and He is one -the God of this magnificent universe is One, and He Himself is the God of man. It is not the import of this verse to prove the existence of the God of man, or His oneness. Otherwise, all the phenomena mentioned in it would have all together constituted only one sign - by showing that the management of all is inter-related and forms a single system. If so, then the preceding verse should have been restyled in this way: And your God is one, there is no god but He.

The proofs in short run are as follows:

First Proof: These heavens, the canopy high above us with all these awe-inspiring luminous stars, constellations and galaxies shining therein; this earth, our shelter and refuge, with all its wonderful natural systems; all these regular changes and alternations occurring in this world - the alternation of the day and the night, the running ships and boats, the pouring rains, the changing winds, the suspended clouds - all these things need by their very nature, a Creator. There is, therefore, a Creator God for all of them.

Second Proof: Look at these heavenly bodies, varying in mass from the minutest to the largest. There is one so small that the scientists have found its volume to be equal to: 0.00000000000000000000000033 cubic cm.; while there are others so huge as to be equal to millions of our earth, which in itself has a diameter of about 9,000 miles. They have found the distance between some celestial bodies to be 3,000,000 light years. A light year is approximately 365 x 24 x 60 x 60 x 300,000 kilometers.

Ponder on these figures, which boggle the mind and stupefy the brain. Then decide, as you wish to decide, about this unique and wonderful system. Keep in mind that each of these untold billions of the suns and planets act on, and react to, the others, no matter where and how distant they are from each other. This goes on by the law of gravity, which permeates the whole universe, and through light and heat. In this way, the established system continues without any impediment. And it is an all-pervasive never stopping system, run according to an established law. Even the theory of relativity (which says that the directions of movements in the physical world are subject to deviations) affirms that another inviolable law governs that deviation itself.

This movement, this general rotation, appears in every part of the universe in a uniform way; look for example at the movement of the sun with its planets and satellites. Now look nearer at hand at our own earth, with its own moon and various systems (the day and the night, the winds, the clouds and the rains). Reduce your circle of vision once more, to ponder on earthly matters and creatures, minerals, vegetables, animals and various other things. Find out about countless species one after another; then go on reducing the circle until you come to the elements, then to the atoms; then the particles of the atoms; finally you shall come to what is today the last stage of the scientific discovery, that is, the electron and the proton. Even there you will find a miniature solar system at work; a nucleus around which these smallest particles revolve, exactly like the movement of the planets around their suns, and the endless journey of the suns (with their families) towards an unknown destination.

Stop at any stage in this scientific journey and you will find an amazing system - a system whose wonders will never cease and whose marvels will never stop. There is no exception in its flow, not even one; nor is there any question of chance in its intricately-woven design, not even a rare one. Man cannot reach its shore, nor does he fully comprehend all the signs on this path.

Proceed from the smallest to the largest heavenly body. You will find it a single universe with one and unified system and inter-related arrangement. Look through the most powerful far-reaching telescope and use the most advanced observatory, you will find the same law governing all celestial bodies.

Now, reverse your journey, until you reach again to the smallest unit. Break it down to its parts, reaching to molecule. You will find in it a miniature universe, with the same design and the same inter-related arrangement - although the two vastly differ in their natures and identities.

In short, the universe is one, and its arrangement and management inter-related; all its parts - no matter how diverse and multiple they may be - are managed under a single system; *and the faces are humbled before the Living, the Self-subsistent God* (20:111). Therefore, the God of the universe is one; He alone created and He alone manages it.

Third Proof: Man is an earthly creature. He lives on the earth and after his death returns to it. His existence and life needs nothing more than the above-mentioned system that governs the whole universe - a unified and inter-related system. The heavenly bodies with the light and heat they generate, the earth with its alternated days and nights, the winds, the clouds and the rains, the beneficial goods it produces and which are transported from region to region - these are the things

man requires for his physical needs, for his existence and continuation of life. *And Allah encompasses them on every side* (85:20). It proves that the God who created the universe and manages its affairs is the same God who also created man and manages his affairs. God of the universe is the God of man.

Again, it is God who bestows on every thing what it needs for happiness of this world and for bliss of the next (if he is qualified for the bliss of the next life) - because the next world is the ultimate destination of this abode. How can anyone manage the end of any affair other than he who manages the affair itself? This is the proof given by the two names, *The Beneficent, the Merciful*.

And in this way is perfected the rational argument offered by this verse for the preceding one. This view is strengthened by the fact that this verse begins with the particle *inna* (surely), which is also used for offering arguments. And Allah knows better.

In short, the words, "Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth", point to the heavens with all their luminary bodies, and the earth with all the wonderful creations and astounding products it contains; the forms which give each species its name, the matter which constitutes its body; their transformation from one form to the other, their recurring additions and subtractions, their joining together and breaking apart. As Allah says: *Do they not see that We come into the land curtailing it of its sides?* (13:41); *Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and the earth were closed up, so We have opened them: and We have made of water every thing living... ?* (21:30)

QUR'AN: *and the alternation of the night and the day:*

It refers to the changes in durations of the nights and the days, which are caused by a combination of two factors: First is the daily rotation of the earth on its axis. This always keeps a little more than half of the earth's sphere facing towards the sun, which sends light and heat to the earth's surface -and that is called the day. The opposite side of the sphere is dark, throwing a conical shade in the space - and it is the night. The day and the night are continuously rotating on the face of the earth.

The second factor is the revolution of the earth on its orbit around the sun. The earth's axis does not form a right angle with the orbit; it has a tilt (of 23 ½ degrees); and because of that tilt the earth's north-south position vis-à-vis the sun changes at different times of the year; when the northern hemisphere is inclined to the sun, it is summer in the north and winter in the south; when the southern hemisphere is inclined to the sun, the north experiences winter and the south, summer. Also, it is because of this tilt that the equator and the North and the South Poles always have days and nights of equal length: The two Poles have only one day and one night in a year - each night and each day being six months long. When it is day on the North Pole, the South Pole has its night, and vice versa. As for the equator, it has about 365 days and 365 nights in a solar year - all of equal length. As for the other regions, the days and the nights differ - in number as well as in length, depending on their distance from the equator and the two Poles. Full description of this phenomenon may be found in the sciences concerned.

It is because of this difference that the sun's life-giving light and heat reach various regions of the earth with varying intensity. This in its turn creates diversity in various factors governing the earth and its environment. And man profits from that diversity in numerous ways.

QUR'AN: *And the ships that run in the sea with that which profits men:*

al-Fulk is boat, ship; it is used for singular and plural both. *al-Fulk* and *al-fulkah* have the same meaning; as *at-tamr* and *at-tamrah* (date) are synonymous. "that which profits men", refers to various types of cargoes and food items which are transported by ship from coast to coast, from region to region.

The verse counts the ships (which are made by man) side by side with those things and natural

phenomena, which are beyond human power, like the heavens, the earth and the alternation of the day and the night. It shows that ultimately the ships too, like those natural phenomena, are the handiwork of Allah. On deep consideration, when we ascribe a work to a man, it has no more significance than ascribing it to a natural cause. Of course, man has a free will and power. But he is not a sufficient or total cause; nor does that freedom make him independent of Allah. He is as much in need of Allah's will and permission as any other natural cause. A natural cause acts on, and reacts with, a matter and through a process of combination and break up gives it a form - let us say, turns it into a rock. A man cuts, breaks up and joins some matters giving them a form - let us say, turn them into a boat. Is there any difference between the two makers? Both ultimately draw their strength and ability from Divine creation and invention; nothing is independent of Allah either in its person or in its activities.

Boat too, like all physical creations, depends on Allah in its existence, as well as in management of its affairs. Allah has pointed to this fact in the verse, where Ibrahim (a.s.) is quoted as telling his people about the idols which they worshipped as god: *And Allah has created you and what you make* (37:96). Admittedly, an idol is but a thing made by man, and Ibrahim (a.s.) ascribes its making to Allah. The same applies to the boats and ships. Also, Allah says: *And His are the ships reared aloft in the sea like mountains* (55:24). According to this verse, the ships belong to Allah. Again, He says: *and He has made the ships subservient to you, that they might run their course in the sea by His command...* (14:32) This verse declares that also the ships' affairs is in Allah's hands.

Can Man-Made Things be Attributed to Allah?

How heedless are those who think that the things made and manufactured by man are exclusively his creation and cannot be attributed to Allah at all - just because they are made by man's will and choice!

First, in this group are the materialists who do not believe in a Creator. They say: The theists believed in a Creator because they found in the nature many things and happenings whose material cause they did not know. As they knew that nothing could happen without a cause, they had to admit that there was a cause for such things and happenings, which was not known to them yet. In this way they came to believe that there was, for those things of unknown cause, a cause whose reality was hidden from them and which was beyond the natural world - and that cause was God. According to the materialists, the belief in the existence of a Creator was a hypothesis which emanated from the ignorance of the primitive man: that man was surrounded by so many phenomena of unknown causes; for example, atmospheric changes and many happenings on the earth. Likewise, there were many psychological factors (whose natural causes are unknown to the science even today). And this resulted in the belief in a super-natural Creator.

They say: Now the sciences have succeeded in unraveling many mysteries of natural phenomena, and in identifying their natural causes. Thus, one of the two pillars of the above-mentioned hypothesis has been pulled down - that is, the need of some natural phenomena for a super-natural cause. Now remains the other pillar - that is, the need of some psychological factors for an immaterial cause. The recent advances in the field of the organic chemistry, give us hope that man will soon understand the mysteries of the soul; then he will be able to manufacture the life-giving cells and germs. This will enable him to create any living being and bring about any psychological effect. Then the second pillar of this hypothesis will go down - and there will remain no basis for believing in a super-natural Creator. Man will create whatever he wishes of spiritual and psychological effects, as he is making today whatever he likes of the physical and material things - although just yesterday he was insisting that there was a hypothetical super-natural cause for these things. Now we know why he held that

belief - it was just because he did not know the real cause of these phenomena.

COMMENTS:

First: If these fat-heads were to wake up from their conceit, they would see that the theists from the very beginning of their belief in a Creator (and there never was a beginning for it) affirmed that creative cause for the whole universe - those things having known physical causes as well as those having unknown causes. According to them this whole lot, in its entirety, needs a cause, separate from the universe. Clearly what the materialists reject is not what the theists believe in. The theists - and the history and the research has not been able to pin-point a starting point for the belief in the Creator, in the history of humanity - have believed in the existence of one or more creators for the whole universe, although the Qur'an has shown that the religion of monotheism appeared before polytheism; and the orientalist, Max Muller, the pioneer in the studies of Sanskrit, also has thrown light upon it. Obviously, the theists, even the primitive man among them, used to see and recognize physical causes of many physical phenomena. Yet, they affirmed that there was a God for the whole universe (not excluding those phenomena of known causes). Evidently, when they believed in the existence of the Creator, basing their argument on the all-pervasive system of cause-and-effect, it was not to solve the problem of some phenomena of which they could not find a cause. After all, they did not say that some parts of the universe needed a Creator, while others (having some known causes) did not need that. What they believed was this: The universe is made up of a series of natural causes and effects. This whole universe, taken as a composite unit, needs and requires a Cause, above all other causes; all actions and reactions, all causes and effects, interacting amongst its countless components, rely and depend on that Cause of the causes. The belief in that Supreme Cause does not negate the general law of causality, which permeates all components of the universe. In the same way, the existence of material causes for the material effects does not make this whole chain of the causes and effects independent of the Supreme Cause, who is out of this universe and separate from it. (When we say 'out of this universe', we do not mean that the Supreme Cause is placed on the summit of the pyramid of the causes and effects. We mean that the Supreme Cause encompasses the whole universe with all its causes and effects, from every possible side.)

The materialists have fallen in an amusing contradiction. They believe that there is a general all-pervasive compulsion in all happenings in the world - including human actions. According to them, every action, every happening, is a compulsory, inescapable effect of various causes. And at the same time they say that if a man created another man, it would not finally end at the Cause of the universe - if there were such a cause.

This fine and deep theme is always present in the subconscious mind of common people (even if a simple man is unable to express it in so many words). That is why they say that the whole universe - together with all its causes and effects - is the creation of a Creator God.

Second: When the theist philosophers furnish the rational proofs to prove the existence of the Creator, they do so after establishing that there is an all-pervasive system of causality in the world. Then they proceed to prove that all these "possible", transient causes must end at an essential, self-existent cause.

This method has been used by them for thousands of years, from the earliest age of philosophy to this, day. There was never any doubt in their minds that the effects - including the natural transient causes - need an essential Cause. In other words, when they attribute the effects to an essential cause, it is not done because they do not know some thing's natural cause.

Third: The Qur'an proves the oneness of the Creator. It does so by showing that the general law of causality governs all components of the universe; it accepts the attribution of each happening to its

particular cause, and confirms what normal wisdom says about it. It ascribes natural phenomena to their natural causes, and attributes to man the actions done by his own free will. There is no need to quote here numerous verses based on this theme. And then it ascribes all these things and happenings - without any exception - to Allah. For example, *Allah is the Creator of every thing* (39:62); *That is Allah, your Lord, the Creator of every thing; there is no god but He* (40:62); *His is the creation and command* (7:54); *His is what is in the heaven and what is in the earth and what is between them two and what is beneath the ground* (20:6). Whatever may be called a "thing", it is created by Allah and may be attributed to Him in a way befitting His Majesty. There are other verses which attribute an action to its doer and at the same time ascribes it to Allah. For example, *And Allah has created you and what you make* (37:96). The verse attributes the actions of men to them and then attributes their creation and that of their actions to Allah. Also, it says: *and you did not smite when you smote* (the enemy), *but it was Allah. Who smote* (8:17). This verse admits that the Messenger of Allah did the act of throwing arrow and then negates it, ascribing it to Allah. Himself. There are other verses of the same connotation.

There are some other verses, which combine the two attributions in a general way. For example, ... *and Who created every thing, then ordained for it a measure* (25:2); *Surely We have created every thing according to a measure... And every thing small and great is written down* (54:49-53); *Allah indeed has made a measure for every thing* (65:3); *And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure* (15:21). Making or appointing a measure for every thing means that Allah has confined it within the limits of the material causes and the boundaries of time and space.

In short, it can never be doubted that the Qur'an proves the existence of the One and Only God basing its arguments on the system of causality found in all the components of the universe; and then it attributes the whole universe to Allah, Who created and made all of it. It is not that we ascribe some things to Allah and some others to their material causes -as the materialists allege.

Why could not the materialists understand this clear fact? The Church misled them in the medieval ages, whose pseudo-philosophers tackled this and similar problems in the manner quoted by the materialists; writers of other religions too rely on similar arguments. The fact is that their discourses were distorted, and their arguments lacked precision. They wanted to explain their true claim (which, their reason told them in general terms, was correct). They tried to go into details of that general idea. But their weak understanding and unripe reasoning led them away from the right method; consequently, they generalized their claim and misdirected their argument. It were they who attributed every thing or effect of unknown cause directly to Allah, and said that voluntary actions did not need any outside cause, and that consequently man's voluntary actions did not belong to Allah man was independent of Allah in such actions. We have written on this topic in detail under the verse: *but He does not cause to err by it* (any) *except the transgressors* (2:26); here something more has been added to complete the discourse.

Another group is that of some Muslim traditionalists and theologians (and some others) whose vision does not penetrate to the inner core of a subject. They did not understand how could the voluntary actions of man be attributed to Allah in a manner that would conform to His Sublime Majesty. Consequently, they thought that man-made things could not be said to have been made by Allah and especially those things, which were made exclusively for sins, for example, liquor, and instruments of music and gambling etc. Allah says: ... *intoxicants and games of chance and* (sacrificing to) *stones set up and* (dividing by) *arrows are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork...* (5:90). And evidently what Allah counts as handiwork of Satan should not be ascribed

to Allah Himself.

COMMENT: The discourse written earlier is enough to show the invalidity of this erroneous surmise - both from the Qur'an and traditions and the rational point of view. The fact is that man's voluntary actions may be attributed to Allah in a befitting manner, and likewise man-made things, being the result of those actions, may be attributed to Allah.

Moreover, "the stones", mentioned in the verse 5:90 above, refers to the idols and images, which are set for worship, and the verse 37:96 (*And Allah has created you and what you make*) says that those idols too are creation of Allah. Obviously, an idol may be looked at from different perspectives. From one point of view it may be ascribed to Allah, for example, looking at the nature of its existence, disregarding the fact of its being used for sin of polytheism. What is an idol? It is just a stone or metal with a particular shape; and as such there is no reason why it should not be attributed to the Creator of all things. Of course, from another angle it is a thing that is worshipped besides Allah. and from this perspective it cannot be attributed to Allah. it should rather be ascribed to the Satan or man. The same principle may be applied for other man-made things.

It clearly shows that man-made things may be attributed to Allah just like any other natural phenomenon, without any difference. Of course, it all depends on the degree of existence the said things enjoy. (Think on it.)

QUR'AN: *and the water that Allah sends down from the cloud, then gives you life with it to the earth after its death and spreads in it all (kinds of) animals:*

What is rain? There are various elements mixed in the water of rivers and other water sources. Then it turns into steam, going up and carrying heat. The steam continues to ascend until it reaches extremely cold strata of the atmosphere. Then the steam changes into water coming down as rain. Some times the steam is frozen into snow or hail. In whatever form, it comes down to us, which drinks it in and becomes alive again. Also, the earth stores a major part of the rain, etc., above or below its surface, and that water comes out and flows as streams and rivers, etc., on the face of earth. Water is the source of life for every living thing. The rain coming down from the clouds is a phenomenon of life, which takes place according to a well regulated and intricately laid down system - without any break down or exception. The genesis of vegetables and animals - of all types - depends on water.

The rain - being inter-woven with so many phenomena of the universe, horizontally and vertically - becomes an inseparable part of the universe. It needs a Creator to create it, a cause to bring it into existence. In other words, there is a God- for it. And man's genesis and life depend on the rain and water. Therefore, the same God who has created water and the intricate system of rain is the God who has created man. The God of rain is the God of man.

QUR'AN: *and the changing of the wind:*

It refers to the changes in directions of the wind, because of various natural factors, the most important of them being the sun's rays. The sun raises the temperature of the air, making it lighter and less dense. This lighter air is unable to carry the load of the surrounding air, which is cooler and heavier. Therefore, the heavier air glides down, forcibly displacing the lighter one. The lighter air travels in a direction opposite to that of the heavier one. And the resulting current is called wind. The wind helps in pollination of trees, shrubs and flowers, removes atmospheric pollutions, and carries rain clouds from one place to another, besides rendering many other services. Blowing of wind is a most important factor in the genesis and life of vegetable, animal and man.

Wind, by itself, proves that there is a Creator God; by its inter-woven relation with other terrestrial

and extra terrestrial phenomena, proves that there is only one Creator for the whole universe; and by being a very important factor for the genesis and life of man, proves that the God of man and the God of the universe is one and the same.

QUR'AN: *and the clouds made subservient between the heaven and the earth:*

as-Sahab is condensed watery vapor floating in air at some distance; it is the source of rain. As long as the steam remains on or near the earth, it is called *ad-dabab* (fog; mist); when it leaves the earth and floats in the air at a distance, it is called *as-sahab*, *al-ghaymand al-ghamam* etc., all having the same meaning: cloud. *atTaskhir* (to subjugate a thing, to make it subservient in its activities). The cloud is made subservient, in its flow and rain, to the winds and atmospheric temperature and other relevant factors, by the permission of Allah.

The cloud is a sign of Allah in the same way as other things mentioned with it, The alternation of the day and the night, the rain coming down from the clouds, the blowing of wind and the subservient clouds are the main natural phenomena, which together make up the system of creation in the terrestrial world, like the vegetable, the animal and the man. This verse may therefore be taken to be a detail of the general statement contained in the verse: ... *and He blessed therein and made therein its foods, in four periods: alike for the seekers* (41:10).

QUR'AN: *there are signs for a people who understand:*

al-Aql is *masdar* of *'aqala*, *ya'qilu* (he understood, he understands). It denotes perfect comprehension and understanding. *al-Aql* is that by which man differentiates between good and bad, distinguishes fact from fiction, and discerns truth and falsehood. It is the self same man who perceives; it is not one of his faculties and characteristics, which are like branches of the soul, for example, the memory, and the eye-sight, etc.

QUR'AN: *And there are some among men who take for themselves equals* (i.e., objects of worship) *besides Allah:*

an-Nidd is on the paradigm of *al-mithl* and has the same meaning: equal, alike, etc. In some other verses Allah has used a slightly different phrase; for example, *therefore do not set up equals to Allah*(2:22); *and they set up equals with Allah* (14:30). The style has been changed here to "besides Allah" because it is preceded by the exclusive statement: "And your God is one God! There is no god but He..." Thus anyone taking any object of worship besides Allah would violate that exclusiveness without any justification; he would take as god something which, he is well aware, is not god; he would do so just in pursuit of his base desire, and in complete disregard to the decree of his reason. That is why Allah has used the word "equals" as common noun, to show their degradation: "And there are some among men who take for themselves equals besides Allah.

QUR'AN: *Whom they love as the love for Allah, and those who believe are stronger in (their) love for Allah:*

The word used is *yuhubbunahum* (they love them); the objective pronoun used here is reserved for rational beings. It means that the word "equals" does not refer to idols only; it includes also the angels and those men who were worshipped besides Allah. Rather, it covers all those who were obeyed by people without any authority from Allah. This interpretation gets support from the verse following it: *When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed* (them) (2:166). Also, Allah says: ... *and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah* (3:64); *They have taken their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allah* (9:31).

The verse shows that love may be attributed to Allah in reality, contrary to the claims of those who say that love, being a branch of the faculty of desire, is related in reality to the body and the matters concerning the body only; and cannot be attributed as such to Allah According to them, love of God

means obedience to Him, doing what He commands us to do and refraining from what He forbids; thus love may be attributed to Allah only in a metaphorical sense, as Allah says: *Say: "If you love Allah then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your sins"* (3:31).

But the verse under discussion goes against their claim. The phrase "stronger in (their) love for Allah", shows that love of Allah may vary in intensity; it is stronger in the believers than in those who take others as equals to Allah. On the other hand, if love is taken to mean obedience, the meaning would be: "and those who believe are more obedient to Allah. Obviously, there could be no question here of any comparative degree of obedience, because the obedience of others is no obedience at all in the eyes of Allah. Therefore, "love" here has been used in its real, not metaphorical, sense.

It is supported also by the verse which says: *Say: "If your fathers and your sons and your brethren and your mates and your kinsfolk and property which you have acquired, and the trade slackness of which you fear and dwellings which you like, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His way..."* (9:25). The word translated here as 'dearer' is *ahabb* (more loved). Evidently the love ascribed to Allah and that ascribed to His Messenger, and the love attributed to the fathers, the sons, and the property, etc., is all of the same quiddity, all of it has the same reality. Otherwise, the phrase 'dearer to you' could not be used. The comparative degree signifies that both sides - the preferred one and the preferred against - share -in the basic quality, although they differ in its degree, one being stronger, the other weaker.

The verse condemns those who take others as equals to Allah, saying: "whom they love as the love for Allah"; then it praises the believers, saying that they, "are stronger in (their) love for Allah." This comparison between the two groups apparently shows that the former has been condemned because they have divided their love between Allah and those whom they have taken as equals to Allah. There was possibility of a misunderstanding that if they had loved Allah more, they would not have been blamed. But the next sentences leave no room for such erroneous surmises. "O that those who are unjust could see when they see the chastisement that the power is wholly Allah's... When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed (them), and they see the chastisement and their ties are cut asunder... Thus will Allah show them their deeds to be intense regret to them..." These verses make it clear that they have been condemned not because of the love, per se, but because of its concomitant, that is, following. They followed false deities thinking that those deities had power, which would help the followers to fulfill their desires or to ward off some undesirable situation. Thus, they discarded the truth either wholly or in some aspects - and the one who follows Allah in some aspects only, is not a follower at all. Thus, there is no room for the abovementioned misunderstanding. It is now clear that man should not take any partner for Allah in this love, otherwise, it will be polytheism. However, when the love for Allah becomes stronger, the lover does not follow anyone other than Allah; he exclusively obeys the commands of Allah. That is why the believers have been praised that they "are stronger in (their) love for Allah."

Now we know that the love has been praised and condemned because of its concomitant, that is, following and obedience. If a man loves someone other than Allah in obedience to the commands of Allah, when that someone calls to the obedience of Allah only, then such a love cannot be censured at all. As Allah says: *Say: "If your fathers and your sons... are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger..."* (9:25). This verse assigns to the Messenger (s.a.w.) a love as it assigns it to Allah Himself; it is so because love of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) is one with the love of Allah. Why? Because the effect of this love, that is, following of the Messenger (s.a.w.) is exactly the obedience of Allah. Allah Himself calls to the obedience of His Messenger, as He says: *And We did not send any messenger but that he should be obeyed by Allah's permission* (4:64); *Say: "If you love Allah then*

follow me, Allah will love you" (3:31). In the same category comes the love of any one whose obedience leads to the obedience of Allah for example, a religious scholar who guides people by his knowledge, a sign that points to Allah the Qur'an which brings the reciter nearer to Allah and things like that. All these are loved because of the love of Allah and by following them one obeys Allah and comes nearer to Him.

In short, whoever loves any one besides Allah, thinking that he has a power, and follows him in order to fulfill some of his needs, or obeys him in a matter which Allah has not allowed, then he has indeed taken other objects of worship besides Allah and surely Allah will show them their deeds to be intense regret to them. On the other hand, the believers are those who love nothing except Allah, do not seek power except from Allah and do not follow except that which is from the commands and prohibitions of Allah They are those who are sincere to Allah in religion.

Also, it is clear that the love of those whose love is Allah's love, and whose obedience Allah's obedience (like the Prophet and his progeny; the divine scholars, the Book of Allah and the traditions of His Prophet; in short, every thing that leads one to Allah's remembrance in a sincere way) is diametrically opposed to polytheism. Indeed, one proceeds nearer to Allah by loving and following the above-mentioned personalities and things. To honor and respect them is a part of piety, and love and fear of Allah as Allah says: *and whoever respects the signs of Allah this surely is* (the outcome) *of the piety of hearts*(22:32). *ash-Sha'a'ir* means the signs that lead or point to some thing; the phrase, 'the signs of Allah is general, not restricted to any particular thing like the Safa and the Marwah, etc. It means that one must respect every sign of Allah every divinely approved symbol, which reminds one of Allah because it is an outcome of piety, a reflection of the love and fear of Allah and this principle applies to all the signs which lead one to piety.

Of course, it is clear as day that one should not think that those signs and symbols are in any way independent of Allah or that they control for themselves or for others any harm or profit, or that they have any independent authority over their own or others' life, death or resurrection. Evidently, if one had such a belief, then these things would not remain signs of Allah they would become equals of Allah - and it would be *ash-shirk* ascribing partners to Allah may He protect you from such polytheism.

QUR'AN: *O that those who are unjust could see, when they see the chastisement, that the power is wholly Allah's and that Allah is severe in chastisement:*

Apparently, "when they see the chastisement" is the object of the verb, "could see"; and "that the power is wholly Allah's and that Allah is severe in chastisement" are the explanatory phrases describing "the chastisement" (in the phrase "when they see the chastisement "). *Wa-law* (would that; O that; if only; I wish) is an optative particle, used to express wish. The verse therefore means: Would that those who are unjust could see in this world the day when they would see the chastisement; then they would see that the power belongs wholly to Allah, and that they had committed the greatest blunder when they ascribed some of that power to their false deities, and that Allah is severe in chastisement and in punishing those who are guilty of this unforgivable sin. As the next verses show, the chastisement would contain of their seeing their blunder in taking other objects of worship besides Allah, and in their wrong assumption that those objects had any power, and then seeing the punishment of their polytheism and misdeed. The next two verses support this interpretation: "When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed (them)." The followers will not get any hoped-for benefit from their leaders; "and they see the chastisement and their ties are cut asunder." Nothing shall have any power or effect besides Allah. "And those who followed shall say: 'O were there for us a return:'" they shall ardently wish to return to this world

"then we would renounce" these objects of worship whom we took as equals to Allah, and whom we followed, in this world, "as they have renounced us" in the next world. "Thus will Allah show" those who were unjust and took others as equals to Allah, "their deeds" (i.e., their love and obedience to those leaders whom they took as equals to Allah "to be intense regret to them, and they shall not come forth from the fire."

QUR'AN: *and they shall not come forth from the fire:*

It is a proof against those who say that the chastisement of the fire shall one day come to an end.

Traditions

Shurayh ibn Wni said: "A Bedouin went on the day of the Camel to the Leader of the faithful (Ali, a. s.) and said: 'O Leader of the faithful! Do you say that Allah is one?' " (Shurayh) said: "Then the people bore down on him and said: 'O Arab! Don't you see how preoccupied the Leader of the faithful is?' But the Leader of the faithful said: 'Let him be, Because what (this) Bedouin wants (i.e., gnosis of Allah) is the very thing which we want from these people (i.e., the enemies).' Then he ('Ali, a.s.) said: 'O Arab! The sentence, "Allah is one", may be interpreted in four ways, two of them are not permissible for Allah and two are allowed. The two meanings which are not permissible for Allah are: (1) The saying of one who says "one", when he uses it as a number: It is not permissible, because that which has no second (i.e., is unique) does not come within the domain of number. Do you not see that Allah has declared him an unbeliever who said that God was the third of the three? (2) And the saying of a one who says that "He is one of the people", in the same sense as a species is one of (its) genes. This (also) is not allowed because it likens Allah (to other things), and our Lord is too great for, and far above of, this (likening). And as for the two meanings which are applicable to Him, they are: (1) The saying of one who says, "He is one, there is nothing like unto Him"; such (indeed) is our Lord. (2) And the saying of one who says that, He, the Mighty, the Great, is unique in significance, that is, He is not divisible - neither in existence, nor in thought or imagination; such (indeed) is our Lord.'" (*al-Khisal; at-Tawhid Ma'ani'l-akhbar*)

The author says: The two meanings confirmed by him (Ali, a.s.) conform to what we have written in the explanation of the verse: *And your God is one God...*

The lectures narrated from 'Ali (a.s.), ar-Rida (a.s.) and other Imams of the *Ahlu'l-bayt* (a.s.) repeatedly say that 'He is one not by number'. It refers to His pristine person that does not accept counting.

There is in a prayer of *as-Sahifah as-Sajaddiyyah*, the sentence, "Thine is the oneness of number." It is interpreted as to refer to "ownership", that is, 'Thou art the owner of the oneness of number'; it does not mean that 'Thou art one in number', because reason as well as the Qur'an and the traditions firmly prove that His existence is Unique and pure, it is not duplicable nor can it be repeated - according to His person and reality.

al-Baqir (a.s.) said in a tradition, *inter-alia*, about the words of Allah, *And there are some among men who take for themselves equals besides Allah...* : "O Jabir! They are, by Allah! the leaders of the unjust ones and their followers" (*al-Kafi; al-Ikhtisas; al-'Ayyashi*). In the last-named book the wording is: "O Jabir! By Allah! They are the leaders of the injustice and their followers."

The author says: Its meaning is clear in the light of the explanation given above. Why did the Imam refer to them as "the leaders of injustice"? It is because Allah! has said: *O that those who are unjust could see...* Thus, the followers who took for themselves equals besides Allah! were "unjust"; therefore, their leaders must be "the leaders of the unjust ones" and "the leaders of injustice."

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allah: *Thus will Allah show them their deeds to be intense*

regret to them: "He is a man who leaves (untouched) his wealth and because of avarice does not spend it in the obedience of Allah; then he dies and leaves it to someone who uses it in the obedience of Allah, or in His disobedience. If he (the heir) used it in the obedience of Allah, (the legator) shall see it in the "balance" of another man, and he shall look at it in intense regret, as the wealth had (originally) belonged to him. And if he (the heir) used it in disobedience of Allah! then it was he (the legator) who strengthened him with that wealth so that he used it in the disobedience of Allah." (*al-Kafi*)

The author says: This meaning has been narrated by al-'Ayyashi, as-Saduq, al-Mufid and at-Tabrasi, from al-Baqir and as-Sadiq (a.s.). It has used the word, equals, in a wider sense; and as we have explained earlier, this expanded meaning is without any doubt, quite in place.

A Philosophical Discourse on Love

Love is one of our emotional feelings; we apply it for the love of food, love of women, love of wealth, love of honour and love of knowledge. We have no doubt that we have these five loves. Also, there is no doubt that when we use the word, love, in the above contexts, we intend the same meaning everywhere; and not only the word, but the meaning also is the same in all the five phrases. At the same time, we know that these contexts are different. The question is: Is this a difference of categories, or of some other type?

Let us look at the love of food. We love an edible thing, like a fruit, because it is related to the activity of our faculty of nutrition. If there were no such faculty, if there were not that nourishment which perfects our body, we would not have loved that fruit, and there would have been no such love. Therefore, the love exists, in reality, between the faculty of nutrition and its activity, on one side, and the satisfaction which that faculty gets from that activity, on the other side. When we say, "satisfaction", we do not mean the satisfying taste which one feels when eating - because the sense of taste is a functionary of the faculty of nutrition, and not the faculty itself. We actually mean that particular pleasure which the faculty gets from its activity.

Likewise, if we look at the love of women, we find that that love is related in reality and primarily to cohabitation, and only secondarily to the women, as its concomitant - in the same way as the love of food was related to a particular food just secondarily and only as a concomitant. Cohabitation is the effect of a faculty given to animals, in the same way as eating food is the effect of a faculty given to them. Evidently, these two loves belong to the same root, that is, a subsistent relationship between these two faculties and their activities - in other words their active perfection.

At this stage, it might possibly be thought that love was an attachment exclusively reserved for the above two faculties, that it was not found in other contexts. But experiment (through various effects) removes this misunderstanding. This attachment, known as love, has an effect on the lover. The lover moves towards the object of his/its love, and yearns for the loved action if he/it is separated from it, and does not like to leave it, after he/it has found it. This particular effect of love is found in all our powers of conception and their actions. All our powers and faculties like eye-sight, hearing, memory and imagination - in short all our internal and external senses - have this very effect, this very attribute, no matter whether they are acting or reacting. Each of these faculties loves its activity and is attracted to it. And it is only because its activity is its perfection, makes up its deficiency, and fulfils its natural need. In this way, we know the significance of the love of wealth, love of power and love of knowledge. Man seeks his perfection through his wealth, honour and knowledge.

It may be inferred from it that love is a special emotional attachment, a particular conscious attraction between man and his perfection. Detailed researches have shown that it is found in animals too. And it is because the lover acts upon, and reacts to, his loved activity; then that love extends to the things related to that activity, as the love of eating was extended to that of fruit. This principle would apply also to other things besides animals, provided they could consciously seek or bestow perfection.

From another point of view, as love is a subsistent relationship between the lover and the loved, there exists a positive connection between them. Now, if an effect (which has the relation of love with its cause) is a conscious being and has got sense and feeling, it would find that love within its soul - if it has a soul and independent existence.

The above discourse leads us to the following conclusions:

First: Love is a subsistent relationship, a special attraction between perfecting cause (or things like that) and perfection-seeking effect (or things like that). That is why we love our actions, because through them we seek perfection. And as its extension, we love the things related to our activities; for example, food which we take, mate with whom we cohabit, wealth which we use, honour from which we gain benefit, a benefactor who bestows something on us, a teacher who teaches us, a leader who guides us, a helper who helps us, a student who learns from us, a servant who serves us, a follower who obeys and follows us. All these are various manifestations of love, some of them are physical, some imaginary and some others intellectual.

Second: Love has different degrees of strength and weakness, because it is a subsistent attraction, an existing attachment - and there are such degrees even in existence itself. Obviously, the attachment between a sufficient cause and its effect cannot be like the one existing between an insufficient cause and its effect. Also, the perfection (because of which the attachment of love comes into being) is itself of various categories, some of it essential, some others inessential, some of it material (like nourishment), others immaterial (like knowledge). It shows the invalidity of the theory which says that love is exclusively reserved for material things. (Some of them said that love was basically related to food only, and other loves issued forth from it; some others gave that central place to the love of sexual intercourse; according to them all other loves branched out from it.)

Third: Allah deserves to be loved - from whatever angle you look at it. Allah is Self-subsistent, exists by Himself; His perfection is limitless while all other perfections are but limited. A limited thing attaches itself to the limitless one in existence. This attachment, this love, is a part of existence, a part of personality; it can never diminish or go away. Moreover, Allah has created us, and bestows on us countless and limitless favours; that is why we love Him, as every bestower of bounties is loved for his favours.

Fourth: As mentioned in the beginning, love is subsistent and existing relationship. Such relations are not separate from the very existence of their subjects. It follows that every thing loves its own person. Also, it was mentioned that by its extension, we love the things related to the loved - therefore, every thing loves the effects of its own existence. It is clear from the above that Allah loves His creation because of His love of His Own Self; and He loves His creation because they are recipients of His favours; and He loves His creation because they accept His guidance.

Fifth: We said earlier that sense, consciousness and knowledge are concomitants of love. But it is necessary in practice only, otherwise, the subsistent attachment - which is the reality of love - does not depend, *per se*, on these factors. It appears from this that even the natural powers and faculties - which have no sense or feeling - love their own actions and effects.

Sixth: It follows that love is a reality which permeates all the existing things.

A Philosophical Discourse on Perpetuity of Punishment

The question arises: Will the chastisement of the Hell come to its end at some time, or will it continue endlessly? Both theories have their adherents and both groups support their views with intellectual reasoning and apparent meanings of the Qur'an and traditions.

As for the Qur'an, it unambiguously declares that many groups shall abide for ever - endlessly and perpetually - in the Hell. As Allah says: *and they shall not come forth from the fire* (2:167).

And nearly *mutawatir* traditions narrated from the Imams of the *Ahlu 'l-bayt* (a.s.) clearly say the same thing. Of course, there are some traditions emanating from other sources which support the view that the chastisement will end. But these traditions must be rejected outright because they are against the clear declarations of the Qur'an.

Now, we come to intellectual reasons. As we said under the verse: *And be on your guard against the day when one soul shall not avail another...* (2:48), it is not possible to explain the details concerning the Resurrection and the Judgment with the help of intellectual deductions, because our reason lacks the premises necessary to lead to a conclusion. The only way is to believe in what the Truthful Prophet (s.a.w.) has brought to us through Divine Revelation - because his truth has been proved without any doubt.

As for the spiritual bliss and chastisement, they happen to the immaterial soul as it acquires good or bad characteristics and traits and is thus wrapped in beautiful or ugly conditions. We have mentioned there that these conditions and characteristics appear to the psyche in their respective good or ugly shapes, and the psyche enjoys the beautiful and good shapes, if it is itself good; and is tormented by what is bad and ugly, whether it is itself good or bad.

If these resulting shapes are not deeply imprinted on the psyche, and are not agreeable to its person, they are bound to disappear sooner or later, because their appearance is a matter of constraint; and we know that constraint does not continue for ever. Suppose there is a true believer who has committed some sins. This man is good and happy in his person, but his psyche has been polluted by, and wrapped in, ugly unhappy shapes. Obviously this ugly shape, not being deeply imprinted will certainly get removed.

But if these ugly shapes have been deeply imprinted on the psyche, then it reshapes the psyche in its own mould. The soul acquires a new shape and becomes almost a new species. Suppose there is a "niggard man"; now niggardliness gives a new form to his humanity, in the same way as "rationality" gives a new form to "animality", and "rational animal" (i.e., man) becomes a new species under the genes, "animal". Likewise "niggard man" becomes a new species under the genes "man". This species has an eternal existence of its own. The man, before the characteristics of niggardliness were firmly ingrained in his psyche, did practise niggardliness under constraint and felt unhappy. But now he does it, by permission of Allah, naturally without any constraint. And as it is done by this new species without constraint, it is eternal, endless and perpetual - contrary to the former condition when it was done under constraint and could therefore be got rid of. This man gets punished because of the concomitants of his characteristics and traits. We may compare his case with that of a man suffering from chronic melancholia or hallucination. His mind perceives frightening nightmares and he is always tortured by it - although it is he himself who produces these fantasies without any extraneous constraint or compulsion. The pictures appearing in his mind are not agreeable to his sick psyche, and he is tortured by it, although it is he himself who has created them. Yet, as we know, he suffers

because of it. What is punishment? It is that from which man runs away (if not inflicted by it yet) and longs to extricate himself (if already suffering from it). And this definition applies to the ugly shapes and frightening conditions which an "unhappy" man suffers in his next abode. It proves that the chastisement of the next world is perpetual and never-ending - for a man whose unhappiness has become an integral part of his personality.

Many objections have been raised against perpetuity of chastisement, all of them clearly without a leg to stand upon:

First Objection: Allah's mercy is limitless, all-encompassing. How can He, in His mercy, create someone whose destination would be a perpetual chastisement which no one could bear?

Second Objection: Punishment is punishment when it is not agreeable to the nature of the convicted person. In other words when it is a compulsion, a constraint. And perpetual constraint is unthinkable. Therefore, it is wrong to say that there would be perpetual punishment.

Third Objection: The man had committed sins which were not perpetual; they came to their end after a short or long duration. How can he be requited with a perpetual never-ending punishment?

Fourth Objection: Even the evil-doers serve the system of creation no less than the good-doers. If they were not there, the virtue of good people could not come about. This being the case, why should they be thrown into perpetual punishment?

Fifth Objection: It is a revenge to punish someone who disobeys the commandments of Allah. As a rule revenge is taken because the unjust and disobedient person makes the wronged party suffer some loss; and that party, if powerful enough, avenges itself to make up that loss. But this rule cannot apply to Allah, because He is Self-sufficient and nobody can inflict any harm or loss upon Him. In this background, how can He punish anyone - and especially with a perpetual punishment?

There are other similar objections against the perpetuity of punishment. If you ponder on what we have written earlier explaining the meaning of the perpetuity of punishment, you will realize that these objections are completely wide of mark :

General Reply: Perpetual punishment is the effect of the form of infelicity and unhappiness when it becomes an inseparable characteristic of the "unhappy" man. It happens after the man acquires full capability for it - through relevant conditions of the psyche - and exercises his free choice by choosing evil, instead of good. That capability creates in the psyche the shape commensurate with it. We do not ask why a man does human actions, once the matter has acquired the human form - because the human form itself is sufficient cause of human activities. Like-wise, we cannot ask why the effects of the inseparable unhappiness and infelicity (including perpetual punishment) are appearing, after the psyche has acquired the form of inseparable unhappiness and infelicity. Because it is its inseparable characteristic and effect. This general reply sufficiently refutes all the objections. Now let us look at each objection separately:-

Reply to the First Objection: When we say "mercy of Allah" we do not refer to any softness of heart, mildness of temper or other such psychological effects, because such mercy presupposes material existence, and Allah is far above such insinuations. Divine Mercy means bestowing on the recipient all things which he is fully qualified for. A fully qualified person longs for the things he is qualified for; and his qualification itself becomes a constant demand for it as if it had a tongue of its own. And Allah gives him what he thus demands and asks for. His Mercy is of two kinds: general and particular. The general mercy gives whatever a person is qualified for in the framework of existence. The particular mercy bestows whatever a person is qualified for in the highway that leads towards monotheism and bliss of Allah's Nearness. When Allah gives the form of inseparable "unhappiness" to a person who is fully qualified for it, it is not against the general mercy; it is rather a part of that

mercy. And perpetual punishment is a compulsory result of that form. As for the particular mercy, it does not cover the person who is not proceeding on the highway of guidance. Now let us look at the claim that perpetual punishment is against the Divine Mercy. If by "mercy" they refer to the general mercy, then surely it is not against it - it is rather a part of the general mercy. And if they mean the particular mercy, then the claim is untenable, because this case is out of the jurisdiction of the particular mercy.

Moreover, this objection, if sustainable, could also be laid against intermittent punishment. Nay, it would invalidate punishments of this world too.

Reply to the Second Objection: First we should decide why a thing is disagreeable to the nature. A thing or condition may be disagreeable to a man because there is no common factor between the man and that thing or condition. This indeed is a constraint, and it happens because of compulsion by an extraneous agent; and goes away as soon as that constraint is removed.

There is, on the other hand, an action or condition which emanates from the very nature of the man, when that nature is thoroughly polluted, when it is moulded in ugly mould and acquires a shape other than the original one. Man, in that existence, demands terrifying punishment; his transformed psyche, by its very nature, longs for chastisement - although at the same time he does not like it. We have earlier given the example of the man suffering from melancholia: Doubtlessly, the terrifying pictures emanating from his mind are "agreeable" to his psyche, because they are the products of that distorted psyche itself, and such effects are surely agreeable to the related psyche or nature. But at the same time they are indeed torture and punishment, because the definition of "punishment" applies thereto. In short, the eternal punishment is disagreeable from the viewpoint of sensitivity, and at the same time it is agreeable because it emanates from the psyche itself.

Reply to the Third Objection: The punishment is not the result of the sin and disobedience which were limited and came to an end. It is the effect of the perpetual ugly shape to which the man's psyche was moulded as a result of those limited and counted sins. There is no question here of a limited cause bringing about an unlimited effect - which, of course, is impossible. As an example, look at the man himself; there were a lot of limited causes which ultimately moulded the matter into human form; now he acts and reacts as a human being, because of that human form. And that humanity continues for ever, even after his death. We cannot ask about this man, as to how did a set of limited causes bring into being those unlimited and unending effects - because their efficient cause exists with them for ever. Likewise, it cannot be asked how can a set of limited sins bring about perpetual limitless chastisement.

Reply to the Fourth Objection: Service and worship, like mercy, is of two kinds: general and particular. General service is to submit to the Source of existence, that is, God, in the affairs and conditions of existence. Particular service is to submit to God and obey Him, in the path that leads to monotheism. Each type of service and obedience has a reward of its own, a mercy most suitable to it. Obviously, the general service in the system of creation is rewarded by general mercy - and as explained earlier, eternal bliss and eternal chastisement both are parts of that mercy. And the particular service is rewarded by the particular mercy, that is, bounties of the Paradise.

Moreover, if this objection is recognized as valid, then it would also negate the limited chastisement of the Hell and even punishments of this world too.

Reply to the Fifth Objection: As you have seen, the perpetual chastisement is ascribed to the shape of unhappiness acquired by man; and to Allah in the sense in which every existing thing is attributed to Him. That punishment is not attributed to Him in the meaning of revenge and satisfaction of the

feeling of rage and anger, because such thing is impossible for Allah.

Of course, one of the names used for Allah is "the Avenger". But it is used in the sense that Allah requites severely His servant when he (the servant) transgresses the limits of servitude and crosses the boundary of obedience going into that of revolt and disobedience. "Revenge" in this meaning is not impossible for Allah; and the perpetual punishment may be called "revenge" in this sense, without any difficulty.

Moreover, this objection, if tenable, may be laid against terminable punishment also; and even against the worldly punishments.

A Qur'anic Note on the above Subject

It should be noted here that this method of argument, which we have used against the above-mentioned objections, has been used also in the Qur'an and traditions. Allah says: *Whoever desires this present life, We hasten to him therein what We please for whomsoever We desire, then We assign to him the hell; he shall enter it despised, driven away. And whoever desires the hereafter and strives for it as he ought to strive and he is a believer; (as for) these, their striving shall be thanked. All do we aid – these as well as those – out of the bounty of your Lord, and the bounty of your Lord is not confined (17:18-20).* As you see, the verses count both chastisement and good recompense as parts of the bounty and mercy of Allah; and it is made clear that whatever happens, it is related to the will, desire and striving of the servant himself. It is this very method that we have used in explaining the main topic and replying to the objections. There are many other verses of this connotation; and we shall write on them in their proper places, Allah willing.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 168-171

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطَوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ 2:168

إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالسُّوءِ وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ 2:169

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ 2:170

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي يَنْعِقُ بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءً وَنِدَاءً صُمُّكُمْ عُمِّي فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ 2:171

2:168 O men! eat the lawful and good things out of what is in the earth, and do not follow the footsteps of the Shaitan; surely he is your open enemy.

2:169 He only enjoins you evil and indecency, and that you may speak against Allah what you do not know.

2:170 And when it is said to them, Follow what Allah has revealed, they say: Nay! we follow what we found our fathers upon. What! and though their fathers had no sense at all, nor did they follow the right way.

2:171 And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who calls out to that which hears no more than a call and a cry; deaf, dumb (and) blind, so they do not understand.

Commentary

QUR'AN: O men! eat the lawful (and) good things out of what is in the earth... what you do not know:

al-Halal (lawful) is opposite of *al-haraam* (forbidden); *al-hill* is used as opposite of *al-hurmah* (prohibition), *al-haram* (sanctuary); while *al-hall* (to untie) is opposite of *al-'aqd* (= to tie). All these usages of *al-hill* allude to freedom of a thing in its action and effect. *al-Tayyib* (good) is opposite of *al-khabith* (bad, evil), and basically means "agreeable"; a good speech is that which is agreeable to the hearing; a good perfume is agreeable to the sense of smelling; a good place or house is agreeable to the people residing therein. *al-Khutuwat* is plural of *al-khutwah* (step, pace, stride). Some reciters have read it as *al-khatawaat* which is plural of *al-khatwah* (one step). The phrase, "the footsteps of the Satan" refers to things leading to the Satanic aim, as footsteps lead to the walker's aim and destination. The Satan's aim is to mislead with polytheism; therefore, his footsteps are the things which lead to polytheism, and take the walker away from Allah.

al-Amr (to enjoin); the enjoiner imposes his own will on the enjoined, so that the latter does what the former wants. The Satan enjoins and orders by devilish insinuations and temptations encouraging man to do what the Satan wants. *as-Su'* (evil) refers to the thing or action which is repugnant and repulsive to society. When it exceeds that limit, it becomes *al-fahsha'* (indecency); it is a *masdar* like *as-sarra'* (prosperity, happiness) and *ad-darra'* (adversity; distress).

Allah has addressed these verses to all the men in general, because the order promulgated therein concerns all. As for the polytheists, they followed some self-imposed taboo, and falsely ascribed its promulgation to Allah. It is reported, for example, that the tribes of Thaqif, Khuza'ah, Banu 'Amir ibn

Sa'sa'ah and Banu Madlaj had forbidden themselves certain things of tilth and cattle, as well as some categories of camels, forging a lie against Allah. Similar baseless taboos are found in other countries and societies too.

Coming to the believers, there was a possibility that even after accepting Islam, some myths and superstitions might continue in their society, because of hereditary influence and national tradition. As a matter of fact, every now spiritual or temporal system concentrates in the beginning on eradicating and destroying the roots of the old system. After it is done, and if by that time it is left with some vitality and vigor - by good training and learning - then it starts mopping up operation by obliterating and erasing the remnants of that old system. Otherwise, the residue of that system is mixed with the new one, and the resulting mixture becomes a hybrid - neither this nor that.

Allah ordered the people to eat from what is in the earth. To eat is to swallow after chewing. Sometimes the word "eating" is allegorically used for general usufruct of a property, for unrestricted right of its disposal, because eating is the basic activity of man, the main pillar of his life. For example, Allah says:... *do not swallow up your property among yourselves by wrongful means, except that it be trading by your mutual consent...* (4:29). The verse under discussion may easily be interpreted in this wider sense, because it is general, not restricted. It would therefore mean: Eat, make use of, and enjoy the usufruct of the bounties of Allah that are in the earth, and which the earth has prepared and kept in store for you by permission of Allah; and it should be in a lawful and proper way. But you should see that there is no snag or hindrance in eating or using it, either from your own nature or from the nature of the earth. For example, there are some things which by their nature cannot be eaten; there are others which man by his nature does not want to eat; and lastly there are things which are eatable and useable, but your own nature rejects them and does not want to touch them at all, for example, a food that was obtained by unlawful means.

Thus, the words of Allah, "eat the lawful (and) good things out of what is in the earth", promulgate general permission of eating all the lawful and good things of the earth, without any condition, without any restriction. But the next sentence, "and do not follow the footsteps of the Satan", shows that there are some things (related to this lawful and good eating) which are called "the footsteps of the Satan." They are of two categories: either refraining from some food as a result of following the Satan, or eating it for the same reason. Thereafter, Allah mentions a general principle applicable to all that is done for following the Satan, that it is evil and indecency, as well as speaking against Allah what one does not know. Desisting from a food is not allowed except when Allah is pleased with such abstaining; likewise one should not audaciously use any thing without the permission of Allah. Eating out of what is in the earth is not lawful and good unless Allah permits and allows it. And He has allowed it in this and similar verses. Also, one should ascertain that a particular thing is not forbidden or prohibited by Allah, as He says after a few verses: *He has only forbidden you what dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine...* (2:173).

The meaning of the verse then would be as follows, and Allah knows better: Eat out of what is in the earth, from the bounties of Allah which He has created for you, as He has made them lawful and good for you; and do not leave some of them abstaining from them, because that would be evil and indecency, and you would be guilty of speaking against Allah what you do not know; it would be tantamount to making your own law against the law of Allah; and you would thus be following the footsteps of the Satan.

The verse thus shows that:

First: Man has been given a general permission for unrestricted use of all that is in the earth - except the things excluded from this general rule by other proofs. Allah may forbid a thing as easily as

He permits it.

Second: One who abstains, without any reasonable proof, from that which Allah has made lawful, in fact promulgates his own law - which he is forbidden to do.

Third: Following the footsteps of the Satan means worshipping Allah in a way Allah has not allowed, by a method He has not approved. Allah has not forbidden any walking except that in which man puts his foot in the footsteps of the Satan, making his walk conform with that of the Satan; thus he would be following the Satan's footsteps.

It may be inferred from above that, although the reason given of this prohibition (*He only enjoins you evil and indecency...*) demands that man should neither proceed to do any thing without knowledge, nor refrain from any thing without knowledge; but this is not what this verse is meant for; because it is not following the footsteps of the Satan, though it is following the Satan.

QUR'AN: *He only enjoins you evil and indecency, and that you may speak against Allah what you do not know:*

Evil and indecency are attributes of action, vis-à-vis, speech. It shows that what the Satan enjoins is confined to the action that is evil and indecency, and the word that is spoken without knowledge.

QUR'AN: *And when it is said to them, "Follow what Allah has revealed," they say: 'My! we follow what we found our fathers upon':*

al-Ilfa (to find). The verse supports what we have inferred from the preceding verse, regarding the footsteps of the Satan.

QUR'AN: *What! and though their fathers had no sense at all, nor did they follow the right way:*

It is rebuttal of their saying; it shows that they speak without knowledge and without ascertaining the truth; and it is a thing which reason rejects. They say, "We follow what we found our fathers upon." It is an unconditional declaration - they intend to follow their fathers in all conditions, without looking at their qualifications and credentials. They are determined to follow their fathers even if they had no sense, even if they had gone astray. They claimed that whatever their fathers did was correct. But such claim, such declaration, is just a talk without knowing; it leads one to say what no sensible person would ever say - if his attention was drawn to its absurdity. There would be no blame on them if they followed their fathers only in those things which they (the fathers) had knowledge of, and concerning which they followed the right way; if they followed them in such things knowing well that their fathers had their knowledge and had been on right way, it would not be counted as following without knowledge.

It shows that the phrase, "What! and though their fathers had no sense at all, nor did they follow the right way," is not intended as an exaggeration, although one may think that negation of all sense and knowledge from their fathers - who certainly knew many things concerning their life and livelihood - was intended as an exaggeration. But it is not so. Actually, the verse exposes the absurdity of their unconditional declaration by pointing out a situation in which no one would allow the following.

QUR'AN: *And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who calls out to that which hears no more than a call and cry:*

al-Mathal (proverb; parable, adage); also it is used for attribute and comparison, as Allah says: *See how they coin comparisons for thee. So they have gone astray, therefore they shall not be able to find a way*(25:9). *an-Na'iq* (admonishing cry of a shepherd to his sheep); *an-nida'* (to call) is *masdar of nada, yunadi, munadatan* (he called, he calls, to call); it is more particular than *ad-du'a'* (to call), because *an-nida'* is reserved for calling in a loud voice, while *ad-du'a'* is general. The meaning of the verse is as follows, and Allah knows better: And O Prophet! your parable, when you call the unbelievers to the truth, is like a man who calls out to the animals while the animals do not

understand what he says, except that they hear a call and cry, and stop in their tracks as soon as they hear it without understanding anything spoken. The unbelievers are, therefore, deaf, they do not hear any talk which would benefit them; dumb, not speaking any sensible word; blind, not seeing any worthwhile thing. Thus they do not understand anything, because their windows of understanding are closed shut.

It appears that there is a sort of reversal in this parable. Although it begins as a parable of those who disbelieve, it changes to describe the shepherd, the caller to guidance; it is in fact the likeness of the Prophet not of those who were being called by him to the right path. But as the three adjectives deducted from it (*deaf, dumb [and] blind, so they do not understand*) were attributes of the disbelievers - not of him who was calling them to the truth - it was highly appropriate to ascribe the parable to the disbelievers, and not to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). Thus, there appears to be a reversal in the parable.

Traditions

'Abdu 'r-Rahman says: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah about a man who vowed to slaughter his child. He said: 'That is from the footsteps of the Satan.'" (at-Tahdhib)

Mansfir ibn Hazim said: "Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said to me: 'Have not you heard about Tariq? Verily, Tariq was a cattle dealer in Medina. He came to Abu Ja'far and said: "O Abu Ja'far! I have taken an oath by divorce (of my wives), emancipation (of my slaves) and vow." Thereupon, (Abu Ja'far, a.s.) said to Him: "O Tariq! verily this is from the footsteps of the Satan."'

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said: 'Every oath taken in the name of other than Allah, is from the footsteps of the Satan.' (al-Ayyashi)

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "When a man takes oath for not doing a thing - while what he has sworn against, its doing is better than its leaving - then he should do that which is better; and there is no penalty on him; surely it (i.e., such oath) is only from the footsteps of the Satan." (*al-Kafi*)

The author says: The traditions, as you see, interpret the footsteps of the Satan as the deeds supposed to bring one nearer to Allah, while in fact they are not so, because the *shari'ah* does not recognize them - as we have explained above. Of course, as for the divorce, etc. (mentioned in the second tradition), there is an additional reason for the invalidity of such oaths; and that is making it conditional on some contingency in future; and it is against the principle of immediate and unconditional effecting of such transactions. (It is a topic of jurisprudence.) Oath in the name of other than Allah refers to an oath which has no validity in the *shari'ah*, and to swearing by what Allah has not sworn by and to which He has given no excellence.

al-Baqir (a.s.) said about the words of Allah, *And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who calls out...* : "That is, their likeness when you call them to the faith is like the caller who calls out to the cattle which understands nothing other than hearing a voice."

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 172-176

- 2:172 يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ
- 2:173 مَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالْدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخَنزِيرِ وَمَا أَهَلَ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ فَمَن اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ
- 2:174 إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَشْتُرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَٰئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا النَّارَ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ
- 2:175 أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالََةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَالْعَذَابَ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ فَمَا أَصْبَرَهُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ
- 2:176 ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِي الْكِتَابِ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ
- 2:1720 *you who believe! eat of the good things that We have provided you with, and give thanks to Allah if Hint it is that you worship.*
- 2:173 *He has only forbidden you what dies of itself, and that over which any other (name) than (that of) Allah has been invoked; but whoever is forced (to it), not revolting, nor exceeding the limit, no sin shall be upon him; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.*
- 2:174 *Surely those who cancel what Allah has revealed of the Book and take for it a small price, they eat nothing but fire into their bellies, and Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement.*
- 2:175 *These are they who have bought error for the guidance, and chastisement for forgiveness; Oh! how (bold) they are to endure fire.*
- 2:176 *This is because Allah has revealed the Book with the truth; and surely those who differ in (matter of) the Book are in a great opposition.*

Commentary

QUR'AN: *0 you who believe! eat of the good things that We have provided you with:*

The preceding verses were addressed to the "men" in general; now a selected group among them (i.e., the believers) is especially spoken to. Thus, this talk issues forth from the preceding one. It seems as though Allah. is turning away from an intractable and self-opinioned group that was impervious to reason, and looks towards those who would listen to, and accept the call of, the Speaker, because they believe hi Him. The difference in the two speeches springs from the change of the audience. The believers were expected to accept what was said to them. Therefore, they were told to "eat from the-good things that We have provided you with." The expression is more loving than the previous impersonal phrase addressed to the general public: "eat the lawful (and) good things out of what is in the earth." The loving expression of the verse under discussion paves the way for the direction that they should be thankful to Allah alone, because they are monotheists, they do not worship anyone other than Allah. It was for this very reason that Allah said, "that We have provided you with", and did not say, 'what you have been provided with', or "what is in the earth." The Qur'anic expression (in active voice) shows that Allah is known to them and near them, is affectionate and compassionate to them.

The Arabic phrase translated as "the good things that We have provided you with", would be literally translated as 'the good things of what We have provided you with' - in genitive case. Apparently the adjective (*the good things*) is the first construct, related to the second construct (*what We have provided you with*); and means in effect, 'eat from Our sustenance that is all good'. This meaning is appropriate in this context which is meant to show Allah's kindness and compassion for the believers. The phrase is not meant to restrict the second construct with the first one. In other words, it does not mean, 'eat from the good provisions, not from the bad ones'; because such meaning would be quite irrelevant in this setting in which Allah wishes to remove prohibition, telling them not to abstain from any provision given by Allah - as, such behavior would be a self-imposed unauthorized legislation, would be a talk without knowledge.

QUR'AN: *and give thanks to Allah if Him it is that you worship:*

Apparently it should have been 'give thanks to Us', but the Qur'an says, "give thanks to Allah." This expression is more appropriate for the theme of monotheism which the verse leads to. And for the same reason the next phrase, "if Him it is that you worship", was preferred to a shorter, 'if you worship Him'. The present expression restricts and confines the worship to Allah alone.

QUR'AN: *He has only forbidden you what dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine, and that over which any other (name) than (that of) Allah has, been invoked:*

Invoking any name other than Allah's, means slaughtering for any thing other than Allah, for example, sacrificing for idols.

QUR'AN: *But whoever is forced (to it), not revolting, nor exceeding the limit:*

That is, when he is not unjust, nor does he exceed the limit; is driven to it because of emergency. The meaning is therefore as follows: Whoever is forced to eat some of these forbidden things, because of some emergency, while he does not like at all to go against the law of Allah, nor does he exceed the limit, there shall be no blame on him. But if he was trapped into that emergency because of his own revolting behavior or because he had exceeded the limit and was then driven to that necessity, then he is not allowed to eat from these things. The sentence, "surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful," shows that the above permission is just a concession given by Allah to the believers; otherwise, the basis of prohibition is present even in this case.

QUR'AN: *Surely those who conceal what Allah has revealed of the Book:*

It is an allusion to the People of the Book. There were many good and lawful things - in the rites of worship and other matters - which their elders and leaders had arbitrarily forbidden them - while they had got the Book and that Book contained no sanction against those good things. These people did not conceal what they did but only because they wanted to protect their high position and prestige in the community, and because they did not like to stem the flow of gifts, riches and properties which their power supposedly entitled them to.

This verse unambiguously proves that a man's deeds are embodied and assume the form of a body; and it is the deeds that finally emerge as their own results. In this verse, Allah first says that their action of taking a small price for the Divine Revelation is one and the same with their eating the fire into their bellies. Then the description of their concealing and price taking is changed to that of buying error for the guidance; then this gives way to bartering chastisement for forgiveness. Then it ends on the words, "Oh! how (bold) they are to endure fire." Thus, their misdeed itself is transformed into the fire, although what they had done was to conceal the revelation and to continue on that behavior.

Traditions

As-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allah, *but whoever is forced (to it), not revolting, nor exceeding the limit: "al-Baghi (revolting) is one who desires hunting*, and al-'adi (exceeding the limit) is thief. They are not allowed to eat dead (animal) even if they are faced with emergency. It is forbidden to them. This (concession) does not cover them as it does (other) Muslims. And they are not allowed to shorten the prayer (in such journeys)." (al-Kafi)*

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "*al-Baghi* is unjust and *al-'adi* is usurper." (al-Ayyashi)

Hammad narrates from the same Imam that he said: "*alBaghi* is one who revolts against the Imam, and *al-'adi* is thief."

Abu Ja'far and Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) have said: "Not revolting against the Imam of the Muslims, nor transgressing the path of the righteous ones with disobedience." (*Majma'u l-bayan*)

The author says: All these are various applications of these words; and they support the meaning we have given earlier.

As-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allah, *Oh! how(bold) they are to endure fire: "(It means) how bold they are to commit the deeds which, they know, 'will take them to the fire."* (*al-Kafi*)

'Ali ibn Ibrahim narrates from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about this sentence: "How daring they are to (risk) the fire."(*Majma'u'l-Bayan*)

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "How active they are in the deeds of the people of the fire."

The author says: These traditions are in fact similar in their meanings: The first tradition explains boldness for fire with boldness in perpetrating the causes of the fire; the second one gives its meaning as daring to enter the fire; the third one interprets it as boldness to commit sins that would lead to the fire - and it is almost the same with the meaning of the first tradition.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSE 177

يَسَّ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ 2:177

2:177 It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is the one who believes in Allah and the last day and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives, and keeps up prayer and pays the zakat, and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflict - these are they who are true and these are they who are the pious.

Commentary

It is said that when the *qiblah* was changed from Baytu'lMaqdis to the Ka'bah, there ensued a long drawn out controversy and conflict in the public. It was then that this verse was revealed.

QUR'AN: *It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West:*

al-Birr (righteousness); *al-barr* (righteous), it is a perpetual adjective. *Qibal* (towards, in the direction of), *al-Qiblah* (a certain direction) is derived from it. *Dhu'l-qurba* (relative); *al-yatama* is plural of *al-yatim* (orphan; he who has lost his father); *al-masakin* is plural of *al-miskin* (miserably poor, one who suffers a worse condition than *al-faqir* =poor). *Ibnu 's-sabil* (one stranded in journey); *ar-riqab* is plural of *ar-raqabah* (neck; it refers to slave). *al-Ba'sa'* is a *masdar* like *al-bu's*, both having the same meaning: hardship, poverty. *A-Darra'* too is a *masdar* like *ad-darr* and both mean affliction with injury or loss, for example, when a man is afflicted with a disease, injury, or loss of property or child. *al-Ba's* (intensity of war).

QUR'AN: *but righteousness is the one who believes in Allah:*

Instead of defining righteousness, the verse turns to describing the righteous ones; thus it introduces the people in the light of their attributes. In this way, it points to the fact that abstract ideals and abstruse ideas have no value in Islam unless they appear in concrete shape in the character of a man. It is a well-known style of the Qur'an that it explains and defines a condition and a rank by introducing the people having that rank and condition; it is never satisfied with mere theoretical explanations of good and bad, virtue and vice.

The words, "the one who believes in Allah and the last day..." define the righteous ones, and explain their real state. The verse introduces them with all three aspects of belief, deeds and morals, in three stages. The first stage begins with the words, "the one who believes in Allah;" the second is the sentence, "these are they who are true;" and the third is, "and these are they who are the pious." Allah begins the first stage, saying: "the one who believes in Allah and the last day and the angels and

the Book and the prophets." It is a comprehensive description of all the true gnosis which Allah wants His servants to believe in. The belief referred to in this verse is the perfect belief which can never fail to produce its effect. When a believer attains to this stage of faith, his heart is never assailed by any doubt or confusion; he does not take a dim view of whatever befalls him, nor is he offended if afflicted with a misfortune. Likewise, his morals and actions are safe from adverse influences. This interpretation is further supported by the phrase, "these are they who are true." Truth, in this verse, is general and unconditional; it is not restricted to any condition of man's heart or any activity of his limbs. It means, they are real believers, true in their belief; as Allah says: *But no! by your Lord! they do not believe until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them, and then do not find any straitness in their hearts as to what you have decided and submit with total submission* (4:65). Thus, their condition fits the fourth stage of the belief, described under the verse: *When his Lord said to him, Submit (yourself), he said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds"* (2:131).

After description of belief, Allah mentions some of their deeds: "and gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives, and keeps up prayer and pays the *zakat*." Here their prayer is mentioned, and it concerns the Divine Worship. Allah says: ... surely *prayer keeps* (one) *away from indecency and evil...* (29:45); also, He says: *and keep up prayer for My remembrance* (20:14). It is followed by mention of *zakat*; and it is a financial obligation promulgated for economic good of the society. And before it all, the verse refers to their giving away wealth to various groups; this habit of theirs spreads the good and enlarges the circle of non-obligatory munificence, in order that the need of the poor may be fulfilled and their condition improved.

Lastly, the verse cites some of their excellent moral characteristics: "and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflict." *al-Ahd* (to promise; to commit oneself to something). The verse mentions "their promise" unconditionally. Yet, it does not cover the belief and the resulting obligation of following the laws of the *shari'ah* (as some people have said). Why? Because on going further we find the proviso, "when they make a promise"; and clearly acceptance of true faith and submission to its concomitants is an unconditional obligation; and is obligatory on all the people at all the times. It does not depend on one's commitment. However, the "promise", by its generality, covers every commitment made by man. For example, when he says: I'll surely do it; or, I'll never do it. It includes every deal made in business transactions, every word spoken in social and family circles.

Patience is steadfastness in face of hardship, be it a series of benumbing misfortunes or a fight against formidable adversaries.

These two excellent virtues - fulfillment of promise and patience - do not cover all the necessary virtues; but when they are found somewhere, the other virtues invariably always follow suit. One of these two virtues (patience in hardships) has a passive quality, while the other (fulfilling the promise) has an active role. By mentioning them, Allah in effect says that when they say something they surely proceed to do it, and do not withdraw from it even if they have to face difficulties.

The second stage of introduction is contained in the phrase, "these are they who are true." Truth is a comprehensive virtue, encompassing all attributes of knowledge and action. Truth is an inseparable concomitant of all basic virtues - continence, bravery, wisdom and justice - and of their branches.. Man's life is made up of his belief, words and actions. When he is true, all the three aspects conform to each other. He does not do except what he says, and does not say except that which he believes.

Man by instinct accepts the right and truth; and even if he pretends otherwise, he submits to it in his

heart. When he believes in the right truthfully, his word conforms with his belief, and his action with his word. It is then that he reaches the perfection in all three aspects of belief, morality and deeds. His faith becomes pure, his character virtuous and his deeds good. Allah says: *O You who believe! Fear Allah and be with the true ones* (9:119). The restrictive style, "these are they who are true", puts emphasis on the description of the righteous. It means - and Allah knows better - that if you want to find the true ones, then these are the righteous.

The third and final stage of their introduction is the phrase, "and these are they who are the pious": This restrictive style looks at the level of perfection. Piety cannot be complete and perfect, unless righteousness and truth have attained their completion and perfection.

The attributes ascribed here to the righteous are the same which Allah has described in other places. Allah says: *Surely the righteous shall drink of a cup the admixture of which is camphor. A fountain from which the servants of Allah shall drink; they shall make it to flow a (goodly) flowing forth. They fulfill vows and fear a day the evil of which shall be spreading far and wide. And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive. We only feed you for Allah's sake; we desire from you neither reward nor thanks; surely do we fear from our Lord a stern, distressful day. Therefore Allah will guard them from the evil of that day and cause them to meet with radiance and happiness; and reward them, because they were patient, with garden and silk* (76:5-12). These verses, about some righteous personalities, describe their attributes of belief in Allah and the last day, their spending for the sake of Allah, their fulfilling the vows and their patience. Again, Allah says: *Nay! Most surely the record of the righteous shall be in the 'Illiyin. And what will make you know, what the 'Illiyin is? It is a written book; see it those who are near (to Allah). Most surely the righteous shall be in bliss, on thrones, they shall gaze. You will recognize in their faces the radiance of bliss. They are made to quaff of a pure drink that is sealed. The sealing of it is (with) musk; and for that let the aspirers aspire. And the admixture of it is a water of Tasnim, a fountain from which drink they who are drawn nearer (to Allah)* (83:18 -28).

If you meditate on these verses in conjunction with those quoted above, you will see the reality of their attributes and their final destination. These verses praise the righteous that they are servants of Allah, and are drawn near to Him. Now, Allah describes His servants in these words: *Surely as regards My servants, thou hast no authority over them* (15:42); and He says about those drawn near to Him: *And the foremost are the foremost; these are they who are drawn near (to Allah), in the gardens of bliss* (56:10-12).

It is now clear that the righteous are the foremost in this world in reaching nearer to Allah, as they are foremost in the next world in attaining to the bounties of the garden.

If you continue looking at the condition of the righteous in the light of these verses you will unearth many hidden nuggets of spiritual reality.

The above discourse shows that the righteous are in the highest, that is, the fourth, stage of belief, as we have explained earlier. Allah says: *Those who believe and do not mix their faith with iniquity, those are they who have the security and they are those who go aright* (6:82).

QUR'AN: *and the patient in distress:*

The word "patient" in the Arabic text is in accusative case while the other attributes are in indicative. This change has been effected to point out its excellence, to show its importance.

Also, it has been said that when a speech becomes a bit lengthy, several adjectives following each other, then the Arabs break the monotony by interposing negatives between the positives, or by exchanging accusative and indicative cases.

Traditions

The Prophet said: "Whosoever acted in accordance with this verse, he surely perfected (his) faith."

The author says: Its reason is clear from the explanation written above. az-Zajjaj and al-Farra' are reported to have said: "This verse is reserved for the sinless prophets, because nobody, except the prophets,, can perform these things as they should be."

But this comment shows that they had not pondered on it properly. They seem confused regarding spiritual ranks. The verses of the Chapter of the Man (76:5-12) quoted above, were revealed about the family members of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.); Allah in those verses has named them "the righteous", although they were not prophets.

Of course, the rank of the righteous is very high, and their position is of very great importance, Allah praises the men of understanding saying that they:*remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth:* Then He quotes their prayer, which shows that their highest aspiration was that their Lord should join them to the righteous: *and make us die with the righteous* (3:190-3).

al-Hakim at-Tirmidhi narrates from Abu 'Amir ash-Sha'bi that he said: "I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! What is the completion of righteousness?' He said: 'That you should do in private what you do in public.'" (*ad-Durru l-manthur*)

Abu Ja'far and Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said: "The near of kin are the relatives of the Prophet." (*Majma'u'l-bayan*)

The author says: It is an application of this verse, keeping in view the verses of *near relatives* (42:23).

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "*al-Faqir* (poor) is he who does not ask from the people; and *al-miskin* is of more straitened circumstances than the "poor"; and *al-ba'is* is the most wretched of all." (*al-Kafi*)

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said: "The wayfarer is the one stranded in the way." (*Maima'u l-bayan*)

as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked about an *al-mukatib** who, after making a partial payment was unable to pay (the balance of the stipulated money of) his *al-mukatabah*

He (a.s.) said. "It will be paid on his behalf from the money of *as-sadaqah* (charity money; also *zakat*), because Allah, the Mighty, the Great, says: *and for*(the emancipation of) *the captives.*" (*at-Tahdhib*)

The same Imam said about the words of Allah, *and the patient in distress and affliction:* "In hunger, and thirst and fear." And he (a.s.) said about the word, *and in time of conflict:* "In the fighting." (*at-Tafsir*, al-Qummi)

* In Islam a slave was allowed to enter into an agreement with his master. This agreement, called *al-mukatabah*, entitled him to gain his freedom on payment of stipulated amount. Such a slave was called *al-mukatib*. (*tr*)

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 178-179

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلَى الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرِّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْأُنثَى بِالْأُنثَى فَمَنْ عُفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَاتِّبَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدَاءٌ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ ذَلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ فَمَنْ اعْتَدَى بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ 2:178
وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَاةٌ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ 2:179

2:1780 *You who believe! retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the slain; the free for the free, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female; but if any remission is made to any one by his (aggrieved) brother, then (the demand for the blood wit) should be made according to usage, and payment should be made to him in a good manner; this is an alleviation from your Lord and a mercy; so whoever exceeds the limit after this, he shall have a painful chastisement.*

2:179 *And there is life for you in the retaliation, O men of understanding, that you may guard yourselves (against evil).*

Commentary

QUR'AN: *O you who believe! Retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the slain; the free for the free... :*

The verse is addressed to the believers. It means that the law promulgated herein applies to the Muslims only. As regards the non-Muslims - whether under protection of an Islamic State or not - the verse is silent about them. Some people think that this verse has abrogated the verse 5:45 (*life is for life*); because it does not allow killing of a free person for a slave, or of a man for a woman. But actually there is no room for this supposition. The position of this verse vis-à-vis the verse 5:45 is like that of an explanation vis-à-vis its text.

al-Qisas (retaliation) is the *masdar* of *qassa yuqassu* (he followed, he follows); an Arab says: *qassa atharahu* (he followed someone's tracks). Another derivative is *al-qassas* (story-teller) - it is as though he follows the tracks of the past generations. Retaliation is called *al-qisas* because it follows the footsteps of the offender, giving him a punishment similar to that which he had inflicted upon his victim.

QUR'AN: *but if any remission is made to any one by his (aggrieved) brother:* Its literal translation is: then whoever is remitted any thing by his brother. "Whoever" refers to the murderer; the heir/s of the murdered person may waive his/their right of retaliation. Therefore, "any thing" refers to that right; it is used here as a common noun, in order that the rule may cover all possibilities, whether there was a full remission or partial. Let us say, for example, that there are many heirs and only some of them waive their right; then there shall be no retaliation; instead the blood money will be imposed. The heir of the murdered person who has the right of retaliation) has extraordinarily been described here as the "brother" of the murderer; this expression has been used to awaken the feeling of love and kindness in the heart of the aggrieved party, and gives a hint to him that remission and forgiveness is highly preferable in the eyes of Allah.

QUR'AN: *then (the demand for the blood wit) should be made according to the usage, and payment should be made to him in a good manner:*

Its literal translation is: then following according to usage, and payment to him in a good manner. Both phrase are subjects with their predicates implied. Thus literally it would mean: then it is obligatory on the aggrieved "brother" to follow that remission with demand for the blood-money according to usage; and it is obligatory on the murderer to pay it to the aggrieved brother, that is, heir of the slain, in a good manner without any annoying delay.

QUR'AN: *this is alleviation from your Lord and a mercy:*

The permission to commute the retaliation into blood-money is alleviation from your Lord, and therefore, once effected, it cannot be changed. The heir of the slain person cannot revert to retaliation after granting remission. If he transgresses the limit and retaliates after remission, then he shall have a painful chastisement.

QUR'AN: *And there is life for you in the retaliation, O men of understanding, that you guard yourselves(against evil):*

This verse points to the philosophy of this legislation. It aims at removing a possible misunderstanding that - because Allah has allowed remission and blood-money, and also because remission expands the circle of mercy and affection - remission is more in conformity with public weal and social good. The verse shows that, although remission is alleviation based on mercy, common good and society's peace depend on the retaliation. The only guarantee of life is the law of retaliation, and not remission, blood-money, or any other thing. Man has to accept this fact, if he has understanding. "that you may guard yourselves" that is, from murder. It gives the basic of the law of retaliation.

The scholars have said that the verse, "and there is life for you in the retaliation," is one of the most eloquent in its clarity, and the most refined in rhetoric, in addition to its having many other fine literary points, like brevity - it has so few words and such a small number of total letters - fluency of style and clarity of composition. It combines the force of argument with beauty of meaning, the fineness of proof with clarity of result.

Before this verse was revealed, the Arabs were fond of some adages and maxims (on the subject of murder and retaliation), of whose rhetoric and fluency they were very proud. For example: 'To kill some is to keep alive all', and 'To increase killing is to decrease killing'. And the most remarkable in their eyes was the sentence: 'Killing stamps out killing.' But when this verse was revealed all were forgotten. Some of its distinguishing points are as follows: The verse has fewer letters, and is easy to pronounce. "the retaliation" with definite article is a proper noun, while "life " is common noun - it shows that the resulting good is greater and more widespread than the retaliation. It explains the result in clear words and describes the real philosophy of the law, that is, the life. It unambiguously shows by what means the desired result can be obtained: Obviously, it is the retaliation that leads to life, and not the killing. (After all, many killings are done unjustly, and they do not lead to life, they are negation of life.) The word, "retaliation," covers also other punishments besides killing, that is, the reprisal in the matter of injury, etc. - and such retributions too lead to the society's life. The word conveys another extra meaning, as it shows that the retribution has resulted from unjust killing. (Compare it with their maxim, "Killing stamps out killing", which does not give any idea that "killing" refers to any punishment.) Then there is an exhortation in this sentence, as it points to a life reserved for the people, whom they are oblivious of; it behooves them to take hold of it as it really belongs to them; it is as if someone tells you: There is a property belonging to you with so-and-so, or in such and such a place. Lastly, the opening word of the verse, that is, "for you" makes it clear to the men of

understanding that the law-giver only desires to protect their interest, and no benefit is ever to accrue to him.

These are a few of the fine points found in this verse. The scholars have mentioned some more points, which may be seen in the books of rhetoric. The fact is, the more deeply you look at this verse, the more dazzled you shall be by its brilliance and radiance; and the word of Allah is the highest.

Traditions

As-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the word of Allah, *the free for the free*: "A free man shall not be killed for the slave' but he shall be beaten a severe beating and be fined the blood-money of the slave. And if a man kills a woman, and the heirs of the slain (woman) want to kill him, they shall pay half of his blood-money to the man's heirs." (al-Ayyashi)

al-Halabi narrates from as-Sadiq (a.s.). He says: "I asked him about the word of Allah the Mighty, the Great: *but he who forgoes it, it shall be an expiation for him (5:45)*; he (the Imam) said: 'His sins shall be expiated, as much as he forgives.' And I asked him about the word of Allah, the Mighty, the Great: *but if any remission is made to anyone by his (aggrieved)brother, then (the demand for the blood wit) should be made according to usage, and payment should be made to him in a good manner*. He said: 'He who has got the right (i.e. the aggrieved party) should not put his brother (i.e. the murderer) in difficulty, when he has made settlement with him concerning the blood-money; and he who has got the duty (of paying the blood-money) should not delay in its payment when he has ability to do so; and he should pay it to him in a good manner.' And I asked him about the word of Allah, the Mighty, the Great: *so whoever exceeds the limit, he shall have a painful chastisement*. He said: 'It refers to a man who accepts blood-money or forgives, or makes compromise, then exceeds the limit (and kills the murderer); so he shall be killed as Allah, the Mighty, the Great, has said.'" (al-Kafi)

The author says: There are many traditions of the same meanings.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 180-182

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ إِنْ تَرَكَ خَيْرًا الْوَصِيَّةَ لِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ 2:180

فَمَنْ بَدَّلَهُ بَعْدَمَا سَمِعَهُ فَإِنَّمَا إِثْمُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يُبَدِّلُونَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ 2:181

فَمَنْ خَافَ مِنْ مَوْصٍ جَنَفًا أَوْ إِثْمًا فَأَصْلَحَ بَيْنَهُمْ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ 2:182

2:180 *Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth, for parents and near relatives, according to usage, a duty (incumbent) upon those who guard (against evil).*

2:181 *Whoever then alters it after he has heard it, the sin of it then is only upon those who alter it; surely Allah is Hearing, Knowing.*

2:182 *But he who fears. an inclination (to a wrong course) or an act of disobedience on the part of the testator, and effects an agreement between the parties, there is no blame on him. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.*

Commentary

QUR'AN: *Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth:*

The language is that of an obligatory rule, because *al-kitabah* (to write; translated here as "prescribed") is used in the Qur'an always for definitely obligatory laws. It is further strengthened by the word "a duty" coming at the end of the verse, because duty too is used, like writing and prescription, for compulsory orders. But the word "a duty" is qualified by "upon those who guard (against evil)"; this somewhat weakens the sense of obligatoriness; it would have been more appropriate, in case of obligatoriness, to say, 'a duty' upon the believers'. In any case, it is said that the verse was later abrogated by the verse of inheritance. If so, then it would only be its "obligatoriness" which was abrogated, not its being liked, recommended. Perhaps, the phrase qualifying "a duty" was used for this very purpose.

al-Khayr is wealth; it probably denotes considerable wealth, not an insignificant amount. *al-Ma'ruf* (known; common usage of good deed and favor).

QUR'AN: *Whoever then alters it after he has heard it, the sin of it then is only upon those who alter it:*

The pronoun in "the sin of it" refers to the alteration; all the rest refer to the bequest according to usage; bequest is a *masdar* and is used both as masculine and feminine. (That is why the pronouns used in the verse are of masculine gender.) "upon those who alter it": Allah did not say 'upon them', because the wording used clearly indicates the nature of sin, that is, alteration of a will; also it paves the way for the next verse.

QUR'AN: *But he who fears an inclination (to a wrong course) or an act of disobedience on the part of the testator, and effects an agreement between the parties, there is no blame on him:*

al-Janaf (inclination; deviation); it is said that it indicates outward inclination of the feet, and *al-hanaf* shows their inward inclination. In any case, it is used here to denote an inclination towards sin and disobedience, as it is followed by "or an act of disobedience." The verse branches out from the preceding one. Its meaning is as follows (and Allah knows better): The sin of alteration is only upon those who alter the bequest (which was made according to usage). Of course, if someone fears that the bequest of the testator is, or shall be, an act of disobedience or inclined towards a wrong course, and then effects an agreement between the parties, free from error and sin, then there is no blame on him; because he has not changed a bequest made according to usage; rather he has altered only the wrong and sin found in it.

Traditions

Muhammad ibn Muslim says that he asked as-Sadiq (a.s.) whether a bequest was allowed in favor of an heir. The Imam said: "Yes." Then he recited this verse, "Bequest is prescribed... if he leave behind wealth, for parents and near relatives..." (al-'Ayyashi). This tradition is also narrated, with a slight change in wording, in *al-Kafi* and *at-Tahdhib*.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) narrates through his father from 'Ali (a.s.) that he said: "He who did not bequeath at the time of his death for those of his near relatives who were not his heirs, surely ended his deeds with disobedience." (al-Ayyashi)

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about this verse: "(It is) a right which Allah has given in the properties of men to the Master of this affair (i.e. to the Imam)." The narrator says: "I said: 'Is there a prescribed limit for it? He said: 'Yes'. I said: 'How much?' He said: 'Its lower limit is one-sixth; and the higher, one-third.'" (al-'Ayyashi)

The author says: This theme has been narrated also by as-Saduq in his *al-Faqih* from the same Imam. It is a fine inference from this verse read in conjunction with the verse: *The Prophet has a greater claim on the believers than they have on themselves, and his wives are their mothers; and the possessors of relationship have the better claim in the ordinance of Allah to inheritance, one with respect to another, than (other) believers, and (than) those who have fled (their homes), except that you do some good to your awliya'*; this is written in the Book (33:6). This verse abrogated the system prevalent in early days of Islam by which a "*muhajir* brother" inherited from his "*ansar* brother"; and initiated inheritance between the relatives; then it made an exception (from this rule of inheritance by relationship), and that was about doing *some good to your awliyaa'**. Now Allah has made the Prophet *al-waliyy* and his pure progeny *al-awliyaa'* of the believers. And this exception of doing good to the *awliyaa'* brings it within the jurisdiction of the verse under discussion: *Bequest... for parents and near relative*. And the Imams are also the "near relatives" (of the Prophet). Understand it.

The Fifth or the Sixth Imam said about the verse, *Bequest is prescribed for you... : It is abrogated. The verses of inheritance abrogated it.*" (al-Ayyashi)

The author says: This tradition may be reconciled with the preceding ones if we say that it was only its obligatoriness which was abrogated; thus the order will continue as *al-mustahabb* (recommended) even after that.

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said about the verse, *But he who fears an inclination (to a wrong course) or an act of disobedience... : al-janaf is inclination to the side of error without knowing that it is allowed (or not).*" (*Majma'u l-bayan*)

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "When a man has made his will, then it is not allowed to the executor to alter the bequest made; he should enforce it as (the testator) has bequeathed; except when (the testator) has made his will against the command of Allah, and done injustice (to an heir). Then it is allowed to the executor to bring the will to the truth (i.e. the right course). Let us say, there is a man who has got some heirs; and he bequeaths all (his) property to some of the heirs, depriving the others. In such cases, it is allowed to the executor to bring the will to the right (course). And this is (the meaning of) the word of Allah, *an inclination* (to a wrong course) *or an act of disobedience*. And *al-janaf* is inclination to some of his heirs, leaving the others aside; and *al-ithm* (sin; act of disobedience) is that he directs to build fire-temples, and to take intoxicant. Then the executor is allowed not to do any such thing." (*at-Tafsir*, al-Qummi)

The author says: The explanation of *al-janaf* given in this tradition makes clear the meaning of the word of Allah: and effects an agreement between the parties. The words refer to effecting reconciliation and settlement between the heirs, when there is conflict and quarrel among them because the testator was inclined to wrong course, and favored one heir at the cost of the others.

Muhammad ibn Suqah said: "I asked Abu Ja'far (a.s.) about the word of Allah: *Whoever then alters it after he has heard it, the sin of it then Is only upon those who alter it*. He said: 'It has been abrogated by the next verse; *But he who fears an inclination* (to a wrong course) *or an act of disobedience on the part of the testator, and effects an agreement between the parties, there is no blame on him.*' He said: 'It means that if the executor fears that the testator is inclined to a wrong course concerning his children in the bequest he has entrusted the executor with, in a way Allah is not pleased with, (and which is) against the truth, then there is no blame on him, (i.e. on the executor of the will) if he changes it to the truth, and to the way of right that Allah is pleased with.'" (*al-Kafi*)

The author says: This tradition explains one verse with the help of another. Therefore, the word, "abrogated", is not used here in its terminological meaning. And we have earlier mentioned that the word, "abrogation", is sometimes used in the speech of *Ahlu'l-bayt*, in a meaning different from the language of the Principles of Jurisprudence.

* *al-Awliyaa* is plural of *al-waliyy*, which has several meanings, important among them being: friend, guardian, relative, a person close to Allah, and master. In the explanation given in the text, it has been taken to mean master and guardian. (tr.)

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 183-185

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ 2:183
 أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ فَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ
 خَيْرٌ لَهُ وَأَن تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ 2:184
 شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَى وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ
 عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ 2:185

2:1830' you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard yourselves (against evil).

2:184for a counted number of days; but whoso among you be sick or on a journey than (he shall fast) that number of other days; and those who are with difficulty able to do so, on them is a redemption by feeding a poor man, and whose, on his own accord performs good, it is better for him, and that you fast is better for you if you know.

2:185The month of Ramadan, in which was sent down the Qur'an, a guidance for the people, and clear evidence of guidance and discrimination (between right and wrong); so whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein; and whosoever is sick or on a journey (he shall fast) the same number of other days; Allah desires ease for you and He desires not hardship for you; and so that you may complete the (prescribed) number, and that you may glorify Allah for his guiding you, and so that you may be thankful to Him.

General Comment

The sequence of the three verses shows that they were revealed together; *for a counted number of days* (in the beginning of the second verse) is an adverbial phrase which qualifies the word, *fasting*, in the first verse; and *the month of Ramadan* in the beginning of the 3rd verse is a predicate, whose subject is a deleted but understood pronoun denoting the words *counted number of days* (which appear in the 2nd verse). Thus it would mean, *the counted number of days is the month of Ramadan*. Alternatively, it may be a subject of a deleted but implied predicate, and would mean *the month of Ramadan is that in which fasting is prescribed for you*. As a third possibility, it may be an alternative of the *fasting* mentioned in the first verse. Whatever be the grammatical position, it is the explanation and description of the counted number of days in which fasting has been prescribed. Therefore, all three verses are a well-arranged statement with a single aim, i.e., promulgation of the ordinance of fast in the month of Ramadan.

Obviously, the first sentences have been revealed to prepare minds for the final ones. The first two verses are like a preparatory statement, with which a speaker tries to keep the audience calm and quiet, and this ensures that they do not become restless on hearing the tough commandment which he is to announce shortly. All the sentences in these two verses gently lead the hearer's mind to the ordinance of the fast of Ramadan. They mention such things as remove gloom and anxiety, cheer the

soul and imperceptibly assuage the mood of unrightness and disobedience. They point to various concessions and indulgences which have been incorporated in the commandment. And all this is in addition to the goods of this world and the next which may be earned by following, the law. It is for this reason that the sentence *O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you* is followed by the phrase *as it was prescribed for those before you* - hinting that you should not think it as a heavy burden nor should you feel 'gloomy, for it is not a new command for which you have been singled out; it was ordained for previous peoples also.

It further encourages them by pointing out: by following this command you may get what you aim at by your faith - and that is piety (*taqwa*) which is the best thing for those who believe in Allah and the Day of Judgment - and you are believers. This is the import of the phrase *so that you may guard yourselves (tattaqun)* from the same root as (*taqwa*).

Moreover, this worthy action, which inspires the hope of piety in you (as it did in your predecessors) does not involve *all your time, nor even most of it. It is only for a counted number of days*. The word days (*ayyaman*) is a common noun, and, it shows insignificance. Its adjective, "counted", hints that the number is very easy (as we see in the words of Allah in the Qur'an, 12:20, *And they sold him for a price, some counted pieces of silver*).

Allah, now points to further concessions: Look how We have been lenient on the man who has a genuine difficulty in keeping the fast, as well as on the person who is hard pressed to do so. Such a man should redeem it by a substitute which is neither difficult nor heavy, and that is feeding a poor person. *But whoso among you be sick or on a journey, then (he shall fast) that number of other days; and those who are with difficulty able to do so, on them is a redemption by feeding a poor man. You must appreciate that this act brings much good to you; and that Allah has made it as easy for you as possible. It is in your interest that you should perform it willingly and eagerly without reluctance, sluggishness or annoyance; because if one performs a good deed on his own accord, it is better for him than if he does it under coercion. This point is made clear in the words: And whoso on his own accord performs good, it is better for him, and that you fast is better for you if you know.*

In this way, the first two verses prepare minds for the third verse, *So whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein...*

In the light of this explanation, it is clear that the sentence in the first verse, *Fasting has been prescribed for you, is the report of the fact of prescription; it is not the initial promulgation [like the verses, O Ye who believe! retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the slain... (2:178) and Bequest is prescribed for you, when death approaches one of you if he leaves behind wealth, for parents and near relatives... (2:180)] There is a difference between retaliation in the matter of the slain and bequeathing to parents and near relatives on the one hand, and the fast on the other. Retaliation for the slain is a matter which is dear to the hearts of the heirs of the slain; and it conforms with the natural rage which is inflamed in them when they see the murderer alive and safe without any worry for the crime he had committed. Likewise, tender love for one's relatives is in itself enough to encourage one to make one's will in favor of one's parents and relatives, and especially so at the time of death and permanent separation. These two commandments, i.e., retaliation and bequest are in conformity with natural feelings, and, as such, they do not require preparatory statements or preambles before their promulgation. But the case of the fast is different. Here the man is denied his choicest desires and most coveted acquirements, i.e., food, drink and sex. It is a heavy burden which should, by nature, be disliked by him. When such an order is directed to the general public it needs some preparatory and introductory statement so that they may accept this hardship willingly and eagerly. Therefore, the prescription in the verses of retaliation for the slain and bequest for parents*

and relatives is the original promulgation (without need of any preamble); but the words: *Fasting has been prescribed for you* is just a report of the commandment and has been used as the preamble of the actual command which comes later: *so whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein...*

Commentary

Qur'an: *O ye who believe.*

This mode of address reminds them of a virtue (faith, belief) which encourages them to accept whatever order is given to them by their Lord, even if it is against their desires and habits.

The verse of retaliation also begins with this very phrase because the Christians, unlike other people, did not believe in retaliation. Therefore, it was necessary to point out that retaliation is allowed to the faithful, even if others do not believe in it.

Qur'an: *Fasting has been written* (i.e. prescribed) *for you, as it was written* (i.e. prescribed) *for those before you:*

"*Kitabah*" means to write. Metaphorically it is used for prescription, enjoinder and irrevocable decision, as Allah says, *Allah has written down: I will most certainly prevail, I and My apostles* (58:21); *and We write down what they have sent before and their footprints* (36:12); *and We wrote on them in it, a soul for a soul* (5:45).

"*Siyam*" and "*sawm*" are infinite verbs meaning to abstain from an action, like abstaining from eating, drinking, sexual intercourse, talking, walking, etc. Also it is said that it means abstaining from desirable and coveted things. Later in religion, it was mostly used for abstaining from some specified things from dawn-break up to sunset with intention (*niyya*).

Those before you means the nations, that came before the advent of Islam: the followers of the previous prophets, like the followers of Musa and 'Isa etc. It is the meaning understood from this phrase wherever it occurs in the Qur'an.

The comparison *as it was prescribed for those before you* is not general; it does not cover all the peoples, nor all the details of the Islamic fast. In other words, it does not mean that the fast was prescribed for the followers of all previous prophets, nor that the fast ordained for them was like the Islamic fast in all the details, like period, rules and other particulars. The comparison is only in the principles of fasting and abstaining from some things - without any regard to the particulars.

Those before you indicates followers of the previous religions without specifying who they were. The words *as it was written* (prescribed), show that they were followers of revealed religions; and that the fast was ordained for them. The present Old and New Testaments do not say that fasting was compulsory and obligatory; rather they extol and praise it. Still, the Jews and the Christians do fast on various days in the year, in various ways, like abstaining from meat, or milk, or food and drink. There are stories in the Qur'an of the fasts of Zakariyya and Maryam in which they abstained from talking.

Fasting was also observed in traditional (unrevealed) religions, as is reported from ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. The Hindus observe fasts even now. Apparently, it is human nature itself that leads one to believe that the fast is an act of worship which brings one nearer to the Creator.

Sometimes it is said that *those before you* means the Jews and the Christians; or that it refers to only the previous prophets (and not their followers). The basis of these assertions are some traditions which are not free from weakness.

Quran: *So that you may guard yourselves* (against evil) (or, so that you may become pious).

Idol-worshippers fasted to please their deities, or, on committing a sin, to extinguish their deities' anger, or to get their prayers granted. This turns the fast into a trade or barter; the man performs what is needed by the deity and the deity in its turn grants the prayers of the man; the worshipper pleases. The deity so that the deity may do what will please the worshipper.

But Allah is All-holiness. No want, need, emotion or grievance can be attributed to Him even in imagination. In short, He is free from every shortcoming. So, all the good effects of the worship (whatever the act of worship and whatever the good results) return to the worshipper himself, not to the Lord. The same is the case of sins. Allah has said: *If you do good, you do good for your own souls, and if you do evil it is for them* (only) (17:7). It is this principle which the Quran teaches by always connecting the effects of good and evil actions with man: man, who is all needs and wants, as Allah says *O man! You are the ones who stand in need of Allah, and Allah is He who is the Self-sufficient* (35:15); and refers to the fact specifically in connection with fasting in the words, *so that you may become pious* (may guard yourselves against evil).

There is no doubt that one may achieve piety through fasting. Everyone naturally feels that for union with the sublime world of holiness and for rising to the height of perfection and spirituality man should first of all restrain himself from gratifying material desires. He should keep away from satisfying the body's lust and inclinations, and purge his soul from the love of worldly affairs. In short, he should guard himself against all such things, which may carry him away from his Lord. This is piety (*taqwa*) which is achieved through abstinence from lust and desires.

Even more beneficial and more effective for the common man is the abstinence from common lawful desires like food, drink and sex. This trains him to keep away from unlawful things; and creates in him the will to guard himself against sin and evil, and to come nearer to Allah. Obviously, when he accepts the words of Allah by abstaining from lawful desires, and heeds to and obeys His commandment; he will be more needful and obedient to His words in connection with sins and unlawful things.

Qur'an: *Counted number of days (ayyaman ma'dudatin):*

"*ayyaman*" has the vowel of *fathah*, because an adverb of time, in (*f*) is understood before it. It is connected with the word fast (*siyam*). It has already been explained that bringing the word "days" as a common noun and attaching to it the adjective, "counted", implies that the order given is not very difficult or bothersome. This in turn encourages the man to obedience. Also it has been maintained that the words *the month of Ramadan...* are the explanation of "days." So, the meaning of *counted number of days is the month of Ramadan*.

Some commentators have said that the words, *counted number of days*, mean three days in every month and the fast of the day of 'Ashura' (10th day of Muharram). Some others have said that it is the 13th, 14th and 15th days of every month plus the fast of 'Ashura'. According to them, the Messenger of Allah and the Muslims used to fast on these days, then Allah revealed the verses *the month of Ramadan in which was sent down the Qur'an...* and this verse abrogated the previous system and made the fast of Ramadan obligatory. These commentators rely on many traditions of the Sunnis - traditions which contradict each other.

There are many things which prove the falsity of these assertions:

First: Fasting is a common act of worship involving the whole *Ummah*. Had there been a system, at any time, of fasting for three days in a month, it would have been recorded in history, and there would not have been any difference about its ordination and then abrogation. But - it is not so.

Moreover, saying that the fast of the day of 'Ashfir' was obligatory (or even desirable), like the fast of the three days of every month, is the innovation of the Umayyids (May Allah curse them). They

wiped out the progeny of the Messenger of Allah and his family-members on the day of 'Ashura'; they killed their men-folk, imprisoned their women and children and tooted their belongings in the battle of Karbala'; and then they regarded it as a blessed auspicious day. They took that day as an Eid (festival), started its fast to obtain its supposed blessings, and then invented for it many virtues and excellences. They forged many traditions showing that it was an Islamic festival. They went even further and said that it was a common festival which had been observed even by the pagans of Arabia, as well as by the Jews and the Christians since the advent of Musa and 'Isa. But all these assertions are baseless. This day has no national importance like the Nowrooz of the Persians, nor did there occur any victory or important event on that day to make it an Islamic festival (like the Day of the first revelation or the Birthday of the Prophet) nor has it any religious aspect which could make it a purely religious festival *'Idu l-ftaar* and *'Idu I-adha*. So how could it be given importance without any reason?

Second: The context makes it impossible to say that the 3rd verse, i.e. *the month of Ramadan...* was revealed alone, to abrogate the first two verses. As mentioned earlier, it is the predicate of a deleted but understood subject, or the subject of a deleted but implied predicate. Thus it is a clarification of the words, *counted number of days*, and all three verses are one interrelated speech with a single aim, i.e. the promulgation of the obligatory fast of the month of Ramadan.

Those commentators claim that the phrase, *month of Ramadan*, is the subject and words, *in which was sent down the Quran*, are its predicate. If we accept this claim then this third verse would become an independent sentence, capable of being revealed alone. But then it could not abrogate the previous two; verses, because there would be no contradiction between this verse and the previous ones; and no verse can abrogate another when there is no contradiction between them.

Even weaker than this is another view, which appears in some writings. It says that the second verse, *for a counted number of days*, abrogated the first verse, *Fasting has been prescribed for you...* They claim that fasting was prescribed for the Christians, but they went on changing its number after 'Isa (a.s.) until finally it was settled as fifty days. Allah then ordained it for the Muslims by the first verse, and people fasted accordingly in the beginning of Islam, until the second verse *counted number of days* was revealed and the new system was introduced abrogating the first order. This view is clearly weaker and more false than the previous ones and all the objections mentioned therein apply here also. Clearly the second verse is complementary to and a continuation of the first verse. The traditions upon which these people have based their views are obviously against the clear meaning and context of the Qur'an.

Qur'an: *But whoso among you be sick or on a journey then (he shall fast) that number of other days:*

"f... " then, but, so, and, etc.) here is for derivation. It means that the sentence is an off-shoot of *Fasting has been prescribed on you and for a counted number of days*. The fast is written-down and obligatory and the number is a part of that obligation. The basic obligation (fast) cannot be neglected and the same is the case of the prescribed number. Even if for any reason like sickness or journey the obligation of fasting during the counted number of days (i.e. month of Ramadan) is waived, the obligation of fasting an equal number of days after that month will still be enforced, in order to make up for the lost days of Ramadan. It is this principle which has been mentioned in the 3rd verse *and so that you may complete the (prescribed) number*. Here we find another significance of the phrase, *counted number of days*; it implies that the order given is not very difficult, and also it shows that the number is an integral part of the said obligation.

"Sickness" is the opposite of "health." *Safar* (journey, is derived from a root-word which means to

uncover. It is as though the traveler is uncovered by going out of his house which is his refuge and shelter.

Allah used the words, *on a journey*, and did not say *a traveler*; it shows that for the purpose of this rule one must be on a journey presently. Past travel or a travel which is yet to start (i.e. to commence later) would not make one entitled to this concession.

Most of the Sunni scholars say that this sentence shows only that a sick person or a traveler is allowed, but not compelled, - leave the fast. According to them, a sick person or a traveler has the choice of fasting or not fasting. But, as has been explained earlier, the meaning of *then that number of other days is* that he is (not only allowed but is) 'compelled' not to fast during the originally prescribed days; he must fast that number of "other days." This is narrated from the Imams of the *Ahlu l-bayt*. Also, it is the ruling of a group of the companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.) like 'Abdu 'r-Rahman ibn 'Awf, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Abu Hurayrah and 'Urwah ibn az-Zubayr. The Sunni scholars say that this sentence means: *but whoso among you be sick or on a journey* (and did not fast) *then* (he shall fast) *that number of other days*; thus they suppose that there is a deleted but implied verb in this sentence. But this supposition is incorrect because:

First: such a supposition is against the apparent meaning. A deletion can be accepted only when the context demands it; and the context of this sentence does not need any such thing.

Second: even if we accept this implied verb, it will not mean that a sick person or a traveler has only an option to break his fast. In these verses Allah is promulgating a law and in this context the hypothetical, implied words, *and did not fast will* mean that during sickness or journey, breaking one's fast is not a sin, rather it is lawful. The word 'lawful' is a general one, meaning all or any of its three kinds: obligatory, recommended and allowed. There is no reason to suppose that in this context it would mean only "allowed" (to the exclusion of the other two meanings). Rather there is a reason against such a supposition, because the Wise Law-Giver when promulgating a law cannot leave one of its important and obligatory aspects.

Qur'an: *and those who are with difficulty able to do so on them is a redemption, by feeding a poor man:*

'spending one's active strength in a work' (*itaqah*) is the meaning explained by some scholars. It necessarily means that the work would be done with difficulty and by overstraining oneself. *Fidyah* means a substitute. Here it is a material substitute, i.e., food for a poor man. The word implies a food which satiates a hungry poor man; and it should be the normal food of the man.

The rule of the substitute also is obligatory, like the rule of repaying a fast afterward for the sick or the traveler. It is shown by the words, - 'on those' (*ala'l-adhina*), which is obviously for obligation and not merely for option or choice.

Some people have said that this sentence gave the people an option and then it was abrogated. According to them, Allah had given all those who were able to fast an option to keep the fast or to redeem it by feeding every day a poor man, because in the beginning people were not accustomed to fast. Then it was abrogated by the sentence, *Sowhosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein*. Some of those writers said that this verse abrogated the option so far as able persons were concerned. But the rule regarding those who were unable to fast (like extremely old, persons, pregnant women and women who are suckling a baby) remained non-abrogated and they could give the substitute.

By God, such an explanation is nothing but playing with the Qur'an and cutting and chopping up the verses into shreds and fragments. If you study these 3 verses, you will see that it is all a well connected speech, delivered with one aim, all in one context only. Its sentences are connected with

each other, having a sweetness and flow of their own. But if you cut it into pieces and accept these people's interpretation then everything will fall out of context and some phrases will contradict others; the latter sentences will clash with the former ones. According to their explanation, first it says 'Fasting is prescribed for you', then it says that 'those who are able to fast have an option to fast or to redeem it by a substitute'; then it goes on to say that 'fasting is obligatory for all of you when you witness the month'; then it abrogates the rule of redemption for able persons and keeps it unchanged for unable ones (while the fact remains that even before the supposed abrogation that verse was not concerned at all with those who were unable. They want us to believe that the single word meaning 'those who are with difficulty able to do so' (*yutiqqunahu*) referred, before the abrogation, to those who were able to fast; and now after abrogation the same word means 'those who are unable to fast'! In short, according to these commentators, *those who are with difficulty able to do so* in the middle of the verse would abrogate *fasting is prescribed for you* which is in the beginning of the verse, because both would be contradictory to each other; but the question would arise why that abrogation was made conditional on ability without any apparent reason. Then again the sentence, *So whosoever of you witnesses the month he shall fast therein*, at the end of the verse, would abrogate *those who are with difficulty able* which is in the middle. Still the question would arise as to how it abrogated that rule for only those who were able to fast and not for those who were unable to do so, when the verse is unconditional and comprehensive and covers able and unable persons alike. Interestingly enough, the supposedly abrogated verse in itself did not cover those who were unable. This is its most obviously absurdity.

Add to it their assertion that the words, *the month of Ramadan...abrogated* the words, *counted number of days*, which in their turn abrogated the words, *Fast has been prescribed for you*; and then ponder with this background upon the meaning of the verses and you will be astonished! Nothing of the verses would remain intact; all would have been abrogated!!

Qur'an: *and whosoever on his own accord performs good it is better for him.*

'To do work willingly and gladly' (*tatawwu'*) is of the form *tafa'ul* from *tawu* which is the opposite of 'to dislike' (*kurh*). The meaning of acceptance is implied in the form *tafa'ul*; therefore, the meaning of *tatawwu'* is 'the present doing of work willingly and gladly without reluctance or annoyance, whether that work is obligatory or not'. The use of this word especially for non-obligatory good work was established among the Muslims long after the revelation of the Qur'an, and this later usage is based on the view that it is only non-obligatory good work which is done willingly without compulsion, while there is a shade of compulsion in obligatory work: because there is no choice, it has to be done. Anyhow, the word *tatawwu'* in its root or form, was not used only for non-obligatory good work.

The preposition for derivation is here represented by (*f*; and, so, etc.), and the sentence is an offshoot of the previous sentences. Thus its meaning is: Fasting is prescribed for you, keeping 'in view your good and betterment, with the additional advantage that it brings you in line with previous peoples, and it has been made easy for you; therefore you should perform it willingly, to do it thus rather than doing it reluctantly.

It appears from the above that the words of Allah: whoso performs good willingly have metaphorically put the 'cause' in the place of 'effect'. It says that to perform good willingly is better for him, instead of saying that to fast willingly is better. It is like the verse, *Indeed We know, it certainly grieves thee that which they say, but verily it is not thee that they belie, but it the signs of Allah which the wrongdoers deny (6:33)*, which means "so endure it and do not be grieved because they do not deny, thee..,"

Sometimes it is said, that the sentence, *whoso willingly performs good it is better for him*, is connected with the preceding sentence, i.e. those who are with difficulty able to do so, on them is redemption by feeding a poor man. According to this interpretation it means that whoso performs non-obligatory good work by giving redemption twice - feeds one poor man twice or two poor man once it is better for him.

But there are three defects in this interpretation:

First: As mentioned earlier, there is no evidence to show that the word meaning 'to do a work willingly' (*tatawwu*) is reserved for non-obligatory good work.

Second: In this interpretation "f" would be without any real significance. It has been mentioned above that the sentence is an off-shoot of the previous sentence. But what is the connection between the rule of redemption and giving non-obligatory food on one's own accord?

Third: This interpretation confuses *adding something on one's own accord* with *performing good willingly*. But obviously these are two separate things.

Qur'an: *and that you fast is better for you if you know*:

This sentence is complementary to the preceding one; and the meaning is: Perform willingly the fast which is prescribed for you because willingly doing a good deed is in itself another good work, and the fast is good for you, therefore, to fast willingly is good twice.

Sometimes it is said that the sentence, *and that you fast is better for you*, is addressed to those who are excused from fasting and not to the other believers who are obliged to fast and for whom the fast is compulsory. They say that its apparent meaning is that fasting is better for you, but there would be no objection if you do not fast. Obviously this meaning can fit the non-obligatory fast only, and not the obligatory one. The implication is that those who have the option not to fast (like a sick person or a traveler) are exhorted to fast and it is recommended to them to keep the fast rather than to break it.

There are five objections to this interpretation:

First: There is no evidence to support this view.

Second: The two sentences differ in syntax. The pronoun in *whoso among you be sick... is* in the 3rd person, and those in *and that you fast...* are in the 2nd person.

Third: The first sentence does not give any option to the sick man or the traveler. On the contrary, the words, *then (he shall fast) that number of other days*, obviously specify fasting on other days, as explained earlier.

Fourth: Even if we accept, for the sake of argument, that the first sentence gives an option to the sick person and the traveler, that option is not between fasting and not fasting; it is between fasting in Ramadan and fasting on other days. And as both options are of a fast in different periods, merely the words, *that you fast is better for you*, cannot prove (in the absence of a clear context) any preference for fasting in Ramadan over fasting on other days.

Fifth: Allah in this sentence is not promulgating any law, so that it may be argued that the description of the preference of fasting shows that in this particular case it is not obligatory. Rather, according to the context of this verse, its aim is to emphasize that the law given by Allah cannot be devoid of benefit, good and advantage for you. Other examples of this style may be seen in many verses, like, *therefore turn to your Creator and kill yourselves; that is better for you*(2:54); *then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading; that is better for you, if you know*(62:9); *you shall believe in Allah and His Apostles, and struggle hard in Allah's way with your properties and your lives; that is better for you if you know*. (61:11). And there are many such verses which show that this style of speech in the Qur'an does not give an option to the believer, it only shows that a given order is for their own advantage and benefit.

Qur'an, *the month of Ramadan, in which was sent down the Qur'an, a guidance...* :

The month of Ramadan is the ninth month of the lunar Arabic calendar, between the months of Shaa'ban and Shawwal. No other month has been mentioned by name in the Qur'an. The word-meaning 'to come down' is *nuzul*. Its transitive forms meaning 'to bring down' are *inzal* and *tanzil* the difference between them is that *inzal* implies bringing down all at once, while *tanzil* implies bringing down gradually.

The Qur'an is the name of the book sent down to His Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), because it is recited and read [It is derived from the root form *qaraa* meaning to read or recite. Allah has said: *Surely We made it an - Arabic Qur'an that you may understand* (43:3). This name is used for the whole book as well as for its parts.

The verse proves that the Qur'an was sent down in the month of Ramadan. But Allah has also said, *And the Qur'an which We revealed in portions so that you may read it to the people by slow degrees, and We sent it down sending it* (in portions) (17:106). And this verse clearly shows that it was revealed gradually during the entire period of the Call, which was about twenty-three years. Also accepted history proves it. This has apparently given room to the objection that there was a complete conflict between these two verses.

Some people have replied that the Qur'an was sent down all at once to the lowest heaven in the month of Ramadan, then was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) in portions, gradually, over about twenty-three years - the total period of the Call. This reply is based on some traditions, some of which will be quoted during the discussion of traditions.

Others have objected to this reply. They say that the words *a guidance for mankind, and clear evidence of guidance and distinction* which come immediately after these words do not support this interpretation; it is difficult to understand how the Qur'an guided the people and was a source of discrimination between truth and falsehood during the time when it was in the heaven for years and years. This objection has been answered in this way: The Qur'an is a guidance and a discrimination; it means that it had the potential and ability to guide those who needed its guidance and to discriminate between the truth and falsehood if there was any confusion. It could remain with that hidden potential for a while until the time came for that potential to become a fact. There are countless examples in civil laws and state constitutions where many articles remain on paper until the occasion arises for their enforcement and they are then acted upon.

But we must admit that there is a great difference between constitutions and civil laws on one hand, and addresses and lectures on the other. Lectures or talks cannot be delivered a single moment before their time and occasion, and there are in the Qur'an numerous verses of this type. For example: *Allah surely heard the plea of her who pleads with you about her husband and complains to Allah, and Allah knows the contentions of both of you...* (58:1); *And when they see merchandise or sport, they break up for it and leave you standing.* (62:11); *Of the believers are men who are true to the covenant which they made with Allah so of them is he, who accomplished his vow, and of them is he who yet waits, and they have not changed in the least* (33:23). Moreover, the Qur'an contains verses which have been abrogated and other that abrogated them, and there is no sense in combining both of them in revelation sent all together.

Another interpretation is that the declaration that the Qur'an was sent down in the month of Ramadan means that its first verses were revealed at that time. It is difficult to accept this interpretation either. It is well known that the Prophet (s.a.w.) was sent with the Qur'an, and the beginning of his Call was on the 27th Rajab, and there is between this date and Ramadan a gap of more than thirty days. How could the prophethood remain without the revelation of the Qur'an for

such a long period? Look at the 96th chapter which was the first chapter revealed (*Read in the name of your Lord...*) Its context shows that it was revealed at the beginning of the Call. likewise, the contents of the 74th chapter show that this also was revealed at the beginning.

Anyhow, the words, *the month of Ramadan in which was sent down the Qur'an*, obviously do not mean that only the first verses were revealed at that time; and there is no such indication in the context. Therefore, such explanation would be without any proof or evidence. Also there are some more verses, which have similar meaning. For example: *By the Book that makes manifest (the truth), Surely We sent it down on a blessed night; Surely We are ever-warning (44:2-3); and Surely We sent it down on the Night of Destiny (97:1)*. Neither the apparent meanings of these verses nor their contexts support the view that *sending down of the Qur'an* means the beginning of its revelation or the revealing its first verses.

Deep consideration of the verses of the Book shows something quite different from all the above interpretations. The verses which say that the Qur'an was sent down in the month of Ramadan, have used the verbal form of *inzal* which indicates sending down all at once. (Quran 2:185; 44:23; 97:1). This "all at once" can mean either of two things:

1) To consider the complete book as one collection and look at it as a collective noun, as Allah says in 10:24 *Like the water which we sent down from the sky. Now, the rain comes down gradually, but it is looked upon as one whole collection and that is why the verbal form inzal, and not tanzil, has been used. The same is the meaning of the verse (this is) a book We have sent down to you abounding in good, so that they may ponder over its verses... (38:29)* in which the whole book has been taken as one collection and the verbal form *inzal Qi* has been used.

2) To accept that the reality of the Book is something different from the words written on paper, etc. Its common meaning gives the picture of a thing which can be divided and sectionalized and which can be a subject of expansion and graduality, but the reality of the Book is a single, non-gradual thing which was sent down all at once, and not in pieces.

This second meaning is apparent in many verses of the Qur'an. See for example the verses, (This is) *a book whose verses were confirmed, then they were divided (made clear) from One Wise All-aware. (11:1)* "Strengthened" or "confirmed" (*uhkimat*, is the opposite of "divided", "made clear" (*fussilat*). The literal meaning of *taffil* is to divide into parts and sections; that is why it implies explanation and clarification. Therefore, confirmed (*uhkimat*) would mean that in that state it was indivisible and indistinguishable in its parts, because it was a single unit without any part of section. The sequence of the words in this verse shows that this division which we find in the Qur'an came to it later; before that, it was something confirmed, undivided and one.

More clear are the verses, *And certainly, We have brought them a Book which We have 'sectionalized'(i.e. explained) with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for the people who believe; Do they wait for aught but its final interpretation? On the day when its final interpretation comes about, those who neglected it before will say: Indeed the Apostles of our Lord had brought the truth... (7:52-53)*. Also the verses, *And this Qur'an is not such as could be forged by those besides Allah, but it is a verification of that which is before it and a 'sectionalization' (explained) of the Book, there is no doubt in it, for the Lord of the worlds... Nay, they rejected that of which they have not comprehensive knowledge, and its final interpretation has not yet come to them... (10:37-38)*. These verses, and especially the last one, clearly show that the division into parts is a thing which came later unto the Book. Therefore, the reality of the Book is one thing and the division which it was subjected to is another. The unbelievers rejected the division (explanation) of the Book because they neglected (forgot) something to which that explanation led and which has been referred to here as the

"final interpretation", and which will appear before them on the Day of Judgment and, at that time, they will inevitably know it, but then their regret will not benefit them, and it is too late to repent. These verses also imply that the real Book is the final interpretation of the Book.

Even far more clear are the verses, *By the Book which makes manifest (the truth), surely We made it an Arabic Qur'an that you may understand, and surely it is in the Source of the Book with Us truly elevated, full of Wisdom.* (43:2-4)

It is apparent that there is a Book which makes manifest the truth, which was later made into an Arabic Qur'an (Recited thing); and it was clothed in recited words and Arabic language so that people might understand; but in reality it is in the Source of the Book with Allah, elevated, so that minds do not reach it, full of wisdom without any division. This verse contains the definition of the Manifest Book and that it is the foundation of the Qur'an revealed later in plain Arabic.

In the same way Allah says in 56:75-80 But nay! I swear by the falling of stars - and most surely it is a great oath if you only know - Most surely it is an honored Qur'an in a Hidden Book, none touches it save the purified ones; A sending down (revelation) from the Lord of the worlds. These verses clearly show that the Qur'an has its own place, in the Hidden Book, where none touches it save the purified servants of Allah, and it was only later that it was sent down. But before being sent down it was in a Book which is hidden from others. It is that Hidden Book which was referred to as the Source of the Book in 43:2-4. The verse 85:21-22 calls that Source the Guarded Tablet: *Nay! It is a Glorious Quran in a Guarded Tablet.* This tablet is called Guarded because it is preserved and protected from changes; but we know that in the Qur'an which was sent down gradually there are verses abrogating other verses; gradual completion itself is a sort of change. So this Qur'an cannot be called the Guarded Tablet. In short, the Manifest Book is the foundation of this Qur'an and this Qur'an is like a clothing to that Reality.

Now we know that the relation of this Qur'an, when it was gradually revealed, to the Manifest Book - which we call the Reality of the Book - is that of a dress to its wearer, and of a metaphor to its real meaning, and of a proverb to its actual aim. It is because of this relationship that the word Qur'an is sometimes used for the Real Book itself, as in the divine words, *Nay! It is a Glorious Qur'an in a Guarded Tablet*, and in other similar verses. Therefore, we may correctly interpret the 'sending down of the Qur'an', in the three verses, where it is said that it was revealed in the month of Ramadan (2:185), on a blessed night (44:3), on the Night of Destiny (97:1), as the revelation of the Source of the Book, i.e., the Manifest Book to the heart of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) all at once. And the sectionalized Qur'an was revealed to his heart gradually during the entire period of his prophetic Call.

This can be better appreciated when we study some other verses. Allah says, *and do not make haste with the Qur'an before its revelation is made complete to you...* (20:114) Also He says: *Do not move your tongue with it to make haste with it; surely on Us is the collecting of it and the reciting of it. Therefore, when We have recited it, then follow its recitation; again on Us is the explaining of it.* (75:16-19) These verses prove without any shadow of doubt that the Messenger of Allah had prior knowledge of what was being revealed to him. That is why he was asked not to make haste in reciting before its revelation was completed. (This matter will be further explained, God willing, in its proper place)

In short, after pondering on the verses of the Qur'an one cannot but accept that: This Qur'an which was gradually revealed to the Prophet is based on a sublime Reality which the minds of common people cannot comprehend and the hands of defiled imaginations (defiled with lust, greed and materialism) cannot touch. That sublime Reality was revealed to the Prophet all at once in the month

of Ramadan. And in this way Allah taught him the real goal and meaning of the Book. (This subject will be explained under the verse 3:7.)

This is what a deep consideration of the verses of the Qur'an leads one to believe. Of course, the traditionalists, and most of the theologians as well as the materialists (who do not accept the reality of metaphysics, the things beyond the matter) have no way but to interpret these and the like verses (e.g. the verses which say that the Qur'an is a guidance, mercy, light, spirit, setting-place of the stars, manifest book, in a guarded tablet, sent down from Allah, in purified pages etc. etc.) as metaphorical and figurative expressions. Thus they have turned the Qur'an into poetic prose!!

A writer has discussed the meaning of the revelation of the Qur'an in the month of Ramadan. What follows is the gist of his writing; our comment will follow thereafter: "There is no doubt that the beginning of the Call of the Prophet coincided with the revelation of the first revealed verses of the Qur'an, and with his being asked by Allah to announce the truth and warn the people. Also, there is no doubt that this happened in the night, as Allah says, *Surely We sent it down on a blessed night* (44:3). Again, there is no doubt that it was in a night of the month of Ramadan as Allah says, *the month of Ramadan, in which was sent down the Qur'an.* (2:185)

"The whole Qur'an was not revealed on that night; but as the chapter of *The Opening* was revealed in it, and this chapter covers all the features and knowledge of the Qur'an, it was as though the whole Qur'an was revealed therein. (Moreover, the name "Qur'an" is used for parts of the Book as well as for the complete book. Further, it is used in Qur'anic terminology for all divine books like the Torah, the Injil, the Zabur etc.)

"The first revelation was *Read in the name of My Lord...* (96:1), which was sent down on the 25th night of Ramadan. It was revealed when the Prophet (s.a.w.) was proceeding to the house of Khadijah in the middle of the valley, looking at Jibril, who revealed to him the divine words, *Read in the name of Thy Lord Who created*. When the Prophet (s.a.w.) received there revelation, it came into his mind to ask Jibril how to remember the name of his Lord. So, Jibril appeared before him and taught him the chapter of the Opening, *In the name of Allah, the Beniftcent, the Merciful, All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the world...* Then he taught him the method of prayer and disappeared. Then the Prophet (s.a.w.) regained consciousness, and did not find any trace of what he had witnessed except a fatigue which had overcome him because Jibril had pressed him hard at the time of revelation. Now, the Prophet continued on his way but he did not realize that he was sent by Allah as His Messenger to mankind, commissioned to guide them unto the right path. When he entered the house, he slept the whole night because of weariness. In the morning, the angel returned and brought the revelation of God, *O thou shrouded (in thy mantle!) Arise, and warn...* (74:1-2)"

Then he goes on to say:

"This is the meaning of revealing the Qur'an in the month of Ramadan, and the coincidence of his Call with the Night of Destiny. As for the assertion of some Shiite books that the start of the Call was on the 27th day of Rajab, these traditions (which are only found in some Shi'ite books which were not written before the beginning of the 4th century of Hijrah) are against the Qur'an, as you know."

Then he says:

"And there are other traditions which support these (Shi'ite) traditions and say that the meaning of the revelation of the Qur'an in the month of Ramadan is that it was sent down, before the beginning of the Call of the Prophet, from the Guarded Tablet to the Inhabited House, and there Jibril dictated it to the angels so that it might be sent down to the Prophet after the beginning of his Call. But these mythological ideas which have been interpolated into the traditions are rejected, first, because they are against the Qur'an, and second, because *the guarded tablet* mentioned in the Qur'an means the

physical world, and *the inhabited house* means the earth because mankind lives therein."

This was the gist of his writing; and, by my life, I do not know which sentence in this balderdash can be amended to conform with fact and reality. The damage is too extensive to be repaired.

First: It is a strange fabrication which he has uttered about the beginning of the prophethood and the revelation of the Qur'an for the first time. Where did he find that *Read in the name of Thy Lord... was revealed* to the Prophet when he was on his way; and that the chapter of *the Opening* was revealed to him then and there; and at the same time he was taught the prayer, and that thereafter he entered his house and slept weary and tired, and then in the morning the chapter of *al-Muddaththir* (the Shrouded) was revealed asking him to announce his prophethood and warn the people? All of this is just his imagination which has no basis at all; neither any clear verse nor any tradition of any standing supports it. It is just a mythological story which conforms with neither the Qur'an nor the traditions, as you will see.

Second: He claims that it is accepted that the beginning of the prophethood and the revelation of the Qur'an as well as the command to announce his prophethood, all happened at one and the same time. Then he explains it by saying that the prophethood started with the revelation of the Qur'an; and the Prophet (s.a.w.) was a prophet without being an apostle (Messenger of Allah) for one night, then in the morning he was given Messengership when the 74th chapter (The Shrouded) was revealed. But the writer cannot show any evidence to support himself either from the Qur'an or from the traditions; and what he claims to be "accepted" is not accepted at all.

As for the traditions, what he has criticized the Shi'ite collections for (that they were written long after the incident) equally discredits all other collections of traditions and no trust can be had in any of them, because not a single book of the traditions, whether of the Sunnis or the Shi'ahs, was written before the expiry of the second century of Hijrah or even later. This much about the traditions. The position of history - which, by the way, does not give the above details - is worse than the traditions. And the criticism of interpolation which he has leveled against the traditions must be directed against history also.

So far as the Qur'an is concerned, it does not support any of his assertions. On the other hand, it plainly contradicted what he has said and refutes what he has fabricated. The 96th chapter (*Read In the name of Thy Lord...*) is the first one revealed, as has been described by the traditions and is proved by the meaning of the first five verses; and nobody has said that this chapter was revealed piecemeal, (at least there is a likelihood that the whole chapter was revealed all together). Now, this chapter clearly shows that the Prophet (s.a.w.) used to pray in the presence of the Meccans, some of whom forbade him to do so and talked about him their gatherings. (We do not know the method of the prayer which the Prophet (s.a.w.) performed in the beginning of his Call to be nearer to Allah, except that this chapter mentions prostration.) Look at these verses of this chapter: *Did you see him who forbids a Servant (of Allah) when he prays? Have you considered if he (the Servant) were on the Guidance or enjoined guarding (against evil)? Have you considered if he (the unbeliever) gives the lie (to the truth) and turns (his) back? Did he not know that Allah does see? Nay! If he desist not, We will certainly smite his forehead; a lying sinful forehead. Then let him summon his council; We too will summon the tormentors of Hell. Nay! 'Obey him not, and prostrate and draw nigh (to Allah) (95:9-19).* These verses show that there was someone who used to forbid a worshipper to pray, and used to mention this matter in his council and did not desist from his deed; and obviously the one who used to pray was the Prophet himself (s.a.w.), especially as Allah directly addresses him in the last verse, *Obey him not, and prostrate and draw nigh (to Allah).* This chapter, therefore, proves that the Prophet (s.a.w.) used to pray even before the revelation of the first chapter of the Qur'an, and was a

Guidance, and enjoined piety and guarding against evil. In other words, his work at that time consisted of prophethood and was not just a warning. In short, even before the Qur'an was revealed, and the chapter of *the Opening* sent down to Muhammad (s.a.w.), and even before he was told to start his Call, he was a prophet and used to pray.

So far as the chapter of *the Opening* is concerned, it was revealed some time after the beginning of the Call. Had there been any truth in the assertion of the above writer that it was revealed just after the 94th chapter because "it came into the Prophet's mind to ask Jibril how to remember Allah", it would have begun with the word say (*qul*): *Say, in the name of Allah... or Say, all praise belongs to Allah... ; and would have ended at the words, Master of the Day of Judgment*, because the last three verses have no relation with that supposed question, and it is not the style of the Qur'an to indulge in unnecessary talk. Of course, a verse in the 15th chapter (al-Hijr) says *And certainly We have given you seven oft-repeated (verses) and the great Qur'an.* (15-87) This chapter is of Meccan period as its subject matter shows. *Seven oft-repeated verses* means the chapter of *the Opening*, and it has been mentioned here side by side with the Qur'an, which shows its greatness and excellence. Yet it was not counted as the Qur'an, but only as *seven of its oft-repeated verses*, and only one of its parts. For further proof see 39:23 where the Qur'an has been given the adjective, "oft-repeated": *Allah has revealed the best discourse, a Book conforming in its various parts, oft-repeated...* Thus, the Qur'an is "oft-repeated" and the chapter of *the Opening* is only *seven of its verses*.

The 15th chapter mentions the 1st chapter (the Opening). It proves that the 1st chapter was revealed before the 15th. And the 15th chapter contains the verses; *Therefore, declare openly what you are bidden and turn aside from the polytheists. Surely, We will suffice you against the scoffers.* (15:94-95) These verses show that the Messenger of Allah had refrained from openly warning for a time and then was told to start it again by the words, *declare openly*.

Now let us look at the 74th chapter (the Shrouded) and its 2nd verse, *Arise, and warn*. If this chapter was revealed all together, then this verse has the same implication as the verse *declare openly what you are bidden* (15:94) because this chapter contains the following verses: *Leave Me and him whom I created alone and given him vast riches... Then he turned back and was big with pride and, then he said, this is naught but an enchantment narrated...* (74:11-25) This subject matter is similar to 15:94 which says *and turn aside from the polytheists*. And if it was revealed piecemeal, then the context says that at least the verses in its beginning were revealed in the early days of the Call, after the Prophet had refrained from an open warning for some time.

Thirdly: He asserts that those traditions are forged and mythological which say that the Qur'an was sent down on the Night of Destiny from the Preserved Tablet to the Inhabited House all together before the beginning of the prophethood and then its verses were revealed in segments to the Messenger of Allah. He says that they are against the Book of Allah and their meaning is not correct. He claims that the Preserved Tablet means the Natural World and the Inhabited House means the Earth. Well, all the above claims are incorrect and a complete lie:

First, because no clear verse of the Qur'an goes against these traditions as has been explained earlier.

Second, because no where in these traditions has it been said that the Qur'an was sent down to the Inhabited House *before the beginning of the prophethood*. This clause has been added by the said writer without any basis.

Third: His assertion that the Preserved Tablet means the natural world (i.e. the universe) is a very ugly interpretation; nay, rather it is a laughing stock. Can he explain what is the basis of naming this universe - in the word of Allah - as 'the Preserved Tablet'? Is this because this universe is free from

change and alteration? But it is a world of movement, always in a state of fluidity, always changing its quality. Or is it because this universe is safe from physical deterioration? But the facts belie such a claim. Or is it because undeserving persons cannot have any knowledge of it (as Allah says in 56:77-79, *Most surely it is an honored Qur'an, in a book that is protected; none shall touch it save the purified ones*)? But the knowledge of the universe is not restricted to any one group.

In short, that writer did not produce any interpretation, concerning the revelation of Qur'an in the month of Ramadan, which could be in accord with the words of the verse. His interpretation boils down to this: The words, *in it was sent down the Qur'an*, means, "it is as though in it was sent down the Qur'an." And the words, *Surely We revealed it in the Night of Destiny*. Means "It is as though We revealed it in the Night of Destiny." Any such interpretation cannot be tolerated by language, usage and context.

Further, that writer says that the whole Qur'an was revealed to the Messenger of Allah in the Night of Destiny because he was given in that night the chapter of the *Opening* which contains an the important knowledge of the Qur'an. Well why cannot others say that the revelation of the Qur'an all at one time means that all its knowledge was sent down to the heart of the Messenger of Allah in that night? There is nothing to contradict this interpretation.

There are many other fabrications and lies in that writing but this is not the place to go into a detailed refutation of it.

Qur'an: *a guidance for the people and clear evidence of guidance and discrimination* (between right and wrong): "People" generally refers to the lowest category of mankind whose intelligence is not high. This word is generally used in the Qur'an with this very implication. For example, *but most people do not know* (30:30); *And these examples, We set them forth for the people and none understand them but the learned.* (29:43) This word generally refers to the people who just follow what others say; they cannot understand abstract ideas even with the help of evidence and proof; they cannot discriminate between right and wrong through any argument; they need someone to explain ideals and a guide to lead them to the right path. And the Qur'an is a guidance for these people; and what an ideal guidance it is!! Then comes the special group, which is perfect both in knowledge and deeds, ready to receive the light of divine guidance, and may be relied upon to discriminate between right and wrong. For such people, the Qur'an is the clear evidence and proof of guidance and discrimination. It leads them to the guidance and chooses right for them and shows them how to discriminate between good and evil, right and wrong. Allah says: *Whereby Allah guides him, who follows His pleasure, into the ways of peace and takes them out from darkness towards the light by His will and guides them unto the path that is straight.* (5:16)

From the above discourse one may understand why Allah has used here two words "guidance" and "clear evidence of guidance." The relation between the two is that of general and particular. The Qur'an is guidance for one group and clear evidence of guidance for another.

Qur'an: *so whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein.*

Shahddah (witnessing) means 'presence' by which one acquires knowledge. Witnessing the month means arrival of the month and the knowledge of its arrival.

Some people say that witnessing of the month means sighting of the new moon, and not on journey. But there is no evidence to support, this interpretation. Of course, sometimes the context implies such a meaning; but there is no such context in this verse.

Qur'an: *and whosoever is sick or on a journey (he shall fast) the same number of other days:*

This sentence has been repeated here. But this repetition is not for emphasis. It was explained earlier that the first two verses did not promulgate any law; rather they paved the way for such

promulgation and prepared the minds to accept and follow the law which was to be shortly announced. It is in this third verse in which that law has been promulgated. As the aim of the first sentences is different from this one, there is, in fact, no repetition.

Qur'an: *Allah desires ease for you and He desires not hardship for You; and so that you may complete the (prescribed) number:*

It is the explanation of the above mentioned exception. A sick person or a traveler has to break his fast because *Allah desires ease for you*, and he shall fast the same number in other days so *that You may complete the prescribed number.*

So that "L" (so that) in 'so that you may complete the number' (*litukmilu l-iddah*) gives the meaning of cause, and it is governed by the verb "desires." Therefore, its meaning will be: We ordered you to break the fast (under certain conditions) and repay it in other days to lighten your burden and to complete the prescribed number.

Qur'an: *and that you glorify Allah for his guiding you, and so that you may be thankful to Him:*

Apparently, these two sentences, the first of which begins with 'so that' (*L*) for a, 'cause', give the reason of the fast, and not of the exception and exemption. The words *the month of Ramadan* are followed by the description of the revelation of the Qur'an in this month. And it indicates that there is a connection between the promulgation of the fast of the month of Ramadan and the revelation of the Qur'an in it as a guidance for the people and a clear evidence of guidance and discrimination between right and wrong. Therefore, the "so that" (*L*) points out that keeping the fast is meant to glorify Allah because He revealed the Qur'an for them and announced His Lordship and the people's servitude. Also it is a thanks to Him since He guided them unto the truth and gave them a Book which discriminates for them between right and wrong.

There is a difference between thanking Allah by fasting and glorifying Him through it. A fast can be said to be a thanks to Allah only when it contains the real spirit of the fast. What is the real spirit of the fast? To be sincere towards Allah by purifying oneself from material involvement and abstaining from the greatest desires of the heart.

But glorifying Him does not depend on that real spirit. The form of the fast and mere abstaining from those things which break the fast (whether it is done with sincere intention or not) shows the glory of Allah and His greatness, as the man is following His command with such self-denial.

Keeping in view this difference, Allah has differentiated between glorifying and thanking: Thanking has been prescribed with (*la'alla*) which literally means 'perhaps' and is used to indicate hope, while glorifying has begun with "so that" (*L*) which indicates cause. And thus we find *and that you glorify Allah... and so that you may be thankful to Him.* It is the same style which is used at the end of the first of these verses so that you may guard yourselves...

Traditions

al-Hadith al-Qudsi: Allah said, "The fast is for Me and I shall give its reward." (or, "I shall be its reward")

Explanation: This *hadith* has been narrated by both groups (i.e. Sunni and Shi'ah) with slight variations. Why has the fast been declared to be for Allah? Because it is the only act of worship which consists of a negative aspect only, for example, not eating, not drinking, etc., while all other acts of worship, like prayer and pilgrimage etc., consist of positive actions or are made up of positive and negative aspects. The positive actions cannot be absolutely pure in showing the worshipper's spirit of servitude or the Lordship of Almighty Allah. It cannot be free of materialistic imperfections and limitations, and sometimes it may be done to please someone other than Allah (as in the case of

hypocrisy and showiness). But the fast is an act of worship in which one has just to abstain from lust and desire and restrain oneself from worldly matters. This negative aspect is a thing which nobody can know except Allah. It is a dealing entirely between the servant and his Lord, and therefore this worship is purely for Allah; others can have no share in it.

"I shall give its reward" can also be translated "I shall be its reward." If the former, then it means that Allah Himself will give its reward directly and will not make anyone a link between Himself and His servant. The servant worshipped Him in a way that nobody knew but Allah, so he will be given its reward in a way that nobody will know it but Allah. It is like the *hadith* about alms: "Verily alms, Allah takes it Himself without making anyone a link in it. Allah said, Do *they not know that Allah... takes the alms.* (9:105)

If the second translation is correct, then it indicates that the reward of the one who fasts is nearer to Allah.

As Saqid (a.s.) said: "The Messenger of Allah, in the early days of his prophethood, used to fast continuously so that people would think that he would not leave a single day's fast, and then to leave the fast continuously so that they would say he would not fast again. Then he changed this regime and began fasting on alternate days, and this was the fast of Dawud; Then he changed it and started fasting three bright days (i.e., 13th, 14th and 15th) of the lunar month when the moonlight is the brightest.) Then again he divided the three days - one day each in every ten days, the first and last Thursdays and the Wednesday in the middle. And he continued with this regime till he left this world." [*alKafi*]

And there is a *hadith* from 'Anbasah al-'Abid that when the Messenger of Allah died it was his custom to fast in Sha'ban and Ramadan and three days in every month.

The author says: There are numerous traditions about it from *Ahlul-bayt*; and this is the *sunnah* fast which the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) used to keep in addition to the fast of Ramadan.

There is a *hadith* in *Tasfir* of al-*Ayyashi* under the words of Allah *O ye who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you*, from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that "It is for the believers only."

Jamil asked as-Saqid (a.s.) about the words of Allah *O ye who believe! Fighting has been prescribed for you*, and *O ye who believe! Fasting has been prescribed on you*. The Imam replied: "All such verses cover (even) those who have gone astray as well as the hypocrites, and (in short) everyone who accepted the declared Call (i.e. Islam)."

Hafs said: "I heard Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) say: 'Verily the month of Ramadan, Allah did not prescribe its fast for any of the people before us.' I asked: 'Then (what is the meaning of) the word of Allah: *O ye who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you?*' (The Imam) said: 'Verily Allah prescribed the month of Ramadan for the prophets, not for their peoples. Thus Allah honored this *ummah* and prescribed its fast for the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) as well as for this *ummah.*'" [*Man la yahduruhu l-faqih*]

The author says: This *hadith* is weak because there is Isma'il ibn Muhammad in its chain of narrators. The same thing is narrated from *al-'Alim* i.e. al-Kazim (a.s.), and probably both traditions are one and the same. In any case, this is a solitary tradition (*khbaru l-wahid*) -a tradition which is not narrated by a great enough number of narrators as to create a certainty of its truth). The obvious meaning of the verses does not support the view that "as it was prescribed for those before you" refers to, the prophets only. Had it been the case (and we know that this sentence has been revealed to encourage the believers to fast, to prepare them for it and to exhort them), then it would have served the purpose better if the word, 'prophets', had been clearly mentioned, as it would have been more effective. And Allah knows better.

There is a tradition from a man who asked as-Saqid (a.s.) whether the Qur'an and Furqan are two

things or one. (The Imam) said: "Qu'ran is the complete Book and Furqan is the obligatory law." (*al-Kafi*)

A *hadith* from the same Imam (a.s.) says: "Furqan is every clear verse of the Book." (*Jawdmilu l-jirni'l*)

The same Imam (a.s.) said: "Furqan is every clear law in the Qur'an and the Book is the complete Qur'an which vouches for the Previous prophets." [*at-Tafsir*, al-'Ayyashi and al-Qummi]

The author says: This interpretation is supported by the literal meaning of the word.

It has been said in some traditions that Ramadan is one of the names of Allah; therefore, one should not say 'Ramadan came' or 'Ramadan went away'; but should say 'the month of Ramadan ... ' But it is a solitary tradition and is unusual. This saying has been reported also - from Qatadah from among the commentators of the Qur'an. But the traditions which count the names of Allah do not mention Ramadan as one of His names. And the use of the word Ramadan without the word "month" as well as its dual form "Ramadan" (two Ramadans) is very common in the traditions narrated from the Prophet and the Imams of *Ahlu l-bayt* (a.s.) This usage is very common; and it cannot be said that a particular narrator might have omitted the word 'month' by mistake.

As Sabah ibn Nubatah said: "I told Abu Abdillah (a.s.) that Ibn Abi Ya'fur told me to ask you some questions. The Imam said: 'And what are those?' I said: 'He asks you, if the month of Ramadan enters and one is in his house, is he allowed to go on a journey?' The Imam said: 'Verily Allah says so *whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein*. Therefore, anyone who is in his house when the month of Ramadan enters is not allowed to travel except for *hajj* or *umrah* or in search of such goods which are in danger of being lost." [*al-Ayyashi*]

The author says: It is a fine inference of a non-obligatory law based on the generality of the words.

'Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.) said: "And as regards the fast of a journey and sickness, the Sunnis (*ammah*) have conflicting views: a group says, he shall fast; others say, he shall not fast; still others opine, he will fast if he so wishes, and shall leave it if so desires. But we say, he shall leave the fast in both conditions. And if he fasted while on journey or during illness then on him is its repayment, i.e. he must fast the same number on other days, because Allah says, *But whoso among you be sick or on a journey, then (he shall fast) the same number of other days*." [*al-Kafi*]

The author says: al-Ayyashi also has narrated this tradition.

And there is in the same *Tafsir* (under the word of Allah, *so whosoever of you witnesses the month...*) a tradition of al-Baqir (a.s.) in which the Imam said: How clear is this verse for him who understands - He who is present in Ramadan shall fast, and he who is on a journey during it shall break the fast.

The author says: *There are* numerous traditions of the Imams of *Ahul-bayt* that it is incumbent on the sick and the traveler to break the fast; and the same is their *madhhab*. Also, you have seen that the verse of the Qur'an clearly proves the same.

Abu Basir said: "I asked him (the Imam - a.s.) about the words of Allah and those who are hardly able to do so, on them is a redemption by feeding a poor man. The Imam said: 'The aged man who is not able (to fast) and the sick.'" [*al-'Ayyashi*]

Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) is *reported to* have said about that verse: "The aged man, and the one who has a sickness in which he is, always thirsty." [*ibid*].

As-Sadiq (a.s.) is *reported to* have said in explanation of that verse: "The woman who is afraid for her child and the aged man." [*ibid*]

The author says: There are numerous traditions from the Imams to this effect. And the "sick" mentioned in the tradition of Abu Basir (mentioned above) means that sick person whose illness

continues the whole year till the next Ramadan comes; such a sick person will not be required to fast the same number of other days.

Sa'id said that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Verily, there *istakbir* (*Allahu akbar*) on the day of 'Idu Iftir. I said: 'There is no *takbir* except in 'Idu I-Adha.' The Imam said: 'There is *takbir* on that day; but it is *sunnah* in prayers of sunset, nightfall, dawn, noon and afternoon and in the two *rakats of IN*.'" [al-'Ayyashi]

Sa'id an-Naqqash said: "Abu Abdillah (a.s.) told me, 'There is *takbir* on the eve of 'Idul-fitr but it is *sunnah*. I asked him; 'And when is it?' He said: 'In the prayer of sunset, nightfall on the eve of 'Idu l-fitr and in the prayers of dawn and 'Id. Then it is discontinued.' I asked him: 'How should I say it?' He said: You say:

(*Allahu akbar Allahu akbar Ia-illaha illa-llahu wa-llahu akbar Allahu akbaru 'ala ma hadana*) - and it is the meaning of the words of Allah, so that you shall complete the number (i.e. prayer) and that you glorify Allah for His guiding you. And the glorifying (*takbir*) is that you say: (*Allahu akbar, la illaha illa'llahu wa-llahu akbar wa NUN 'I-hamd*).' And he said: 'In a tradition the last *takbir* is four times.

The author says: The first tradition includes prayers of noon and afternoon in glorifying (*takbir*) and the last one omits them. This difference may be an indication of the difference in the degrees of *sunnah*. And the word of the Imam, "i.e. prayer", perhaps indicate that the words of Allah, so that you shall complete the number, meant 'complete the number of the days of fast with the prayer of 'id and glorify Allah with prayers for His guiding you'. This meaning is not against the meaning which we described earlier because it is an inference of a non-obligatory rule from a sentence containing an obligatory law. It is like the tradition quoted earlier in which the Imam inferred from the verse, *so whosoever of you witnesses the month he shall fast therein* the undesirability of travel - when one is in his abode on the first night.

The tradition has two different methods of *takbir*. This difference supports the opinion of some writers that glorifying in "that you glorify Allah" includes praising also, and that is why it is followed in this verse by the preposition on (*'ala*) which is the preposition generally used after praise (*al-hamd*).

Ibn Abi 'Umayr said that he asked as-Sadiq (a.s.): "May I be your ransom! Is it correct what we are told, that the Prophet (s.a.w.) fasted for twenty-nine days much more than he fasted for thirty days? He (the Imam) said: 'Allah did not create a single letter of this talk. The Prophet (s.a.w.) did not fast but thirty days, because Allah says: *You shall complete the number*. Was the Messenger of Allah shortening it?'" [al-'Ayyashi]

The author says: This question is for repudiation. The tradition shows what we have already mentioned that completing here means completing the month of Ramadan.

One of our companions narrates about the words of Allah, *so that you glorify Allah for His guiding you*, that glorifying means 'extolling' and guidance means 'friendship of the Imams' (*wilayah*). [al-Mahasin]

The author says: The interpretation of guidance as friendship of the Imam is like explaining an idea by giving a clear example. Also, it may be treated as its inner meaning. It is as has been mentioned in some traditions that in the verse: *Allah desires ease for you and He desires not hardship for you*, 'ease' means friendship (of the Imams) and 'hardship' means their enmity and friendship with enemies of Allah.

Hafs ibn al-Ghiyath asked Abu Abdillah (a.s.) about the words of Allah *the month of Ramadan in which was sent down the Qur'an*, when (the fact is that) the Qur'an was sent down twenty years from

its beginning to its end. Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said: "The Qur'an came all together in the month of Ramadan down to the 'Inhabited House'; then it came down (in segments) in a period of twenty years." Then the Imam said: "The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: 'The book of Ibrahim came down in the first night of the month of Ramadan, and the Torah was sent down on the sixth of the month of Ramadan, and the Zabur was sent down on the eighteenth of the month of Ramadan; in and the Qur'an was sent down on the twenty-third of the month of Ramadan.' [al-Kafi]

The author says: The tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w.) narrated by the Imam (a.s.) has been narrated by as-Suyuti in *ad-Durru l-manthiur*, with several chains from the Prophet (s.a.w.) through Wadthilah ibn al-Asqa'.

Ya'qub said; "I heard a man asking Abil 'Abdillah (a.s.) about the Night of Destiny, whether it occurred (once only) or it comes every year. Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said: 'If the Night of Destiny were taken away the Qur'an would be taken away.'" [al-Kafi and *Man la yahdurruhu I-faqih*]

Ibn 'Abbas said: "The month of Ramadan and the Blessed Night and the Night of Destiny; because verily the Night of Destiny is the Blessed Night and it is in Ramadan - The Qur'an came down all together from reminder (*dhikr*, to the Inhabited House and it is the falling place of the stars in the lowest heaven where the Qur'an came down. Later it descended on Muhammad (s.a.w.) piecemeal, about order, prohibition, and in battles." [ad-Durru l-manthur]

The author says: This matter has also been narrated by others, like Said itin Jubayr. And it appears from this talk of Ibn 'Abbas that he inferred it from the Qur'anic verses; for example the words of Allah: *and the wise reminder (3:58), And(I swear by) the Book written in an outstretched fine parchment and the inhabited house and the elevated canopy (52:2-5);But nay! I swear by the falling of stars, and most certainly it is a great oath if you only know, most surely it is an honored Qur'an in a Book that is hidden; none shall touch it save the purified ones(56:75-79); and We adorned the lowest heaven with lamps (stars) and (made it) to guard (41:12)* And all His words are clear except what He said about the place of falling, that it is the lowest heaven and is the place of the Qur'an. The meaning of this assertion is obscure and the verses of the 56th chapter do not clearly show it, ofcourse; it is narrated from *Ahlu l-bayt* that the Inhabited House is in heaven, and we shall explain it, God willing, in its proper place.

What should clearly be understood is that traditions are like the Qur'an, because there are, in traditions also, some clear ones and others ambiguous. One very commonly finds in their talks which are based on hints and symbols, and especially so in the explanation of such facts as the Tablet, the Pen, the Curtain, the Heaven, the Inhabited House, the Swollen Sea etc. Therefore, it is obligatory for a research scholar to strive his utmost to find out if there is any hint or context to determine the true meaning of a given text.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSE 186

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ 2:186

2:186 *And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then verily I am near, I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me, so they should answer My call and believe in Me, so that they may walk in the right way.*

Commentary

Quran: *And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then verily I am near, I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me:*

This is the best expression of the subject matter in the most elegant and beautiful style. The whole verse is based on the first person singular pronoun which shows the great importance which the speaker, i.e. Allah attaches to this subject; then come the words *My servants* and not "people" or such other words; and this enhances its importance even more; the reply (*then verily I am near*) starts dramatically just after the question without any preamble like: "then say that I am near"; and the reply has been emphasized with "verily" (*inna*) and the nearness of the speaker is described with the adjective *near* and not with any verb like "I come near him", thus it shows that He is already near and will always remain near; then it mentions answering the prayer with the verb the *mudari'* (aorist tense) which combines both the present and the future tenses; and indicates that He answers at present and will continue to answer the prayers of the supplicant; then the answer (I answer the prayer of the supplicant) is conditioned with *when he calls on Me*, but in reality it is not a condition separate from the main clause, both are one and the same thing, and it serves to emphasize that the prayer of the supplicant is answered without any condition or stipulation (as we see also in the verse: *call on Me, I will answer you* 40:60). These seven points show how much importance has been attached to the answering of prayers. In addition, this verse short as it is - repeats the first person singular pronoun seven times; it is the only verse with this characteristic in the whole of Qur'an.

"*Du'd...* and "*dawah* " mean to turn the attention of the called one to the caller. Asking (*su'al*) means to gain a benefit or advantage from the one whose attention is drawn towards the asker and before whom his (asker's) need is put. Therefore, asking (*su'al*) is the final aim of calling (*du'd*). This meaning covers all types of asking, for example, asking for the removal of ignorance, asking with the meaning of reckoning, asking in the sense of seeking beneficence.

Literally, "bondage" (*ubudiyah*), as explained earlier, is the status of being owned. It is not used for any other owned thing except human beings. Therefore, "servant" (*abu*), is used only for a human being or another intelligent being (like an angel).

The ownership of Allah is as different from the ownership of others as is the truth from pretence or the reality from metaphor. Allah owns His servants; his ownership is total and comprehensive. They have no authority, independent from Allah, over their own selves or over matters or things which are

subordinate to them; for example, their attributes and actions and all things which are related to them, like wives, children, property, honor etc. Everything which they own and is related to them in any way - as we say, his self, his body, his ears, his eyes, his actions, his impression (and these are a sort of natural and real possessions), or as we say, his spouse, his wealth, his honor, his right - (and these are a sort of supposed or assumed possession) - is in his possession only because Allah allowed the establishment of that relation of ownership between man and his possession, whatever it may be. It is Allah, glorified be his name, who gave their selves and their persons to them - and if He did not wish so, it could not be attributed to them and they would have remained without any self or person - in other words, non-existent. It is He who gave them hearing and sight and hearts; and it is He who created everything, then fixed for it a measure.

Therefore, Allah intervenes between a thing and its self, between it and between all its associates like child, spouse, friend, property, honor and rights. It means that He, is the nearest of all to His creatures. In other words, He is the Near One in the true sense of this word. He has said: *And We are nearer to him than you, but you see (Us) not (56:85); and We are nearer to him than his life vein (50:16); and know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart (8:24)*. 'Heart' here means the rational soul or spirit.

In short, Allah's ownership of His creatures is real ownership, and as they are His servants He is near to them in its true sense, which means nearest of all things. His ownership gives Him authority to make use of them as He wishes, without any hindrance or obstruction. Also it gives Him authority to answer any prayer which is put before Him by any of His creatures, and to fulfill his need by accepting his supplication, because the ownership is all-encompassing, and His Power and pervasiveness cover all possible situations. It is not as though He has authority in one eventuality and not in the other, as the Jews say that when God created things and decreed their destinies, His work was finished and now His hands are folded up, He can not take any new decision; there is no abrogation (of previous laws), no change and no answering of prayer because every affair is already finished. Nor is it, as a group of this *ummah* said, that Allah has no power about the actions of His creatures. They are called Qadariyyah and were named the Magians of this *ummah* by the Messenger of Allah. *Sunnis* and *Shi'ah* both have reported that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: "Qadariyyah are the Magians of this *ummah*."

The truth is that real ownership in its totality is by Allah only and nobody owns any thing but when He makes him its owner and allows him to possess it. Therefore, whatever Allah wills and gives in possession and allows its coming into being, comes into being. And whatever He does not will, and does not give in possession and does not allow, does not come into being, even if one strives his utmost to bring it into being. Allah has said: *O people! You are they who are needy unto Allah, and Allah is He who is the Self-sufficient, the Most Praised One. (35:15)*

It is, thus, clear that this verse not only mentions a fact, i.e., answering prayer, but gives its reasons also: Because the supplicants are servants of Allah, He is near to them; and because He is near to them, He answers their prayers without any reservation. And the unconditional answering of prayer means that there is no condition imposed on prayer also; whatever prayer is addressed to Him, He shall answer it. Of course, it seems that His promise 'I answer the prayer of the supplicant' depends on the condition, *when he calls Me*. But this condition is not something different from the main clause; and such a mode of expression indicates that the main clause is free from metaphor and analogy; that its meaning is what appears from the words. For example, when we say, "Listen to the sincere advisor when he sincerely advises you", or "Respect the scholar if he be a scholar", it means that we want him to be sure that the advisor is really sincere or the scholar is really a scholar so that listening

to him or respecting him becomes necessary. In the same way, the condition *when he calls on me* shows that the promise of answering the prayer shall apply when the supplicant is a supplicant in reality; when he wants that. Thing according to his natural and deep-ingrained knowledge and when his heart is really in what his tongue is asking for. The reality of prayer and supplication is what the heart desires and the tongue of nature asks for, not this tongue of flesh which moves as it is moved without caring whether the word spoken is a truth or a lie, a reality or a metaphor, a serious talk or a joke. It is because of this that Allah has even mentioned such prayers in which the tongue is not used at all. He said: *And He gave you of all that you asked Him; and if you count Allah's bounties, you will not be able to compute them; Verily, man is very unjust very ungrateful* (14:34). Mankind prays to Him and beseeches Him for bounties which they cannot count, but this asking is not done by the tongue of the mouth, it is done by the tongue of their neediness, the tongue of nature and existence. Also He said:

All those in the heavens and the earth do beseech Him; every day He is in a (new) splendor (55:29). This verse more clearly proves what we have just said.

Therefore, the natural prayer addressed to Allah shall always be answered. If a prayer is not answered* then it lacks both or one of the two things mentioned in the verse: *the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me*. It may happen in following ways:

First: There may be no prayer at all, it may only be a misunderstanding of the supplicant. For example, a man prays for an impossible thing (but he does not know that it is impossible), or for a thing which, if he knew the fact, would not have wanted at all. Let us say that someone was sick and died but his friend is unaware of his death and prays for his recovery, while now the prayer should be for bringing him back to life. If he had been really sure that a dead body could be resurrected and had asked for its resurrection (as the prophets did) his life would have been returned to him; but he does not have such firm conviction and therefore the prayer is not answered. Or, let us say, he asks for a thing which, had he known it really, he Would not have wanted. Therefore, it is not granted.

Second: There is indeed a prayer, but it is not addressed exclusively to Allah. For example, a man beseeches Allah for his needs, but his heart is looking towards its apparent causes or to some imaginary beings whom he thinks have power to fulfill his needs. In this case, his prayer is not addressed exclusively to Allah. In other words, he did not beseech Allah at all; because Allah, Who answers the prayers, is the One who has no partner in His affairs. He is not the one who works in partnership with apparent causes and imaginary beings.

So these are the two groups of supplicants whose hearts were not sincere in their prayers even if their tongues were.

This is the gist of the subject of prayer according to the verse of the Qur'an. The meaning of all verses on this subject may be understood from this explanation. See, for example, the following verses:

Say, my Lord would not care for you, were it not for your prayer; but you have indeed rejected (the truth),so soon you shall be in the grip (25:77).

Say, think you that if the chastisement of Allah comes to you or the Hour comes to you, will you call upon other than Allah, if you are truthful Nay! Him you will call upon, so He clears away that for which you pray, if He pleases, and you will forget what you set up(with Him) (6:40-41).

Say, who is it that delivers you from the (dread of the)darkness of the land and the sea (when) you pray to him (openly) humiliating yourselves and secretly: "If He delivers us from this, certainly we shall be of the grateful ones." Say, Allah delivers you from them and from every distress, yet again you associate (others)with Him (6:63-64).

These verses prove that man has been created with a natural prayer and inner beseeching which is silently addressed to his Lord. But when he spends his life in ease and prosperity, his soul becomes blinded by apparent causes and he treats them as partners to his Lord; thus he becomes confused and thinks that he does not ask his Lord for anything and does not beseech Him, while the fact is that he does not beseech anyone other than Allah, because this prayer (to Allah) is ingrained into his nature, and there is no change in the creation of Allah. Later comes the hardship and the apparent causes become divorced from the expected effects, and those whom he treated as partners of Allah or intercessors before Him disappear completely; then he realizes that there is no one to fulfill his needs and to answer his prayers except Allah. Thus, he returns to his natural monotheism and forgets every other cause and turns his face towards the Beneficent Lord; and the Lord clears away his hardship and fulfills his wants and places him under the shade of opulence. But as soon as he regains his prosperity and happiness - he goes back to the previous polytheism and forgetfulness.

And your Lord said: Call upon Me, I will answer you. Verily, those who are arrogant to My worship shall soon enter Hell, disgraced (40:60).

This verse invites mankind to beseech Allah, and promises the answering, and goes even further by naming the prayer as worship in the clause, *arrogant to My worship* which means "to my prayer." Rather, it equates the worship with prayer: it threatens with Hell those who do not pray, and such a threat can only be justified when one neglects worship completely, not on neglecting only one kind of it. Therefore, the prayer is not just an important type of worship; it is the foundation of worship itself.

From the above, one may appreciate the meaning of other verses on this subject:

Therefore, call upon Allah, being sincere to Him in religion, though averse be the disbelievers (40:14).

And call on Him fearing and hoping; surely, the mercy of Allah is near to those who do good (7:56).

... surely they used to... call unto Us with love and reverence, and were humble before Us (21:90).

Call upon your Lord humbly and secretly; surely He loves not those who exceed the limit (7:55).

When called he (Zakariyya) unto his Lord in low voice. He said: My Lord! Surely my bones are weakened and my head fares with hoariness, and, my Lord! Never have I been unsuccessful in my prayer to Thee (19:3-4).

And He answers those who believe and do good deeds, and increases unto them of His grace (42:26).

There are other relevant verses, and all of these contain the pillars of prayer and explain the manner of the supplication. And the most important of all is to keep the prayer exclusively for Allah; it will come true when the feeling of the heart conforms with the words spoken by the tongue; when one abandons reliance on all apparent reasons other than Allah and depends exclusively upon Allah. Also among them are: fear of Allah; hope in His answering; His love and reverence; humility and humbleness; as well as perseverance in prayer; remembrance of Allah; good deeds; true faith; presence of heart at that time; and similar things.

Qur'an: So they should answer My call and believe in Me:

This sentence branches out from the previous one. Allah is near to His servants; nothings comes between Him and their prayer; He cares for them and for the things they ask for; that is why He invites them to call upon Him and He is of such high attributes.

Therefore, they should accept this invitation of their Lord and should advance towards Him, and have faith in Him about this attribute, having firm belief that He is near and He answers their call; so

that they may be guided rightly in praying unto Him.

Traditions

The Sunnis and Shi'ahs both have narrated from the Prophet (s.a.w.) that "Prayer is the armament of the believer."

It is narrated in *al-Hadith al-qudsi*: "O Musa! Ask from Me all that you need, even fodder for your goat and salt for your dough," [*'Uddatu 'd-dai*]

The Prophet said: "Calling (upon Allah) is better than reciting the Qur'an, because Allah (Powerful and Great is He!) said, 'Say, My Lord would not care for you were it not for your prayer.'" [*Makarimu l-akhlaq*]

The same *hadith* has been narrated from al-Baqir and as Sadiq (a.s.).

Muhammad ibn 'Ajlin narrates from Muhammad ibn 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn from his cousin, as Saqid (a.s.) from his forefathers from the Prophet that he said: "Allah informed one of his prophets in a revelation: 'By My Power and Dignity! Verily I shall change into despair the hope of everyone who hoped from other than Me, and I shall dress him with the clothing of disgrace before people, and I shall remove him from My relief and bounty.

Does my servant put his hope in other than Me in hardships, while hardships are in My hand; And does he expect anything from other than Me, while I am the Self-sufficient, the Munificent? In My hand are the keys of the doors' while they are closed; and My door is open for the one who calls on Me. [*'Uddatu d-dai*]

The Prophet said: "Allah said; 'No creature seeks refuge in another creature, leaving Me, but that I cut off all the means in the heavens and the earth for him. Then if he asks from Me, I do not give him; and if he calls on Me, I do not answer him. And no creature seeks refuge in Me, leaving My creatures, but that I make the heaven and the earth responsible for his sustenance; then if he calls on Me, I answer him and, if he seeks pardon from Me, I forgive!'" [*ibid.*]

The author says: The aim of the above two traditions is to emphasize that the invocation must be purely for Allah. It was not meant to negate the positive causes which Allah has created as instrumental links between the things and their needs. But these instruments are not independent causes. The Independent Cause is only Allah. And man does have an inner feeling of this fact: he feels by his nature that there is a Perfect Cause who fulfils his needs and who can never fail in bringing about the desired effect. On the other hand, he knows that all the apparent causes which are expected to produce an effect, some times fail to do so. Thus he knows that the First Cause, who is the Source and Origin of everything and upon whom every need relies and depends for its fulfillment, is other than these apparent causes. Once he realizes it, he will never entirely rely on these causes, forgetting the Real Cause. Man may appreciate this fact after just a little thinking.

Now, if he prays for something and that need is fulfilled, it will prove that he asked his Lord for it, and that the prayer, which emanated from his inner feeling and knowledge, reached through the apparent causes to his Lord and was granted by Him. On the contrary, if he prays to some apparent causes for it, then it does not originate from natural inner feeling and knowledge; it is just an imaginary need, based not on inner feeling but on some imaginary reasons. It is one of the situations where appearance goes against reality, because he thinks that he is praying, while his inner self knows nothing about that prayer.

Another example: Many is the time that a man likes a thing and makes all efforts to get it; but when he gets it, he finds that it is harmful to another thing which is far more important and far more dear than that thing. Then he leaves that which he had strived for and keeps that which is more important.

Likewise, sometimes he dislikes a thing, but once it comes to him he finds it far more beneficial and far better than the alternative which he previously preferred. A child is sick; when he is given a bitter medicine, he refuses to take it and starts crying. But at the same time he wants to regain his health. Now the position is this: his natural inner feeling prays for health and, therefore, for the medicine; but his words and deeds reject the same medicine. likewise, man, in his life, has a discipline based on natural understanding and inner feeling; and he also has a system based on his imagination only. The natural discipline makes no mistake, it never leads astray; while the imaginary discipline often goes wrong. It is clear from the example of the sick child that sometimes man asks for some thing urged by his imagination but in reality that very prayer is the prayer for its opposite.

This discourse will help the readers in understanding the meaning of the traditions, and it is also the implication of the words of 'Ali (a.s.) which come later, "Verily, the granting (of Prayer) is according to the measure of the intention..."

The Prophet said: "Call upon Allah and you can be confident for the answering." [*Uddatu 'd-dai*]
"I am near the opinion (i.e. expectation) of My servant about Me; so, he should not have any opinion about Me (i.e. should not expect from Me) except good." [*al-hadith al-qudsi*]

The author says: It is because if one prays and at the same time is pessimistic or doubtful about its outcome, then it shows that the prayer is just a formality, the supplicant has no real intention of asking for it (see the previous explanation). And the traditions forbid asking for a thing which one is sure will not come about.

The Prophet said: "Resort to Allah in your needs; and seek refuge in Him in your misfortunes; and humiliate yourselves before Him and beseech Him, because, verily, supplication is the essence of worship. And no believer calls upon Allah but He answers him: either it is speeded up to him in this world, or is kept in reserve for him for the next one, or his sins are forgiven in proportion to his supplication, provided he does not pray for a sinful thing." [*Uddatu 'd-dai*]

'Ali (a.s.) wrote in his will for his son, al-Husayn (a.s.): "Then He placed the keys of His treasures in your hands in the sense that He allowed you to ask Him. Therefore, whenever you wish, you may get the doors of His bounties opened with prayer, and get the heavy rains of His Mercy to fall upon you. Delay in acceptance of the prayers should not disappoint you, because the granting (of prayer) is according to the measure of (your) intention. And sometimes, the answering of your prayer is delayed so that it brings a greater reward to, the asker and a better granting to the expectant. Sometimes you ask for a thing and it is not given to you, but a better thing is given to you, immediately or later; or a thing is diverted from you for some greater good for you, because often you ask for a thing which would have destroyed your religion had it been given to you. Therefore, your prayer should be for things whose beauty should last for you and whose evil should remain away from you. As for wealth, it will not last for you, nor will you last for it." [*Nahju l-balaghah*]

The author says: "The granting (of prayer) is according to the measure of (your) intention." 'Ali (a.s.) means that the answer is given according to the call. The supplicant is granted whatever he asks for from Allah with the firm conviction of his conscience and with his heart, and not what is asked for in words. As explained earlier, the words sometimes do not completely conform with the real requirement demanded by the nature. This sentence, therefore, shows in the most lucid and comprehensive way, the relationship between prayer and its answer. 'Ali (a.s.) has, in this writing, explained many cases in which it appears that the prayer was not granted, e.g. where there is delay in answering the call, or a material bounty is asked for but it is changed to some thing which is far better for him either in this world or in the next, or it is diverted to some thing more beneficial for the asker. The supplicant had, for example, asked for a pleasant bounty; and if he were given it without delay it

would not have been really appreciated and valued, and, therefore, its granting was delayed. In short, when he asked for a "pleasant" bounty, he implicitly asked for a delay in granting of the prayer. Likewise, a believer who seriously pays attention to his religion, prays for some thing which would be harmful to his religion, although he does not know it and thinks that it would bring him happiness. But his happiness is in his religion and in the next world. Therefore, his prayer is in fact for the next world, not for this one, and, accordingly, it is granted for the next world, not for this one. Al-Baqir (a.s.) said: "A servant does not extend his hand towards Allah, but that Allah is ashamed to return it empty. He puts in it from His bounty and mercy whatever He wishes. So, when one of you calls (upon Allah), he should not return his hand until he wipes it on his head and face." [*'Uddatu 'd-dai*] In another *hadith* it is "on his face and chest."

The author says: There are in *ad-Durru l-manthure* eight similar traditions narrated by a number of the companions, like Salman, Jabir, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Anas ibn Malik and Ibn Abi Mughith from the Prophet; and all of them mention raising of the hands in the prayer. Therefore, it is meaningless to reject raising of hands in the prayer as someone has done saying that "it is suggestive of the belief that Allah has a body, because the raising of the hands towards the sky is an indication that He is there - Holy and Sanctified is He from it."

But this statement is wrong. All acts of worship performed by the body are in reality the heartfelt sense of gratitude and inner attention which is reduced to the level of symbolic appearance; and the spiritual realities are demonstrated in the moulds of the body, as one may see in the *salat*, the fast, the *hajj*, etc., and their parts and conditions. Had it not been so, there would not have been any justification for worship by the body. And invocation is such a form of worship. It is the attention of the heart and the inner supplication demonstrated by the symbol of the begging of a wretched pauper coming near a powerful and wealthy person, raising and extending his hands towards him and asking his needs from him, humiliating himself before him and imploring him to grant him his requirements. ash-Shaykh has reported in *al-Majalis wa 'I-akhbar*, with his *sanad* (chain of narrators) from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) and Zayd from their father, Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn from his father al-Husayn (a.s.) from the Prophet that "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) used to raise his hands when he prayed and beseeched (Allah) as a pauper begs for food." The same *hadith* is written in *Uddatu d-dai* without *sanad*.

'Ali (a.s.) heard a man saying "O Allah I seek refuge in Thee from temptation -" 'Ali-(a.s.) said: 'I see, you are seeking refuge against your wealth and children. Allah says: *Verily your wealth and your children are temptations* (8:28). You should rather say: O Allah! I seek refuge in Thee from misleading temptations." [*Biharu'l-anwar*]

The author says: It is another way of determining the meaning of a word. And there are many such examples in traditions. The fact is that the true meaning of every word is that for which it has been used by Allah in His talk. And some examples of this are the traditions which explain the meaning of 'part', 'many' etc.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Verily, Allah does not answer the memorized prayer by a forgetful heart." [*'Uddatu 'd-dai*]

'Ali (a.s.) said: "Allah does not accept the prayer of an inattentive heart." [*ibid*]

The author says: There are other traditions with this meaning; and the reason is that there is in reality no prayer and supplication with forgetfulness and inattention.

There is in the Torah: Allah says to His servant, "Verily, when you pray against one of my servants because he was unjust to you, then at the same time there may be another of my servants praying against you too because you were unjust to him. Now, if you so wish, I shall grant your prayer and

also his prayer against you; and if you so wish, I shall postpone the cases of both of you for the Day of Resurrection." [ar-Rawandi, *ad-Da'wat*]

The author says: If someone prays for something then it means that he is pleased with it and this pleasure naturally extends to all those things which are similar to it in all respects. He prays for punishment of his oppressor; he prays against him because of his oppression and injustice. It means that he is pleased with the punishment of the unjust. Now, if he himself oppressed another person then the same prayer against his oppressor shall become a prayer against himself. If he is pleased that he himself should be punished (and he shall never be pleased with it), then he will be given the same punishment which he wanted for his oppressor. And if he is not pleased with it, then there is in reality no prayer at all. Allah said: *And man prays for evil as he ought to pray for good, and man is ever hasty* (17:11).

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said to Abu Dharr: "O Abu Dharr! Should I not teach you some words by which Allah will benefit you? I (Abu Dharr) said: 'Surely! O Messenger of Allah.' He said: 'Guard (the commands of) Allah, (and) Allah will guard you. Keep (the remembrance of) Allah, (and) you will find Him before you. Make the acquaintance of Allah in opulence, He will know you in hardship. And when you ask, ask from Allah; and when you seek help, seek help from Allah, because whatever is to happen up to the Day of Resurrection has already been written, and if all the creatures together strived to benefit you with what Allah did not write for you, they would not be able to do so.' [*Uddatu d-dai*]

The author says: His words, "Make the acquaintance of Allah in opulence, He will know you in hardship", mean "Can upon Allah in opulence and do not forget Him, so that He will answer your call in hardship and will not forget you." Anybody who forgets his Lord in opulence is as if he believes that the apparent causes are the total and real cause of his opulence. Then comes the hardship and he starts calling on his Lord. His action indicates that he believes in the Lordship of Allah only when he is afflicted with hardship. But Allah is not so. He is the Lord in every condition and every situation. Therefore, if he calls on a lord whose lordship is limited to the time of hardship only, he does not call on the True Lord.

This meaning has been explained in some traditions in a different language. As Sadiq (a.s.) said: "One who goes on calling (on his Lord) in advance, his call will be answered when there comes down an affliction (on him), and it will be said, '(it is) a known voice', and it will not be screened out of the heavens. And the one who does not call (on his Lord) in advance, his call is not answered when an affliction comes, and the angels say, 'It is a voice which we do not know...' "[*Makarimu l-akhlaq*]

And it is understood from the word of Allah, *They forget Allah, so He forgets them* (9:68). There is another tradition that *du'a'*- (prayer) is not rejected if one cuts oneself (from all apparent causes and turns exclusively towards Allah). There is no contradiction between this tradition and those mentioned before, because affliction and hardship is something different from exclusively turning towards Allah.

His words: *and when you ask, ask from Allah, and when you seek help, seek help from Allah*. It teaches one to adhere only to Allah in reality while asking and seeking help; because so far as these nominal causes, which we find in this world are concerned, their relation with their effects is confined within the limit set for it by Allah. They are not independent in producing the effect as it appears to uninformed eyes; they are only a means to produce that effect; the incumbent on the man to turn towards Allah in all his needs, without relying on nominal causes and means, although Allah has decreed not to produce an effect if its cause is missing. In short, the above sentence tells one not to

rely on nominal causes and not to forget that it is Allah who has made it a cause of that effect. It does not mean that one should neglect the causes and means and ask for one's needs without striving for its cause; it would be rather asking for the impossible. One should realize that even the heart where the prayer originates, the tongue which utters the words of the prayer and the hands, etc., which are used in praying are but some of the causes and means. So, how can one escape from the apparent causes?

Let us look at the example of man himself. Whatever he does, is done with his limbs and organs: lie gives with his hands, sees with his eyes and hears with his ears. Now, if one asked his Lord to fulfill his needs neglecting its causes and means, it would be as if he asked someone to give him something without using his hand, or to look at him without using his eyes or to listen to his pleas without using his ears.

On the other hand, if one relies on the nominal causes without remembering Allah, it would be as though one thinks that it is the man's hand which gives, his eyes which see and his ears which hear, and forgets that the real doer of these actions is man himself. Such a person is stupid and a simpleton.

The above explanation does not mean that the Power of Allah is limited, or that His Authority is conditional. No, His Power and Authority are All-encompassing and without limit. In the same way the limitations are meant to apply to the deeds not to doers. Obviously, it is man who has the power to give, see and hear, though he gives with his hand, sees with his eyes and hears with his ears. Likewise, Allah is All-powerful, but the specification depends on intermediate causes. Zayd is a creation of Allah, and he was born through the union of his parents in a certain place or; a certain day when certain conditions were fulfilled and certain obstacles removed. Now, if even one of these causes be missing and one of these conditions be not fulfilled, there would be no Zayd. Thus the existence of Zayd depends on the fulfillment of all these causes and means; but what depends is the creature, i.e., Zayd, not the Creator. (Think on this point.)

His words: Whatever is to happen up to the Day of Resurrection has already been written. It is based on the sentence, And when you ask, ask from Allah, and gives its reason. It means that all events are written and decreed by Allah; no cause has any real influence on them; therefore, you should not ask from anyone other than Allah, and should not seek any one's help other than that of Allah. As for Allah, His authority is everlasting; His Power is Eternal; His Will is effective; and every day He is in a new Splendor. It is for this reason that this sentence is followed by the words: *and if all the creatures together strived to benefit you with what Allah did not write for you, they would not be able to do so.*

Among the traditions of *du'a'* is the near *mutawatir hadith*: "Verily, *dua'* (prayer) is a part of destiny."

The author says: This is the reply to the objection of the Jews and others on *dua'*. They say: The need asked for is either already measured and decreed (to happen) or not. If it is already decreed, then it would happen in any case and the prayer would be meaningless. If it is not decreed, then it can never happen and the prayer would be meaningless. In either case the prayer will have no effect at all.

The reply: Even when an event is already decreed, it does not mean that it is independent of its causes, and one of the means of its coming into existence is *du'a'*. If one beseeches Allah for his need, one of the conditions of its existence is fulfilled; and the effect follows the cause. This is the meaning of the tradition, "Verily, *du'a'* (prayer) is a part of destiny."

And there are other traditions with the same meaning. There is a *hadith* from the Prophet: "Nothing turns away the decree (fate) except prayer (*du'a'*)." [*Biharul-anwar*]. And there is another one from as-Sadiq (a.s.): "Prayer (*du'a'*) turns away the decree even after it is confirmed." [*ibid.*] Another one

from Abu l-Hasan Musa al-Kazim (a.s.): "On you *is du'a*, because *du'a* and asking from Allah turns the calamity away even when it is measured and decreed and nothing remains except its enforcement; then if Allah is called upon and asked, He removes that calamity entirely." [Ibid]

As-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Verily, the prayer (*du'a*) turns away the confirmed decree even after its confirmation. Therefore, pray often (and repeatedly), because it is the key to every mercy and the fulfillment of every need. And what is with Allah is not obtained except through prayer; because verily, no door is knocked repeatedly but it is hoped that it will be opened to the knocker." [ibid]

The author says: This *hadith* exhorts one to pray often and repeatedly; and this is one of the important elements of prayer, as repeated remembrance of a need creates purity of intention.

Isma'il ibn Hammam narrates from Abu l-Hasan (a.s.): "One secret prayer of a servant is equal to seventy open prayers."

The author says: This teaches one to keep one's prayer (*du'a*) secret and confidential because it helps in keeping the prayer pure.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: ... The prayer is kept screened (i.e. is not granted) until he (the beseecher) prays for the blessings of Allah upon Muhammad and his progeny." [Makarimu l-akhlaq]

Also, as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Whoever advances (the names of) forty believers (in his prayers) then prays (for himself), his call will be answered." [ibid]

One of the companions of as-Sadiq (a.s.) said to him: "There are two verses in the Book of Allah (the application) for which I am seeking without finding it." The Imam asked: "And what are those?" The companion says: "I said, '(there is the verse): *Call upon Me, I shall answer...* but we call upon Him and do not get any answer.' The Imam said: 'Well, do you think Allah has broken His promise, I said: 'No!' He said: 'Then what?' I said: 'I do not know.' He said: 'But I will tell you. Whoever obeys Allah in His commandments, and then calls upon Him in the proper way, He will answer him.' I said: 'And what is the proper way of prayer (*dua*)?' He said: 'You shall begin with the praise of Allah and shall glorify Him and remember His bounties upon you and thank Him; then you shall pray for His blessings upon Muhammad and his progeny; then you shall remember your sins and confess them; then you shall seek (His) pardon for them. So this is the proper way of prayer (*dua*).' Then the Imam asked: 'And what is the second verse? I said: '*and whatever thing you spend, He returns it (34:39)*, and I find that I spend but He does not return it.' He said: 'Well, do you think Allah has broken His promise I said: 'No' He said: 'Then what?' I said: 'I do not know.' He said: 'If any of you earn his wealth lawfully and spend it in its proper place, he will not spend a single dirham but that Allah shall return it to him! '" [ibid]

The author says: The reason of the manners of prayer (*du'a*) mentioned in these traditions is clear, because these things bring the servant (of Allah) nearer to the reality of prayer and beseeching.

Ibn 'Umar reported that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: "Verily, when Allah wishes to answer (the call of) a servant, He allows him to call (upon Him)." [ad-Durru l-manthur]

Also, Ibn 'Umar narrates from him (the Holy Prophet): "Whenever the door of prayer (*dua*) is opened for anyone among you, the doors of Mercy are opened for him." Another tradition says: "When the (door of) prayer is opened for anyone among you, the doors of the Garden (Paradise) are opened for him." [ibid.]

The author says: The same thing has been narrated from the Imams of *Ahlu l-bayt* also: "Whoever is given *dua*, is given (its) answer." Its meaning is dear.

Also there, is a tradition from Ma'adh ibn Jabal from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.): "Had you known Allah, as He should be known, verily the mountains would have been moved by your prayer." [ibid]

The author says: If a man does not know the dignity of the Creator and the power of His Lordship, and if he relies upon the causes, then he believes that these causes have real influence upon the result, and that events cannot happen without their normal and apparent causes. Sometimes he does not believe that these causes have any real effect upon the outcome, still he thinks that they are essential in order to bring a thing into existence. For example, we see that movement and walking brings one nearer to one's destination. And even when we do not believe that movement has any real effect on the nearness, we go on believing that movement is a means, though it is Allah who is the real cause, of that nearness, and in this way we go on believing that the middle causes are essential, at least as a means, if not as the real cause. Thus, we think that if there is no movement, we cannot come near our destination. In short, we believe that the effect cannot be separate from its causes, even if these causes are just apparent means and not the real cause.

But such a belief is below the dignity of Allah; it does not conform with divine authority which is total and perfect. It is this belief which creates the idea that effects cannot come into being without their normal causes, e.g. a body cannot be without a weight and gravity; movement is necessary for bringing two things nearer; eating and drinking is essential for satisfying the hunger and thirst, etc. etc. We have already mentioned in the discussion of miracles that the system of cause and effect is an inescapable fact; but it does not mean that the cause is confined to the normal causes only. Reason as well as the Qur'an and the traditions prove that while everything depends upon a cause, that cause is not confined within the limits of normal ones. The Creator may create causes for it, quite different from the normal ones. So, while it is true that the effect depends upon a cause, it is not true that it depends upon a particular cause.

Of course, the things which are, according to reason, impossible, cannot come into being.

In short, when you properly know Allah, you will believe that the prayer for what is not impossible by reason, even if normally it does not happen, will be answered. A major portion of the miracles of the prophets was basically the answer to their calls.

There is in the *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi under the words of Allah: So *they should answer My call and believe in Me*, a *hadith* from as-Sadiq (a.s.): "They should know that I have power to give them whatever they ask from Me."

And there is another *hadith* in *Majmau l-bayan* from the same Imam that he said: "... *and believe in Me* means that they should have firm belief that I have power to give them what they ask for; *so that they may walk in the right way* means so that they may reach the Truth."

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSE 187

أَجَلٌ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ فَالآنَ بَاشِرُوا هُنَّ وَأَبْنَعُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتِمُوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ وَلَا تُبَاشِرُوا هُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرُبُوهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ 2:187

2:187 It is made lawful to you on the night of the fast to go in unto your wives; they are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them; Allah knew that you were acting unfaithfully to yourselves, so He has turned to you (mercifully) and forgiven you. Wherefore, now be in contact with them and seek what Allah has written for you, and eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct unto you from the black thread (of night) at dawn-break, then complete the fast until night. And associate not with them while you are confined in the mosque. These are the limits (prescribed by) Allah; therefore, draw not yourselves near them. Thus does Allah make clear His signs for the people, so that they may guard themselves (against evil).

Commentary

Qur'an: *It is made lawful to you on the night of the fast to go in unto your wives:*

Ihlal means to allow; its root is *hall* (to open, which is opposite of *aqd* (to tie) *Rafath* literally means to say clearly such words, which are generally unmentionable, which are normally only hinted at; such words are usually uttered during sexual intercourse. Now, this "uttering unmentionable words" has been used as metaphor of the sexual intercourse; and this is the nobility of the exalted Qur'an. And all words used for this meaning in the Qur'an are of the same type; none were made for copulation, all are used as a metaphor, like *mubashirah* (to be in contact with each other, *dukhul* (to enter), *mass* or *lams* (to touch), *ityan* (to come to), *qurb* (to be near), etc. The same is the case of the words, *wa 't* (to press down) and *jima'* (to come together) which are used in Islamic books other than the Qur'an, although some of these words have been so much used for this meaning that now they are no longer metaphoric. The words, *farj* (an opening), and *gla'it* (the depth) which are, now commonly used for "vulva" and "excrement" respectively, are the other examples of this type. It is said that the preposition *ila* coming here after *rafath* gives the meaning of entering into.

Qur'an: *they are apparel for you and you are apparel for them:*

Libas means what a man uses to cover his body. The two sentences are used figuratively, because each spouse restrains the other from unchastity, and protects society from debauchery. Thus each one is like apparel for the other with which he/she covers his/her shame and protects his/her privacy.

It is a very fine metaphor, and its literary value has been increased by putting it after the sentence, *It is made lawful to you... to go in unto your wives*. A man hides his private parts from others with his dress, but there is no hiding from the dress itself. Likewise, each spouse protects the other one from having sexual relations with others; but there is no restriction on them against such relations with each other.

Qu'ran *Allah knew that you were acting unfaithfully to yourselves, so He has turned to you (mercifully) and forgiven you.*

Ikhtiyān and *khiyānah* are synonymous; and it is said that they convey the meaning of defect, decrease. *You were acting unfaithfully* conveys the meaning of continuity; and it shows that this unfaithfulness commonly continued among the Muslims after the command of the fast had been promulgated; and they were sinning against Allah secretly by being unfaithful to their own souls. Had not this unfaithfulness been a sin, there would have been no need to mention *turning to them mercifully and forgiving*; and although these two words do not say openly that a sin had already been committed, still their most obvious meaning shows a preceding sin, especially when both are mentioned together.

Accordingly, the verse proves that before its revelation, sexual intercourse in the nights of the fast was forbidden; and that it was this verse which made it lawful and abrogated its prohibition, as has been stated by a group of the commentators of the Qur'an. As a further proof, look at the words, *It is made lawful to you. You were acting unfaithfully, so He has turned to you (mercifully) and forgiven you* and *Wherefore, now be in contact with them*. Had there been no previous prohibition, such words would have been out of context; instead there would have come the words like "there is no blame on you that you be in contact with them."

Some people say: "This verse does not abrogate any rule, because the verse of fasting mentioned earlier did not prohibit intercourse or food or drink in the night. Apparently, according to some Sunni traditions, when the fast was prescribed and the words were revealed, *Fast has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you* refers to the fast per se, and not meant total conformity in all the details of fast. It is said that the Christians used to eat, drink and go to their women during the early period of the night, then abstained from it. So the Muslims adopted the same system. But it proved difficult. Many youths could not restrain themselves from secret sexual intercourse, but they thought that they were committing a sin and acting unfaithfully to themselves. Likewise, aged persons found it a heavy burden to abstain from eating and drinking once they began their sleep. Sometimes someone could not keep his eyes open before eating and drinking and then thought that food and drink was unlawful for him. It was to remove this misunderstanding that this verse was revealed; it made it clear that sexual intercourse, food and drink was not unlawful for them during the night of Ramadan. This verse also made it clear that the comparison in *as it was prescribed for those before you* refers to the fast per se, and not to its details. The words *It is made lawful to you* do not necessarily mean that 'this was unlawful before that; it simply declares legality of this action. See, for example, the words: *The game of the sea is made lawful to you* (5:96); as it is known that the game of the sea was not unlawful to the pilgrims before the revelation of this verse, Likewise, the words *Allah knew that you were acting unfaithfully to yourselves* means that they were doing wrong according to their own view only. That is why Allah said "unfaithfully to yourselves." Had He said "unfaithfully to Allah", it would have conveyed the meaning of prohibition, as, for example, in the verse: *Be you not unfaithful to Allah and the Apostle* (8:27). Also the word *ikhtiyān* maybe taken to mean "curtail" or "decrease" and the sentence may be translated, as "Allah knew that you were curtailing your desires." The words *He has turned to you (mercifully) and has forgiven you* do not clearly convey the idea that sexual intercourse was a sin before that.

But this argument is not conclusive, because it goes against the clear meaning of the verse. We have already said that the words like *It is made lawful to you; you were acting unfaithfully to yourselves, He has turned toward you (mercifully) and forgiven you* do not say openly that a sin had already been committed; still, this is their most obvious implication. Add to it the words *now be in contact with*

them which would be inappropriate if there were no previous prohibition, as I have explained earlier.

The argument, that "this verse does not abrogate any rule because the verse of fasting did not prohibit sexual intercourse in the night", is not valid because that verse did not prohibit it clearly for the day time also. It is known that the Messenger of Allah had explained the rules of fasting before this verse was revealed, Perhaps the prohibition of sexual relations during the night was one of those rules; and the verse abrogated it. So this verse cancels not another verse, but a tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w.).

Someone may object: *The words they are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them* have been used as the reason for this permission. Now, the husband and wife were the apparel to each other when, supposedly, copulation at night was forbidden and they remained like the apparel when that prohibition was supposedly lifted. So where, in these words, is the reason for the supposed abrogation if they are equally true in both conditions before abrogation and after abrogation? We know that the reason given for a rule of the *shari'ah* is mostly its benefit, and not necessarily its real causes. And as a benefit, it need not be fully comprehensive. Still, in a supposedly abrogating verse at least it should not be common to both conditions.

But deep consideration of the verse does not sustain this objection. It is not acceptable that this sentence is the reason of this permission, The permission in this verse is limited to *the night of the fast*, while the simile of apparel is as much true during the day as in the night. So, it cannot be the reason of that permission.

The fact is that the three clauses in this verse coming one after the other, and all taken together, give us the reason for this abrogation. They are *on the night of the fast, they are an apparel for you...* and *you were acting unfaithfully to yourselves*.

As the spouses are like apparel to each other they should be allowed to establish sexual relations together without any restriction. Then came the commandment of the fast, without demanded self-denial and abstention from desires, like food, drink and sexual relations. But the servants of Allah found it difficult to abstain for a full month from copulation, and this unfaithfulness was common and continued. Therefore, Allah in His mercy eased the conditions and lightened their burden by allowing it during the night.

In this way, the general implication of the sentence of *apparel* is made subordinate to the *fast*; and thus is limited to the nighttime only (when there is no fast).

In short, the sentence of apparel is not a reason for this permission; rather it is the reason or benefit of copulation per se. The main aim of the whole verse is to explain why copulation was allowed in the night of fast. And the sentence beginning with *they are an apparel* and ending on *forgiven you* taken together show this reason, not any single sentence alone. And this reason is not found in the rule which was followed before this permission.

Qur'an: *Wherefore, now be in contact with them and seek what Allah has written for you:*

This is an order preceded by prohibition; thus it means permission. The verse begins with the words, *It is made lawful to you*. The meaning, therefore, is, "from now on you are allowed to establish sexual relations with them." *Ibtigha* means 'to seek', 'to desire'. Seek what *Allah has written for you* means seeking the children which Allah has written to give to the mankind. Allah created in human being the desire to copulate and made it the means of that gift (of children) and to some extent put them under the pressure of that desire. When a couple engages in that action, they are in reality seeking what Allah has written for them, even if at that time their only aim is to satisfy their sexual desire or lust. It is like taking food and drink. Allah had written that their lives, growth and health

depend on food and drink, and that remains the goal of nature even when they, at that particular time, do not look further than satisfying their hunger and thirst or to pamper their gustatory pleasure. This is the compulsion put on them by Allah in all such matters.

It has been said: *What Allah has written for you* means "what Allah has allowed to you"; and the implication is that they should take advantage of this permission. Allah likes His servants to take advantage of His permission, as He likes them to obey His compulsory commandments.

But his view is not acceptable, because we have not seen a single instance in the Qur'an where "writing" is used for 'permission'.

Qur'an: *and eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct unto you from the black thread (of night) at dawn-break:*

There are two dawns: the first is called the 'false' dawn because it vanishes in a short time. It is also called the tail of the wolf because it looks as if a tail is raised. This false dawn is a beam of light like-a vertical column; it appears at the end of the night on the eastern horizon when the sun reaches an angle of 18 degrees below the horizon. Then it gives way to a horizontal line of light which looks as if a white thread has been stretched on the horizon. This is the second dawn. It is called 'true' dawn because it truthfully announces the arrival of day-time and is connected with sunrise.

Obviously, the *white thread* in this verse means the "true dawn"; and "at" (*min*), in "at dawn-break" (*mina'l-fafri*), is explanatory so as to clarify this phrase. This sentence is metaphorical and it likens the streak of light, stretched across the horizon, to a white thread and the darkness of night adjoining that light to a black thread.

This shows that the limit of the given permission is exactly the beginning of the true dawn; because soon after, when the sun comes nearer to the horizon, both threads disappear. There remains neither the white thread nor the black.

Qur'an: *Then complete the fast until night:*

As the start of the fast was from the dawn-break, there was no need to say, 'keep the fast during daytime'. Instead its other limit is now mentioned in these words.

Complete the fast shows that the fast of one day is one unit, a single act of worship which is not made up of a various parts. There is a difference between completion (*tamam*) and perfection (*kamal*). Completion (*tamam*) the word used in this verse, means that a single thing (which is not made of such parts which may have separate functions) finally comes into being. Perfection (*kamal*), means that a single thing (which has various parts and every part has a separate function) finally comes into being. Allah says: *This day I perfected (akmaltu) for you your religion and completed (atmamtu) My favor on you*(5:4). The religion is a collection of various things like prayer, fast, *hajj* etc. and all these have a separate effect; therefore, the religion was "perfected", But the favor of Allah is the one thing without any parts (as I will explain under that verse); therefore, it was "completed."

Qur'an: *And associate not with them while you are confined in the mosques:*

ukuf and *I'tikaf* both mean "to keep close to." When used with the name of a place, they mean to remain continuously in that place. *I'takaf* is an act of worship. When in *i'tikaf* one must remain inside a mosque, not going out without a genuine reason (e.g. to relieve oneself); and fasting is an essential part of this act of worship.

As the Muslims were given permission to have sexual relations with their wives in the night of fast, there was a possibility that they might think that that permission extended to the nights of *i'tikaf* also, when they were inside a mosque. This sentence removed the chance of any such misunderstanding.

Qur'an: *These are the limits (prescribed by) Allah; therefore, draw not near them:*

Hadd (limit) literally means "to keep from", "to restrict." All its uses carry this meaning; for example, *haddu 'ssayf* (edge of sword), *Waddu 'd-dar* (boundary of the house), *haddu l-fuilir* (punishment of immorality) etc. Therefore the phrase, *huddu'l-fujur* mentioned in the verse, means, the "restrictive ordinances of Allah" and the command not to go near them figuratively means not to commit that sin. In short, it says: you should not commit the sins mentioned here, i.e., eating, drinking and copulating during the prohibited hours; you should not trespass beyond the limits ordained for you; you should not neglect the fast or the guarding of yourselves against evil in the period of that special worship.

Traditions

As Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Food and copulation were unlawful in the month of Ramadan at night after sleeping." (That is, if one prayed the prayer of *al-'Isha'* and slept without breaking one's fast, then, he was not allowed to eat or drink even if he awoke later in the night. And sexual intercourse was unlawful in the month of Ramadan both in the day and in the night.) There was a companion of the Messenger of Allah, Khawwat ibn Jubayr al-Ansari. He was brother of Abdullah ibn Jubayr, who in the battle of Uhud, was deputed by the Messenger of Allah at the mouth of the mountain-pass with fifty archers; most of them left him, but he remained at this station with only twelve soldiers and was martyred there. His brother Khawwat ibn Jubayr, was an aged and weak person, and was fasting with the Messenger of Allah in the battle of the Khandaq (Trench). In the evening he came to his house and asked: "Do you have any food?" They said: "Do not go to sleep; we shall prepare some food for you." There was some delay in cooking and he was overcome with sleep before breaking his fast. When he woke up he said to his family: "Now eating is forbidden to me tonight." Next day, he presented himself at the Khandaq and fainted. The Messenger of Allah looked at him and felt pity for him. Also, there were some youths who had secretly indulged in sexual relations at night in the month of Ramadan. Therefore Allah sent down (the verse); *It is made lawful to you on the night of fast to go in unto your wives...* Thus Allah allowed sexual relations during the nights of the month of Ramadan, and eating after going to sleep up to the dawn-break, as He said, *until the white thread becomes distinct from the black thread* (of night) *at dawn-break*. The Imam said: "It means the whiteness of the day from the darkness of the night." [*at-Tafsir*, al-Qummi]

The author says: The sentences (given in bracket), starting with "That is" and ending upto "both in the day and in the night", are explanatory notes of the narrator of this tradition.

This episode is narrated in other traditions also, by al-Kulayni, al-'Ayyashi and others. All these traditions say that the words, *eat and drink... were* revealed because of the event of Khawwat ibn Jubayr al-Ansari; and the words *It is made lawful to you ...* were revealed because of the secret doings of some Muslim youths.

There is another tradition in *ad-Durru l-manthur* from various commentators and traditionalists from Bara ibn 'Azib who said: "It was the custom among the companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.) that if someone fasted and the time of *Iftar* (breaking the fast) came but he went to sleep before breaking his fast, he did not eat that night and fasted the next day without eating anything, till the next evening came. Once Qays ibn Sarmah al-Ansari fasted, and that day he had been working in the field. The time came for breaking the fast and he came to his wife and asked: 'Do you have any food? He could not keep awake and went to sleep. When his wife returned and found him sleeping she said: 'Woe unto you! Did you go to sleep? In the noon of the next day, he fainted. This was reported to the Prophet (s.a.w.). Then this verse was sent down: *It is made lawful to you on the night of the fast... at dawn-break*. And the Muslims were extremely happy at it."

The author says: This story is narrated by other chains also. In some of them the name is given as Abu Qubays ibn Sarmah; in others, Sarmah ibn Malik al-Ansari. There is some variation in the story also.

Ibn Jarir and Ibn al-Mundhir have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas, as follows:- "The Muslims were forbidden (sexual relations with) women and food in the month of Ramadan once they had prayed the prayer of al-'isha', till the next evening. But some of them ate food and had sexual intercourse with women after the *al-isha* one Ramadan; one of them was 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. Then they complained about it to the Messenger of Allah. Therefore Allah sent down the verse, *It is made lawful to you- be in contact withthem.* [ad-Durru l-manthur]

The author says: There are numerous traditions from Sunni chains about this matter; most of them mention the name of 'Umar. All say with one voice that the rule about sexual intercourse in the night of Ramadan was the same as that about food and drink: All of these were allowed before the sleep, forbidden after it. But the obvious meaning of the first tradition is that the sexual intercourse was completely forbidden in the month of Ramadan, during the night as well as in the daytime; and the food and drink were allowed before sleeping, forbidden after that. And the context of the verse supports this tradition. Had the sexual relation been like food and drink (allowed before sleeping and forbidden after) it would have been necessary to mention here the farthest limit of the permission, as was done about food and drink (*eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct...*) But it only says: *It is made lawful to you on the night of the fast to go in unto your wives*, without putting any limit to it. It shows that previously they were forbidden to indulge in this act the whole "night of the fast."

Some traditions say (and the one quoted last is one of them) that the Muslims were acting unfaithfully not only in the matter of sexual relations, but also in food and drink. But the *sequence* of the sentences of the verse does not support it. The sentence, *Allah knew that you were acting unfaithfully...* is put in the middle of the permission for sexual relations and the words *eat and drink* appear after this topic has ended, Therefore the "acting unfaithfully" cannot be connected with eating and drinking.

Verily, the Messenger of Allah said: "The dawn is of two kinds. The one which looks like the tail of the wolf does not allow anything, nor prohibits anything. But the long one which covers the horizon allows the prayer (of dawn) and prohibits food." [ad-Durru l-manthur]

The author says: The traditions of this meaning are nearly *mutawatir* from Sunni and Shi'ah sources; as are the ones about *i'tikaf* and prohibition of sexual intercourse in that period.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSE 188

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتُدْلُوا بِهَا إِلَى الْحُكَّامِ لِتَأْكُلُوا فَرِيقًا مِّنْ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْإِثْمِ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ 2:188

2:188 *And do not swallow up your property among yourselves by wrongful means; neither seek to gain access thereby to the authorities, so that you may swallow up a portion of the property of men wrongfully while you know.*

Commentary

Qur'an: *And do not swallow up your property among yourselves by wrongful means.*

Akl (to eat, to swallow up) metaphorically means 'to take hold of, or to make use of'. The reason of this metaphorical use is that eating is the most common and the earliest natural desire; as soon as his life begins, man feels the need of food and then gradually proceeds to other needs like clothing, habitation and marriage, etc. Acquiring food is his first natural action and willful doing. That is why if one uses or takes a thing it is said one has eaten it, and especially so in the case of wealth and property. And this figure of speech is common to all languages.

Mal (wealth, property) literally means the possession which is desired. It seems that its root is *mayl* (inclination, desire, bent), because it is one of those things to which the heart is inclined, which it *desires*. *Baynakum* (among yourselves, (*bayn*) means the gap between two or more things. Wrong (*batil*) is opposite of truth (*haqq*) *haqq* means a thing which is confirmed.

The proviso *among yourselves* added after the command *do not swallow up your property* shows that wealth is for all the people; but Allah has distributed it among them - a just distribution - by promulgating laws based on justice and equity, which cut at the roots of corruption and immorality. If anybody trespasses the limits put by these laws, it will be invalid and wrong. This verse, in a way, explains the verse: *He it is who created for you all that is in the earth* (2:29).

Your property (*amwalakum*), History and ancient tradition show that ever since man put his foot on this globe, society has recognized the right to property and upheld it in one way or other. By using this possessive pronoun, Allah confirms this right. This principle has been mentioned in the Qur'an in more than a hundred places, in various words like dominion (*mulk*) property (*mal*), the preposition for (L) used for possession, and *istikhkaf* (to make man Allah's deputy on earth); but there is no need to quote the references here. Likewise all the verses which regulate selling, trade and other commercial dealings implicitly recognize this right. example: *and Allah has allowed trading* (2:275), *do not swallow up your. Property among yourselves by wrongful means, except that it be trading by your mutual consent* (4:29), *and the trade dullness of which you fear* (9:25) and other such references. And *mutawatir* traditions support it.

Qur'an: *neither seek to gain access thereby to the authorities, so that you may swallow up a portion of the property of man wrongfully while you know.*

Idla (translated here as "to gain access") literally means to send the bucket (*dal*) down into the

well for drawing water. Its metaphorical use in this verse implies offering money, etc., to the authorities to induce them to give judgment in favor of the bribe-giver. It is a very nice allegory. The desired judgment is the water in the depth of the well; the bribe is the bucket which is sent down to bring the desired result.

A portion (*fariqan*) It is a part separated from the whole.

This sentence is in conjunction with the words *swallow up*; therefore, grammatically it is a prohibitory verb, and hence the sign of quiescence.

Another possibility: The "and" (*wa*) (the conjunction word not appearing in the above translation) may be taken to mean "with" (*ma'*), and further it may be presumed that after it, the word that (*inna*) is implied. In this case the whole verse will be one sentence and will mean: "... by wrongful means with seeking to gain access..." Thus, the verse prohibits the mutual understanding between the bribe-giver and bribe-taker so that they wrongfully swallow up the property of the people by sharing it between themselves - the bribe-taker taking the portion which has been offered to him, and the giver usurping the other portion - while they know that it is wrong and unjust.

Traditions

In a tradition, as-Sadiq (a.s.) says about this verse: "The Arabs used to gamble with their wives and property. So, Allah prohibited them to do so." [*al-Kafi*]

Abu Basir says: "I asked Abu 'Abdullah (a.s.) the meaning of the words of Allah in His book: *and do not swallow up your property among yourselves by wrongful means; neither seek to gain access thereby to the authorities*. He (the Imam) said: 'O Abu Basir! Verily Allah knew that there would be in this *ummah* judges who would do injustice. Verily, He did not mean (here) judges of a just authority, but He meant those of an unjust authority. O Abu Muhammad! (i.e. Abu Basir) If you had a right against someone and you summoned him to the judges of a just authority, but he did not agree to it and compelled you to put your case before the judges of an unjust authority, so that they might decide in his favor, then that man would be among those who had resorted to the Judgment of the *taghut* (Satan). And it is the word of Allah: *Have you not observed those who think that they believe in what has been sent down unto you and what was sent down before you? They intend to resort to the Judgment of taghut (Satan), though they were commanded to deny (reject) him... (4:60)*" [*ibid.*]

There is a tradition from Abu Ja'far (a.s.): "The meaning of 'wrongful means' is the false oath with which property is usurped." [*Majam u l-bayan*]

The author says: All the above traditions give some examples, but the verse is general. Discourse on Social Science

All organic things, vegetable, animal and human beings make use of other things to sustain their lives. They actively take advantage of those surrounding things which may help in their continued existence.

We have never heard of a thing which exists but is not active, or an action which is done without the doer expecting its benefit to return to him. Remark the vegetable kingdom which does whatever it does with the single aim of benefiting from it in its existence, growth, and reproduction. Similarly, all animals and human beings do whatever they do with the aim of getting benefit one way or another, even if that benefit be only in the imagination and thought.

Plants have been taught by the Creator, and animals and men know by their instinct that they cannot use any material for the fulfillment of their natural needs and the protection of their existence unless that material has a very special relation to them; in other words, unless it belongs to them. They know

that one deed cannot be done by two doers. Accordingly, man and animal etc. prohibit others from interfering in their affairs and do not allow anything to utilize what they want to utilize for themselves. This is the foundation of this special relation - namely, possession which is recognized by one and all. Hence the words 'my', 'your', etc. etc.

For a further proof, look at any animal fighting to remove others from its territory, its prey, or its mate. Again, see children quarrelling for, and defending, whatever food, or toy, they have got. Even a suckling infant does not allow another infant to suck at the same breast. This is the lesson taught by nature. When man, being a social animal, established society, that natural instinct was bound to become more pronounced; and eventually became a well-organized and well balanced system that took the shape of social ethics and moral values; gradually the basic concept of that special relation branched off into various kinds with different names: the monetary relation was named 'property', the non-monetary, 'right', and so on.

Human beings may have different views on the legality of various means of acquiring property, like inheritance, trade, confiscation by the ruling authority, etc., or on the suitability of the owner, whether he is adult or minor, sane or idiot, a single person or a group, and so on. But there is no escape from recognizing the basic principle of ownership. That is why even those who apparently reject the idea of ownership, have only transferred it from the individual to the society or the state.

Even then, they have not been able to abolish private ownership totally; and they will never be able to do so, because it is the verdict of nature, and if nature. is rejected, man will perish.

We shall discuss, God willing, in their proper places the details of this basic principle, according to the means of its acquirement, such as trade, profit, inheritance, war-booty, collection, etc. and according to the status of the owner, Le. adult or minor, etc.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSE 189

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَهْلَةِ قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيْتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ وَلَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِأَنْ تَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهَا وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنِ اتَّقَى وَأَتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ
أَبْوَابِهَا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ 2:189

2:189 They ask you concerning the new moons. Say, they are (indications of) times fixed for men and (for) the pilgrimage. And it is not righteousness that you should enter the houses from their backs; but righteousness is the one who guards himself (against evil); and enter the houses by their doors and fear Allah, so that you may be successful.

Commentary

QUR'AN: *They ask you... the pilgrimage:*

Ahillah is plural of *hilal* (crescent). The moon is called *hilal* at the beginning of the lunar month when it comes away from the direct rays of the sun; it is named crescent (*hilal*) on the first and second nights according to one group, while some others say that it is named so for the first three nights; still others say that this name continues until a faint circle of light shows the outline of the moon. A fourth group says that is a "crescent" until its light brightens the night; this occurs on the seventh night, after which it is simply called moon (*qamar*) and on the fourteenth night it becomes full moon (*badr*). Its general name in Arabic is *zibriqan*.

The Arabs say *istahalla 's-sabiyy* when the newly born child cries soon after birth. Also they say *ahalla 'I-qawmu bi l-hajj* when the pilgrims call out loudly *labbayk Allahumma labbayk*. Thus the root *H-L-L* gives the idea of raising one's voice, and the new moon is called *hilal* because people hail it and raise their voice to point it out. *Mawaqit* is plural of *miqa* which means the time appointed for a work. It also means the place appointed for it, as we say: *Themiqat* of the Syrians or the Yemenis, which means the place where they wear the robes of *ihram* for pilgrimage. In this verse it has the first meaning, i.e., the appointed time.

They ask you concerning the new moons. It does not say what the question was. Some say that they wanted to know the reality of the moon and why it appeared in different shapes from night to night. Others think that they wished to know the reason for the reappearance of the new moon after its disappearing at the end of the month.

But the word used is *ahillah* (new moons) in the plural, and it proves that the question was not about the reality of the moon or its various phases; because in that case it would have been appropriate to say "they ask you concerning the moon" not "the new moons." And if the question was about the reason of the new moon, the proper words would be "they ask you concerning the new moon." In both cases the use of the plural would be inappropriate. This plural "new moons" proves that the question was: What is the reason or benefit of the appearance of the moon as crescent after crescent and of its marking the lunar months? This question was shortened into "new moons" because it is the new moon which starts a new month; and then its benefit was explained.

This question may be inferred from the reply: *say they are* (indications of) *times fixed for men and (for) pilgrimage*. The times fixed for various actions and activities are the 'months', and not the various shapes of the moon but about the lunar months which are marked by the new moons. And Allah explained that these months were the times fixed for the benefit of man in affairs of their material and spiritual lives. Man, by his nature, is obliged to measure all his activities by time. It was, therefore, necessary to divide time (which is the yard-stick of his actions) into various short and long portions. The mercy of Allah which looks after the affairs of His creatures, and guides them towards the betterment of their lives, effected this division- by- creating night, day, month, season and year etc. The most obvious and the clearest division is the grouping of the days in the lunar months. Everyone may benefit from it, be he a scholar or an ignorant person, a Bedouin or a city-dweller; everyone can observe the beginning of the new moon if his eyesight is correct; and everyone may easily keep its count. These benefits are conspicuously absent in the solar calendar: man did ' not wake to this idea, and could not come to grips with its complicated reckoning, until many centuries after human society came into being. Moreover, not every one can always know the dates of the solar calendar.

Therefore, the lunar months are the times fixed and prescribed for men for their use in their material and spiritual affairs, and especially so for the *hajj*(pilgrimage) because it is performed in the known months.

The *hajj* (pilgrimage) has especially been mentioned here as an introduction to the topic which is dealt with in the following sentences.

Qur'an: *And it is not righteousness... by their doors*.

It is known from the reports that in the days before Islam it was the custom of some Arabs that after wearing the robes of *ihram* for pilgrimage, if they had to enter their houses for any reason, they did not use the doors, but cut a hole in the wall for that purpose. Islam disapproved that practice and told them to enter the houses from their doors. The verse has been revealed in a way that the above-mentioned report may be believed to be true.

Had there been no such reliable report, these words could be interpreted metaphorically as a prohibition of performing religious rites in any way other than the prescribed one. For example, pilgrimage should not be done but in its prescribed months, fast should not be kept in any month other than Ramadan, and so on. In that case, the sentence would have been complementary to the previous one. The meaning would have been: These months are the times prescribed for the religious deeds fixed for them, and it is not permitted to transfer those deeds to other months, like doing *hajj* (pilgrimage) outside the prescribed months or fasting in a month other than Ramadan.

But the first interpretation is supported by the traditions. The words, *it is not righteousness to enter the houses from their backs*, proves that this practice was never approved of by the religion; otherwise it would not have been said to be against righteousness. It was just a bad custom of the pre-Islamic times; and Allah said that it was not righteousness. Rather, righteousness was the fear of Allah and guarding oneself against evil.

but righteousness is the one who guards himself(against evil): Apparently, the sentence should have been "but righteousness is guarding oneself (against evil)", but Allah used the expression *the one who guards himself* to show that the real virtue is in practicing "piety", and not in its abstract idea. It is like the verse: *It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the east and the west but righteousness is the one who believes in Allah* (2:177)

and enter the houses by their doors: It is not a compulsory order; it is a guidance that entering into houses from their doors is the proper method, as it is the usual and recognized way. People build

houses and put doors in them for this very purpose, and there is no reason why a hole should be drilled for entering into, or going out of, the house. This sentence admonishes them not to follow a foolish custom which goes against common sense. In short, the sentence does not say that it is obligatory on every one to enter into a house through the door. It just tells them that it is the proper way. Of course, if one enters into a house by a way other than the door, thinking that this custom is a part of religion, then it will be an "unlawful innovation."

Qur'an: *and fear Allah, so that you may be successful.*

It was mentioned in the beginning of this *surah*(chapter) that *taqwa* (piety) is virtue which gathers in its fold all ranks of the faith and all stages of perfection. Obviously, not every stage and rank leads one to spiritual success and happiness, as do the last stages which remove all shades of polytheism and misdirection. It is these last stages which guide one to success and bring the good tidings of happiness. That is why Allah said, *so that you may be successful*, using the word 'may'.

Also, it is possible to interpret the words, "fear Allah", here as following this particular order, and discarding the practice of going into houses from their backs.

Traditions

Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "The people asked the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) concerning the new moons. Then this verse was revealed, *They ask you concerning the new moons. Say, 'they are (indications of) times fixed for men'*; they know from them the time their loans are due, the waiting period (number of months a women must wait after divorce or the death of her husband before the next marriage) of their women and, the time of their pilgrimage." [*adDurrul-manthur*] Some others from different chains are from Abu'l-'Aliyah, Qatadah and others.

There is another tradition that someone asked the Prophet about the various phases of the moon; so this verse was sent down. But we have already commented on this report that it is against the apparent meaning of the verse, and, therefore, is not worthy of consideration.

There is a tradition reported by Waki', al-Bukhari and Ibn Jarir from al-Bara'. In the days of "ignorance", when they wore the *ihram*, they used to go into the house from its back. Therefore, Allah sent down the verse *And it is not righteousness that you should enter the houses from their backs; but righteousness is the one who guards himself (against evil); and enter the houses by their doors.* [*ad-Durru l-manthur*]

There is another tradition reported by Ibn Abi Hatim and al-Hakim (and he has said that it is "correct") from Jabir. He said: "The Quraysh were called *hums*(enthusiastic, strenuous), and they used to enter by the doors in the condition of *ihram*. The *ansar*(helpers) and other Arabs did not enter from the door in *ihram*. Once the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) was in a garden, and came out from its door, and Qutbah ibn 'Amir al-Ansari came out with him. The people said, 'O Messenger of Allah!

Verily Qutbah ibn 'Amir is a sinner, he came out with you from the door.' The Prophet asked him: 'Why did you do so?' He replied: 'I saw you doing it, so I did as you did.' The Prophet said: 'I am an *ahmas* (i.e. Qurayshite).' He said: 'But my religion is your religion. Then Allah sent down: it is not *righteousness* that you should enter the houses from their backs. [ibid]

The author says: Other traditions of nearly the same meaning have been narrated from other chains. *Hums* is the plural of *ahmas* from *himsah* which means "hardiness." The tribe of Quraysh was called *hums* because of their zeal in the matter of their religion, or because of their bravery and

strength.

Apparently, this tradition shows that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) had allowed the continuation of that custom by non-Qurayshites before this incident; and that is why he admonished him in these words: "Why did you do so?" If we accept this view then this verse was revealed to abrogate a rule which was enforced not by a verse but by the order of the Prophet. But you already know that the verse does not support this view. It says, it is not righteousness that you *should enter*... It is unimaginable that Allah or His Apostle on divine command enforced a rule and then Allah at the time of its abrogation condemned and criticized it as being against righteousness.

al-Baqir (a.s.) said about the word of Allah, *and enter the houses by their doors*: "Allah means that every affair, whatever it may be, should be approached in its (proper) way." [al-Mahasin]

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "The Imams (al-awliya) are the doors of Allah, from which Allah is approached; and had they not been there, Allah would not have been known; and it is through them that Allah has established His proof over His creatures." [al-Kafi]

The author says: This tradition gives an example of the general meaning of this verse, which has been explained in the previous one. There is no doubt that the verse is general in its meaning, even if it was sent down on a particular occasion. The Imam said: "had they not been there, Allah would not have been known." This refers to the true explanation of religion and the complete Call (Mission of the Prophet) which are with them. This sentence has a deeper meaning also; maybe we shall explain it later on. There are numerous traditions of the same meaning as given in these two.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 190-195

- وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ 2:190
 وَاقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَأَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجُوكُمْ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ وَلَا تُقَاتِلُوهُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتَّى يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِيهِ
 فَإِن قَاتَلُوكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ كَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ 2:191
 فَإِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ 2:192
 وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ فَإِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ 2:193
 الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمَاتُ قِصَاصٌ فَمَنِ اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ
 مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ 2:194
 وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْفُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ وَأَحْسِنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ 2:195
- 2:190 And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you and do not exceed the limits. Verily, Allah loves not those who exceed the limit.*
- 2:191 And kill them wherever you find them and drive them out from whence they drove you out; and mischief (disbelief) is more grievous than slaughter; and do not fight with them at the Sacred Mosque until they fight with you therein; but if they do fight you than slay them; such is the recompense of the unbelievers.*
- 2:192 But if they desist, then verily Allah is forgiving, Merciful.*
- 2:193 And fight with them until there is no (more) mischief (disbelief), and religion be only for Allah; but if they desist then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors.*
- 2:194 The sacred month for the sacred month and reprisal (is lawful) in all sacred things; whoever then acts aggressively against you, inflict the like aggression on him as he has inflicted on you; and fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who guard (against evil).*
- 2:195 And spend in the way of Allah and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands; and do good; verily Allah loves those who do good.*

General Comment

The context of the verses shows that they were revealed together. The whole talk has only one aim: permission, for the first time, of fighting with the polytheists of Mecca. These verses refer to driving them out from whence they drove the believers out, to disbelief and to reprisal; they prohibit fighting with them at the Sacred Mosque unless they fight the believers in it. All these matters were connected with the polytheists of Mecca. Also, the sentence: *fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you*, deserves more attention. It is not a condition, i.e., it does not mean, "fight with them if they fight with you." Nor is it a restrictive clause (as some people think) meaning, "fight with the men, and not with their women and children who are not in a position to fight with you", because nobody "fights" with those who are unable to fight back. Had it been the aim of the sentence, it would have been proper to say "do not kill them." Therefore, the words *those who fight with you* only refer to a fact - fight those who are presently engaged in fighting against you. And it points to the polytheists of

Mecca.

The verses have the same significance as the following verses: *Permission(to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made, for they have been oppressed, and most surely Allah is able to help them; those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say, Our Lord is Allah (22:39-40)*. These verses also contain the initial (but unconditional) permission to fight with the fighting polytheists.

These five verses together promulgate a single law covering all its limits and details. *And fight in the way of Allah* is the basic law; *and do not exceed the limit* puts disciplinary restriction on it; *And kill them wherever you find them* defines the limits of pressure; *and do not fight with them at the Sacred Mosque until they fight with you therein* puts a restriction according to the place; *and fight with them until there is no more mischief (disbelief) shows its duration*; *The sacred month for the sacred month, and reprisal (is lawful) in all sacred things* explains that this legislation is based on the principle of retaliation in fighting and killing, it is paying them in their own coin; *And spend in the way of Allah* makes the believers responsible for the financial preparations for war: they must spend for their own preparation and for that of others. Therefore, it seems that all the five verses were sent down together about one subject. It is wrong to say (as some have done) that some of these verses abrogate the others; or that they were revealed separately on different occasions. In fact, the aim of all these verses is one: permission to fight against the polytheists of Mecca who were fighting the believers.

Commentary

Qur'an: *And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you:*

qital means attempting to kill someone who is attempting to kill you. This fight was *in the way of Allah* because its aim was to establish the religion and to raise the belief of monotheism. It was an act of worship done to gain the favour of Allah, and not to usurp the property of people or to damage their dignity. War in Islam is basically defensive; it protects the right of humanity sanctioned by nature, as will be explained later. Defense is by nature a limited venture; that is why Allah said soon after this permission, *and do not exceed the limit*.

Qur'an: *and do not exceed the limit. Verily, Allah loves not those who exceed the limit:*

i'tida' means going beyond the boundary. The Arabs say *ada* and *i'tada* when someone goes beyond the boundary. This prohibitory order is general and covers all the situations where one may be said to exceed the limit, like fighting someone before calling him to follow the path of truth, or starting a war, or killing women and children, or not desisting from war when ordered: Its other examples are explained in the traditions of the Prophet.

Qur'an: *And kill them wherever than slaughter:*

thiqafah means "to find." This sentence is similar to the verse: *Then slay the polytheists wherever you find them (9:6)*. *Fitnah* is the means of testing a thing. It is also used for the test itself as well as its related things like difficulty and hardship. It is also used for punishment, and the crimes and sins which bring that punishment in their wake, like polytheism, disbelief and going astray. The Qur'an has used this word in various places in all these meanings.

In this verse the word means ascribing a partner to Allah and disbelieving in His Messenger and persecuting and oppressing the Messenger of Allah and the believers as was done by the polytheists of Mecca before and after the Hijrah.

The verse says: Put the utmost pressure on the polytheists by killing them wherever they be found until they are compelled to go out of their town and emigrate from their land, as they did to you. And whatever they did to you was more grievous, because it was simply a mischief and an act of infidelity; and mischief and infidelity are more grievous than killing. Killing only terminates the life of this world while infidelity terminates this life as well as the next one and destroys both worlds.

Qur'an: *and do not fight with them... recompense of the disbelievers:*

It prohibits fighting with them at the Sacred Mosque(*Masjidu l-Haram*), to protect its sanctity, as long as they respect that sanctity. *Therein* refers to the Sacred Mosque.

Qur'an: *Then if they desist, then verily Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.*

Intiha means to desist from, to abstain from. *If they desist* means "if they desist from fighting near the Sacred Mosque", because the sentence is mentioned immediately after that topic. It does not mean desisting from fighting altogether by accepting Islam and obeying its commands. However this topic comes soon after it and then Allah will refer to it in these words, *but if they desist then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors.*

Thus the two sentences refer to two completely different matters, and there is no repetition.

Then verily Allah is forgiving, Merciful. This sentence puts the cause in the place of the effect. The full meaning is: "But if they desist from fighting at the Sacred Mosque, then you must desist from it, because Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."

Qur'an: *And fight with them until there is no more mischief (disbelief) and the religion be only for Allah:*

This defines the time limit of the fighting. *Fitnah*(translated here as 'disbelief' and 'mischief') means here 'ascribing a partner to Allah and worshipping idols', as was the custom of the polytheists of Mecca, who compelled others to do likewise. This meaning is inferred from the next sentence, and religion be only for Allah.

This verse is similar to the verse: *And fight with them until there is no mischief (disbelief), and the religion be only for Allah; but if they desist, then verily Allah sees what they do. And if they turn back, then know that Allah is your Master; The Most Excellent Master and the Most Excellent Helper* (8:39-40).

This verse shows that it is obligatory to call them to the right path before the war. If they accept the call, there will be no fighting; but if they reject it then there is no Master except Allah, and He is the most excellent Master and the most excellent Helper; He helps his believing servants. It is known that fighting is prescribed so that the religion be only for Allah. Such a fighting cannot be started until the adversaries are first invited to come onto the right path, i.e. the religion based upon monotheism.

Some people wrote that this verse was abrogated by the verse: *Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Apostle have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, from among those who were given the Book, until they pay the jizyah (tributary tax) with their hand while they are in a state of subjection* (9:29).

But there is no question of either verse abrogating the other, because they deal with different subjects. The verse under discussion is, as explained earlier, about the Meccan polytheists and does not cover the People of the Book who are referred to in verse 9:29. And the religion be only for Allah means that idol worship be abolished and the oneness of Allah be accepted. The people of the Book do believe in One Creator, We know their belief is in reality disbelief as Allah says that they: *do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Apostle have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth.* But Islam is content with their mere profession of monotheism. Fighting with them was ordained not to make them believe in monotheism, but simply so

that they might pay tribute to the Muslims, thus raising the true creed above their creed and making Islam victorious over all religions.

Qur'an: *but if they desist then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors:*

If they desist from disbelief in what you believe in, then cease fighting with them, because there is no hostility except against the oppressors. In this verse also, the cause has been mentioned in place of the effect. Instead of saying "then cease fighting with them" it points out the cause that, *there should be no hostility except against the oppressors*. It is like the verse: *But if they repent and establish the prayer and pay the zakat, then they are your brethren in faith*(9:11).

Qur'an: *The sacred month for the sacred month and reprisal (is lawful) in all sacred things:*

hurumat (sacred things refers to the sanctity of the sacred month, the sanctity of the "boundary" (*haram*) of Mecca, and the sanctity of the Sacred Mosque. If the Meccan polytheists disregard the sanctity of the sacred month by fighting in it - and they did violate its sanctity when they prevented the Prophet and his companions from pilgrimage (*umrah*) in the years of Hudaibiyah (6 A.H.), and attacked them with arrows and stones - then the believers are allowed to fight them in that month and it would not be deemed disrespectful towards it. The believers are fighting in the way of Allah and are obeying His Command to raise up His word. Likewise, if the infidels violate the sanctity of the boundary of Mecca or the Sacred Mosque by fighting in it or in that area then the believers may hit back at them in that place and that area.

The sacred month for the sacred month describes a particular example, followed by a general observation, *and reprisal(is lawful) in all sacred things*. This in its turn is followed by even more general principle, *whoever then acts aggressively against you, inflict the like aggression on him as he has inflicted on you*.

The meaning, thus, will be: Allah has sanctioned reprisal in the sacred month because He has sanctioned it for all sacred things. And He has sanctioned reprisal for all sacred things because He has made it lawful for His servants to inflict aggression equal to the aggression inflicted upon them.

Then He exhorts them to remain steadfastly cautious when inflicting aggression in reprisal, lest they trespass the limit. After all, punishing an oppressor seems sweet, and all animal instincts are roused when one is engaged in taking revenge. There are more chances of deviation from justice, by the use of excessive force, and by disregard of the limits put by the religion. But the fact has already been mentioned that *Allah loves not those who exceed the limit*. And the believers are most in need of the love of Allah His patronage and His help. Therefore, they are told to *fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who guard* (against evil).

The question arises: Why Allah sanctioned acting aggressively when He does not love those who act aggressively (or, as translated above, exceed the limit)? Of course, acting aggressively is to be condemned, but only when it is not in response to an aggression. But if it is in reprisal of an aggression, then it is not "exceeding the limit" or "acting aggressively." It is defending oneself from degradation, and liberating oneself from the fetters of slavery, oppression and injustice. It is like showing pride before a proud man, or the open utterance of evil in speech by the one who has been wronged.

Qur'an: *And spend in the way of Allah and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands*.

It is the command to spend wealth for waging war in the way of Allah. The clause, *in the way of Allah* attached to "spending" has the same significance as when attached to "fighting" in 2:190. "With your hands" (*biaydikum*); with (*b...*) here is extra, added for emphasis. The meaning is "and cast not your hands in perdition." The hand is a symbol of power, ability and strength; and the verse says: do

not nullify or waste your strength by not spending money in preparation for war. Another interpretation: "with" (*b...*) signifies the cause or means; and the object of the verb is yourselves (*anfusakum*) which is deleted but understood. Accordingly, the meaning will be as translated above: *and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands.*

Tahlukah and *hilak* are synonymous; both mean to perish, to fall in perdition. When man becomes in such a condition that he does not know where he is, this word is used. *Tahlukah* is with the paradigm of *tafa'ulah* There is' no other infinitive verb in Arabic with this paradigm.

The order is, anyhow, general; and it prohibits any commission or omission which may cause perdition, whether it is on the side of excess or deficiency. For example, miserliness and avarice when preparing for war would weaken the fighters and make the army of Islam the target of the enemy; and many would be killed. On the other hand, extravagance in expenditure would bring poverty and misery to such a spender, degrade him in society and make life unbearable. Both these actions are prohibited by this verse.

Allah finished this talk on "doing good", and said: *and do good; verily Allah loves the doers of good.* Doing good does not mean desisting from fighting, or clemency in killing the enemies of the religion etc. It means doing a work in its proper way: Fight when fighting is required; restrain yourselves when restraint is preferred; be strict where strictness is demanded by reason, and forgive where forgiveness will not embolden the enemy. In short, repulsing the oppressor by the most reasonable means is to do good for humanity, because this repulsion guarantees humanity its due right, and defends the religion which would improve man's condition in both worlds.

Further, desisting from 'exceeding the limits while obtaining the due right is another good action. And love of Allah is the final good of the religion; and it is essential for every follower of religion to be worthy of the love of Allah by obeying His command and following His Apostle. Allah says in the Qur'an: *Say "if you love Allah then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your sins"* (3:30).

These five verses - and they are about fighting - began with the prohibition of exceeding the limit and that: *Verily Allah loves not those who exceed the limit*, and ended with the command to do good and that: *Verily Allah loves those who do good.* Its delicacy and subtlety need no explanation.

Traditions

Ibn 'Abbas said about the verse, *And fight in the way of Allah...* : "This verse was revealed about the treaty of Hudaibiyah. And it was like this: The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) and his companions came out in the year when they wanted to perform 'umrah. They were one thousand and four hundred persons. They proceeded till they reached Hudaibiyah. There the polytheists prevented them from reaching the Sacred House. Therefore, they slaughtered their sacrificial animals at Hudaibiyah. The polytheists made an agreement with them that they were to go back that year; they would return for 'umrah next year when they would be allowed to enter and remain in Mecca for three days to perform *tawaf* and whatever religious rites they wished.

"The (Messenger of Allah) thereon returned to Medina. Next year the Prophet and his companions made preparations for the 'umrah which had become *qada* the previous year. At the same time, they were afraid that the Qurayshites would not honor the agreement and would again prevent them from reaching the Sacred House and would fight. The, Messenger of Allah did not like the idea of fighting with them in the Sacred month within the sacred boundary of Mecca. Then Allah sent down this

verse." [Majam'u l-bayan]

The author says: Similar traditions have been written in *ad-Durru l-manthur* with various chains from Ibn 'Abbas and others.

Another tradition from ar-Rabi' ibn Anas and 'Abdu 'r-Rahman ibn Zayd ibn Aslam said: This is the first verse revealed about fighting. When it was revealed, the Messenger of Allah used to fight with those who fought with him and desisted from fighting those who refrained from fighting, until was revealed the verses, *Kill the polytheists wherever you find them*. Thus the above verse was abrogated. [Majam'u l-bayan]

The author says: It is their own opinion. You know that the verse: *Kill the polytheists wherever you find them* does not abrogate the verse *And fight in the way of Allah...* Rather it generalizes an order which was specific.

About the verse, *and kill them wherever you find them*. This verse was revealed because one of the companions killed an infidel in the sacred month, The believers condemned him for it. Then Allah made it clear that mischief in religion, i.e. polytheism, is more grievous than killing polytheists in the sacred month, even though it was not allowed. [Majam'u l-bayan]

The author says: You know that the singleness of the context and inter-relationship of all the five verses obviously proves that they were revealed all together, not piecemeal.

There is a tradition from various chains, from Qatadah. He said: "*And fight with them until there is no more mischief*, i.e. polytheism, *and the religion be only for Allah*." He said: "till it is said, 'there is none to be worshipped except Allah.' It is this cause which the Messenger of Allah fought for, and called the people to. And we are told that the Prophet used to say, 'Verily Allah ordered me to fight the people till they say, "there is none to be worshipped except Allah", then, if they desisted (from polytheism), there should be no hostility except against the oppressors." He said: "And verily the oppressor, who refuses to say 'there is none to be worshipped except Allah' shall be fought with till he says 'there is none to be worshipped except Allah'." [ad-Durru l-manthur]

The author says: The sentence "And verily the oppressor. . is the saying of Qatadah; he has inferred it from the saying of the Prophet and it is a fine inference.

A similar interpretation has been reported from 'Ikrimah.

Al-Bukhari, Abu sh-Shaykh and Ibn Mardawayh have narrated from Ibn 'Umar that two persons came to him during the *fitnah* (mischief) of Ibn az-Zubayr and told him: "Verily, people have done (what they have done) and you are the son of 'Umar and a companion of the Prophet; then why do you not come out?" He (Ibn 'Umar) said: "It prevents me (from coming out) that Allah has forbidden (shedding) the blood of my (Muslim) brother." They said: "Has not Allah said, *fight with them until there is no (more) mischief?*" He said: "We fought until there was no more mischief and the religion became only of Allah; but you want to fight until there be mischief and the religion be for other than Allah." [ad-Durru l-manthur]

The author says: He was mistaken in the meaning of *fitnah* and also the two questioners were mistaken. The meaning of *fitnah* has already been explained. The event of Ibn az-Zubayr was not "polytheism or disbelief", it was an example of disorder on earth, or fighting with one another without any just cause; and believers were not allowed to remain silent about it.

There is in *Majma'u l-bayan*, under the verse, *and fight with them until there is no (more) mischief*. "That is polytheism", and the author of *Majam'u l-bayan* said: "And it is narrated from Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.)."

There is a *hadith* in the *Tafsir of al-'Ayyashi* about the words of Allah: *The sacred month for the sacred month*; al-Ula' ibn al-Fudayl said: "I asked him (the Imam) Whether it was allowed to the

Muslims to start fighting with the polytheists in the sacred month. He said: 'If the polytheists start the fight with them by (practically) making it lawful (to fight in the month), then the Muslims will see how they can overcome the polytheists (and do it). And it is the word of Allah, *The sacred month for the sacred month and reprisal* (is lawful) *in all sacred things*.'

Ahmad and Ibn Jarir, and an-Nahhas in his *Nasikh*, have narrated from Jabir ibn 'Abdullah that he said: "The Messenger of Allah did not fight in the sacred month until he was fought with, and if ever he was in a fight and the sacred month began, he would desist (from fighting) until it came to an end." [*adDurru l-manthur*]

Mu'awiyah ibn 'Ammar said: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) about a man who killed another man, outside the sacred territory and then entered the sacred territory. The Imam (a.s.) said: 'He will not be killed (therein), but he will not be given anything to eat or drink, and will not be sold anything until he comes out of the sacred territory; then he will be given the punishment of his crime'." The narrator said that he then asked the Imam (a.s.): "Then what do you say about a man who killed someone in the sacred territory or stole therein. He (the Imam) said: 'He will be punished inside the sacred territory because he himself did not maintain respect of it. And Allah has said, *whoever then acts aggressively against you, inflict the like aggression on him*.' (The Imam said) 'This is the law about the sacred territory; and Allah said, *there should be no hostility except against the aggressors*'." [*al-Kafi*]

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allah, *and cast not yourselves into perdition*.. "If a man spent in the way of Allah all that he had, he would not have done good and God would not lead him to success. Does Allah not say: *and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands; and do good; Verily Allah loves those who do good*, i.e., who are economical." [*ibid*].

as-Saduq has narrated from Thabit ibn Anas that he said: "The Messenger of Allah said: obedience to the ruler is obligatory; and one who has left the obedience to the ruler has not obeyed Allah and has entered into His prohibition, as He says: *and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands*'."

It is narrated in *ad-Durru l-manthur* with numerous chains, from Aslam Abi Imran that he said: "We were (fighting) at Constantinople; 'Aqbah ibn Amir commanded the Egyptians, and Fudalah ibn 'Ubayd led the Syrians. There came out a big row of the Romans, and we stood in row against them. Then a man from our side attacked the Roman row until he entered in its midst. The people (Muslims) cried out, 'Glory be to Allah! He is casting himself in perdition with his own hands!' Then Abu Ayyub, the companion of the Messenger of Allah, stood up and said: 'O people! You are interpreting this verse in this way, while (the fact is that) it was sent down about us, the group of the Helpers. Verily, when Allah made His religion powerful, and its helpers increased in number, some of us told others, keeping it secret from the Messenger of Allah, "Verily, our properties are ruined, and (now) Allah had made Islam powerful and its helpers have increased. Therefore, (it would be better) if we stayed in our properties and mended what had been damaged therein." Then Allah revealed to his prophet, refuting what we had said, *And spend in the way of Allah and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands*. So, perdition meant our staying in our properties and repairing them by leaving fighting (in the way of Allah)'."

The author says: The difference of the traditions in interpreting the meaning of this verse supports what we have said that this verse is general and covers both extremes (extravagance and miserliness) in spending, and that it is not confined to spending only, but covers other aspects also where "casting oneself into perdition" can be applied.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 196-203

وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ فَإِنْ أُحْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا رُؤُوسَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحَلَّهُ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ بِهِ أَذًى مِنْ رَأْسِهِ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِنْ صِيَامٍ أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسُكٍ فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ فَمَنْ تَمَتَّعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ إِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامًا ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجِّ وَسَبْعَةً إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ تِلْكَ عَشْرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلَهُ حَاضِرِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

2:196 شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَعْلُومَاتٌ فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ الْحَجَّ فَلَا رَفْتٌ وَلَا فُسُوقٌ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِي الْحَجِّ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَعْلَمُهُ اللَّهُ وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنْ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

2:197 خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَإِذَا أَفَضْتُمْ مِنْ عَرَفَاتٍ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ عِنْدَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ وَاذْكُرُوهُ كَمَا هَدَاكُمْ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمَنِ الضَّالِّينَ

2:198 لَمَنِ الضَّالِّينَ

ثُمَّ أَفِيضُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَفَاضَ النَّاسُ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

2:199 ثُمَّ أَفِيضُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَفَاضَ النَّاسُ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

2:200 فَضِيَّتُمْ مَنَاسِكَكُمْ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَذِكْرِكُمْ آبَاءَكُمْ أَوْ أَشَدَّ ذِكْرًا فَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَقٍ

2:201 وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

2:202 أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ تَأَخَّرَ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ لِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ

2:203 تُحْشَرُونَ

2:196 And complete the hajj (pilgrimage) and umrah for Allah, but if you be prevented, then (send) whatever offering (sacrificial animal) is easy to obtain, and do not have your heads until the offering reaches its destination; but whoever among you is sick or has an affliction in his head, then (he should effect) a redemption by fasting, or alms, or sacrifice. But when you are secure (from the hindrance) then whoever enjoys by the 'umrah for the hajj, (he Should offer) whatever offering (sacrificial animal) is easy to obtain; but he who cannot find (any offering) should fast for three days during the hajj (pilgrimage) and for seven days when you return; these (make) ten (days) perfect; this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque; and fear Allah and know that Allah is severe in requiting (evil).

2:197 Hajj is the months well-known; so whoever determines (to perform) the hajj therein, then there shall be no sexual intercourse, nor bad language, nor quarrelling during the hajj; and whatever good you do, Allah knows it; and make provision, for surely the best provision is piety (guarding oneself against evil), and fear Me, O people of understanding!

2:198 There is no blame on you if you seek bounty from your Lord; then when you march from 'Arafat, remember Allah near the Holy Monument, and remember Him O He has guided you, although before this you were surely of those who had gone astray.

2:199 Then march on from whence the people march on, and ask for the forgiveness of Allah; verily, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

2:200 So, when you have performed your rites, then remember Allah as you remember your fathers, rather a more intense remembrance. For, of men there is he who says, "Our Lord! give us in this world", and for him there shall be no portion in the Hereafter.

2:201 And among them there is he who says, Our Lord! give us good in this world and good in the

Hereafter and save us from the chastisement of the Fire."

2:202 They shall have (their) portion of what they have earned; and Allah is quick in reckoning.

2:203 And remember Allah during the counted number of days; then whoever hastens off in two days, there is no sin on him, and whoever tarries (there) there is no sin on him, (this is) for him who guards (himself); and fear Allah, and know that you (all) shall be gathered together unto Him.

Commentary

These verses were revealed during the last pilgrimage (*hajjatu-l-wida*) performed by the Messenger of Allah. They (the verses) promulgated the pilgrimage of enjoyment *hajj 't-tamattu'*,

Qur'an: *And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah:*

Completeness (*tamam*) of a thing is the final part, when added to the other parts it makes that thing whole, the thing becomes itself; and then the expected effects follow. When a thing is started and some of its parts are assembled and then the final part is added, it is called *itmam* (completion, to complete). Perfection (*kamal*) is a condition, virtue or characteristic which creates such an effect in a complete thing which would not be found in it without that perfection. When a human foetus receives all its limbs and organs, it is its completion. When he is called knowledgeable, courageous or chaste it is his perfection.

Sometimes, completion (*tamam*) is used metaphorically in place of perfection (*kamal*) to show the extreme importance of that virtue or characteristic; the speaker implies that that virtue or is not something extra or external, it is an integral part without which the thing would remain incomplete.

In this verse, the completion of *hajj* and *'umrah* has been used in the first (literal) sense; and it is proved by the following sentence, *but if you be prevented*. Obviously, this means prevented 'from carrying on the *hajj* and *'umrah* to their last rite'; in other words, 'from completing them'. It cannot mean 'prevented from perfecting them'.

Hajj is a well-known Islamic act of worship, started by the Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.). It continued among the Arabs, and Allah promulgated it for this *ummah* as a law which would continue up to the Day of Resurrection.

This action begins with *ihram* and the stay in 'Arafat and then in the Sacred Monument. The pilgrims sacrifice an animal each at Mina, throw stones on the three Stone-pillars, circumambulate around the Ka'bah, pray, and march between the Safa and the Marwah. There are some other obligations as well.

Hajj is of three kinds: *hajju l-ifrad*, *hajju' l-qiran*, and *hajju 't-tamattu'*. This last one was ordained in the last days of the Messenger of Allah.

'Umrah is another act of worship. In *'umrah*, the pilgrims visit the House of Allah after putting on *ihram* from one of the appointed places. Then they go round the Ka'bah, pray, and march between the Safa and the Marwah and finally cut off some nails or hair.

Hajj and *'umrah* are acts of worship and cannot be complete except when they are done for the sake of Allah, as is seen in the sentence: *And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah.*

Qur'an: *but if you be prevented... offering reaches its destination:*

ihsar, means to prevent, to obstruct. The verse refers to being prevented from completing the *hajj* or *'umrah*, after *ihram*, because of an ailment or enemy. *Istisar* of a thing means its becoming easy, not difficult; this paradigm implies that that thing acquires easeness for itself. *Hady* means the animal presented by one man to another or to a place, to seek someone's pleasure with it. It is derived from *hadyah* (gift, present) or from *huda* (to lead to destination) It is used in both masculine and

feminine forms, *hady* and *hadyah* like *tamr* and *tamrah* (date, Here it means the animals brought or led by the pilgrims for sacrifice during the *hajj*).

Qur'an: *but whoever among you be sick... or sacrifices:*

This sentence is an offshoot of the preceding one, *do not shave your heads...* It implies that the sickness refers to only that one in which the man would suffer if his head were not shaved.

or has an affliction in his head: The conjunctive "or" shows that the affliction here means a suffering other than sickness, like vermine. It figuratively means to be afflicted with vermine, e.g., lice. These two things (sickness and lice) make it lawful to shave the head; but a redemption should be effected by any of the three ways: fast, alms or sacrifice.

It is narrated in a tradition that the fast is for three days; the alms are to feed six poor persons, and the sacrifice is one goat.

Qur'an: *But when you are secure (from the hindrance), then whoever enjoys by the 'umrah for the hajj:*

It is an offshoot of the sentence: if you *be prevented*. The meaning is: When you are safe from all hindrances like sickness, an enemy or other such things, *then whoever enjoys by 'umrah for the hajj* i.e. enjoys because of *'umrah*. How does one enjoy because of *'umrah*? It is because *'umrah* is completed and the restrictions of *ihram* are lifted until the time comes to wear *ihram* again for *hajj*. Therefore, by *(bi) in* by *'umrah (bi 'l-umrah)* is causative. How does *'umrah* cause enjoyment? It is because when *'umrah* is completed, the restrictions of *ihram* like women, perfume, etc. are lifted, and one may enjoy them till the time comes for the *ihram of hajj*.

Qur'an: (he should offer) *whatever offering is easy to obtain:*

Obviously, the sacrifice of the animal is an independent rite. It is not a substitute to make up for not wearing *ihram of hajj* from an appointed place; as it puts uncalled for strain on the mind to infer such a meaning from this verse.

Someone might say: (he should offer) *whatever offering is easy to obtain* is based on: *then whoever enjoys by the 'umrah*, just as an effect is based on its condition. In other words, the offering of the sacrifice is prescribed because of the enjoyment. Moreover, the word *enjoyment* mentioned in the conditional clause hints that the sacrifice is a recompense of that enjoyment which was allowed to lighten the burden and hardship of pilgrims, and the sacrifice compensates for it.

The author says: The above argument is refuted by the phrase, *by the 'umrah*, i.e. because the enjoyment is allowed after the *'umrah* comes to its end. The argument of lightening the burden could be advanced only if the enjoyments were allowed during the *'umrah*. But how can the words *lightening the burden* be used in this case when the *'umrah* is already completed and the restrictions of *ihram* terminated; and when the *ihram of hajj* is yet to start?

And if there is any hint, it is only that the sacrificing of the animal has been prescribed because of the ordination of enjoyment by the *'umrah for the hajj*. There is no hint whatsoever in it that the sacrifice is to compensate for not doing *ihram of hajj* from the appointed place (*miqat*) outside Mecca.

Apparently the verse, *then whoever enjoys by the 'umrah for the hajj*, (he should offer) *whatever offering is easy to obtain*, mentions *hajju 't-tamattu'* as an already prescribed act of worship. It is not the original and initial ordination. It mentions enjoyment (*tamattu'*) as an established fact and then, on the basis of it, prescribes the sacrifice of the animal. It says, *whosoever performs hajju 't-tamattu, shall offer sacrifice*. It does not say, "performs *hajju 't-tamattu'* and offer sacrifice." The original and initial prescription of *tamattu'* comes in the verse which comes later, *this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque*.

Qur'an: *but he who cannot find (any offering) should fast for three days during the hajj and for seven days when you return:*

Hajj is mentioned as the time of the fast because the time and place of both are the same. The time of *hajj* - from the *ihram* of *hajj* to the returning from it - is the very time of the three days' fast. There are traditions from the Imams of *Ahlu l-bayt* that the time of this fast is before the Day of Sacrifice (10th *Dhu'l-hijjah*) or, if one could not fast at that time then, after the 13th of *Dhu l-hijjah*, or, as a last alternative, at the time of returning to one's home.

The time of the seven-day fast is after returning to one's home, as is clear from the words, *when you return*. It should be noted that Allah did not say, "at the time of returning." Moreover, the change of pronoun from the (previously used) third person to the second person in *when you return* is a hint that the hearer is now present - at home.

Qur'an: *these (make) ten (days) perfect:*

Three and seven together make ten perfect days. The seven days make perfect the previous three days; they do not complete it. The difference between perfection and completion has been explained in the beginning of the verse; and it means that both groups of three and seven days have separate identities with separate rules. The fast of three days is a complete act in itself; it depends on the fast of seven days for its perfection, not completion.

Qur'an: *this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque:*

This order of *enjoying by the 'umrah for the Hajj* for the non-resident i.e. the person who dwells not less than twelve miles away from the Sacred Mosque. His family (*ahlul*) here means his dependents, like his wife and children, The non-resident has been described as he *whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque*. It is a very fine way of expression as it not only promulgates the law but explains its reason also; and that reason is to lighten the burden. The pilgrims who come from far off places for the *hajj* have to undergo all kinds of troubles, hardships and difficulties during the journey; and when they reach Mecca, they are tired and worn out. They naturally need a place to rest and recuperate. Usually, one gets this rest with his family, but here is a pilgrim *whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque*. Therefore, Allah ordained for him enjoyment (*tamattu*) he may enjoy himself after completing the *'umrah* up to the time of *hajj* and then may raise his voice in *talbiyah*. i.e. he may wear the *ihram of hajj* from the Sacred Mosque without going back to an appointed place for that purpose.

It has been explained earlier that it is this sentence that promulgates *hajju t-tamatt'* it is a general ordinance, and is not limited to a particular time, or to a particular person, or to a particular situation. It is for all the non-resident pilgrims, for all times, and for all situations.

Qur'an: *and fear Allah and know that Allah is severe in requiting:*

This extreme severity in this humiliating way shows that there was a likelihood of the audience rejecting this order or hesitating to follow it. And this is what actually happened. Of all the laws of Islam, *hajj* had already been practiced by the Arabs since the days of Ibrahim and all its rites were well-known to, and performed by, them. They were used to those rites, and when Islam came, it let it be, as it was, until the last days of the Prophet's life. Therefore, it was not an easy thing to make any change in its method; they were not expected to accept any change in it willingly. That is why they protested against the law of *enjoyment by 'umrah* and, as the traditions show, many of them did not welcome that order. So much so that the Prophet felt a pressing need to deliver a lecture telling them that the authority was from Allah only, He ordains as He wishes, and that it was a general order, nobody was exempted from it - neither the Prophet nor the *ummah*. This explains why the verse ended on such a harsh note, ordering them to fear Allah and threatening them with the chastisement of Allah.

Qur'an: *hajj is the months well-known; ... nor quarrelling during the hajj:*

hajj at the beginning of the verse means "the time of *half*". "Well-known", i.e., to the Muslims; and the *sunnah* has explained it as *Shawwal, Dhu l-qa'dah* and *Dhu l-hijjah*. So far as *Dhu l-hijjah* is concerned, it is only about a half of the month which is the time of *hajj*; but there is no objection to counting it as one of the "months" of *hajj*.

We say: ... The time of our reaching Mecca is Friday." But we reach there at a certain hour and minute, not during the whole day.

The noun *hajj* has been repeated three times in this verse. Why was the pronoun not used, which could have shortened the sentence? The fact is that the sentence has been shortened by using the noun instead of the pronouns: *hajj is the months...* means "the time of *hajj*"; *whoever determines the hajj* means the action itself; *nor quarrelling during the hajj* refers to "the duration and place of *hajj*. If the noun had not been repeated, it would have been necessary to lengthen the sentence to make the meaning clear.

so whoever determines the hajj therein: farada fi hinna l-hajj literally means 'makes *hajj* obligatory therein'; and it implies, "makes *hajj* obligatory I or himself by beginning its rites", because Allah says, *And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah*. Therefore, once one starts the *hajj*, it is obligatory on one to complete it, *Rafath* as mentioned in an earlier verse, literally means to say clearly such words which are generally unmentionable: *fusuq* means "disobedience" and *jidal* is "disputation in the talk." But *sunnah* has explained that in this verse *rafath* means sexual intercourse; *fusuq* is lie; and *jidal* is swearing by the name of Allah - 'No, by God', 'Yes, by God' '

Qur'an: *and whatever you do, Allah knows it:*

It is a reminder that one's actions are not hidden from Allah; it calls one to piety and fear of Allah, so that one's acts of worship might not be devoid of the spirit of devotion; so that one might not go through the external rites of worship with one's mind absent and one's heart forgetful. This is, generally, the style of the Qur'an in all subjects. You will find it explaining the fundamentals of the faith, narrating the stories of previous peoples, or promulgating laws; but whatever the subject, it is invariably followed by a lesson and an admonition so that knowledge is not without practice. Knowledge without practice has no value in Islam. That is why this exhortation to piety and fear of God was immediately followed by the words, *and fear Me, O people of understanding*. In the preceding sentence the name of Allah was mentioned in the third person (*Allah knows it*) but immediately it is changed to the first person (*fear Me*) - it is to show the utmost importance of piety, and to imply that the pious person has not reached nearer to Allah and is now directly addressed by Him.

Qur'an: *There is no blame on you if you seek bounty from your Lord:*

It is like the words of Allah: O you who believe! when the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading... And when the prayer is ended then disperse in the land and seek of the grace of Allah... (62:9-10). The *trading* of the first verse was changed to the *seeking of bounty of Allah* in the next one, showing that both are the same. That is why the *sunnah* has interpreted the words, *seek the bounty of Allah* in the verse under discussion as "the trading." This verse proves that trading during the pilgrimage is lawful.

Qur'an: *then when you march from 'Arafat, remember Allah near to the Holy Monument:*

ifadah means going out from a place in a group. This verse, therefore, describes the stay at 'Arafat as well as the stay at the Sacred Monument, i.e. *al-muzdalafah*

Qur'an: *and remember Him as He has guided you... :*

Remember Him intensely enough to be like His guidance to you, although before His guidance you

were surely of those who had gone astray.

Qur'an: *Then march on from whence the people march on:*

The verse makes it compulsory to march on as "the people" were doing, and obliges the immediate audience to follow "the people." This supports the reports that the Qurayshites and their allies (together known as *hums*) did not stay at 'Arafat; instead they went direct to *al-muzdalafah* and stayed therein, claiming that they were the people of the sacred territory of Allah and, therefore, they would not leave that boundary. Allah, therefore, ordered them to march on (to *al-muzdalafah*) from whence the other people march on, i.e. from 'Arafat. In other words, the Qurayshites also must stay at 'Arafat and then march on from there with others.

That being the case, why did Allah mention this order after the order to march from 'Arafat, and begin it with then (*thumma*)

This sentence has been figuratively written as a sort of *istidrik* (to catch up what had escaped). The meaning thus, will be: "The rules of *hajj* are as mentioned above, except that you are obliged to stay at, and march on from, 'Arafat, not *al-muzdalafah*."

Qur'an: So, *when you have performed... intense remembrance:*

It is a call to remember Allah with utmost intensity. The pilgrim should remember Him as he remembers his forefathers, or even more intensely. The grace of Allah on him (i.e. the grace of guidance, as He mentioned it just above, *remember Him as He has guided you*) is far greater than the right of his forefathers upon him.

It has been said that the Arabs, in the days of ignorance, used to stay at Mina after the rites of *hajj* to boast vainly about their forefathers, in lectures and poetry. Allah by this verse changed it to His own remembrance.

Aw in *aw ashadda dhikran* (or a more intense remembrance) is used in the meaning of "rather." The *remembrance* should be "tense." Remembrance may be intense (in quality) or frequent (in quantity). See, for example, the following verses where the adjective of quantity *kathiran* (much, frequently) has been used: *remember Allah, remembering frequently, (33:35); and the men who remember Allah much (33:35)*. Remembrance of Allah, in reality, is not by words alone. It is a thing concerned with the heart and mind; words are merely a demonstration of that feeling. Therefore, it may be described as frequent (in quantity), if one remembers Allah most of the time, as the Qur'an says: *Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and reclining on their sides... (3:191)*. And it may be described as intense (in quality) at some other times. As remembrance was ordered for a time (*when you have finished your rites*) when one is liable to divert one's attention from Allah and forget Him, it was appropriate to use the adjective "more intense" rather than "more frequent."

Qur'an: *For, of men there is he who says... what they have earned:*

It is based on the sentence: *then remember Allah as you remember your fathers, rather a more intense remembrance*. *Nas* (men, people) is general; it describes all human beings, the unbelievers as well as the believer - the unbelievers who only remembers his forefathers. In other words, he only wants the vainglories of this world, only seeks material greatness, and has no concern with the Hereafter. And there is the believer who only seeks the pleasure of Allah, and even when he wants something from this world, he wants only that which his Lord is pleased to bestow upon him.

In view of above explanations, it is clear that the words *says* in both places does not mean asking or saying in so many Words. It means 'wanting' by one's state and inner feeling. Thus, the verses mean that some people do not "want" anything except this world, and they shall have no portion in the Hereafter; and there are others who do not seek anything except what Allah is pleased to give them whether it be in this world or in the Hereafter; and they shall have their portion in the Hereafter.

Good (*hasanah*) is mentioned in the saying of the believers but not in that of the unbelievers. It is no secret that the one who wants this world, does not care whether it is good in the eyes of Allah or not. The whole world is sweet and good, in his thinking, if it satisfies his desire and if he can enjoy it. It is diametrically opposed to the thinking of the believer who wants the Hereafter. As the Hereafter will be either good or bad, he only wants and only asks for, the good, and not the bad.

The contrast between the sentences, and for him there shall be no portion in the Hereafter and they shall have (their) portion of what they have earned, shows that the deeds of the first groups (but not of the second) shall be void and forfeited. Allah has said; And We will proceed to what they have done of deeds, so We shall render them like dust scattered in air, (25:23); And on the day when those who disbelieve shall be brought before the fire: You did away with your good things in your life of the world and you took your fill of pleasure in them... (46:20); so their deeds become void and We will not assign to them any weight on the Day of Resurrection (18:105).

Qur'an: *and Allah is quick in reckoning:*

sari'u l-hisab (quick of reckoning) is one of the names of Allah. Its generality suggests that it covers this world as well as the Hereafter. Even now the reckoning is in progress; whenever a man does any good or bad deed, Allah gives him its full recompense.

In short, the purpose of these two verses is to exhort people to remember Allah. Men are of two types: Some want this world, and do not know or remember anything else; such persons have no portion in the Hereafter. And there are others who want what God is pleased to give them; they shall have their share in the Hereafter; and Allah is quick in reckoning - He quickly reckons what His servant wants, and recompenses him according to his wish. Therefore, you should remember Allah so that you may be among those who will get their portion in the Hereafter; do not join that group which does not remember Allah and, therefore, will have no portion. Otherwise, you will be disappointed on that day.

Qur'an: *And remember Allah during the counted number of days:*

The counted days are the days of brightness, i.e., the 11th, 12th and 13th of *Dhu l-hijjah*. The proof that these counted days are after the 10th of *Dhu l-hijjah* is that this order has been given when all the rites of *hajj* have already been mentioned. The proof that they are three days may be found in the next sentence, *then whoever hastens off in two days*. One may "hasten off" in two days only when the original number of days is three.

And the traditions also have interpreted it in the same way.

Qur'an: *then whoever hastens... him who guards(himself):*

No (*la*) here is for negation of a genus. There is no sin on him (*la ithma 'alayh*), mentioned in the two sentences means that the pilgrim is free from the genus of sin, i.e. from all sin. Had Allah meant to say that there would be no sin on the pilgrim in hastening off or in tarrying therein, the sentences would have contained some words to show it; but they are unconditional. Therefore, the verse means that the pilgrim who performs the rites of *hajj* is forgiven all his sins, there remains no sin on him whether he hastens off in two days or tarryes therein.

It appears from the above that the aim of this verse is not to show that the pilgrim has an option between hastening off and tarrying; its purpose is to declare that all the sins of the pilgrim are forgiven in either case.

The words: (this is) *for him who guards* (himself), are not related to the forgiveness of sins; otherwise it would have been "on him who guards (himself)", not "for him." Apparently it is like a previous sentence, *this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque*. As that sentence pointed to the group which shall be governed by the law of *enjoying by 'umrah*, likewise, the

words, *for him who guards*, specify those who have the option of hastening off or tarrying therein. This option is for him who guards himself; if someone did not guard himself, then it is not for him. It follows that the guarding here is confined to guarding against those things which Allah has forbidden during *hajj*. In other words, the meaning is this: This choice is given to him who guards himself from the things forbidden during the *ihram*. If he was not careful then he must stay a full three days at Mina and remember Allah in those counted days. This meaning has been given in some of the traditions of the Imams of *Ahlu l-bayt*.

Qu'ran: *and fear Allah... gathered together unto Him:*

The topic ends on the order to fear Allah and on the reminder that all shall be resurrected and gathered unto Him. Piety and fear of Allah cannot be complete, and sins not avoided, unless one remembers the Day of Recompense. Allah says: *nose who go astray from the path of Allah, for them shall surely be a severe punishment, because they forgot the Day of Reckoning (38:26).*

The choice of the word *tuhsharun* (you shall be gathered together) at the end of the topic of *hajj* (where people assemble and gather together from all parts of the world) is highly suitable. Also, it gives a hint that when the pilgrim, at the time of his *hajj*, sees the gathering and marching together, he should remember the Day when Allah will gather them together and will not leave any one of them behind.

Traditions

There is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the words of Allah, *And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah*. He said: "They are obligatory." [*at-Tahdhib and al-Ayyashi*]

There is a tradition narrated by Zurarah, Himran and Muhammad ibn Muslim from Abu Ja'far and Abu 'Abdillah (peace be on them). They said: "We asked both Imams about the words of Allah, *And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah*. Both replied: 'Verily, it is the completion of *hajj* that one should not indulge in sexual intercourse, nor in bad language nor in quarrelling.'" [*al-'Ayyashi*]

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said in a tradition, *inter alia*: "(Allah) means by their (*hajj* and '*umrah*'s) completion, performing them and guarding oneself from the things which a pilgrim in condition of *ihram* should guard against." [*al-Kafi*]

The author says: There is no conflict in these traditions and the meaning of completion (*itmam*) explained by us in the beginning, because their being obligatory and their performance is the same as completing them.

al-Halabi narrates from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said: "Verily, when the Messenger of Allah performed the last pilgrimage (*hajj*), he proceeded (from Medina) on the 26th of *Dhu'l-qa'dah*, until he reached (the Mosque of) Shajarah (which is the *miqat*) i.e. appointed place of *ihram* for pilgrims from Medina) and prayed there. Then he led his camel till he reached the desert (i.e. open space) and he re-affirmed the intention (*niyyah*) of the *ihram* there and said *labbayk Allahumma labbayk ... (talbiyah) of hajj*, and drove a hundred camels (of sacrifice); and (likewise) all the people put on the *ihram of hajj*'; they did not have the intention of '*umrah*', and knew nothing about *mut'ah* (enjoyment of '*umrah*'). When the Messenger of Allah reached Mecca, he circumambulated the House and the people circumambulated with him; then he prayed *tworakah* near the Stand of Ibrahim and kissed the (Black) Stone. Then he said: 'I begin with what Allah has begun with'. So, he came to (the hill of) Safa, and began from there and went between Safa and Marwah seven times. When he finished his perambulation at Marwah, he stood up before them to give a

lecture. (In that lecture he ordered them to end their *ihram*, and treat it (the rites performed so far) as *'umrah*; and that it was a system ordained by Allah. So the people ended their *ihram*. The Messenger of Allah told them that had he advanced from his affairs what he had delayed (i.e. had he known this system before) he also would have done as they were doing but he could not do so because he had led his sacrificial animals with him and Allah had said: *and do not shave your heads till the offering reaches its destination*. Suraqah ibn Ja'tham al-Kinani said: 'We have learned our religion as though we were born today. Do you think that this system which you have taught us is only for this year? Or for every year The Messenger of Allah said: 'No. It is for eternity.' And another man stood up and said: 'O Messenger of Allah! Shall we go out for *hajj* (on 8th of *Dhu'l-hijjah*) and our heads shall be wet (by obligatory bath) because of going unto our women? The Messenger of Allah said: 'Verily, you shall never believe in it.'

The Imam said: "Then 'Ali (a.s.) proceeded from Yemen till he reached (Mecca near the time of) *hajj*; and found that Fatimah had ended her *ihram*, and felt the smell of perfume. So, he went to the Messenger of Allah, to enquire about it. The Messenger of Allah asked him: 'O 'Ali! On what did you raise your voice *intalbiyah* i.e. what was the intention of your *hajj*?' He said: '(My intention was) according to the intention of the Prophet.' So, the Messenger of Allah told him: Then you do not end your *ihram*. Then the Prophet gave him a share in his sacrificial animals, he gave him thirty seven and sacrificed himself sixty-three, slaughtering them by his own hand. He took a portion from each sacrifice, put all portions in one pot, and ordered it to be cooked. He ate from it and sipped a little of its soup and said: 'Now we have eaten from all of them. And *hajju 't-tamattu'* (*mut'ah*) is better than *hajju l-qiran* in which the pilgrim leads his sacrificial animal, and better than *hajju'l-ifrad*.'" The narrator says: "I asked the Imam whether the Messenger of Allah began his *ihram* at night in the daytime. The Imam said: 'At daytime'. Then I asked, at what time. The Imam said 'At the prayer of noon (*zuhr*)!'" [al-Kafi]

The author says: This matter has been reported in *Maimaul-bayan* and other books also. There is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said: "The *'umrah* has entered into *hajj* upto the Day of Resurrection. Then whoever enjoys by *'umrah* for the *hajj* (he should offer) whatever offering (sacrificial animal) is easy to obtain. Now, no one has any option but to perform *hajj t'-tamattu*, because Allah sent it down in his book and it was started by the traditions of the Messenger of Allah." [at-Tahdhib]

There is from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the word of Allah, *whatever offering is easy to obtain*, that it is "a goat." [al-Kafi]

There is from the same Imam that he was asked what was the one doing *hajj al-tamattu* to do if he did not get a goat. He said: "He will fast before the day of *tarwiyah* (8th of *Dhu'l-hijjah*) and on the day of the *tarwiyah* and the day of *'arafah* (9th of *Dhu'l-hijjah*)" He was told: "(Suppose) he reached there on the very day of *tarwiyah*." He replied: "He shall fast three days after *tashriq* i.e. after 13th He was asked: "What if his camel-driver did not stay there?" The Imam said: "He shall fast on the day of *hasabah* and the following two days." It was asked: "And what is *hasabah*?" He said: "The day of his (return) journey." It was said: "Will he fast when he is on a journey?" He said: "Yes. Is he not on journey on the day of *'arafah*? Verily, we the *Alul 'l-bayt* say so. Allah says, should fast for three days during the *hajj*. Allah means in *Dhu l-hijjah*." [Ibid]

ash-Shaykh has narrated from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said: "Whatever is after the *miqat* upto Mecca, (its inhabitants) is the dweller of the Sacred Mosque and for him there is no *hajju 't-tamattu* (*mutah*),

The author says: It means that the residence of the area from the appointed place of *ihram* up to Mecca come under the term "dwellers of the Sacred Mosque" and they cannot *do hajju 'ttamattu*'.

And there are numerous traditions of the same meaning from the imams of *Ahlu l-bayt*.

There is a tradition from al-Baqir (a.s.) about the word of Allah: *hajj* is the months well-known, that he said: *hajj* is in the months well-known, *Shawwal* and *Dhul-qad'dah* and *Dhu l-hijjah*. Nobody can perform *hajj* in other months." [al-Kafi]

And there is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the words of Allah: so whoever determines (to perform) *hajj* therein, that *fard* (obligation, determination) is (by) *talbiyah* (labbayk Allahumma labbayk), and *dish'ar* (putting some recognized signs on the sacrificial animals) and *taqlid* (putting a string on its neck). Whichever of these the pilgrim does, he determines to perform the *hajj*." [ibid]

And there is in the same book from the same Imam under the word of Allah, There shall be no uttering unmentionable words... that *rafath* means sexual intercourse, *fusuq* means a lie or abuse and *jidat* is saying, 'No, by God'; 'Yes, by God'.

It is narrated from as-Saqid (a.s.) about the words of Allah, There is no blame on you if you seek bounty from your Lord, that the bounty (*fadl*) here means sustenance. When the pilgrim has ended his *ihram* and performed his rites then he may purchase and sell in that season. [al-'Ayyashi]

The author says: It is said that according to their belief, trading during the season of *hajj* was a sin; so Allah removed this misunderstanding with this verse.

And it is said that it means that there is no blame on you if you seek forgiveness from your Lord. This meaning has been narrated by Jabir from Abu Ja'far (a.s.). [Majma'u'l-bayan]

The author says: This tradition looks at "bounty" in its generality and interprets it with its best example.

There is a tradition from as-Saqid (a.s.) about the word of Allah, *Then march on from whence the people march on*, He said: "Verily, the people of the *haram* (the Quraysh) used to stay at the Sacred Mosque and other people used to stay at 'Arafat, and (the Quraysh) did not march on from there until the people of 'Arafat came in sight (coming from 'Arafat). There was a man, with the patronymic, Abu Sayyar; he had a fast donkey and always went ahead of the people of 'Arafat. When he came into sight they said, 'Here is Abu Sayyar' and then started marching on. So, Allah ordered them (i.e. the people of *haram*) that they must stay at 'Arafat and march on from there." [al-Ayyashi]

The author says: There are other traditions with this meaning.

There is a tradition from the same Imam about the words of Allah: *Our Lord! give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter*. He said: 'The pleasure of Allah and the Garden in the Hereafter, and increase in sustenance and good disposition in this world.'

And also he said: "The pleasure of Allah, and increase in sustenance and good company; and in the Hereafter, the Garden."

And Ali (a.s.) said: "Good in this world is a virtuous wife and good in the Hereafter is the hour; and the chastisement of the Fire is a bad (ill-tempered) wife." [ibid]

The author says: These traditions give sortie examples; otherwise the verse is general. The pleasure of Allah can be got even in this world, although its complete manifestation will be in the Hereafter. That is why it may be counted as a good in this world (1st tradition) as well as in the Hereafter (2nd tradition).

There is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the word of Allah, *and remember Allah during the counted number of days*. He said: "and they are the days of brightness (*tashriq*) (the 11th, 12th and 13th of Lunar month). When the Arabs stayed at Mina after sacrificing the animals, they used to boast against one another. One would say: 'My father used to do this and that.' So Allah said: *when you have performed your rites, then remember Allah as you remember your fathers, rather a more intense remembrance*." He further said: "And the *takbir* is *Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar, la ilaha*

illallahu wa'llahu akbar, wa lillahi 'l-hamd, Allah akbar ala ma hadana, Allahu akbar 'ala ma razaqana min bahimati 'l-an'am." [al-Kafi]

The same Imam said: "And the *takbir* is in the days of brightness from the prayer of noon on the day of sacrifice till the prayer of dawn on the third day. And in (other) towns *takbir* would be (recited) after ten prayers." [ibid]

About the word of Allah, *then whoever hastens off in two days, there is no sin on him, and whoever tarries(there) there is no sin on him*, that as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked about it, and he said: "It does not mean that he has the option to do like this if he wishes. But it means that he returns (from *hajj*) and his sins are forgiven, there is no sin on him." [Man la yahduruhu'l-faiqih]

And there is a tradition from as-Saqid (a.s.) that he said: "He returns and his sins are forgiven, there is no sin on him, (this is) for him who guards (himself)." [al-'Ayyashi]

And there is in *al-Faqih* from the same Imam about the word of Allah, (this is) *for him who guards(Himself)*. He said: "He shall guard himself against hunting till the people of Mina return (from it)."

And al-Baqir (a.s.) said: "(This is) for him who guards himself against sexual intercourse and bad language and quarrelling and those things which Allah has forbidden in *ihram*." Also he said: "for him who fears Allah."

And as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "for him who guards himself against big sins."

The author says: The meaning of the sentence has already been explained. But it is possible to interpret *taqwa* (piety, fear of Allah) in its general meaning, as has been done in the last two traditions.

Traditions on Mut'atu'l-Hajj

Al-Bukhari and al-Bayhaqi have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he was asked about *hajju 't-tamattu'(mu'atu l-hajj)* He said: "The Emigrants(*muhajirin*) and the Helpers (*ansar*) and the wives of the Prophet raised their voices in *talbiyah* (i.e. put on *ihram*) in the last pilgrimage, and we did likewise. When we reached Mecca, the Messenger of Allah said: 'Make (i.e. change) your intention of *hajj* into that of *umrah*, except the one who has put string on his sacrificial animal.' So we circumambulated the House and (arched) between Safa and Marwah; (then we ended our *ihram*) and went to the women and put on (sewn) clothes. And the prophet said: He who put string on the sacrificial animal shall not end his *ihram* until the sacrifice reaches (its destination).' Then he ordered us on the eve of *tarwiyah* (8th of *Dhu l-hijjah*) to raise our voice in *talbiyah* to wear the *ihram of hajj*. When we finished the rites (upto Mina), we came and circumambulated the House and (marched) between Safa and Marwah and our *hajj* was completed. And on us was a sacrifice, as Allah said: *Whatever offering is easy to obtain, but he Who cannot find should fast for three days during the hajj and for seven days when you return to your towns; and a goat is enough.* Thus the pilgrims combined the two rites, *hajj* and *'umrah*, in one year. For, verily Allah sent it down in His Book, and His prophet promulgated it and made it lawful for all people except the people of Mecca. Allah has said: *this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque.* And the months of *hajj*, which Allah has mentioned, are *Shawwal, Dhu l-qadah* and *Dhu'l-hijjah*. Therefore, he who performs *mu'tatu l-hajj* in these months, on him is a sacrifice or the (10 days') fast. And *rafath* is sexual intercourse, and *fusuq* is sins and *jidal*) is quarrelling." [ad-Durru'l-manthur]

al-Bukhari and Muslim have narrated from Ibn 'Umar that he said: "The Messenger of Allah, in the

last pilgrimage, enjoyed by the *umrah* for the *hajj*, and offered the sacrifice. He led the sacrificial animals with him from *Dhu'l-halifah*. And the Messenger of Allah began and raised his voice in *talbiyah* (i.e. put on *ihram*) of *'umrah*. Later on, he raised his voice in *talbiyah* (i.e. put on *ihram*) of *hajj*. And the people enjoyed with the Prophet by the *Umrah* for the *hajj*. Some people had taken their sacrificial animals with them, others had not done so. When the Prophet reached Mecca he told the people: 'Anyone of you who has led his sacrificial animal with him, (shall not end his *ihram* and) no such thing, which was forbidden for him, shall be allowed to him until he performs his *hajj*. And he who has not taken his sacrifice with him, he will go around the House, and (march) between Safa and Marwah, and cut some hair or nails, and his *ihram* will come to end; then later he will raise his voice in *talbiyah* (i.e. will put on *ihram*) of *hajj*; and if he cannot find an offering, he will fast for three days during the *hajj* and for seven (days) when he returns to his family.'" [ibid]

al-Hakim. has narrated (and said that it is "correct") through Mujahid and 'Ata', from Jabir that he said: "There are many people talking (without knowing the facts). We came out (from Medina) for *hajj*. When only a few days remained for our *ihram* to come to an end, we were ordered to (then and there) finish our *ihram*. We said, 'Well, shall one go to Arafat (at the beginning of *hajj*) with one's penis dripping semen? This talk reached the Messenger of Allah, so he stood up to deliver a lecture, and said: 'O people! Do you (want to) teach me about Allah? For, by Allah, I am the most knowledgeable of you about Allah, and the most God-fearing of you. And had I advanced my affair which I kept behind, I would not have taken any sacrifice with me and would have ended my *ihram* as they had done. Then (at the time of *hajj*) he who did not have any sacrificial animal would fast for three days in the *hajj* and for seven (days) when he returns to his family; and he who had found animal would slaughter it. Thus, we slaughtered animals for seven days.'" 'Ata' said that Ibn 'Abbas said: "Surely, the Messenger of Allah distributed sheep and goats among his companions that day; and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas received a he-goat and slaughtered it on his own behalf." [ibid]

Ibn Abi Shaybah, al-Bukhari and Muslim have narrated from Imran ibn Hasin that he said: "The verse of *mut'ah* came down in the Book of Allah and we did it in the company of the Messenger of Allah, then there did not come down any verse to abrogate the verse of the *mut'atu'l-hajj*, nor did (the Messenger of Allah) forbid it till he died. (And then) one man said by his own opinion what he wished." [ibid]

The author says: This tradition has been narrated (in another place) with different words but the same meaning.

There is a tradition from Mutrif that he said: "Imran ibn Hasin sent for me in his illness in which he died, and said: 'I was narrating to you some traditions so that Allah may benefit you by them. Now, if I remain alive, keep them as my secret, and if I die, then narrate them on my authority, because then I will be safe. And know that the Prophet of Allah combined the *hajj* and the *'umrah*; then nothing was sent down on this subject in the Book of Allah, nor was it forbidden by the Prophet of Allah. (But) one man said about it by his own opinion what he wished.' [Muslim; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *as-Sunan*, an-Nasa'i]

It is reported that 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar was asked about *mut'atu'l-hajj* He said: "It is *halal* (lawful)." The questioner told him: "Surely, your father forbade it!" He said: "If my father forbade it and the Messenger of Allah performed it then what do you think I should do? Should I follow the order of my father or the order of the Messenger of Allah?" The man said: "Rather, the order of the Messenger of Allah." He said: "Surely the Messenger of Allah performed it." [at-Trimidhi, *Zadu'l-ma'ad*]

And there is from Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah that he heard Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas and Dahhak ibn

Qays, (in the year when Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan performed his *hajj*) talking about enjoyment by *'umrah* for *hajj*. Dahhak said: "Nobody shall do it except he who is ignorant of the command of Allah." Sa'd replied: "What evil did you utter, O my nephew!" Dahhak said: "But surely 'Umar ibn al-Khattab forbade it." Sa'd said: "Surely, the Messenger of Allah did it and we did it in his company." [at-Tirmidhi, *as-Sunan*, an-Nasa'ias-*Sunan al-kubra*; *al-Muwatta'* and al-Umm]

al-Bukhari, Muslim and al-Nasa'i have narrated from Abu Musa that he said: "I came to the Messenger of Allah while he was in al-Batha'. He said: 'Did you raise your voice in *talbiyah* (Did you put on ihram)?' I said: 'I raised my voice as the Prophet did.' He asked me: 'Have you brought any sacrificial animal?' I said: 'No,' The Prophet said: 'Go around the House and (march) between Safa and Marwah, then end your ihram.' So I went around the House and, (marched) between Safa and Marwah. Then (after ending the ihram) I went to a woman from my people, she combed my head and I washed my head. Thereafter, I used to give religious decisions during the rule of Abu Bakr and 'Umar. Once I was standing in the season (of *hajj*) when a man came to me and said: 'You do not know what the leader of the faithful ('Umar) has invented concerning the rites (of *hajj*).' So I said: 'O people! Whoever we might have given him our decision, let him wait, because this leader of the faithful is coming to you concerning it.' When he ('Umar) arrived, I asked him: 'What have you invented concerning the rites?' He said: 'if we take the Book of Allah, then Allah says: And completed the *hajj* and *'umrah* for Allah, and if we take the tradition of our Prophet, then he did not end his ihram until he slaughtered the offering.'" [ad-Durru'l-manthur]

Muslim has narrated from Abu Nadrah that he said: "Ibn 'Abbas used to order *mutah* and Ibn az-Zubayr used to forbid it. This was reported to Jabir ibn 'Abdullah; so he said: 'On my hand the talk progressed. We did *mut'ah* in the company of the Messenger of Allah; then when 'Umar stood up (became caliph) he said: "Surely, Allah used to make lawful for the Messenger of Allah whatever He wished from whatever He wished. And surely the Qur'an came down gradually. Therefore, complete the *hajj* and *'umrah* as Allah has ordered you, and separate your hail from your *'umrah*, as it is more completing. for your *hajj* and more completing for your *'umrah*... .. [ibid]

And there is from Abu Musa that 'Umar said: "It (i.e. *mutah*) is the *sunnah* (custom) of the Messenger of Allah. But I am afraid that they will sleep with them (i.e. the women) under the trees and then proceed with them as pilgrims." [Ahmad ibn Hanbal] There is a tradition from Sa'id ibn Musayyab (that he said) that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab forbade *Mut'ah* in the months of *hajj* and said: "I performed it in the company of the Messenger of Allah and I forbid it. And it is because one of you comes from a far away place dishevelled, worn out, having the intention of *'umrah* in the months of *hajj*. And his dishevelment, and tiredness and *talbiyah* are only for his *'umrah*. Then he arrives and goes around the House, and ends his *ihram* and wears sewn clothes) and uses perfume and sleeps with his wife if e with him. Thereafter, when the day of *tarwiyah* comes he raises his voice in *talbiyah of hajj* and proceeds to Mina, saying *talbiyah of hajj* in which there is neither dishevelment, nor tiredness nor *talbiyah* except for one day only. And the *hajj* is better than *'umrah*. If we leave them on this system, they shall embrace them (i.e. the women) under the trees. Moreover, the people of the House (i.e. Meccans) have neither any cattle nor any crop, and their spring is only those who stay with them." [Jam'u'l-jawami] There is from Muslim from Abu Nadrah from Jabir. (Abu Nadrah) said: "I said: 'Verily, Ibn az-Zubayr forbids *mutah* and Ibn 'Abbas orders it.' He (Jabir) said: 'On my hand the talk progressed. We did *mut'ah* in the company of the Messenger of Allah and in the company of Abu Bakr. When 'Umar became ruler, he delivered a lecture before the people and said: "Verily, the Messenger of Allah is this Messenger, and the Qur'an is this Qur'an. And, surely, there were two *mut'ah's* in the days of the Messenger of Allah, and I forbid them and shall inflict

punishment for them; one of them is the *mu'tah* of women; and I will not get hold of a man who marries a woman for a period, but that I shall eliminate him with stones; and the second is the *mu'tah of hajj*." [asSunan al-kubra]

There is a tradition from Ibn 'Abbas that he said that he heard 'Umar saying: "By Allah, verily I forbid you the *mu'tah*, and surely it is in the Book of Allah and surely the Messenger of Allah performed it." He meant *'umrah* in the *hajj*. [as-Sunan al-kubra] Muslim has narrated from 'Abdullah ibn Shaqiq that he said: 'Uthman used to forbid the *mutah* and 'Ali used to order it. So, Uthman said something to Ali and Ali said: 'Surely, you know that we performed *mutah* in the company of the Messenger of Allah.' 'Uthman said: 'But we were afraid.'" [ad-Durru'l-manthur]

Ibn Abi Shaybah and Muslim have narrated from Abu Dharr: "*Mut'ah* in the *hajj* was (prescribed) especially for the companions of Muhammad (s.a.w.)." [ibid.]

Muslim has narrated from Abu Dharr that: "The two *mutah's* are not suitable but for us especially." He meant the *mutah of women* and *mutah of hajj*. [ibid]

The author says: The traditions of this meaning are very numerous, but we have quoted only what was relevant to the scope of our discussion, and that is to discuss the prohibition of *mut'atu'l-hajj* from the point of view of the *Tafsir*. Sometimes, the argument about it is to see whether the man who prohibited it was right or not, or whether had any excuse for it or not. But such a discussion comes under *'ilmu'l-kalam*(Theology); it is outside the limits of our book. And sometimes, the arguments are to see what reasoning has been advanced in the traditions concerning this subject, with special reference to the Qur'an and the *sunnah*. Such a discussion is based on the meaning of the Qur'an and the traditions. And it is relevant to the subject of this book of ours.

Therefore, we shall look, one by one, into the arguments put in these traditions:

First Argument: It is claimed that the words of Allah, *And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah* show that *hajju 't-tamattu* is not lawful, and that *hajju 't-tamattu'* was especially allowed for the Messenger of Allah. This argument has been put in the tradition of Abu Nadrah from Jabir that 'Umar said: "Surely, Allah used to make lawful for the Messenger of Allah whatever He wished from whatever He wished. And surely the Qur'an came down gradually. Therefore, complete the *hajj* and *'umrah* as Allah has ordered you."

Reply: You very well know that the words of Allah, *And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah...* do not say anything except that it is obligatory to complete the *hajj* and *'umrah* after one determines to perform them. For a further proof, see the next sentence, *but if you are prevented*, i.e. from completing them.

Complete the hajj and 'umrah cannot, by any stretch of imagination, mean that *'umrah* and *hajj* should not be combined. Likewise, there is not even an iota of proof that combining the *'umrah* and the *hajj* was an order given specially to the Prophet only, or to him and his companions on the last pilgrimage only.

By saying that it was an order especially for the Prophet and/ or his companions, one has to accept that it was a system established by the Messenger of Allah. See the tradition of an-Nasa'i from Ibn 'Abbas that he heard 'Umar saying: "By Allah, verily I forbid you the *mut'ah*, and surely it is in the Book of Allah and surely the Messenger of Allah performed it."

Second Argument: *Mut'atu l-hajj* was forbidden on the basis of the Book of Allah and the tradition of the Prophet. This argument is seen in the tradition of Abu Musa, where 'Umar told him: "If we take the Book of Allah, then Allah says, *And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah*, and if we take the tradition of our Prophet then (we find that) he did not end the *ihram* until he slaughtered the offering."

Replies: So far as the Book of Allah is concerned, it has just been shown that it goes against his

claim. His reference to the tradition of the Prophet is equally weak:

First, he contradicts himself in this claim. He has already said in other traditions (some of which have been quoted earlier) that "surely the Messenger of Allah performed it."

Second: The traditions loudly say that the Messenger of Allah performed it; and that once he raised his voice in *talbiyah of 'umrah* and later on raised his voice in *talbiyah of hajj*; and that he admonished the people, saying, "Do you (want to) teach me about Allah?"

The claim of Ibn Taymiyyah at this juncture that the Messenger of Allah had performed *hajju'l-qiran* that year is a very astonishing thing. Even more amusing is his claim that *hajju'l-qiran* was called *mut'atu'l-hajj!!*

Third: What the traditions say is that the Prophet did not shave his head after performing the *'umrah*, because his sacrificial animals had not yet reached their destination. But it does not mean that he had not ended his *ihram of 'umrah* or that he went to *hajj* with the same *ihram*. The verse clearly says that the pilgrim who leads his offerings with him, is not to shave his head until the offering reaches its destination. Also, it clearly says that the one whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque shall do *mut'atu'l-hajj*. If a non-resident pilgrim brings his offering with him, he is obliged to perform *mut'atu'l-hajj* (because he is non-resident) and at the same time, not to shave his head (because the offering is yet to reach its destination.) Merely not shaving the head does not mean that one has not ended one's *ihram of 'umrah*.

Fourth: Let us accept, for the sake of argument, that the Messenger of Allah himself did not perform *mut'atu l-hajj*. But it is universally accepted, that he ordered all his companions and family members to perform their *hajj* according to the newly established system of *mut'atu'l-hajj*. Now which of the two could be called the system promulgated by the Prophet for his *ummah*? The one which was especially meant for his own self? Or the other which he ordered his *ummah* to follow and which was also supported by the Qur'an.

Third Argument: It was claimed, that *mut'atu'l-hajj* creates a situation which is riot suitable for the pilgrims. After *'umrah* and before *hajj*, he is allowed to wear beautiful clothes, use perfume and sleep with the women. And it is against the dignity of *hajj*. This claim is found in the traditions of Abu Musa in which 'Umar is reported as saying: "But I am afraid that they will sleep with them (women) under the trees and then proceed with them as pilgrims." And as he said, according to another tradition: "Surely I know that the Prophet and his companions did it. But I did not like them sleeping with them (i.e. with their women) under the trees and then proceeding to *hail* with the water dropping from their heads" (because of the obligatory bath).

Replies: It is preferring one's own opinion against a clear order of Allah. Allah and His Messenger had clearly promulgated the system of *mut'atu'l-hajj*; and Allah and His Messenger knew very well that this system would lead to this supposedly undesirable effect. Still they thought it good for the Muslims. Then why should 'Umar be afraid of this effect?

It is interesting to note that the relevant verse of the Qur'an gives the same reason for the promulgation of this system which he is using to show his displeasure and dislike. Allah says: *then whoever enjoys by the 'umrah for hajj*. What is the meaning of enjoyment if not 'taking one's fill of the pleasure', 'sleeping oneself with sexual activities, fine clothes, etc.' So, Allah mentions it approvingly and 'Umar disliked it and was displeased with it!

We are even more astonished when we see that the companions had offered the same criticism against Allah and His Prophet (when the verse was revealed and the Prophet ordered them to adopt the system of *mut'atu'l-hajj*) which 'Umar used as the basis of his prohibition. See the tradition reported in *ad-Durru l-manthur* through al-Hakim from Jabir in which he says: "We said: 'Well, shall

one go to 'Arafat with one's penis dripping semen? This talk reached the Messenger of Allah, so he stood up to deliver a lecture" and replied to their objection and again ordered to perform *muta'a tu'l-hajj* as he had ordered them the first time. Was that reply not enough to bury such displeasure for ever?

Fourth Argument: It is said that this system badly affects the market of Mecca. We see this argument in the tradition of alSuyuti from Sa'id ibn Musayyab, in which 'Umar says: "The people of the House have neither any cattle nor any crop, and their spring is only those who stay with them."

Replies: This also is preferring one's own opinion against a clear order of Allah. Moreover, Allah has refuted such claims in a similar situation where He says: *O you who believe Verily, the idolaters are unclean, so they shall not approach the Sacred Mosque after this very year; and if you fear poverty, then soon Allah will enrich you through His grace, if He please; Surely Allah is All-knowing, All-wise. (9:28)*

Fifth Argument: It is claimed that *mut'atu'l-hajj* is allowed when one is afraid, and when there is no fear there should be no *mut'atu'l-hajj*. It is seen in the tradition of Muslim from Abdullah ibn Shaqiq that 'Uthman said to Ali: "But we were afraid." Also it is written in *ad-Durru l-manthur* that Ibn Abi Shaybah, Ibn Jarir and Ibn al-Mundhir have reported from Ibn az-Zubayr that he said in a lecture: "O people! By Allah, enjoying by *'umrah* for *hajj* is not as you do. It is for the men who raises his voice in *talbiyah of hajj*, then he is prevented by an enemy or illness or fracture or any other reasons till the days of *hajj* are gone, then he reaches (Mecca); so he shall change it to *'umrah*, and go on enjoying until the next year; then he shall perform *hajj* and offer sacrifice. This is the meaning of enjoyment by *'umrah* to *hajj*."

Replies: The verse is general and unconditional; it covers those who are afraid as well as those who are not afraid. It has been explained earlier that the sentence which promulgates *mut'atu'l-hajj* is the verse: *this is for him Whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque*. And it is without any condition.

Moreover, the traditions clearly say that the Prophet performed his last pilgrimage as *hajju 't-tamattu'* and he did the intention (*niyyah*) of *ihram* twice - first for *'umrah* and later for *hajj*. And nobody can say that at that time there was any risk or danger for the Muslims.

Sixth Argument: It is claimed in the two traditions of Abu Dharr, reported in *ad-Durru l-manthur*, that *mut'atu'l-hajj* was a system meant especially for the companions of the Prophet.

Replies: If it means what 'Uthman and Ibn az-Zubayr claimed that they were at that time in danger and, therefore, it was allowed to them, then the reply given to the fifth argument applies here also.

But if it means that it was a special rule made for them only, then it is refuted by the words of Allah: *this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque*. It does not say, "this is for the companions of Muhammad only."

Moreover, if it was meant especially for the companions of the Prophet, then why did some of the companions, like 'Umar, 'Uthman, Ibn az-Zubayr, Abu Musa, Mu'awiyah, and, according to a report, Abu Bakr reject it?

Seventh Argument: Some people say that 'Umar prohibited it by his own authority as he was Master of the Affairs (*khalifah*) (*waliyu l-amr*) and Allah has made it obligatory on the Muslims to obey the Masters of the Affairs, as He says:

Obey Allah, and obey the Apostle and the Masters of the affair from among you. (4:59)

Replies: The authority vested in the Masters of the Affairs does not cover this case. There are very many verses in the Qur'an which show that, it is compulsory to obey and follow what Allah has revealed to His Prophet: *Follow what has been sent down to you from your Lord... (7:3)*

Whatever was ordained and promulgated by the Prophet was according to the command of Allah, as may be understood from the verses: ... *nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Apostle have prohibited... (9:29),... and whatever the Apostle gives you, accept it, and from whatever he forbids you keep back... (59:7)*. 'Me meaning of *gives you* is 'orders you', because it is used here as the opposite of "forbids you." It is obligatory to obey Allah and His Apostle by doing what he orders and keeping back from what he forbids.

Likewise, the judgment and decision must be according to the revelation sent down by Allah: *and whoso judges not by what Allah has sent down, these then are the unjust. (5:45) and whoso judges not by what Allah has sent down, these then are the transgressors. (5:47); and whoso judges not by what Allah has sent down these then are infidels. (5:44)*. Again Allah says: *And it is not for a believer man or woman to have any choice in their affair when Allah and His Apostle have decided a matter; and whoever disobeys Allah and His Apostle, indeed he has strayed off a manifest straying (33:36); And thy Lord creates whatever He pleases, and chooses too; it is not theirs to choose... (28:68)*. Choosing means judging and legislating, or else it is general in meaning which includes judging and legislating too.

The Qur'an has openly declared that it is a Book not to be abrogated and that its laws will remain as they are up to the Day of Resurrection. *And surely it is Mighty Book. Falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it; a revelation from the All-wise, the Most Praised One. (41:41-42)*. The verse is general and the "falsehood" includes abrogation also, which is rejected by this verse.

In short, whatever has been ordained by Allah and His Prophet, or whatever has been decided by Allah and His Prophet must be obeyed and followed by the whole *ummah*, the rulers as well as the ruled.

It is obvious from above that the word of Allah, *Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and the Masters of the Affair from among you*, gives "the Master of Affairs" authority in other than the *shari'ah*. Because protecting and following the *shari'ah* is obligatory on the rulers as well as the others; nay! it is more binding on the rulers. The authority of the Masters of Affair (*ulu l-amr*) is confined to giving orders which they think to be in the interest of the *ummah* provided that the command of Allah concerning that matter is protected and followed. It is only then that the *ummah* is expected to obey them.

A man has an option to eat on a certain day and abstain from food next day, while he accepts that it is lawful to him to eat from his own money. He is free to sell or buy at any time, or not to do so, if he so wishes, while the basic matter - trade - is lawful. If someone quarrels with him about his property, he may appeal to the judge to protect his right; on the other hand, he may refrain from doing so; but the basic *shari'ah* will remain in force that it is his right to bring the matter before the judge. It all depends on his own choice on what he thinks to be in his best interest. But the basic rules remain intact, that it is lawful -f or him to eat, sell and buy, or to put his case before the judge.

But he has no right to drink liquor, or take interest or usurp other's property, even if he thought that it was in his best interest. Why? Because it directly conflicts with the laws ordained by Allah.

The above were the examples of personal affairs. In the same way the ruler has the authority to manage the affairs of the state according to the best interest of the *ummah*, but always protecting and preserving the laws of Allah as He has ordained. For example, he may decide to defend a frontier of the Islamic state at a certain time, or to retreat from it if it is more advantageous. He may announce a public holiday on a certain day and things like that, as he, in his best judgment, thinks beneficial for the *ummah*. But he cannot change the *shari'ah*.

In short, as an individual has a right to take a decision in his personal or family affairs, keeping within the limits imposed by the relevant laws, so also, a ruler appointed by the authority of the Messenger of Allah has the authority to take a decision in the affairs of the state and the *ummah*, keeping within the relevant laws ordained by Allah.

Had a ruler been given authority to manipulate the laws of the divine *shari'ah*, if he thought that the manipulation was in the interest of *ummah*, no rule and no law could remain intact; the talk that the *shari'ah* of Islam was to continue up to the Day of Resurrection would become meaningless.

What is the difference between the three statements appended below?

"The law of enjoying the good things of life is not suitable for the pilgrim who was expected to spend his time in devotion and worship. Therefore, this law must be abolished."

"The laws legalizing slavery are not suitable for the modern world which stands for general freedom. Therefore, these laws must be abolished."

"The penal code of Islam cannot be tolerated by the advanced human society of modern times, nor is that code in conformity with current codes. Therefore, this code must be abolished." Why should the first statement be accepted and the others rejected?

Some traditions on this subject show that this basic principle was raised during that controversy. Ishaq ibn Ra'wiyah (in his *alMusnad*) and Ahmad have narrated from Hasan: "Verily, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab wanted to prohibit *mut'atu'l-hajj*. Ubay ibn Ka'b stood up and said: 'You have no right to do so. Surely, the Book "Allah came with it (i.e., it was promulgated by the Qur'an) and we did *'umrah* (of *tamattu*) with the Messenger of Allah. Thereupon, 'Umar came down." [*ad-Durru l-manthur*]

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 204-207

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهَدُ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ وَهُوَ أَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ 2:204

وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ 2:205

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْإِثْمِ فَحَسْبُهُ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ 2:206

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ رَؤُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ 2:207

2:204 *And among men is he whose talk in the life of this world pleases you, and takes Allah to witness as to what is in his heart, yet he is the most violent of adversaries.*

2:205 *And when he becomes ruler, he strives on earth that he may cause mischief therein and destroy the crop and the progeny; and Allah does not love mischief.*

2:206 *And when it is said to him, fear Allah, he is overcome by honor (pride) by sin; so enough for him is Hell; and certainly it is an evil abode.*

2:207 *And Among men is he who sells his self (soul) to seek the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is Affectionate to the servants.*

Commentary

This is another classification of men according to their character. As the preceding verses (200-202) classified them according to their want of this world or the Hereafter, these verses do so from the point of view of their hypocrisy or the sincerity of their faith. And this is the link between these and the preceding verses.

Qur'an: *And among men... most violent of adversaries:*

a'jabahu means gave him pleasure, delighted him. The words, *in the life of this world* are connected with *pleases you*. The meaning is: his talk pleases you in this life, because in this life one has to rely on appearances. The deeper traits and inner feelings are hidden behind a curtain which cannot be lifted at all, although sometimes some clues are found which help one to surmise what lies behind the curtain.

Then come the word: *and takes Allah to witness as to what is in his heart*. He talks in a way that pleases you: he seems eager to protect the way of the truth, appears keen to do good for the people, looks enthusiastic for the advancement of the cause of the religion and the *ummah*. And to show that his voice comes from the depth of his heart, he calls on Allah to be his witness. But, in reality he is the most virulent enemy of the truth.

Aladd is the adjective in superlative degree, derived from *ladda luddudan* (he became a very violent adversary, *khisam* is plural of *khasm* by the paradigm of *sa'b:si'ab* and *ka'b:ki'ab*. Also it is said that it is an infinitive verb, and that *aladdu l-khisam* means "most violent in enmity."

Qur'an: *And when he become ruler he strives on earth that he may cause mischief therein:*

tawalli means to get authority and power. Further support of this meaning comes from the next verse: *he is overcome by honor (pride) by sin*. It shows that he has got an honor (i.e., a cause of

pride) earned with sin. (The sin is committed by his heart that does not conform with his tongue.)

Sa'y means to strive, to walk hurriedly. Thus the verse means: When this hypocrite, this most violent of adversaries, gets a chance to do something, and is given authority and rules over the people, he hastens hither and thither and strives to create mischief in the land.

Tawalli may also mean to tam back, to be out of sight. In that case the verse would mean: "And when he turns back (from you), his actions in your absence belie his talk in your presence." The enthusiasm for the common welfare and the good of the *umma* turns into striving in the land to create mischief and evil.

Qur'an: *and destroy the crop and the progeny:*

Apparently it is a description of the mischief. He creates mischief by destroying the crop and the progeny. The continued existence of the human species depends on food and procreation. These are the two most essential things which the human species cannot do without. Procreation is clear from the word 'progeny'. So far as food is concerned, man acquires it from the animal and the plant; animals again acquire it from plants. Thus, the basis of food is the plant which is obtained from crops. That is why the mischief and destruction has been explained in terms of crops and progeny. The verse means that he creates mischief and destruction in the earth by eliminating through the destruction of crop and progeny.

Qur'an: *and Allah does not love mischief:*

fasad literally means deterioration, corruption, decay, negation, immorality; here it has been translated as mischief.

fasad in this sentence does not refer to the physical decay or destruction in this world. This universe is based on such a system that every destruction leads to a subsequent construction. A struggle for survival is continuously going on; every existence is followed by extinction, every life by death. Both are found in this natural cosmos side by side. This is the system created by Allah; and how can He hate a thing which He Himself has created and decreed?

It follows that the "mischief" here refers to corruption in the *shari'ah* and legislation. Allah ordained the laws of religion for the betterment of the actions of His servants; these laws will improve their character and traits; they will keep human society and human beings on the straight path, on the path of moderation. Thereupon, they will find happiness and prosperity in this life as well as in the life Hereafter. (This will be further explained under the verse 2:213)

Then this man appears on the scene whose words belie his inner feelings; he starts running hither and thither to create immorality and mischief on the earth. He pretends to improve society, but in reality he destroys. He alters the words of Allah by giving them a wrong meaning; he changes the laws ordained by Allah; he manipulates the teachings of the religion. All this leads to depravity of character and perennial controversy in religion and society. And, in this manner, the religion is negated, humanity is eliminated and the whole world is ruined.

To appreciate how true these verses are, look at the history of Islam and see how unauthorized people took the reins of the state in their hands, how they imposed themselves on the Muslim *umma* and how they corruptly conducted the affairs of religion and state. They did what they did and the losers were the religion (which got nothing but evil results), the Muslims (who are always in decline and decadence) and the *umma* (which is perennially plagued with internal strife and dispute.) The religion is now a ball in the hands of anyone who wants to play with; and human values a toy to be treasured and then discarded at the whim of the child.

The result of this striving of that hypocrite is decay and deterioration on the earth; first, he corrupted religion and then destroyed humanity. That is why in some traditions *and destroy the crops*

and progeny has been interpreted as the destruction of religion and humanity.

Qur'an: *And when it is said to him, fear Allah, he is overcome by honor (pride) by sin; so enough for is Hell, and certainly it is an ill abode:*

'*Izzah* means honor, *mihad* is the paved way, abode. Apparently, the words *by sin* qualify the word, *the honor*, and have no connection with *he is overcome*. The verse says that when he is told to fear Allah, he is overcome by the apparent honor which he has earned through his sins and hypocrisy.

The real honor comes from Allah as He says: *and Thou exaltest whom Thou pleasest and abasest whom thou pleasest (3:26); and to Allah belongs the honor and to His Apostle and to the believer (63:8); Do they seek honor from them? Then, surely all honor belongs to Allah (4:139)*. Honor is a status which Allah attributes to Himself and declares that it is only He who bestows it on His chosen creatures. Such a thing cannot be a source of sin or evil. It naturally follows that the honor mentioned in this verse is not real honor which is given by Allah. It is only a masquerade which deceives none except the ignorant people who mistakenly accept it as honor.

The preposition "by" (*b...*) in "by sin" (*bi 'l-ithm*) has no connection with the verb *he is overcome*; the word "sin" is neither the object of "is overcome", nor its cause. In other words, the verse does not say that his honor or pride drives him to sin and to rejection of the advice to fear Allah, or incites him to answer back the said advisor in unbecoming language. Nor does it mean that sin drives him to pride. As mentioned above, the word *by sin* qualifies the word *honor* (or pride), and indicates the honor or pride gained by sin. Had the word *honor* been left unconditional, it would have meant that Allah recognized it as real honor (which comes from Allah). And in that case it could not be said to create, or be created by, sin or pride. That is why we say that it is conditional and means an apparent honor which is earned through sin and hypocrisy.

There is another verse where the word honor (*izzah*) has been used for the unbelievers. But there, also, the context shows that it means only an appearance of honor, not real honor. Allah says: *Nay, those who disbelieve are (steeped) in self-exaltation 'izzatin, and opposition. How many did We destroy of the generations before them, then they cried but there was no longer any escape (38:2-3)*. Here the word *izzatin* (translated above as "self-exaltation") is a common noun, it does not have any definite article before it, and the next verse describes the destruction of people like them. These points clearly show that here also it is only an appearance of honor, a passing shadow which will not last long.

Qur'an: *And among the man is he who sells his self (soul) to seek the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is Affectionate to the servants.:*

This verse is in contrast to the preceding three ones. On one side there is a man priding himself in his sins, boasting and self-exalting, showing the doing of good to people, hiding his hypocrisy behind a mask of charming words; and religion and humanity cannot expect of him anything except ruin and destruction.

On the other side is a man who has sold his soul to Allah, he wants nothing except what Allah wishes; he desires nothing for his self; his honor and strength come only from Allah, and he seeks nothing but the pleasure of Allah. By his presence, religious and worldly affairs re-acquire their correct shape, the truth is revived, humanity enjoys a happy life and the good effects of Islam reach every one.

This also shows the connection of the end of the verse, *and Allah is Affectionate to the servants*, with its beginning. Surely, the presence of such a man is a great mercy from Allah to His servants. Had there not been such virtuous people to counteract the designs of those others (whose stock-in-trade is hypocrisy and mischief), the structure of religion would have fallen into ruins, and the

foundation of righteousness and goodness would have been destroyed. But it is the method chosen by Allah that He removes that wrong by this truth, and repairs the damage inflicted by His enemies with the good spread by His beloved and chosen servants. He has said: *And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth certainly would be in a state of disorder (2:251); And had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, certainly would have been pulled down cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered(22:40); therefore if these disbelievers in it, We have already entrusted it with a people who are not disbelievers in it (6:89)*. The decadence brought upon the religion and the world by those who love nothing but their own selves cannot be removed except through the good overflowing from those who have sold their souls to Allah, who love nothing except Allah and who desire nothing except that the world and the people of the world may become virtuous.

This deal has been praised by Allah in many verses, one of which is as follows:

Surely Allah has bought from the believers their selves and their properties, for this that theirs be the Garden; they fight in Allah's way, so they slay and are slain; (this is) a promise which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Injil and the Qur'an; and who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah? Therefore, rejoice in the trade that you have transacted; and that is the great achievement (9:111).

Traditions

It is reported from as-Suddi about the verses, And among the men is he whose talk... an evil abode, that they were revealed about, Akhnas ibn Shariq ath-Thaqafi, an ally of Banu Zuhrah. He came to the Prophet in Medina and said: "I have come seeking Islam, and Allah knows that surely I am truthful." The Prophet was pleased with that talk. The words of Allah, and takes Allah to witness as to what is in his heart refer to this, aspect. Then he went out and passed by an agricultural field and some donkeys belonging to some Muslims. He burnt the filth and wounded and killed the donkeys. It was about that that the verse was revealed, and when he turns away (from you) he runs hither and thither on earth so that he may cause mischief therein and destroy the *tilth* and the stock. [*ad-Durru'l manthur*]

It is narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that the three verses were revealed about the hypocrites because he shows what is opposed to what he hides in his heart. The author of *al-Majma'* (said that the same was also narrated from as-Sadiq (a.s.). [*Majma'u'l-bayan*]

The author says: But this interpretation does not fit the apparent meaning of the verse.

It is written in some traditions narrated from the Imams of *Ahlu l-bayt* that these verses were revealed about their enemies.

It is narrated from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the words of Allah, and destroy the crop and progeny, that crop means religion, and progeny, humanity. [*Majma'u'l-bayan*]

The author says: This tradition has already been explained earlier. In another tradition the crop has been interpreted as 'progeny and crop'. It is easy to see how this also may fit the earlier explanation.

ash-Shaykh has narrated in his *al-Amali* a tradition from 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.), about the verse: And among men is he who sells... Affectionate to the servants, that he said: "It was revealed about 'Ali (a.s.) when he slept (on the night of hijrah) on the bed of the Messenger of Allah."

The author says: There are innumerable traditions from both

Shi'ah and Sunni chains that this verse was revealed about 'Ali concerning his sacrifice on the night

of *hijrah*,. *Tafsir al-burhan* gives five of those chains from ath-Tha'labi and others.

Ibn Marduwayh has narrated from Suhayb that he said: "When I intended to emigrate from Mecca to the Prophet in Medina, the Qurayshites told me, 'O Suhayb! You came to us and you had no wealth. Now you want to emigrate with all this wealth of yours, By God, this can't be.' So I said to them, 'What do you think? Would you leave me if I gave you all my wealth?' They said: 'Yes!' Thereupon I gave them my wealth and they left me. I came out till I reached Medina. This incident was reported to the Prophet and he said: 'Suhayb profited twice.'" [*ad-Durru l-manthur*]

The author says: He has narrated it from some other chains also, some of which add: and then the verse was revealed: *And among men is he who sells his soul...*

Some other traditions say that it was revealed about Suhayb and Abu Dharr because they purchased themselves by giving away their properties. But the verse does not say, "he who purchases ... ", it says, *he who sells*. And the interpretation of the verses does not agree with the meaning of "purchase."

There is a tradition from 'Ali (a.s.) that this verse refers to a man who is killed because of enjoining to do good and forbidding to do bad. [*Majma'u l-bayan*]

The author says: It is one example of the general meaning of the verse. There is no difficulty in explaining the meaning of the verse in general terms, though it was sent down on a particular occasion for a particular person.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 208-210

ا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطَوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ 2:208

فَإِنْ زَلَلْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْكُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ فَاَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ 2:209

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِنَ الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ 2:210

2:2080 *you who believe! Enter you one and all into submission wholly and do not follow the footsteps of Satan; surely he is to you an open enemy.*

2:209 *But if you slip after clear signs have come to you, then know that Allah is Almighty, Wise.*

2:210 *Do they await aught but that Allah should come to them in the canopies of bright cloud and the angels; and the matter is decreed away; and all matters are returned to Allah.*

Commentary

These three verses, together with the four that follow them, guide us as how to preserve religious unity in human society: To enter into total submission, to limit oneself to the word spoken by Allah and to that deed whose path is shown by Allah. They declare that religious unity was never disintegrated, nor was the happiness of both worlds turned into misery with disaster visited upon the territory of a people, except when they left submission, manipulated the signs of Allah by altering them and putting them into the wrong place. This had happened to the children of Israel and other people, and will surely happen to this *umrah* also. But in the end Allah promises them His help, *Surely the help of Allah is near.*

Qur'an: O *you who believe! Enter you one and all into submission wholly:*

silm (submission), *islam* and *taslim* all are the same *kaffatan* is for emphasis and means 'all', 'wholly'. As the verse is addressed to the believers, and they are ordered to enter into submission "wholly" the command covers the whole group as well as every individual. It is obligatory on each and every believer, as it is on the whole of Muslim society not to contravene this command and to submit all matters to Allah and His Apostle. Hence the phrase *one and all* in the translation.

Again, as the hearers are already believers the submission called for means total submission to Allah after believing in Him. Hence the word wholly in the translation. It follows that the believers must submit all their affairs to Allah, they should not decide themselves what was good for them and what was not, they should not prepare or select any path for themselves without the guidance of Allah and His Apostle. They must remember that no people were destroyed except that they followed their own views and desires, and talked without true knowledge; and no people forfeited the right of life and happiness except that they became disunited.

It is clear from the above that following the footsteps of Satan does not mean following him in all the falsehood which he invites to, because a believer cannot follow Satan in all satanic schemes. Rather, it means to follow him in the matters of religion. Satan furnishes some paths of untruth with the signposts of truth; in this way, he puts into religion what is not from religion. Thus, a believer is

deceived into following that path without realizing his error.

One way of becoming aware of such an interpolation is to find out whether AM and His Apostle have ever mentioned it in their teachings of the religion.

The context and words of the verses also show what has been explained above. "Footsteps" are found in a trodden path. The believer is proceeding on that path; therefore, it must be the path of true religion. But Satan has put his marks thereon. So, the *footsteps of Satan* should refer to Satanic ways within the highway of true faith. The believer is obliged to enter into submission. Therefore, wherever he proceeds without wholly submitting himself to Allah and His Apostle, it must be in the footsteps of Satan. If he goes on to that path, he is following Satan's footsteps.

This verse is similar to some others. For example: *Omen! Eat of what is in the earth lawful and good, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan; surely he is to you an open enemy. He only enjoins you evil and indecency, and that you should say against Allah what you do not know (2:168-169); O you who believe! Do not follow the footsteps of Satan; and whoever follows the footsteps of Satan, then surely he enjoins indecency and evil. (24:21); Eat of what Allah has given you and do not follow the footsteps of Satan, then surely he enjoins indecency and evil. (24:21); Eat of what Allah has given you and do not follow the footsteps of Satan; surely he is your open enemy. (6:142).* The difference between the verse under discussion and those quoted above is that this verse addresses the group as a whole, as it contains the word *kaffatan* (all, wholly, but those other verses are general. Accordingly, this verse implies the same meaning as the verses, *And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together and be not divided. (3:103); And surely this My path is straight one, so follow it; and do not follow the (other) ways, for they will scatter you from His path. (6:153).*

The verse implies that Islam guarantees that it contains all kind of laws and knowledge which are needed by the human beings for their welfare and good.

Qur'an: *But if you slip... Mighty, Wise:*

zallah means a slip, a falling. The verse says: If you did not enter one and all into submission, wholly and slipped - and the slip refers to following the footsteps of Satan - then know that Allah is Mighty, Who is not prevailed upon in His orders, and Wise, Who decides in your affairs according to His Wisdom. Thus He shall decide about you according to His Wisdom and shall enforce it upon you and nobody will be able to hinder it.

Qur'an: *Do they await aught but that Allah should come to them in the canopies of bright cloud and the angel:*

zulal is plural of *zullah* which means "anything used for shade", like canopy, awning, tent. Apparently, the word "angels" is in conjunction with the divine name "Allah."

The preceding two verses were addressed to the believers (in the second person). This one dramatically changes it to third person and starts addressing the Apostle of Allah; implying that those who slip up and follow the footsteps of Satan are not worthy of direct address from Allah. It appears as though they are awaiting a decree by their following the footsteps of Satan and by their disunity and division. And that *decree should* be that Allah and the angels come unto them in canopies of cloud, and the matter be decided while they are still unaware of it - or without having any pity on them and on their plight; and all matters are returned to Allah; there is no escape from His judgment and decree.

The context shows that *Do they await aught... is* the description of the threat implied in the previous sentence, *then know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.*

It is self-evident truth, which is also proved by the Qur'an and the *sunnah*, that attributes of the body cannot be used for Allah, nor can He be described with adjectives of transient things. No such word, phrase or sentence can be used for Him which implies transience, need, deficiency or want.

Allah says: *Nothing whatsoever (is there) like the like of Him.* (42:11); *and Allah is He Who is Self-sufficient*(35:15); *Allah is the Creator of everything* (39:62). There are numerous such verses; and all of them are confirmed and decisive ones to which the ambiguous verses should be referred. It is *these confirmed* verses which guide us towards the correct interpretation of the ambiguous ones. If any verse apparently attributes to Allah an action or a characteristic of transient things, then it must be referred to the confirmed verses and interpreted in a way which is not below His dignity nor opposed to His beautiful names.

Now *here is* a verse which attributes the action of "coming" to Allah. A few other verses also have used this word for Him. *And comes your Lord with the angels arrayed in ranks* (89:22); *then came upon them Allah from whence they did not expect* (59:2); *so Allah came upon their structure from the foundations* (16:26). In all such verses, it is necessary to interpret them with such meanings which are worthy of Divine sublimity. We may give them the meaning of, let us say, sending His chastisement upon them, surrounding them with His power or wrath. Accordingly, the meaning of *Allah should come to them in this verse shall* be "Allah should surround them with His power for enforcing His *decree on them.*"

Further, *whenever Allah* is pleased to show that the apparent means and the intermediate causes are not independent of the order of Allah, He discards attributing the action to such causes and means; instead He attributes it to Himself or to His order. He says in one place: *Allah takes the souls at the time of their death* (39:42); while in other places He attributes this action to the angel of death or the angels; *Say, the angel of death... shall cause you to die* (32:11); *Until when death comes to one of you, Our messengers (i.e. angels) take him away* (6:61). To make it more clear, look how He has declared about the angels that: *only according to His command do they act* (21:27).

Likewise, He says, *Surely your Lord will judge between them* (10:93), and *when the order of Allah came, judgment was given with truth* (40:78).

And the same is the case with the *verse under discussion* (*Do they await aught but that Allah should come to them in the canopies of bright cloud and the angels*) and the *verse Do they await aught but that the angels should come to them or that the order of your Lord should come* (16:33).

The above verse proves that the verse under discussion, *Allah should come*, also means "the order of Allah should come." Likewise, in *every place* where the action attributed to Allah is below His power and dignity, we may safely say that the word 'order' or 'command' is implied, as the above *verses haveshown*.

This explanation has been *accepted by* the majority of the commentators of the Qur'an and it is correct. But *there is* even a *deeper and* finer meaning which can be understood if one ponders on the Qur'an.

A characteristic which is accompanied by a deficiency, want or *imperfection is* not attributable to Allah. But if that characteristic could be *separated from* that deficiency, want or imperfection, then *there is* no reason why it cannot be attributed to Allah, provided it is suitable for His sublimity and *perfection*. The word "coming" creates in our mind a picture of a body gradually moving and shortening the distance between itself and another body till it reaches quite near to that. If we can remove the material characteristics from this meaning, there will remain the idea of "nearness", with the disappearance of any obstruction in between. In that case, it would be quite correct to use this word for Allah literally, not metaphorically. Accordingly, *Allah should come to them* would mean that there would remain no curtain between His creatures and His judgment about them.

Anyhow, this verse contains the threat, which was implied in the preceding sentence, *then know that Allah is Mighty, Wise*. This threat may be about the chastisement awaiting them in the Hereafter,

as it is in the similar verse: *Do they await aught but that the angels should come to them or that the order of your Lord should come* (16:33), which, as its context shows, is clearly about the events of the Hereafter.

Or, it may be about something expected to happen in this world, as may be seen in the verses of *surah Yunus: so when their apostle came, the matter was decided with justice, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly. And they say, 'when this promise will come to pass, if you are truthful...'* Say, *Do you see if His chastisement overtakes you by night or by day, what is there of it that the guilty hasten for?* (10:47-50). The same is the implication of the verses, *30:30-36*, and the verse, *How many a town, which was unjust, We did destroy and We raised another people after it?* (21:11).

The chastisement of this world is because this world is a foretaste of the life Hereafter, where every aspect of this world would appear more perfectly and: completely.

And it is possible that the promised punishment would be in both worlds together.

In any case, the words, *in the canopies of bright cloud* would be interpreted according to the place where the promised punishment would be meted out.

Qur'an: and the matter is decreed away; and all matters are returned to Allah.: The matter is decreed away by Allah, but His name is not mentioned to show His Greatness. There are many examples of such deletion in the Qur'an.

Traditions

Many traditions have been written concerning verse 2:168 (O men! Eat the lawful and good things out of what is in the earth; and do not follow the footsteps of Satan...) which support the meaning given by us of following the footsteps of Satan.

Some traditions say that "submission" means the love and obedience of the Prophet and his progeny (*wilayah*) There is a tradition from ar-Rida (a.s.) about the words of Allah, *Do they await aught but that Allah should come to them in the canopies of bright cloud and the angels:* He said: "Allah says: 'Do they wait aught but that Allah should come to them with the angels in the canopies of bright clouds'. Like this it was revealed." And he said, about the word of Allah; *And comes your Lord with the angels arranged in ranks* (89:22), that: "Surely, Allah cannot be described with attributes of coming and going. Elevated is He from transferring from one place to another. Verily, it means, 'And comes the command of your Lord with the angels arranged in ranks'." [at-Tawhid and Ma'ani al-akhbar]

The author says: The words of the Imam at the beginning of the interpretation, "Allah says", do not mean the actual word or recitation of the verse. The word "says" here stands for "means." The interpretation given in this tradition is the same, which we have already explained, that "coming of Allah" means coming of His command. The Angels do whatever they do, and come down whenever they come down, by the command of Allah. He says about angels: *Nay! They are honored servants; they do not precede Him in speech and (only) according to His commandment do they act.* (21:27), and He sends down the angels with the spirit by His commandment (16:2).

The verse begins with an interrogation which here stands for denial and disapproval. It means that "they do not await" or "they should not await." But some people have said that this denial and disapproval is comprehensive and refutes not only their awaiting but even the thing awaited. In other words, it means that they do not await aught but an impossible thing - that Allah should come to them

in the canopies of cloud as one body comes to another body, and that the angels should come with Him and He should order them and forbid them. Obviously such a thing is impossible; and the aim of the verse would be to hint that these people cannot mend their ways by these exhortations and sermons.

But this meaning does not agree with the context of the verse. It has been explained that all these verses have one context. Therefore, this verse also is about the condition of the believers. And the believers cannot be condemned in the suggested manner. Apart from that if Allah had meant to show that the thing awaited was impossible or beneath His sublimity, He would have followed it with some words to show that it was so. And we find that it is the custom of the Qur'an everywhere on such occasions. For example: *And those who do not hope of our meeting say: "Why have not angels been sent down upon us, or (why) do we not see our Lord?" Certainly they think too high of themselves and have revolted(in) a great revolt. (25:21); And they say: "The Beneficent (God) has taken to Himself a son!" Glory be to Him! (21:26).*

Apart from that, what would be, in this case, the significance of the words, *in the canopies of bright cloud?* And what would the subsequent words mean?

Other Traditions

This last verse has variously been interpreted in the traditions of the Imams of *Ahlu l-bayt* as referring to the Day of Resurrection (al-Ayyashi from al-Baqir - a.s.) or the Day of Return (the *raj'ah*) as-Saduq from as-Sadiq (a.s.) or the Reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) (al-'Ayyashi from al-Baqir [a.s.] with two chains.)

And there are many such cases where a verse has been interpreted by them as referring to the Day of Resurrection in one tradition, and to the Day of Return in another, and to the Reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) in yet another one. It is because all these meanings are interrelated, so much so that they can be said to be basically one. As the people have not gone deep into the subject of the Resurrection and have not looked into it in the light of the Qur'an they have gone their separate ways about these traditions. Some have discarded them altogether, even though there are probably more than five hundred traditions on its various aspects; some have interpreted them according to their own views even though the wordings of the traditions are very clear and explicit. A third group quotes these traditions and refrains from giving any opinion - these people are the most reasonable of all.

The non-Shi'ah Muslims believe that Imam al-Mahdi! will appear; they have narrated *mutawatir* traditions about it from the Prophet, but they reject the idea of the *raj'ah* and say that this belief is a peculiarity of the Shi'ah. And in these days some people, claiming to be Shi'ah, also have rejected this belief, saying that it has been foisted into Shi'ism by the Jews and some nominal Muslims like Abdullah ibn Saba and his companions. One of them tried to refute this belief by intellectual argument, the gist of which is as follows:

"It is a special grace of Allah that a living person is not given death until he reaches the perfection of the life and all his potentialities are converted into achievements. If after death he is again sent back to this world it would be retrogression, a backward step from accomplishment to potentiality, and it is impossible, except when a truthful informer tells us about it, i.e., Allah or any of His Representatives, as He has informed us concerning the events of Musa, 'Isa, Ibrahim (peace be on them all) and others. But we have not, been told by Win or them anything about *ar-raj'ah*. And the evidence put by the believers in *ar-raj'ah* is not complete."

After saying this he went on to claim about each and every tradition that it was weak - without knowing the difference between the correct ones and the defective ones. The poor man did not realize that this argument is not a rational one at all. Its first part refutes its second part. If some thing is impossible, by nature it would remain impossible without any exception. An "impossible" idea would not be turned into "possible" just because a truthful informer said so. Anybody who said about an impossibility that it became a possibility, would not be "truthful." And if he was supposed to be really truthful then that thing would not have been an impossibility in the first place. Would we say that he was truthful if he were to say that one is not a half of two, or that a truthful person was at the same time a liar?

This much about the consistency of his argument. Now, we come to his argument that (1) All people die when they reach the perfection of the life, and when their potentialities are converted into achievements; (2) What has attained achievement cannot be turned back to potentiality; (3) Therefore, a dead man cannot be returned to this life.

In this argument, the second premise is correct; the first is not. It is not "all" people, but only "some", who die after attaining perfection and converting their potentialities into achievements. A man, who completes his natural span of life and dies from old age, may be said to have reached the last stage of his perfection. But what about another man who prematurely dies of an epidemic or fatal sickness, or is killed? Can it be claimed that he had already reached the last stage of his potential perfection? The answer is 'No'. Therefore, it cannot be said that it is impossible for such persons to be returned to the life of this world. Now it is obvious that his argument is neither comprehensive nor correct. We can think of many cases where it might be possible for a dead person (even if he had died after attaining his perfection) to be sent back to this world; for example, a man in his first life had a potential for a perfection which was not available at that time; he died; then by the progress of society, that perfectness became possible. What is there to prevent his return to this world to achieve that perfection for which he had a potential in the first life? Because it will not be a step backward - from perfection to potentiality,- it will be progress from potential to perfection.

There are other examples, but this is not the place to go into the details of this subject.

As regards his argument against individual traditions, it has two serious defects: (1) These traditions are *mutawatir*, in their meaning, from the Imams of *Ahlulbayt* - so much so that non Shi'ite Muslims have counted the belief of *ar-rajah*, from the very early days of Islam, as one of the special beliefs of the Shi'ah and their Imams - and a *mutawatir* matter cannot be refuted even if the individual traditions be really defective, or weak, or arguable. (2). There are many verses revealed on this subject and many traditions which are complete in their meaning and reliable in their chains. We shall mention them when we come to the relevant verses like: *And on the day when We will gather from every people a party from among those who rejected Our signs, then they shall be formed into groups* (27:83). There are other verses to prove this belief.

Apart from these specific verses, there are others which imply this meaning. For example, the words of Allah which come shortly after the verse under discussion: *Or " you think that you will enter the Garden while yet has not come upon the like of which came upon those who have passed before you* (2:214). And one of the things which came upon previous nations was that some of their dead were resurrected, and lived again in this world, as the Qur'an narrates concerning the stories of Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa, 'Uzayr, Armia and others. And the Messenger of Allah has said: "By Him in Whose hand is my soul! Most certainly you shall follow the traditions of those who were before you, as in a pair of shoes the one tallies with the other, and as one flea looks like another, until you will not miss their path, nor will they miss yours; (and this means) the traditions of the Israelites.

Moreover, these matters are among the reports of the great events of the latter days, foretold by the Imams of *Ahlu l-bayt*; these prophecies were preserved by reporters and narrators in books which were written and copied centuries before the events; and every day we see some of its parts fulfilled in exactly the same way without any addition or subtraction. This compels us to believe that the remaining part of those prophecies (including *ar-raj'ah*) must be true,

Now we come back to the topic in hand. We were discussing why a single verse is sometimes explained as referring to the Day of Resurrection and sometimes as describing *ar-raj'ah* or the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.). It appears from the characteristics and details of the Day of Resurrection, mentioned in the Qur'an, that it will be a day when no intermediate cause will hinder one from the signs of Allah; there will remain no veil on the face of truth. All illusions will vanish and the signs of Allah will appear in their perfect manifestation.

That day could exist side by side with this world, but it is obvious from the Qur'an and *sunnah* that human beings, i.e., this species of homo sapiens who are descended from Adam and his wife, will become extinct in this world and only then will this great day dawn upon them.

The life of this world and the life of the Resurrection can exist side by side for different groups and species. The life of the period between death and the Day of Resurrection (*barzakh*) exists for our dead side by side with our life on this earth; neither does our life interfere with theirs, nor theirs with ours. Allah says: *By Allah Most certainly We sent (apostles) to nations before you, but Satan made their deeds fair-seeming to them; so he is their guardian today and for them is a painful punishment (16:63).*

This, therefore, is the reality of the Day of Resurrection, "the Day on which men shall stand before the Lord of the worlds" "the Day when they shall come forth; nothing concerning them remains hidden from Allah." That is why sometimes even death is called Resurrection, because the veil of intermediate causes is lifted from the imagination of the dead person. 'Ali (a.s.) has said: "Whoever dies his resurrection begins." This subject will be explained, God willing in its appropriate place.

The traditions which prove *ar-raj'ah* in spite of their large number, are one in their essence. They show that the world is proceeding towards a day when the signs of Allah will appear in their perfect manifestation; man will not disobey Allah, but shall worship Him with a sincere and pure heart, untainted by the desires of this world; and he will not be deceived by Satan. At that time some dead persons - some friends of Allah and some of his enemies - shall be returned to the world again, and the truth will be separated from the falsehood.

It appears from above that the Day of Return shall be one of the stages of the Day of Resurrection. But it will be a lesser manifestation, because there shall remain, at that time, the possibility, to a certain extent, of evil and mischief, which will be impossible on the Day of Resurrection

And that is the reason why in some traditions the same verses have been said to be related concerning the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.). It is because at his reappearance also the truth will be manifested perfectly, though it will be less than on the Day of "Return."

There are traditions narrated from the Imams of Ahlulbayt that "The days of Allah are three: the Day of reappearance, and the Day of Return, and the Day of Resurrection." Some of them say that "The days of Allah are three: the Day of Death, and the Day of Return, and the Day of Resurrection."

The three days are one in their nature but different in degrees. It is because of this oneness of essence that a single verse is at different times interpreted by all three days.

The above discussion clearly shows that the Day of Return is not only possible, but a reality; and those who reject it have no reason to refute it.

1. Abdullah ibn Saba is a mythical personality, who did not exist outside *the imagination of some*

story-tellers. See 'Abdullah ibn Saba 'wa asatir ukhra by as-Sayyid Murtada al-Askari of Tehran.

2. *ar-Raj'ah* (return) means that after the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) and before the Day of Judgment some confirmed friends of Allah and some of His confirmed enemies shall be returned to this world again to live under the rule of the Representative of Allah.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 211-212

2:211 سَلْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ كَمْ آتَيْنَاهُم مِّنْ آيَةٍ بَيِّنَةٍ وَمَنْ يُبَدِّلْ نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ
 2:212 زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ
 2:211 *Ask the children of Israel how many a clear sign We gave them; and whoever changes the favor of Allah after it has come to him, then surely Allah is severe in requiting (evil).*
 2:212 *The life of this world is made to seem fair to those who disbelieve, and they mock those who believe; but those who guard (against evil) shall be above them on the Day of Resurrection; and Allah provides with sustenance whom He pleases without measure.*

Commentary

Qur'an: *Ask, the children of Israel... severe in requiting (evil):*

It reconfirms and emphasizes the threat contained, in (2:209), that Allah shall seize, the sinners, in the manner of the One who *is* Mighty and Powerful. It says: These Israelites are within your sight and hearing. They were the people to whom Allah gave the Rook and the rule and prophethood and territory; and provided them with good things and made them excel other nations. Ask them. how many a clear sign We gave them; and then see from when they started and where they went. They changed the words of Allah from their places; they. followed some self Book and His signs invented things in opposition to Allah, His o And all this Was done in revolt after they were given the knowledge., Then Allah punished them with the most severe punishment: They went astray, became disunited, disagreed among themselves; they unlawfully ate the property of their brethren; their power was gone; their happiness vanished; and humiliation and wretchedness were stamped upon them in this world, and the chastisement of the Hereafter is more humiliating and then they shall not get any help.

This is the tradition of Allah: whoever changes the favor of Allah and uses it wrongfully, Allah surely chastises him and of course Allah is severe in chastisement.

The sentence, *whoever changes the favor of Allah... then surely Allah is severe in requiting* gives the general principle and describes the unchangeable habit of Allah, so that the hearers may know the firm decree of Allah in such cases.

Qur'an: *The life... make those who believe:*

It explains the reason why the Israelites and the people like them went astray. The main reason is that the life of this world seems alluring to them. When materialism allures someone, it encourages him to fulfill the lust and desire of his heart and to satisfy his sensuous appetite; it makes him forget all truth and reality. The only aim of such a man remains to get whatever he can from this world - status, dignity, wealth, beauty, and so forth. He makes use of everything to reach this goal - and 'everything' includes religion. Thus, he misuses religion to gain privilege and distinction. Religion becomes a means of honoring the leaders and the bosses and bestowing on them the prestige befitting

their status and place in the world; it encourages the common man to seek nearness to those leaders, not to Allah; it allows them to find ways to seek the favors of these nobles and leaders. This we see in the *Muslimummah* today, just as it was seen in the Israelites before.

Those who disbelieve *kufir* (translated here as disbelief) is apparently used in the Qur'an in its literal meaning, i.e. to hide. In this general meaning it is comprehensive; it includes "disbelief" as well as "hiding the truth." The life of this world is made to seem fair not to the disbelievers only but to them also who hide any religious truth or change any religious favors. Accordingly, such a man also is hider of truth (*kafir*) who has been allured by the beauty of this life, and he also should prepare himself for the severe punishment.

Qur'an: *but those who guard (against evil) shall be above them... without measure.:*

"Those who believe" of the preceding sentence has been changed in this sentence to *those who guard themselves* (against evil). It is to emphasize that mere belief (*iman*) without *taqwa* (guarding oneself against evil; piety, fear of Allah) is of no use.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSE 213

إِنَّ النَّاسَ أُمَّةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اختلفُوا فِيهِ وَمَا اختلفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَا اختلفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ 2:213

2:213 Mankind was but one people; so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with the truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed. And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves; whereupon Allah guided, by His will, those 'who believed to the truth about which they differed. And Allah guides whom He pleases to the straight path.

General Comment

This verse explains why religion was promulgated and mankind obliged to follow it, and why differences occurred in it.

Mankind, having been created with a natural urge to remain together and cooperate with each other, were in the beginning one single group. Then occurred' differences about the acquisition of the necessities of life. These differences could 'only be settled by creating laws to give each one his right and to make him respect the rights of others. Allah has ordained the law and sent it down as religion, accompanied by good tidings of reward for those who obey and a warning. of punishment for the offenders. This religion was made perfect by the institution of worship. All this was accomplished by sending the prophets and the apostles.

After that, people differed again this time about the knowledge of religion, or about matters concerning the beginning and end of mankind. Thus, religious unity was disrupted and various groups appeared on the scene, and their differences contaminated the other aspects of life.

These second differences only occurred because of the revolt of the very people who were given the book, after the fundamentals and characteristics of religion had been fully explained to them and the proof of Allah had been completed for them.

It is clear that there were two differences: First, the difference about worldly gains, which was but natural; second, the difference about matters of religion which was based, not on nature, but on the revolt of mischief-makers. Then Allah guided the believers to the truth about which they differed; and this guidance was done by His Will; and Allah guides whomsoever He pleases to the straight path.

The divine religion is the only means of happiness and felicity for the human species, and it keeps life in order. It creates a balance between various human instincts and urges, and keeps them on the middle path, preventing them from going towards either extreme. Thus, there appears the best system and the highest discipline in the human life both of this world and of the Hereafter, the material as well as the spiritual.

This is an outline of the social and religious history of human beings, as given in this verse. The details may be seen in various verses throughout the Qur'an.

Commentary

Qur'an: *Mankind was but one people:*

nas translated here as mankind literally means 'men'. *Ummah* translated here as 'people', means 'a group of men'. Sometimes it is used for only one man, as in the verses: *Surely Ibrahim was a (ummatan) people, (devoutly) obedient to Allah (16:120)*; sometimes for a long period, as in the verse: *and remembered after an (ummatin) a long time (12:45)* and in the verse: *And if We hold back from them the punishment until (ummatin Ma'dudatin) stated period of time (11:8)*. A fourth usage is for religion, as in the verse: *And surely this (ummatukum ummatan wahidah), your religion is one religion and I am your Lord, therefore, fear Me (23:52)* and, *Surely this your religion is one 'religion' and I am your Lord, therefore worship Me. (21:92)* In both these verses, according to some commentators, the word *ummah* has been used for 'religion'.

The word *ummah* is derived from *amma* (he had an aim); thus it is used for a company of people - not every company, but that which has a single aim, a single goal and a single ambition, and that unity of aim unites all the members and makes them one people. That is why it is correct to use it for one man as well as for many; the other usages mentioned above are based on that basic meaning.

Anyhow, the sentence obviously refers to the beginning of humanity, when they were united, and lived a simple life and had simple thoughts. There were no differences or any tug-of-war in matters of life or livelihood, nor was there any disagreement about religion or religious matters.

That at that time there was no difference about matters of life is evident from the next sentence, *so Allah sent the prophets... so that it (the book) might judge between the people in that in which they had differed*, as it shows that the prophets were sent and the book was revealed to remove differences, because earlier they were one people. Thus the difference in matters of life occurred after the unity. And the proof that at that time there was no difference about matters of religion is seen in the following sentences, *And none differed about it but the very people who were given it... revolting among themselves*, as it shows that the disagreement about religion was started by those who were given the book, which obviously means that it started after the book was revealed.

Experience also supports this. Mankind is continuously climbing the heights of knowledge and thought and ever progressing along the path of learning and culture, year after year, and generation after generation. Thus civilization goes forward day by day, new ways are found to fulfill even the slightest needs, natural and physical obstacles are removed and ever newer instruments are invented to make life more and more comfortable.

On the other hand, if we retrace our steps, going back towards the early days of humanity, every step will take us to people less and less acquainted with the secrets of life and the mysteries of nature, till we reach early man who knew almost nothing of the possibilities of life except those facts that were self-evident, and who used only a little imagination to gather his means of livelihood by the simplest methods. His food consisted of plants and meat which he obtained by hunting; he lived in caves, and defended himself with sticks and stones.

It is clear that a people who lived such a primitive life would not become entangled in any considerable disagreement; nor could there occur among them any lasting differences. They were in a way like a flock of sheep, everyone following the others, all remaining together for the purposes of

food and abode.

This was in the very beginning. But, as we have described earlier, man had the natural urge to take advantage of others. And although the need to cooperate with each other in gathering the necessities of life compelled people to remain together, it did not prevent them from quarrelling with, and getting better of, each other. And every day man acquired new skills, and every new experience added to his store of knowledge. Whenever he used a newly-acquired expertise, it opened new avenues of progress and dexterity for him. Also, because of the dictates of nature, some individuals were stronger while others were weaker. Those who were stronger in body or mind tried to reduce others to virtual subjugation, taking more from them than they gave them in return. That was the beginning of the differences, which was only natural as it was based on the natural urge to take advantage of others, although it had been the same urge which had led to the creation of society.

It may seem strange that the same natural urge compelled men to remain together, on one hand, and led them to quarrel and find differences, on the other. But there is nothing objectionable in the conflict between two natural demands, provided there is a third faculty above them to judge and decide, and to create a balance between them. For example, there is hunger which urges man to fill his stomach with whatever he can, even when the digestive system cannot tolerate it. There is a conflict between hunger and the power of digestion, but always there is the mind and reason to judge and decide between these two demands. It gives to each power only that which does not hinder the activities of the other.

The conflict between the two natural urges of marshalling others to one's service and cooperating with others as a single society is of the same category, because, Allah decreed to remove that conflict by sending the prophets and revealing to them the book to decide and judge in the matters of their differences and contentions.

This is the correct interpretation of this verse. Unfortunately, some commentators have interpreted it in various other ways, but none of those interpretations conform to the meaning of the verse.

One of them has said: The verse says that all men were on the right path, because the differences began only when the book was sent down to them, and the followers of the book differed, revolting among themselves.

This man did not realize that the verse describes two conflicts, not one; and we have already explained this. Also he did not pause to think that if all men were already on the right path and there was no difference, then what was the justification of sending the prophets and revealing the book and thus giving them an opportunity to differ among themselves by revolt, and thus creating chaos in the world, sowing the *seed of unbelief and sin, debauchery and immorality?*

Another one has said: Mankind was one group in the meaning that all had gone astray. Otherwise, Allah would not have said, *so Allah sent the prophets...*

This man did not ponder upon the verse with a clear mind. This going astray, to which he referred in this interpretation, has been indicated by Allah in His words, *whereupon Allah guided... those who believed to the truth about which they differed.* It means that this difference and going astray had started because of the bad motives of the followers of the book and the scholars of religion after the book was revealed and its signs were clarified for people. If people had already gone astray, if they had already been treading the path of disbelief, hypocrisy, sin and immorality, before the coming of the prophets and the book, how could it be attributed to the followers of the book and the scholars of religion?

A third interpretation: Mankind (*nas*) in this verse refers to the Israelites only. Allah says somewhere else about them: *but they did not differ until after knowledge had come to them,*

revolting among themselves. (45:17) As the same words have been used in the verse under discussion, it means that the people referred to are the same.

But it is proof which has no validity at all. If in one verse, a virtue or vice is attributed to a certain nation, it does not mean that that characteristic is confined to that nation or is its special characteristic.

Even more worthless is the fourth interpretation: Mankind means Adam; and the verse says that Adam (a.s.) was one group on the right path; then his descendants differed among themselves, so Allah sent the prophets ...

But the context of the whole verse disagrees with such a meaning. It is not possible to accept even a part of this interpretation, let alone the whole.

A fifth interpreter said: "Was" (*kana*) in this sentence should not be taken as a past tense; rather it stands for "is" and shows a continuously existing reality, as in the words of Allah: *and Allah is (kana) Mighty, Wise* (48:19). In short, it means that mankind is by nature one group, because people are dictated by nature to remain together, and as cooperation and sociability is their natural urge, they have to live together in a society. But this togetherness breeds difference and conflicts. Therefore, Allah sent the prophets and revealed the book to judge about that difference.

There are three defects in this interpretation:

First: It supposes that sociability and cooperation is the primary natural urge. But it has been explained that it is not so. The primary urge is to take advantage of others and use them for one's own benefit. It is only when a man finds out that others have the same design about him that he comes to a compromise with them, and this "give-and-take" results in cooperation. So this cooperation is based on compromise, not on any natural urge. The Qur'an also goes against that supposition, as has been explained earlier.

Second: The mere fact that man is "social by nature", does not justify sending the prophets and revealing the book, unless it is mentioned that this "natural sociability" leads to conflict and disturbance. In other words, this interpretation makes it necessary to read this verse in this way: "Mankind is but one people (but that oneness breeds conflict) so Allah sent the prophets ... '!". But the said interpreter does not accept that 'conflict' is implied in this sentence.

Third: This interpretation mentions only one conflict. But the verse clearly shows two conflicts - first, before the revelation of the book, when the differences were common to all people (*so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed*); and, second, after its revelation, which was confined to the religious scholars, and not common to all people (And none differed about it - i.e. about the book - but the very people who were given it... *revolting among themselves.*) Thus there were two differences, one was after receiving the knowledge and based on revolt, the other was not so.

Qur'an: *so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners:*

Ba'th literally means to revive, to awaken, to bring back to life. Its past tense, *ba'atha* has been translated here as 'sent down', only to make the meaning clear; otherwise, 'sent down' is the translation of *arsala* not of *ba'atha*.

Why did Allah use here the word *ba'atha* (awakened, revived) here and not *arsala* (sent down)? The early period of mankind, which is being discussed in this sentence, was a period of quietness and inactivity. And it was more relevant to say that they were awakened and revived than that someone was sent to them.

Perhaps that is also the reason why those representatives of Allah are here referred to as prophets (*nabiyyan*) and not apostles (*mursalin*) It has been described in the first volume that the

purpose of raising the prophets and revealing the books was to explain the truth to people, and to teach them the realities of their existence, making them aware of the fact that they have been created by their Lord, Allah Who has no colleague or partner in His divinity or power; and that they are to return to Him and then shall be resurrected and brought back to life on a great day; that presently they have halted in a midway station which has no more reality than a sport or play. Having realized this basic fact, they must keep it before their eyes in all situation and all their actions, always bearing *in mind where they have come from, where they are, and what is their destination.

This waking up to the realities of life is more appropriately described by the word *nabiyyin*(prophets) because *naba* means "one who has the news (*naba*)."

Allah sent the prophets: The authority and responsibility for sending the prophets is on Allah alone. It is only He Who sends them. It proves their sinlessness in receiving the revelation and explaining it to the people. (This topic. is described in detail at the end of this commentary).

The prophets were sent *as beaters of good tidings and as warners*. They brought the good news of the mercy of Allah and His pleasure and paradise for those who believe in Him and guard themselves against evil. And they gave the warning of the chastisement from Allah and His displeasure and Fire, to those who reject the truth and commit sins. The two aspects of prophethood - good tidings and warnings - are the most effective ways of keeping an average person on right path and making the prophetic mission a success, although some righteous servants of Allah do good and desist from evil only for the sake of their Lord without thinking about any reward or punishment.

Quran: *and He sent down with them the book with the truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed: kitab* is on the paradigm of *fi'aland* means 'the written'. The word generally refers to anything written by pen. But as the covenants and decrees are confirmed through writing, it is not infrequently used for compulsory and obligatory commands, and for every confirmed fact or idea which is irrefutable. And it has been used in this meaning in numerous verses of the Qur'an. The Qur'an itself is called the book (*kitab*) with this very meaning; otherwise, it is the talk of Allah.

It is said in the Qur'an: (It is) *a "book" which We revealed to you, abounding in blessings...* (38:29); *Surely, prayer is (compulsory) on the believers (kitabān mawāquta), a timed ordinance.* (4:103).

The words, *in that in which they had differed* show that the meaning is, "Mankind was but one people, then they different, so Allah sent the prophets ... "

The definite article "the" (*al,*) 'the book' (*al-kitab*) indicates either the genus of book (and, accordingly refer to all divine books revealed to the prophets) or a known (and implied) book. In later case, it would refer to the book of Nuh (a.s.), because Allah says in the Qur'an: *He has prescribed for you of the religion what He enjoined upon Nuh and that which We have revealed unto you and that which We enjoined upon Ibrahim and Musa and Isa...* (42:13). This verse describes the grace and favor of Allah by saying that the *shari'ah* (Law) sent down to the Muslims combines in itself what was given piecemeal to the previous prophets and over and above it contains many new features revealed to the prophet of Islam. It means that the Law was given only to those great prophets who are named here: Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, Isa and Muhammad (peace be on them all).

Now, the verse under discussion (*He sent down with them the book...*)clearly says that the *shari'ah* was given in written form. Look at these two verses together and you will see that:

First: Nuh (a.s.) was given a book containing the Law, and that book is surely referred to in this verse, *He sent down with them the book* either alone (if "the" is for a known and implied book) or with other divine books (if "the" denotes the genus of the book).

Second: The book of Nuh was the first divine book containing the *shari'ah*. Had there been any other such book before him it would have contained a Law to judge between the people, and Allah would have mentioned that *shari'ah* in verse (42:13).

Third: The period referred to in the sentence, *Mankind was but one people* was the era before the mission of Nuh (a.s.) and his book decided and judged between the people in their differences.

Qur'an: *And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves:*

It has been explained that it refers to the difference about the matters of religion among the followers of the religion. As the religion is based on the nature of man as created by Allah (*Then set your face uprightly for the (right) religion - the nature made by Allah in which He has made men - 30:30*), Allah attributed these differences to the revolt of the followers and the scholars of the religion.

The words - *but the very people who were given it* - indicate the origin of the religious differences about the meaning of the book. It does not say that every one who goes astray or follows a false religion is a rebel, although it is true that he has lost his way. Allah would not accept the excuses of a rebel; but He might accept the entreaties of those who were confused and could not find the right path. Allah says: *The way (to blame) is only against those who do injustice to the people and revolt in the earth unjustly... (42:42); And others have confessed evil (one); may be Allah will turn to them (in mercy); surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful... And others are made to wait Allah's command - whether He will chastise them or whether He will turn (in mercy), to them; And Allah is All-knowing, All-wise (9:102-106); Except the weakened ones from among the men and the women and the children who have not in their power the means nor do they find a way; so these, it may be, Allah will pardon them, and Allah is the Clement, Oft-forgiving (4:98-99)*

Moreover, nature may go hand in hand with forgetfulness or doubt, but it cannot with revolt and intentional transgression. That is why the verse uses the words of revolt especially for those who knew the book and for whom the signs were made clear. Allah says: *And (as to) those who disbelieve in and reject My signs, they are the inmates of the Fire, in it they shall abide. (2:39)* There are numerous verses of this meaning in the Qur'an; and in all of them the disbelief has been made conditional on the rejection of the signs of Allah and then it is followed by the threat of punishment.

In short, this sentence shows that the second differences began because of the rebellion of the scholars of the book, after they were given knowledge of it.

Qur'an: *whereupon Allah guided, by His will, those who believed to the truth about which they differed. And Allah guides whom He pleases to the straight path:*

the truth about which they differed explains the subjects of the differences and that it was the truth with which the book was sent down ("the book with the truth").

At this juncture, Allah guided the believers to the truth in both differences: differences in affairs of this life, and differences in the matters of religion. The guidance of the believers was by His will, because they could not make it binding upon Allah to guide them, for the simple reason that there is none to impose upon Him. It is only He Himself who takes upon Himself whatever He pleases. Therefore, the guidance was by His will; if He were not pleased, He would not have willed and would not have guided.

Accordingly, the sentence, *And Allah guides whom He pleases to the straight path* gives the reason of "by His will." He guided them because it is His discretion to guide whom He pleases, nobody can impose upon Him to guide this or to guide that. And He surely willed to guide the believers to the straight path.

Looking at the verses as a whole, we come to know the following:

First: The definition of religion: Religion is a way of life which contains the good of this world in a manner that ensures perfection of the next life - the life that is the real and eternal one near to Allah.

It means that the *shari'ah* must contain the necessary laws for this worldly life and one's livelihood.

Second: Originally religion was promulgated to remove natural differences; then it was perfected to remove both types of differences; then it was perfected to remove both types of difference - the natural ones and the un-natural ones emanating from the rebellion of religious scholars.

Third: Religion goes on perfecting itself until its laws cover all the possible needs and eventualities of life. When it reaches that stage of perfection it is finalized and no other religion comes after it. Conversely, if a religion is the final one, it must be comprehensive enough to cover 0 eventualities and fulfill all the needs of life. Allah said: *Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Last of the prophet...* (33:40); *and We revealed unto you the book, explaining clearly everything...* (16:89); *and most surely it is a mighty book; falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from? behind it...* (41:41-42).

Fourth: Every succeeding *shari'ah* was more perfect than the preceding one.

Fifth: Why were the prophets sent and the books revealed? In other words, what was the reason for the prophetic mission? Man, by his nature, develops towards differences in matters of life, as much as he progresses towards social cooperation. As it is nature itself which leads to differences, it is incapable of removing them. How can it repel a thing when it is forcefully pulling it towards itself? Therefore, Allah took it upon Himself to remove that conflict; and He sent the prophets with the laws to lead men to their perfection - real perfection which is a part of their creation. Allah says: *Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (to its goal.)* (20:50) It shows that Allah completes the creation of everything and guides it to its perfection. The creation of man is completed when he is guided to his perfection in both lives. Also He says: *All do We aid - these as well as those - out of the bounty of your Lord; and the bounty of your Lord is not confined.*(17:20). It means that Allah aids out of His bounty everyone who is in need of His aid in his life and existence; He gives him what he deserves. His bounty is neither confined nor limited, so far as Allah is concerned. If there is any limitation, it is from man's side, not from his Creator's.

Obviously, man cannot perfect himself, because it is his own nature which is the cause of this defect. As it is nature which leads to the conflict, and as that nature is unable to mend what it has damaged, the reform (if there is to be any) must come from somewhere outside nature - it must come from the Creator; and it came in the form of prophethood guided by divine revelation. The sending of the 'prophets for this reform and removal of conflict has been given the name of *ba'th* (awakening, revival, and never has this verb been attributed, in the Qur'an, to anyone except Allah, although the prophetic calls, like everything else, have some connection with their place and time.

Prophethood is a divine (say, if you will, unseen) condition which has the same relation to general human perception and activity as wakefulness has to sleep. The prophet receives the knowledge by which the conflicts and differences of human life can be removed. This perception received from the unseen is called, in the language of the Qur'anic 'revelation'; and the quality and condition of *receiving that* revelation is called 'prophethood'. *Therefore*, the reason for initiating the prophetic mission rests on the following factors:

- (1) Human nature leads man to social cooperation;
- (2) At the same time it *creates friction* and conflict;
- (3) Nature itself cannot remove that conflict;

(4) Therefore, a force outside of nature, should intervene to remove that conflict;

(5) Allah completes creation and in His mercy, has taken it upon Himself to guide everything to its perfection; As a result of that undertaking, He sent prophets and revealed to them the book to reform human society. All these factors are proved by reason and experience.

Never has man desisted from exploiting others to his advantage; never has that exploitation, after action and reaction, failed to create a society; never has any society been free from conflict; never has that conflict been removed without social laws; and never has human wisdom been able to make such laws which could cut away all the roots of conflict. Look at the present world. *See* the chaos in human society, the degradation of moral values, the never-ending chain of wars,

the destruction of crops and cattle, the fighting which exterminate millions and millions of people, the autocracies, the subjugation of nations, the abasing of the human spirit, the usurping of lives and property; you will find all these and much more. And it is happening in this, the twentieth century, the century of civilization, the age of progress, the era of culture and *science*. What could have been the situation in the old day - the age of ignorance and darkness?

That the teaching and training of religion, emanating from the prophets and revelation, have the ability to eradicate this conflict is proved by reason and experience.

Reason: Religion calls people to real knowledge, high ethics, and noble deeds. Humanity can reach the highest peak of perfection by following such teachings.

Experience: Islam has proved it during the short period when it had control over Muslim society, as will be explained, God willing, in a proper place.

Sixth: The religion, which has been sent as the last of all religions, proves that humanity has reached the final stage of its completion and perfection. That is why the Qur'an has decreed that prophethood has come to its end with Muhammad (s.a.w.). His religion will never be abrogated, and his *shari'ah* will remain in force till the end of the world. It means that human perfection, individual as well as collective, shall always, remain within the limits of the laws ordained by Islam. There can never arise a situation for which Islam has no guidance.

It is a prophecy of the Qur'an confirmed by the history of humanity in the last fourteen centuries. Mankind has, in this period, progressed tremendously, and reached unimaginable heights in the field of the material and physical sciences. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about his ethics and morality. It has not progressed even one step since that time. Rather, it could be claimed that in this respect it has taken many steps backwards. Thus humanity has not progressed as a whole. It is a lopsided development. Man has strengthened his body, neglecting his soul, which has become weaker.

It is clear from above that the laws of Islam have as much relevance in this era as they had fourteen centuries ago. And they will not lose their relevancy even in the future.

Some people say: The laws of religion were made for the reform of man and the good of society. If society changes, and climbs further towards the summit of perfection, religion and its law also must change, to stay in step with the changing society. It is no secret that the difference between this age and that when the Qur'an came down and Islamic laws were promulgated is far greater than the difference between the times of Musa and 'Isa (a.s.) and that of the Prophet of Islam. This vast difference demands the abrogation of the laws of Islam, so that other laws, more appropriate to a modern progressive society, can be ordained.

Reply: Religion does not aim only at the material and physical perfection of man. It looks at the human being as a whole, and seeks to make him perfect both physically and spiritually, so that he may attain both material and spiritual bliss. Its deal is the social man who is perfect from the above-mentioned point of view, not a social man who might be perfect in technology and politics but

bankrupt in other aspects of humanity. These people looked at societies based on materialism. Matter is always in change, climbing up the ladder of perfection, and the same is true of materialistic societies. These people thought that a society based on religion would also always be subject to change and abrogation. But they over-looked the fundamental difference between the two societies. They forgot that Islam does not aim at a lop-sided development of man; instead, it seeks well-balanced development, where man becomes perfect as a whole, both in body and soul. Before demanding the abrogation of Islam, they should produce an individual or a society which combines religious tenets and material progress. Then they should say what deficiency has been left therein which should be completed by a new *shari'ah*, or what weakness is there which needs a new law. Unless and until they produce such a society to point to the supposed defects, they have no justification in claiming that Islam should be abrogated.

Seventh: The prophets (peace be on them all) were sinless and protected from error and sin.

Traditions

Al-Baqir (a.s.) said: 'The men before Nuh, were one people, on the creation of Allah, neither rightly guided nor gone astray, then Allah raised the prophets.' [*Majma'u '-bayan*]

There is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said about this verse: *And it was before Nuh*. He was asked whether they were on the right path. He said: "Rather they were astray. When Adam and his good children died, his successor, Shith, was unable to expound the religion of Allah which was followed by Adam and his good children. It was so because Qabil had threatened to kill him as had killed his brother, H5bil, Therefore, Shith lived among them in fear, keeping his religion secret. Their straying increased day by -day -until nobody remained with them on the earth except those who had already passed away. And the successor (of Adam) settled in an island to worship Allah. Then Allah decided to raise the apostles. And if these ignorant ones were asked they would say that He (Allah) had finished the matter;' but they are liars; verily it is thing a bout which Allah decrees every year." Then the Imam recited: *Therein every wise affair 'is made distinct. (44:4)*. (Then he said:) "So Allah decrees what should happen during the year, hardship or abundance or rain or other such things." The narrator asked whether before the prophet they had gone astray or were on the right path. The Imam said: "They were not on guidance. They were on the creation of Allah upon which they were created. There is no change in the creation of Allah. And they were not to be guided until Allah guided them. Do you not hear the words of Ibrahim, *Had not my Lord guided me, I would certainly have been of the erring people. (6:77)* i.e., forgetful of the covenant." [*al 'Ayyashi*]

The author says: The words, *They were not on guidance. They were on creation of Allah*, explain the words *they were astray* which have been used in the beginning of the tradition. It means that they were not guided in detail to the divine knowledge, but had its rudimentary knowledge. And such a guidance may be termed straying in the meaning of ignorance of details. The first tradition, quoted from *Majma u'l-bayan*, mentions it in these words: "on the creation of Allah, neither rightly guided nor gone astray."

The last words of this tradition, "forgetful of the covenant" also explain the straying mentioned earlier. Guidance is the remembrance of the covenant in its reality (as is the case with the perfect believers), or the carrying on like those who remember the covenant, even if one oneself does not remember it in reality (as is the case of most of the believers); and giving the name of guidance to this second group is only because of the mercy of Allah.

Hisham ibn al-Hakam narrates that an atheist came to Abu Abdullah (a.s.), and asked him, "From where did you prove the prophets and apostles?" The Imam said: "'When we proved that there is a Creator and Maker who is elevated above us and above all the created things, and that that Creator is wise, and that it is not possible for His creatures to see Him or touch Him; and that He cannot live with them nor they with Him, and He cannot have discussion with them nor they argue with Him; then it is proved that He must have in His creation some envoys to guide the people to their advantage and interest and to that on which depends their existence and the neglect of which brings their destruction. Thus it is proved that there should be some people to enjoin (good) and forbid (evil) on behalf of the (Creator who is) wise and Cognizant of His creation. It all proves that He has his interpreters, and they are the prophets, His chosen ones from among His creation, wise, well-trained in erudition, sent (to the people) with that (wisdom); not like the people in their conditions though they are like them in physique and the make-up of the body; supported by the Wise, the All-knowing with wisdom and proofs - and arguments and evidence, like raising up the dead and healing the blind and the leper. So, the earth of Allah cannot remain empty from a proof (of Allah) with whom should be a sign to show that he is truthful in his words, and it is essential for him to be on justice." [at-Tawhid]

The author says: Evidently, this tradition contains three proofs about three subjects of prophethood:

First: A reason to prove the necessity of prophethood in general. On deep consideration you will find it in conformity with what we have inferred from the verse under discussion.

Second: The proof that it is necessary that the prophet be supported with miracles. It conforms with what we said about miracles under the verse (2:23) *And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it...*

Third: The proof that there should always be a representative of Allah on this earth, be he a prophet or an Imam. And we shall explain this, God willing, in a suitable place.

There is a tradition narrated by 'Utbah al-Laythi from Abu Dharr (May Allah have mercy on him) that he said: I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! How many prophets were there?' The Prophet said: 'One hundred and twenty-four thousand.' I said: 'How many of them were apostles?' He said: 'Three hundred and thirteen, a large crowd!' I said: 'Who was first of the prophets?' He said: 'Adam' I said: 'Was he an apostle from among the prophets?' He said: 'Yes. Allah made him by His hand (power) and breathed into him of His spirit.' Then the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: 'O Abu Dharr! Four of the prophets were Syrians: Adam, Shith, Ukhnukh i.e. Idris (and he was the first to write with the pen) and Nuh; and four of them were Arabs: Hud, Salih, Shu'ayb and your prophet, Muhammad (s.a.w.); and the first prophet among the children of Israel was Musa, and the last of them was Isa and (between them were) six hundred prophets.' I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! How many books were sent down by Allah?' He said: 'One hundred and four books. Allah sent down fifty books unto Shith, and thirty books unto Idris, and twenty books unto Ibrahim, and He sent down the Torah, and the Injil, and that Zabur, and al-Furqan.'" [al-Khisal and Ma'ani al-akhbar]

The author says: This tradition, and especially its first part describing the number of the prophets and the apostles, is famous, and it has been narrated by Shi'ahs and Sunnis in their books. And as-Saqud has narrated a tradition of the same meaning in *al-Khisal* and *al-Amali*, from ar-Rida (a.s.) through his forefathers from the Prophet; and (another tradition) from Zayd ibn 'Ali through his father and grandfather from 'Ali (a.s.); and similar traditions have been reported by Ibn Qawlawayh in *Kamilu 'z-ziyarah* and by as-Sayyid in *al-lqbdl* from as-Sajjad (a.s.) and in *al-Basair* from al-Baqir (a.s.).

There is a tradition from al-Baqir (a.s.) about the words of Allah: *and he was an apostle, a prophet* (19:51), that he said: "The prophet is the one who sees in his dream and hears the voice but

does not see the angel; and the apostle is the one who hears the voice, and does not see in dreams, and sees the angel." [al-Kafi]

The author says: There are other traditions with this meaning. Possibly, their meaning may be inferred from such verses as, *therefore, send Thou to Harun.*(26:13) This tradition does not say that the apostle means the one to whom the angel of revelation is sent. It simply says that prophethood and apostleship are two ranks, the specialty of the one is seeing in the dream, and of the other is seeing the angel of revelation. Sometimes, both ranks are combined in one person, then the two specialties are found together; and sometimes prophethood is found without apostleship. Therefore, apostleship is more particular than prophethood, in practice, but not in meaning. See for example, the tradition of Abu Dharr, mentioned above, in which he asks, "how many of the prophets were apostles?"

Therefore, it is clear that every apostle is a prophet but not *vice versa*. This clear explanation provides the answer to the misunderstanding of some people who say that the Holy Prophet of Islam was not the last apostle, though he was the last prophet. Their "argument" is as follows:

Allah says: *but he* (i.e. Muhammad) *is the Apostle of Allah and the last of the prophets.* (33:40) The verse says that he was the last of the prophets, but does not say that he was the last of the apostles."

Reply: Prophethood is, in fact, more general and comprehensive than apostleship. When a general item is negated its particular groups are automatically negated.

And so far as the traditions are concerned they have never said that apostleship can be found without prophethood. As you have seen they clearly say that all apostles were prophets, but not all prophets were apostles:

Abul-Hasan ar-Rida (a.s.) said: The *ulu 'l-azm* prophets were given this name because they were people of firm determination and (brought a new) law. It was like this: Every prophet coming after Nuh was on his *shari'ah* and his way, and followed his (Nuh) book upto the time of Ibrahim, the friend (of Allah). And every prophet from the time of Ibrahim was on the *sharrah* of Ibrahim and his way and followed his book upto the time of Musa. And every prophet from the time of Musa was on the *shari'ah* of Musa and his way and followed his book upto the time of 'Isa. And every prophet who was in the time of 'Isa and after him, was on the *shari'ah* of 'Isa and his way and followed his book upto the time of our prophet, Muhammad (s.a.w.). So, these five are *ulu'l-azm*, and they are the best of the prophets and apostles (peace be on them all). And the *shari'ah* of Muhammad will not be abrogated till the Day of Resurrection. Therefore, anyone who makes a claim to prophethood after him or to bringing a book after the Qur'an, his blood is allowed (i.e. it is allowed to kill him) to anyone who hears this (claim) from him." [Uy-unu'l-akhbar]

The author says: A tradition of similar meaning is reported from as-Saqid (a.s.) in *Qisasu'l anbiya* About the verse: *Therefore, bear up patiently as did the apostles endowed with fortitude bear up with patience*, that the apostles referred to here are Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa and 'Isa (peace be on them all). And the meaning of "endowed with fortitude" is that they were the first of all prophets in believing in Allah, and they believed in every prophet who was before them or came after them; and they were determined to remain patient even when they were rejected (by their people) and tormented. [at-Tafsir, al Qummi]

The author says: It has been narrated by Sunni chains from Ibn 'Abbas and Qatadah that the prophets endowed with patience were five: Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa and Muhammad (s.a.w.). It is the same as narrated in the traditions of *Ahlu l-bayt*. There are other views attributed to some Sunni scholars. One said that they were six: Nuh, Ibrahim, Ishaq, Ya'qub, Yusef and Ayyub. Another said that they were the prophets who were given the order to fight in the way of Allah, and thus waged

war. Some one said that they were four: Ibrahim, Nuh, Hud, and the fourth was Muhammad (s.a.w.). But all these sayings are without any proof.

There is a tradition narrated by ath-Thumali from al-Baqir (a.s.), that he said: "The prophets between Adam and Nuh were concealed, and that is why they were not mentioned in the Qur'an nor were they named therein as were named those prophets who declared themselves (before their people)." [al-'Ayyashi]

The author says: This meaning has been narrated from the Imams of *Ahlu l-bayt* by numerous chains.

Tafsir of as-Safi quotes from *Majmu'u l-bayan* a tradition of 'Ali (a.s.) that Allah raised a black prophet whose story He did not reveal to us.

In the first of *Nahju'l-balaghah* Ali (a.s.) says, mentioning Adam (a.s.):

"Then (Allah) sent him down to the place of trial and procreation of progeny. And from his progeny Allah chose prophets and took their pledge for (His) revelation and for carrying (His) message as their trust. In the course of time, many people changed the covenant which Allah had made with them; thus they ignored His right, and took partners along with Him. And Satan turned them away from knowing Him and cut them off from His worship. Then Allah raised among them His apostles, and sent to them His prophets one after another, to exhort the people to fulfill the covenant of His creation; and to remind them of His bounties which were forgotten; and to argue with them by communicating (to them revelation), and to bring out for them the buried (treasures of) wisdom, and to show the signs of His omnipotence: namely, the roof (i.e. sky) which is raised over them, and the floor (i.e. earth) which is placed beneath them, and the means of livelihood that sustain them, and the deaths that make them die, and the ailments that turn them old, and the happenings that successively betake them. And Allah never allowed His creation to remain without a prophet sent (by Him), or a book sent down (from Him), or a binding proof, or a laid-down highway - the apostles who were not discouraged by the smallness of their (followers') number or largeness of their rejecters. Among them was a predecessor who was told the name of his follower, or a follower introduced by his predecessor. In this way, ages passed by, and the times rolled on, and the fathers passed away while the sons took their place, till Allah raised Muhammad in fulfillment of His promise and to finalize His prophethood."

The author says: "In fulfillment of His promise" refers to the promise made by Allah to sending His Apostle, Muhammad; and good tidings of him were brought by 'Isa and other prophets (peace be on them), as Allah says: *And the word of your Lord has been accomplished truly and justly...* (6:115)

There is a tradition narrated by 'Abdullah ibn al-Walid from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said: "Allah said about Musa: *And We wrote for him in the tablets admonition from everything...* (7:145) So, we know that He did not write for Musa everything (but only a portion 'from everything'). And He said quoting 'Isa: *so that I may make clear to you part of what you differ in...* (43:63). And He said to Muhammad (s.a.w.): *... and (will) bring you as a witness against these; and We revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything...* (16:89)" [al-'Ayyashi]

The author says: The same meaning has been narrated in *Basa'iru 'd-darajat* from 'Abdullah ibn al-Walid by two chains.

The words of the Imam, "Allah said about Musa... " point out that the words of Allah, *in the tablets... from every thing* explain the immediately following words about the Torah, *and clear explanation of all things*. If Allah had meant a comprehensive description of every thing, He would not have said, *from everything*- which refers only to a portion, not to the whole. This "from" shows that the "explanation of everything" means only a partial, not a comprehensive, explanation of

everything.

Qur'anic Guidance About the Reality of Man and the History of Mankind

Mankind, having been created with a natural urge to remain together and cooperate with each other, were in the beginning one single group. Then occurred differences about the acquisition of the necessities of life. These differences could only be settled by creating laws to give each one his right and to make his respect the rights of others. Allah has ordained the law and sent it down as religion, accompanied by good tidings of reward for those who obey and a warning of punishment for the offenders. This religion was made perfect by the institution of worship. All this was accomplished by sending the prophets and the apostles.

After that, people differed again - this time about the knowledge of religion, or about matters concerning the beginning and end of mankind. Thus, religious unity was disrupted and various groups appeared on the scene, and their differences contaminated the other aspects of life.

These second differences only occurred because of the revolt of the very people who were given the book, after the fundamentals and characteristics of religion had been fully explained to them and the proof of Allah had been completed for them.

It is clear that they were two differences: first, the difference about worldly gains, which was but natural; second, the difference between matters of religion which was based, not on nature but on the revolt of mischief-makers. Then Allah guided the believers to the truth about which they differed; and this guidance was done by his Will; and Allah guides whomsoever He pleases to the straight path.

The divine religion is the only means of happiness and felicity for the human species, and it keeps life in order. It creates a balance between various human instincts and urges, and keeps them on the middle path, preventing them from going towards either extreme. Thus, there appears the best system and the highest discipline in the human life both of this world and of the Hereafter, the material as well as the spiritual.

This is the outline of the social and religious history of human beings, as given in this verse. The details may be seen in various verses throughout the Qur'an.

How Mankind Came Into Being

It appears from various verses, found in various places in the Qur'an, that mankind did not develop from any other species - neither from any animal nor from any plant. It is a species which was created by Allah directly from the earth. There was a time when the sky existed with the things of the earth; but there was no man. Then Allah created a couple, male and female, of this species and all present human beings are descended from that couple. Allah says: *O men! Surely we created you of a male and female, and made you into tribes and families so that you may recognize each other...* (49:13); and He says: *He it is who created you from a single being and of the same (kind) did he make his mate.* (7:189); again he says: *as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust...* (3:59).

The theory of scientists that one species changed into another, and that homo sapiens developed from some kind of ape or, going further back, originated from some water animal, is just a hypothesis. A hypothesis is not a definite fact; it is just a supposition made as a basis for reasoning, or as a starting point for academic investigation. There is no harm in treating it as a reality or as a possibility,

because its only function is to provide a basis for scientific research, and to find out whether it can explain the causes and effects of a given matter. It has no more value than that. We discuss this subject fully under the verse (3:59), *Surely the likeness of 'Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him 'Be' and he became.*

His Composition of Soul and Body

When Allah created this species, He created it composed of two parts; a material substance, the body, and a non-material one, the soul or spirit. Man's body and soul remain together during his life in this world; then the body dies, the living soul departs and thus man returns to his Creator. Allah says: *And certainly We created man of an extract of clay, then We made him sperm, in a firm resting place, then We made the sperm a clot, the We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We did grow it into another creation, so Blessed by Allah, the best of the creators. Then after that, you will most surely die; then surely on the Day of Resurrection you shall be raised. (23:12-16)*(See it what stage Allah says *did grow it into another creation.* The same meaning is found in the verse, *So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down making obedience to him (38:72).* Then we come to the words of Allah, where he describes the creation of man goes on to say: *And they said: What! When we have become lost in the earth, shall we(even) then be returned into a new creation? Nay! They are disbelievers in the meeting of their Lord. Say: The angel of death, who is given charge of you, shall cause you to die then to your Lord you shall be brought back (32:10-11).*

In this verse, Allah first mentions the 'argument' of the unbelievers that there was no possibility of being raised to life again because all the limbs and organs of the body disintegrated and turned to dust after death. Then comes the reply that the angel of death causes them to die and fully takes hold of them; they are something different from the mere body; the bodies are lost in the earth but "they" i.e. their souls, are neither lost, disintegrated nor dead.

We shall explain in a proper place the teaching of the Qur'an about the soul of man.

His Perception and Connection with Other Things

Allah made man and gave him perception, and created in him hearing, sight and the heart (wisdom). He has been given the quality of mind which is known as intelligence and thinking-power. By those difficulties, he looks at the present, finds out about the past and surmises about the future; he has a sort of comprehensive knowledge of the things around him. Allah says (Allah) *taught man what he know not(96:5); And Allah brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers, you did not know anything, and He gave your hearing and sight and the hearts (wisdom)so that you may give thanks (16:78); And he taught Adam all the names... (2:31).*

Allah has given him such faculties so that he can establish relation and connection with all things and can derive benefit from all of them; he can establish that connection either directly or through instruments and machines, the aim all the time being to use them to his own advantage. Look at the innumerable discoveries and inventions, and you will know how Allah has made everything subservient to man. For example, He says: *He it is who created you from all that is in earth (2:29);*

And He has made subservient to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all from Himself (45:13).

His Practical Knowledge

The two faculties - intelligence and the ability to exploit other things - produced a third wonderful facility: to find out new avenues of knowledge and perception, so as to use them in his exploitation of other things to his advantage.

Suppose you were looking at this species of homo sapiens for the first time. You would be overwhelmingly astonished to see how each member of this species used an unlimited amount of knowledge and ideas to make his life comfortable. That knowledge and those ideas were acquired, analyzed, compared and developed either through the five senses, which provided knowledge of the external world, or through the five faculties of the mind, or through the power of thought, using and reusing the knowledge acquired by those senses.

Then if you were to look at that knowledge and perception, you would find that they could easily be divided into two groups. First, the knowledge which had no direct bearing on man's own actions. For example, the perceiving of the earth, the sky, men, horses, etc. or that four was an even number, or that water was a liquid. Such precepts are acquired by man's reaction to the world outside his own being. To acquire those precepts, man does not have to have any intention or action on his own part; they are just information of the outside world for which he is not obliged to do anything.

The second group is opposite to the first one. You will hear him saying: This is good; that is bad; this should be done; that must be avoided; justice is good; injustice is evil. Then, also, you might find him thinking about the ideas of ruling and subjection; of membership and slavery. Such thoughts and precepts have a direct bearing on his actions and activities. All his intentional actions depend on those precepts and knowledge. And, unlike the first group, these precepts do not originate outside his being; they are formed in his mind either involuntarily, by his instinct, or voluntarily, through his own thinking, or feeling. For example, he has a system for digestion and nourishment and another for reproduction. These systems are governed by some inner motivating forces, which make him desire what helps in these functions and dislike what hinders him in pursuit of those pleasures. This inner reaction creates in him such emotions and feelings as love, hate, inclination and desire.

These emotions and feelings compel him to think about what is good and what is bad, what is desirable and what is undesirable, what compulsory, and what permissible, etc. Then taking such ideas as a base, he decides his course of action and uses the things around him accordingly.

It is clear from the above that those ideas, morals or ethics (whatever you call them) have no value unless and until they are acted upon. As mere ideas they are worthless. Therefore, we may call them practical knowledge.

As mentioned above, Allah inspired man with these morals to prepare him for action and make him ready to exploit the hidden forces of the world: "in order that Allah might bring about a matter which was to be done". Allah says: *Our Lord is He gave everything to its creation, then guided it (to its goal.)(20:50); Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High, Who created, then made complete, and who made (things)according to a measure, then guided (them to their goal.) (87:1-3).* The guidance, mentioned in these verses, is the general guidance bestowed on every creature, sentient as well as insentient, to lead it to the perfection of its being, and to encourage it to act for its own protection and maintenance.

Allah says, especially about the man: *And (I swear by) the soul as it is made perfect, and He inspired unto it (about) its vices and its piety. (91:7-8)*. It shows that man knows about vice and virtue through a divine inspiration which is implanted in his nature. These two precepts - 'should do' and 'should not do' - have no existence outside his mind; and perhaps that is why Allah used the pronoun "Its" (i.e. soul's) about vices and piety.

Also, Allah says: *And this life of the world is nothing but a vain sport and play; and surely the abode of the Hereafter is certainly the life, if they but know (29:64)*. Sport or play is in the attitude of the mind. If the same action were done as a responsibility or as a job, it would lose its charm. Likewise, the aspect of this life - prestige, riches, progress, backwardness, mastership, servitude - are only in the mind of man. These aspects do not exist outside the mind. For example, we say, 'a man who is president' or 'a cloth which is possessed'. Now 'a man' and 'a cloth' are the things which exist outside the mind of the speaker; but that man's 'presidency' and that cloth's being 'possessed' are not so. These aspects are in the mind only.

His Exploitation of Other Things

To make a long story short, one of these ideas is the belief that men must take all necessary steps to preserve his own life; and because of this belief he makes use of all the materials available to him. He exploits matter to fulfill his needs - the knife to cut, the needle to sew, pots to keep water, ladders to climb and innumerable such tools and machines for their benefit.

Likewise, he uses plants and vegetables for food, clothing, housing, etc. And subjugates animals to support his own existence; and takes advantage of their meat, blood, hide; hair, wool, tusks, horns, excrement, milk, bones and other such things. He benefits not only from the parts of their bodies, but also from their actions, as he rides a horse or uses the oxen for pulling carts and ploughs.

Man's exploitation does not end here. He goes further and exploits his own kind, subjugating other human beings, or taking advantage of them in other manners, as much as he can.

Man is Social by Nature

But man found, to his chagrin, that other men in their turn wanted to subjugate him in the same way as he was thinking about them. The result was a mutual understanding that they would take advantage of him as much as he benefited from them. The "give-and-take" prompted men to live in society and to cooperate with each other in their affairs. It necessitated the safeguarding of the rights of every member of that society to keep a balance between their rights and their duties. This is called social justice.

Society and social justice were founded on the unavoidable compulsion of the above-mentioned situation. Had it not been for that compulsion, man would not have agreed to it at all. This is the reality behind the claim that man is social by nature and that he follows the dictates of social justice! The fact is that this sociability and social justice came into being under the compulsion of the mutual tendency to exploit each other.

That is why whenever a man acquired power over his fellows, the dictates of social justice are forgotten; and the mighty one ignores the rights of the weaker ones. It is as much true in the case of individuals as in that of nations and states; and this has been going on from the early history of

mankind until the present, which is called the age of civilization and freedom!

This has been hinted in the verses: *Surely he* (i.e. man) *is unjust, ignorant* (33:72); *Surely man is created avaricious* (70:19); *Surely man is very unjust, very ungrateful* (14:34); *Nay! Verily man is wont to rebel as he sees himself free from want* (96:6-7).

His social justice being the primary urge of his nature, most of society would have been overwhelmingly just and equitable. But what we see is always opposite to that. Always the demonstration of 'might is right' comes in front of our eyes; powerful ones coerce weaker ones into subjugation; victors humiliate the vanquished, and exploit them for their own advantage.

Difference among Human Beings

So there is the natural instinct to take advantage of others. Then there are the necessary differences among individuals in bodily physique, in habitat, habits, character and things like that, in their turn create a difference in strength; some become stronger, others weaker. At this stage, the stronger men start ignoring the dictates of social justice and they no longer pay attention to the common weal of the society. The mighty one exploits the weaker one and gives him little in exchange; the victor takes advantage of the vanquished without giving him any benefit in return. The weak person makes it up by deception and trickery, always waiting for a chance to get the upper hand. And as soon as he gets the chance he avenges himself with a most severe repr'isal.

Thus the difference leads to chaos, disorder and disturbance. Humanity comes near to extinction, and the happiness and felicity depart from society. It is this aspect to which the verse under discussion as well as some other verses refer: *And men were naught but a single people, then they differed* (10:19); *and they shall continue to differ except those on whom your Lord has mercy* (11:118-119).

This disunity and difference was bound to occur in society. As has already been mentioned, men were different in the build of their bodies and the bent of their minds. Of course, they were all human beings and to a certain extent their activities and thinking were similar. But at the same time, their feelings, character and condition were different from each other. That resulted in a difference in their ambitions, sins and goals of life, which in its turn motivated them to different types of actions, and finally led to the disruption of the social system.

The disruption and disturbance made it necessary to legislate such comprehensive and fundamental laws as could remove that disturbance, difference and disagreement by, giving each one his due right. Also, it was essential to make people obey those laws.

Nowadays, societies use one of two methods to enforce the law:

1. Compelling the people to obey laws (which are legislated to make all people share in the means of livelihood and to give everyone what could take him to the perfection of his life) and discarding religious tenets like belief in God and higher moral values. Faith in God is completely eradicated, and morality is made to follow the trends of society. Whatever is liked by a sizable section of the community is accepted as virtue. One day chastity is held in high regard, the next day it is ridiculed and debauchery becomes the norm of the time. One day, truth is respected, the next day falsity is glorified. One day trustworthiness, and the next day embezzlement and so on.

2. Making people obey laws by character-building and by training them to respect the laws - but after removing religion and religious teachings from the training programs.

The first method uses the sheer force of the rulers, the second, combines force with moral teaching.

Apart from the rot that sets into society as a result, both methods are based on ignorance and negate the reality of human existence. Man is created by Allah; his existence depends on his Master; he came from Allah and to him he will return. On his departure from this world his life will continue in the next world forever and ever without disruption. But the quality of the next life will depend on upon this life - how he behaved here, how he maintained the relation with his Creator, and which characteristics he developed and which qualities he acquired. If a man builds his life here on the foundation of the rejection of the divinity, he will surely destroy his "self" and ruin his next life.

Let us take the example of a caravan. The company of the travelers start for a far away place with sufficient provision for the journey. They camp in a caravanserai for a while, no sooner are they lodged for the night then they start quarreling among themselves. They do not stop at any misdeed; they fight with each other, murder and defame one another, plunder belongings and commit many other atrocities. Then appalled by the carnage, they sit together to find a way to save their lives and property. Someone says: "Let us jointly use, and benefit from, all these provisions, and allow every individual a right to enjoy them according to his service to the group. We have nowhere to go from this place. Anyone opposing this scheme will be severely punished." Another person says: "Let's make a law to remove the difference; each of us shall concentrate on his building his character, we must behave with kindness towards our companions, we should not deviate from the path of love, gallantry and nobility. Therefore, we should jointly enjoy the provisions which we have. After all, the provisions are for our own use in this very place."

There is no need to point out that both advisers are mistaken. They forget that the whole caravan is still on its way; and that the traveler in all conditions and at all times, should remember his final destination and manage the affairs of his journey with only one goal in view: "What is the best way of his reaching home?" If he forgets this fundamental truth, there will be nothing left for him but becoming lost in the wilderness, and disaster and death.

A sensible adviser would have advised them with these words: "Use these provisions according to what you need of tonight; save the rest for other stopping places on the way; because your final destination is still very far and you must think to save some of the provisions for use after reaching home."

Religion removes the Difference

This is why Allah created laws, basing them on the belief of the oneness of Allah, on true faith, on fine character and good deeds. In other words, these laws were made to teach people the reality of life, from the beginning up to its final destination; to make them realize that this life should be spent keeping the next life in view, and that this short life is but a preparation for the next one which will last forever and ever.

It is clear that it is only divine law which is based on knowledge. No other law was ever built on that foundation. Allah says: *Judgment is not but Allah's; He has commanded that you worship not but Him; this is the right religion, but most people do not know.* (12:40) And He says in the verse under discussion: *So Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners and he sent down with them the book with the truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed.* Here the sending of the prophets to bring good tiding and to warn has been joined with sending down the book which contains the laws and rules, so as to remove their differences.

Another verse says: *And they say: "There is nothing but our life in this world; we die and live*

and destroys us but time"; and they have no knowledge of that, they only conjecture (45:24). This instance of theirs was not only to refute belief in the hereafter; its real motive was to wriggle out from the responsibilities which result from that belief. Reason says that if you believe in the life hereafter, you must make this life subservient to that one; you must worship the Creator and obey the laws ordained by Him which will guide you in all the spheres of life: worship, social dealings, and the penal law. In short, belief in the hereafter makes it obligatory to follow the dictates of religion, to always keep the improvement of the next life in view. That was the reason why the unbelievers rejected that belief and based their social norms on the assumption that there was nothing beyond life in this world.

Again Allah says: *they do not follow anything but conjecture, and surely conjecture does not avail against the truth at all. Therefore, turn aside from him who turns his back upon Our reminder and does not desire anything but the life of this world. That is the (last) reach of their knowledge... (53:28-30).* In this verse Allah makes it clear that they base their lives on conjecture and ignorance, while Allah invites them to the Abode of Peace and His religion is based on truth and knowledge, and which the prophet calls them towards what gives them life. Allah says, *O you who believe! Answer (the call of) Allah and the Apostle when he calls you to that which gives you life... (8:24).* Life which is mentioned in this verse has been explained in the following verses:

Is he who was dead when we raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like unto him whose similitude is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot forth? (6:122)

Is then he who knows that what has been sent down to you from your Lord is the truth, like unto him who is blind? Only those possessed of understanding shall bear in mind. (13:19)

Say this is my way. I invite (you) unto Allah; with clear sight (are) I and he who follows me; and glory be to Allah, and I am not of polytheists. (12:108)

Say are those who know and those who do not know alike? Only those possessed of understanding shall bear in mind. (39:9)

... an Apostle from among themselves who shall recite to them their communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them... (2:129)

There are many verses like these in the Qur'an extolling the virtues of understanding, calling people to acquire knowledge and follow the path of wisdom. It attaches so much importance to knowledge that has named the pre-Islamic days "the period of ignorance".

With this background, you will realize how unjust is the claim that religion is based on blind faith and ignorance, and is opposed to knowledge and learning.

This allegation was laid by some scientists. They spent their time in natural and social sciences and they did not find in these physical sciences anything which could prove anything metaphysical. And they thought that the "non-existence of proof" is a "proof on non-existence". It is obvious that they were mistaken in that conjecture. Going further, they looked at some myths which some entranced interests had imposed on the masses in their countries, claiming that it was religion, and which in fact was nothing but polytheism - and Allah and His Apostle repudiate the polytheists. Then they had the preaching of priests exhorting the public to accept, without any questioning, the dogma and tenets of that mythical religion.

All these factors led them to declare that religion was against knowledge. But the true religion is too great to encourage ignorance or blind faith, or to exhort to act without understanding. The true religion never uttered a word without proper guidance or without an illuminating book. *And who is more unjust than the one who forgets a lie against Allah or gives the lie to the truth when it has*

come to him? (29:68)

Difference in Religion Itself

Allah informs us in this verse that differences and disunity in the affairs of society and worldly life were removed for the first time by religion. If there are any laws which are apparently non-religious, they too are based on that first religious teaching.

Then Allah informs us that later on there occurred differences in the religion itself. These differences were created by the followers of the religion, who were given the clear book and who possessed knowledge of it. It happened because of their revolt, injustice and rebellion. Allah says: *He has prescribed for you the religion which he enjoined upon Nuh, and that which We have revealed to you, and that which We enjoined upon Ibrahim and Musa and 'Isa, to establish the religion and be not divided therein... And they did not become divided until after the knowledge had come to them, out of rivalry among themselves; and had not a word gone forth from your Lord till an appointed time, certainly the affair would have been decided between them...* (42:13-14)

Also He says: *And mankind was not but a single people, then they differed and had not a word already gone forth from your Lord, the matter would certainly have been decided between them in respect of that concerning which they disagree.* (10:19)

The word which had gone forth was the promise given to Adam: *and for you there is in earth an abode and a provision for a (fixed) time.* (7:24)

The difference among the followers of religion was based on rebellion and revolt, not on any dictate of nature. The divine religion is based on nature and normally people cannot go astray in a natural thing. Nor can the demand of nature change. Allah says: *Then set your face upright for religion, in natural devotion (to the truth) - the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no change in the creation of Allah; that is the right (established) religion...* (30:30)

This in short is the foundation upon which this verse is based.

Man After the World

Then Allah informs us that man shall soon depart from this world and his intermediate station will be a place called barzakh (barrier,), and the final destination is a place called the Hereafter.

His life, after this life is an individualistic one; there will be no social cooperation, mutual help or partnership. Man shall leave this physical world behind, returning to his Lord and Creator. There shall be no room there for that knowledge which we named earlier 'practical knowledge'. There will be no exploitation or taking advantage of others; no civilization, social "give-and-take", nor any other of the paraphernalia connected with the life of this world. His only companion will be his deeds which he did in this world; he will see the good and bad results of his actions. Reality will become clear to him, and he will clearly know the Great News about which they had differed.

Allah says:

And We will inherit of him what he says and he shall come to Us alone (19:80)

And certainly you have come to Us alone as We created you at first, and you have left behind your backs the things which We gave; and we do not see with you your intercessors about whom you asserted that they were (Allah's) associates in respect to you; certainly the ties between you

are now cut off and what you asserted is gone from you (6:94)

There shall every soul become acquainted with what it sent before and they shall be brought back to Allah, their true Master and what they did fabricate shall escape from them (10:30)

What is the matter with you that you do not help each other? Nay! On this day they are submissive. (37:25-26)

On the day when the earth shall be changed into a different earth, and the heavens (as well); and they shall come forth before Allah, the One, the Subduer.(14:48)

And that there is not for man (aught) except what he strives for; and that his striving shall soon be seen; then shall he be recompensed for the fullest recompense. (53:39-41)

These and many such verses clearly show that man's system of life shall change after death. There shall be no cooperation and not striving. There he shall see the result of his striving and the fruits of his actions. All his striving shall appear before him in its true color and he shall be recompensed for it with the fullest measure.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSE 214

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَّاءُ وَزُلْزِلُوا حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَى نَصُرُ اللَّهُ أَلا إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ 2:214

2:214 *Or do you think that you would enter the Garden while yet the like of those who have passed away before you has not come upon you; distress and affliction befell them and they were shaken violently, so that the apostle and those who believed with him said: When will the help of Allah come? Now, surely the help of Allah is nigh!*

Commentary

It has already been mentioned that these verses (from 2:208 to 2:214) are in one context and related to each other.

Qur'an: *Or do you think that you would enter the Garden:*

It concludes what was described in the previous verse: Religion is a guidance from Allah to lead mankind to what contains their prosperity and happiness in this world and the hereafter; and it is a grace of Allah bestowed upon them. Therefore, it is essential for them to submit themselves to this religion, without following in the footsteps of Satan. They should not create differences in it and should not turn the medicine itself into a disease; they should not change the bounty of Allah into disbelief and ingratitude, by following their lust and desire, and seeking the trinkets of this world and its decorations. If they do so, they will incur the wrath of Allah, as happened in the case of the Israelites when they perverted the bounty of Allah given to them. They must remember that the trial is continuing and the test is in progress. They also will be tested as the previous people were put to test; and no one will get the bliss of religion and nearness to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, except through fortitude and complete submission to His commands.

The first two verses were addressed directly to the believers, then the style was changed, treating them in the third person, finally in this verse they are again addressed in the second person, treating them as present. The fact is that the whole talk is with them and they are the real audience. But the style was changed in the middle verses for some good reasons (for example, those verses contained the topics of chastisement and punishment.) When the purpose was served, once again a direct address was resumed.

The word *am* (or) gives here the meaning of "but." It is made for "or", but the context of the verses gives it the following meaning: Do you intend to devote *yourselves solely* to what I have told you - to submit to Me, to believe in Me and to remain steadfast on the right path of religion, maintaining unity and cooperation - Or do you not; but think that you would enter the Garden ...

Qur'an: *while yet the like of those who have passed away before you has not come to you.*

mathal and *mithl* are used for that likeness which creates a picture of the thing for which it is used in the mind of the hearer.

Mathal (adage) is generally used for a saying or story which brings to mind the intended meaning in the shape of an illustrative metaphor, as Allah says: *The similitude [mathal] I of those who were placed under the Torah then they did not hold it, is as the similitude of the donkey bearing books...* (62: 5) Also, *mathal* is used in the meaning of adjectives, as Allah says: *See how they coin comparisons [amthal,] for you...* (25:9) They were using for him (s.a.w.) adjectives like insane, bewitching, lying, etc.

In this verse, the word *mathal* is used in the first meaning, because the similitude is explained in the words, *distress and affliction befell them...*

Qur'an: *distress and affliction befell them and they were shaken violently:*

When a short reference was made to "the like of those who have passed away *before you*", the audience became anxious to know what had befallen them. Then Allah described it in detail in these words, *distress and affliction befell them...*

Distress (*ba'sa*) is that hardship which befalls a man outside his person, like to property, prestige, family or in the general law and order of the society. Affliction (*darra*) means that hardship which befalls him in his person, like a wound, murder, sickness, etc. *Zalزالah* and *zilzal* means an earthquake. Its root is *zalla* which means 'slipped up', 'stumbled'. The root word is repeated in this verb to imply repeated stumbling and slipping up. Anyhow the word is metaphorically used for being agitated and disturbed, and that is why we have translated it "were shaken violently."

Qur'an: *so that the apostle and those who believe with him said: When will the help of Allah come?*

Apparently it was the saying of the apostle and the believers together. There can be no objection as to why the apostle should utter such words. He might have exclaimed so to seek the help of Allah which He had promised in these verses: *And certainly Our word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the apostles, most surely they shall be the assisted ones.* (37:171-172) Also He said, *Allah has written down: I will most certainly prevail, I and my apostles.* (58:21)

Allah says: *Until when the apostles despaired and deemed they were indeed told a lie, Our help came to them...* (12:110) We may see that the tone of this verse is far harsher than the verse under discussion.

Qur'an: *Now, surely the help of Allah is nigh:*

Apparently this is Allah's answer to the call of the apostle and the believers.

It has already been mentioned that the verse proves that the test and trial of the people will continue in this nation also as it did for the previous ones. Also, it shows that if the same actions and attitudes appear again, the same consequences will follow. It is true in the religion also, as historians say that the history repeats itself.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSE 215

2:215 مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَإِذَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ 2:215 They ask you as to what they should spend Say: Whatever of good you spend, it is for the parents, and the near of kin, and the orphans, and the poor, and the way-farer; and whatever of good you do Allah surely knows it. And when We said to the angels: "Prostrate before Adam", then all prostrated except Iblis. He refused and he showed arrogance and he was one of the unbelievers.

Commentary

Qur'an: They ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever of good you spend...

The scholars say that the style of this verse is one of philosophy. The questioners had asked about what they should spend. But that question was foolish, because one does not need divine revelation to know that what is spent is wealth in all its various shapes. Rather, they should have asked: Whom the wealth should be spent for. Therefore, Allah mentioned, instead, the deserving beneficiaries, which the questioners should have asked in the first place.

It is good reasoning; but those scholars have left out one important point. Even though the verse did not reply to their question directly, it has touched on it, and has hinted at the reply in two places: *Whatever of good you spend* and *whatever of good you do*. The verse, therefore, shows that the thing to be spent is wealth, irrespective of its shape and quantity; and that spending it on worthy beneficiaries is a good deed and Allah knows it very well; then it makes them aware that they should rather have asked the Dames of the beneficiaries, and guides them in this respect by giving the list: the parents, the near relatives, the orphans, the poor and the way-farer.

One finds in the commentaries of the Qur'an some strange explanations of this verse:

One of them says: "what" (*ma*) in *what they should spend* was not used by the questioners to enquire about the quiddity and essence of the thing which should be spent, because it is from the terminology of logic, and is not worthy of any literary speech of eloquent style, let alone the Qur'an which is the purest of the Arabic literature. Rather the word "what" was used for "how"; they wanted to know how they should spend their wealth and on whom. Accordingly, the verse answered that question. The reply, therefore, is according to the question, and the reasoning of the scholars of eloquence (given earlier) is out of place.

Someone else went a step further. He said: It is true that "what" is used to ask about the *essence*; *eventhen* the questioners' aim was to ask as to "how" they should spend. It was known that "what" is spent is wealth. As this was well-known, there was no risk of their being misunderstood; the hearer was bound to understand that they wanted to ask about "how." It is like the verse: *they said: "Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is, for surely to us all the cows are alike..."* (2:70) They knew that the cow is an animal having such shape and such characteristics. Therefore, the words *what she is* could not be taken to mean that they wanted to know its quiddity -its genus and

species. The only possible meaning, thus, was that they wanted to know the particulars of that cow so that they might distinguish it from the others. That is why they were given the reply, *He (Musa) said: "He (Allah) says, surely she is a cow not made submissive that she should plough the land... "* (2:71)

Both the commentators seem confused. It is true that *ma* (what) is not used in language to ask about the quiddity of a thing, according to the terminology of logic - for a definition made up of the nearest genus and species. But it does not mean that it is made for the question about "how." It would be a linguistic mistake for the one who wants to ask, "for whom should I spend?" to say "what should I spend?"

Ma (what) is made so as to ask for the factors which might distinguish one thing from others. The reply may be given by a logical definition using the nearest genus and *species*, or by describing such other distinctive characteristics and qualities by which that thing may easily be recognized. The word "what" is, therefore, general and includes the logical term, but is not different from it. And certainly it is not made to ask "how." The question about the cow and its reply (2:70-71) was asked and given correctly according to the language. There was no deviation in either from the real meaning of "what" - the question was about distinguishing factors of a thing.

A third one said: As the quiddity and essence was well-known, there was no alternative but to divert the word "what" to mean "how."

It is a manifest error. That the answer is well-known, is no justification for changing the meaning of a word to mean something quite different.

There is one more strange explanation: The questioners had asked both questions - what should they spend, and where. The Qur'an mentioned only the first question and omitted the second, because the reply pointed to it. What nonsense!

Now, we come back to the verse. There is no doubt that there is here a diversion, in the main reply, from the asked question, to remind the people that the question worthy of asking was "where", not "what", they should spend, because it was no secret that spending is done from wealth and riches.

We find in the Qur'an that it often diverts its speech from one meaning to another, to point out that the new topic is more worthy of attention. It is a style of beauty which is difficult to find in other books. See for example:

And the parable of those who disbelieve is the parable of one who shouts to that which hears not but a call and a cry... (2:17)

(Here the parable has been diverted to a satire against the idols.)

The likeness of what they spend in the life of this world is as the likeness of a wind in which is intense cold, (that) smote upon the tilth of a people who had done injustice to their souls, and destroyed it. (3:117)

(The parable is diverted from the wealth spent to its ultimate forfeiture.)

The parable of those who *spend their* wealth in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears, in every ear there are a *hundred grains*; and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases... ; (2:261)

(The parable is diverted from those who spend in the way of Allah to the manifold increase in its reward.)

The day on which neither property will avail nor sons, except him who comes to Allah with a heart free(from evil). (26:88-89)

(Instead of praising the heart, free from evil, the believer is praised who has got that heart, to show the importance of the believer.)

Say: I do not ask you aught of recompense for it, except that he who will, may take the way to his Lord.(25:57)

Glory be to Allah (for freedom) from what they describe except the servants of Allah, the purified ones. (37:159-160) There are many such verses.

Qur'an: *and whatever of good you do*, Allah surely knows it.: The word spending has been changed here to "doing good"; likewise, in the beginning of the verse "wealth" was changed to "good" ("whatever of good you spend").

This change guides us to two principles:

First: It is very much recommended that one should spend one's wealth on the recognized beneficiaries - it does not matter whether the amount is small or large. But what matters is that the thing spent should be "good", desirable and likeable. Allah says: *Never shall you attain to righteousness until you spend(benevolently) out of what you love* (3:91); *O you who believe! Spend (benevolently) out of the good things that you have earned and what We have brought forth for you out of the earth; and do not aim at what is bad that you may spend of it (in charity) while you would not take it yourselves unless you connive at it*(2:267)

Second: The spending should not be in a bad manner. The spending should be without reminding the receiver reproachfully of it or injuring his feelings. Allah says: *... then do not follow up what they have spent with obligation (reproach) or injury...* (2:262);

And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever can be spared... (2:219)

Traditions

There is a saying of Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "I did not see any people better than the companions of Muhammad. They did not ask him except thirteen questions till he was taken away (from this world), all of those (questions) are in the Qur'an. Among them are: 'They ask you about the intoxicants and games of chance'; 'They ask you about the sacred month'; 'They ask you about the, orphans'; 'They ask you about the menses'; 'They ask you about the booty'; 'They ask you as to what they should spend'. They never asked but what was of (practical) to them." [*ad-Durru'l-manthur*]

It is written in *Majmau l-bayan* that this verse was revealed about 'Amr ibn al-Jamuh; he was a very old man of great wealth. He said: "O Messenger of Allah! What should I give in charity and to whom?" Then Allah revealed this verse.

The author says: This tradition has also been narrated in *adDurru l-manthur* through Ibn al-Mundhir from Ibn Hayyan. But the scholars have said that this tradition is weak. Apart from the weakness in the chain of narrators, it is not in conformity with the verse, because the verse mentions only one question as to what should be spent, and not on whom.

Similarly, two other traditions reported in that book do not conform with the verse. The first is narrated through Ibn Jarir and Ibn al-Mundhir from Ibn Jarir that he said: "The believers asked the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) where they should put (i.e. spend) their wealth. So, the verse was revealed: *They ask you as to what they should spend. Say: 'Whatever of good you spend...'* This, then, is voluntary (non-obligatory) expenditure; and *zakat* is different from all of it."

The second one is narrated from as-Suddi that he said: The day when this verse was revealed, there was no *zakat*. It is (about) the spending what one does on one's family and the alms one gives away. Then (the law of) *zakat* abrogated it.

The author says: It is clear that the relation between the verse of *zakat* (*Take alms out of their wealth* -9:103) and this verse is not of abrogation at all. Or does the word "abrogation" mean something else in their language?

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 216-218

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَى أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ 2:216

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ قِتَالٍ فِيهِ قُلْ قِتَالٌ فِيهِ كَبِيرٌ وَصَدٌّ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَكُفْرٌ بِهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِخْرَاجُ أَهْلِهِ مِنْهُ أَكْبَرُ عِندَ اللَّهِ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَكْبَرُ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ وَلَا يَزَالُونَ يُقَاتِلُونَكَ حَتَّى يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَن دِينِكُمْ إِنِ اسْتَطَاعُوا وَمَن يَرْتَدِدْ مِنكُمْ عَن دِينِهِ فَيَمُتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ فَأُولَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ 2:217

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ 2:218

2:216 Fighting has been prescribed for you, and it is (an object of) dislike to you; and it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you love a thing while it is evil for you; and Allah knows, while you do not know.

2:217 They ask you concerning the sacred month about fighting in it Say: Fighting in it is a grave matter; and hindering (men) from Allah's way and denying it, and (hindering men from) the Sacred Mosque and turning its people out of it are still graver with Allah, and the mischief is graver than the killing; and they will go on fighting with you so that they may turn you back from your religion if they can; and whoever of you turns back from his religion, then dies while an unbeliever these it is whose deeds are forfeited in this world and the hereafter; and they are the inmates of the fire; therein shall they abide.

2:218 Surely those who believed and those who fled (their home) and strove hard in the way of Allah, these hope for the mercy of Allah; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Commentary

Qur'an: *Fighting has been prescribed for you, and it is (an object of) dislike to you:*

It has repeatedly been explained that *kitabah* (writing), which has been translated here as prescription, means an obligatory command, if used in the matter of legislation, and a firm decree, if used in the matter of creation. This verse, therefore, shows that fighting in the way of Allah is compulsory for all believers (as the verse is addressed to them) except those who are exempted by other verses or traditions. For example: *There is no blame (in staying behind) on the weak, nor on the sick, nor on those who do not find what they should spend, so long as they are sincere to Allah and His Apostle... nor on those who when they came to you that you might carry them, you said: I cannot find that on which to carry you... (9:91-92)*

The verb, *kutiba* (has been written) is in the passive voice, because it is followed by the phrase, *and it is (an object of) dislike to you*. It was not proper to mention clearly the name of the writer (i.e. Allah) of a writing which was to be an object of dislike to the believers. By not using the active voice, the verse protected the sanctity of the divine name and removed every chance of slight to it.

Kurh (dislike) is the hardship felt by man in his self, naturally or otherwise. *Karh* (compulsion) is the hardship forced upon him by extraneous agencies as when he is forced to do a work which he

does not like to do. Allah says: ... *it is not lawful for you that you should take women as heritage against (their) will... (4:19);... so He said to it and to the earth: Come both, willingly or unwillingly... (4:11)*

Why was the ordained fighting to be an object of dislike to the believers? Three explanations have been given for it:

1) Fighting entails loss of limbs and lives, economic hardship, monetary loss and the deterioration of law and order; goods necessary for life disappear from the market and become scarce; and many other things crop up in society which man dislikes by nature. Allah has praised the believers in His book and said that a group of them were sincere in their faith and successful in their endeavors. But, at the same time, He has admonished another group of them because of their shaky belief and crooked thinking, as may be seen in the verses revealed about the battles of Badr, Uhud and Khandaq etc. The people addressed by this verse were, therefore, of two types: One, steadfast in their faith, who could not dislike any command of Allah; the other, those who might dislike them, and this second group was more numerous. Therefore, it was quite in order to describe such a mixed group as disliking an order, especially when those disliking it were in the majority.

2) The believers were aware that the unbelievers were well prepared for fighting and had more strength and material support than the Muslims. They, therefore, thought that fighting at that particular time would not be in the interests of the Muslims; hence, the order to fight should be delayed for some other suitable time. This postponement would give them time to increase their manpower, war-material and martial strength. Allah told them in this verse that they were mistaken in this view, because Allah in this affair has a purpose which shall surely be attained; He knows the hidden reality of everything while their knowledge is confined only to the apparent facts.

3) The believers were well-trained by the Qur'an, and, accordingly, they felt clemency towards the creatures of Allah, and mercy and pity had become second nature to them. They did not like fighting with the unbelievers, as it meant that a number of their adversaries would die in disbelief, and the believers were not pleased about that. They would have liked to deal with those adversaries with good humor, and live with them with nobleness and gentleness, inviting them to Islam with good exhortation, hoping that they would come to the right path. They thought that in this way, they would protect themselves from death, and the unbelievers from dying in disbelief and entering into eternal fire.

Allah, in this verse, made it clear that this thought of theirs was not correct. Allah, Who ordained the fighting knew very well that the call of truth would have no effect on those misguided souls who were spiritually a total failure. The true religion could not expect any good from them either in this world or in the next. They were in humanity like a totally degenerated limb which will certainly infect other organs if not removed from the body by a surgical operation.

These are the explanations given for the words of Allah, *and it is* (an object of) *dislike to you*. But the first one is the most appropriate, especially if we look at the verses admonishing a group of believers (referred to in the explanation) and keep in view the passive voice of the verb, *has been written on you*, i.e., has been prescribed for you.

Qur'an: *and it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you:*

It has already been explained that the words like "may be" and "perhaps", when used in divine speech, means "it is hoped." This hope is related not to the speaker (Allah) but to the hearers. In other words, where Allah says: *may be it is so* it does not mean that He hopes it will be so (Elevated be He from such uncertainties!); rather it means that the hearers should hope or expect it in this way.

The repetition of "may be" in this sentence and, the following one (*and it may be that you love a*

thing while it is evil for you) means that the believers disliked fighting and loved peace; so Allah told them that they were mistaken in both. If the sentence is framed without repeating the word "may be" (i.e. 'and it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you or love a thing while it is evil for you') it will convey the idea that "your dislike and love have no significance, because such feelings are often misplaced." Such a sentence is addressed to the one who has erred in something, for example, if one dislikes meeting a certain person. But if he has erred in two things - e.g., he dislikes mixing with the people and loves seclusion - then the norms of elocution demand that he should be warned against both tendencies, e.g. 'you are neither justified in your dislike, nor are you right in your love; it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you love a thing and it is evil for you; because you do not know the unseen, and, therefore, you cannot find your way towards the hidden realities of any thing.' As the believers, in addition to their dislike of fighting, also loved peace and ease (as is implied in the previous verse: or do you think that you would enter the Garden while yet the like of those who passed away before you has not come upon you). Allah pointed to both mistakes in two separate sentences: it may be that you dislike... and it may be that you love...

Qur'an: and Allah knows while you do not know:

This is the final step in making their mistake known to them. Allah has gradually made them realize that they were in manifest error. To begin with, He told them that it was possible that they were mistaken in their dislike of the fighting (it may be that you dislike...). Their minds accepted the implication of those two sentences; and thus they were freed from their compound ignorance, as now they felt doubtful about the correctness of their views. When that stage was reached, Allah told them clearly that the order which you dislike, is ordained by Him who is not unaware of the hidden realities of the things, while your views are based on your psyche which knows only that much which it has been allowed by Allah to know. Therefore, it is incumbent upon you to leave all such decisions into His hand.

The verse proves that knowledge, in its reality and totality, is Allah's only; and others have no knowledge of their own at all. This reality is explained in many other verses: Allah, surely nothing is hidden from Him... (3:5), and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases... (2:255). And some explanation about fighting has been given in the verse 2:190, And fight in the way of Allah...

Qur'an: They ask you concerning the sacred month about fighting in it:

The verse contains the prohibition of fighting in the sacred month. Then it goes on to say that disbelief and turning the people of the Sacred Mosque out of it are far graver sins and that the mischief is graver than the killing. These sentences show that there must have occurred some incident which prompted the believers to ask the question, and that there was some killing in that incident, but that killing was not intentional. (See the last verse: Surely those who believed... these hope for the mercy of Allah.) All these pointers confirm what has been described in the traditions that some believers had killed an unbeliever unknowingly in the sacred month in a battle, and that the unbelievers had ridiculed the Muslims for it. The incident was that of 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh and his companions.

Qur'an: Say, fighting, in it is a grave matter; and hindering (men) from Allah's way and denying it and(hindering men from) the Sacred Mosque... :

"Allah's way" means worship and virtuous actions and especially the pilgrimage (~*affl*). Apparently the pronoun "it" in "denying it" refers to "Allah's way"; thus it would mean denial in practice, not in faith. And "the Sacred Mosque" is in conjunction with "Allah's way", and means 'hindering from

Allah's way and the Sacred Mosque'.

The verse clearly shows that fighting in the sacred month is forbidden.

It has been said that this verse was abrogated by the verse: *then slay the idolaters wherever you find them (9:5)* But this view is not correct, and some explanation about it have been given in the commentary of the verses of fighting.

Qur'an: *and turning its people out of it are still graver with Allah, and the mischief is graver than the killing:*

What the idolaters had done - turning the Apostle of Allah and the believers out of the Sacred Mosque (and they were truly the people of the Sacred Mosque) - is far graver than fighting. And the mischief done by them in rebuking the believers and calling them back to disbelief is graver than killing. Therefore, they have no right to reprove the believers for killing when they themselves had committed far graver sins'. So far as the believers are concerned, they still hope for the mercy of Allah, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Qur'an: *and they will go on fighting with you so that they may turn you back... :*

hatta means "till"; but here it signifies cause or purpose. That is why it has been translated here as "so that."

Qur'an: *and whoever of you turns back... these it is whose deeds are forfeited... and they are inmates of fire:*

It threatens apostates with the forfeiture of their deeds and an eternal abode in the Fire.

Traditions

Ibn Jarir has narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "I was riding (on a camel) behind the Messenger of Allah. He said: 'O Ibn 'Abbas! Be satisfied with what Allah (*qaddara*) has measured (decreed) for you even if it is against your wishes; because it is so written in the Book of Allah.' I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! And where is it, and I have read the Qur'an?' He said: 'and it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you love a thing while it is evil for you; and Allah knows, while you do not know.'" [*ad-Durru'l manthur*]

The author says: This tradition implies that *taqdir*(measure, decree) is a general word, covering both legislation and creation, and that its meaning varies according to the context. But this tradition does not show that *asa* (may be) can be used to mean obligation. it has been explained that this word is used in the Qur'an in its literal meaning, and that is "may-be", expectation. Therefore, the opinion expressed by a commentator that wherever the word *asa* has been used in the Qur'an the "may-be" of Allah implies compulsion is not worthy of consideration. Even more strange is the view of another that wherever "may-be" comes in the Qur'an it indicates compulsion (obligation) except in two verses, one in the chapter of *at-Tahrlin* (*Maybe if he divorces you...*), and the other in the chapter of *al-'Isra* (*It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you...*)

There is a tradition narrated by Ibn Jarir from the chain of as-Suddi: The Messenger of Allah sent a company consisting of seven of his companions, under the command of 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh al-Asadi. The other members were: 'Ammar ibn Yasir Hudhayfah ibn 'Utbah ibn Rabi'ah, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, 'Utbah ibn Ghazwan as-Sulami (an ally of Bani Nawfal), Sahl ibn

Bayda, 'Amir ibn Fuhayrah and Waqid ibn 'Abdullah al-Yarbu'i (an ally of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab).

The Prophet wrote a letter and gave it to 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh telling him not to read it until he camped at Malal. When 'Abdullah camped at the valley of Malal, he opened the letter. Written in it was: "Proceed till you camp in the valley of Nakhlah." On reading it he told his companions: "Anyone who is ready to die let him proceed (with me) and make his will, because I am making my will and

proceeding as ordered by the Messenger of Allah." So he went on, and only Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas and 'Utbah ibn Ghazwan remained behind because they had lost their camel. And Abdullah ibn Jahsh went forward, and lo! they unexpectedly met al-Hakam ibn Kaysan, 'Abdullah ibn al-Mughirah ibn Uthman and 'Amr al-Hadrami. They fought and arrested al-Hakam ibn Kaysan and 'Abdullah ibn al-Mughirah; and al-Mughirah fled away; and 'Amr al-Hadrami was killed by Waqid ibn 'Abdullah. And it was the first booty taken by the companions of Muhammad (s.a.w.). When they returned to Medina with the two captives and the booty, the polytheists said: "Muhammad thinks that he follows the commands of Allah and he is the first to desecrate the sacred month." Then Allah sent down the verse: *They ask you concerning the sacred month about fighting in it. Say: Fighting in it is a grave matter; is not allowed, And what you did, O polytheists! is still graver than killing in the sacred month, because you disbelieved in Allah, and hindered Muhammad from Allah's way; and the mischief, that is polytheism, is graver before Allah than the killing. And this is the saying of Allah, and hindering (men) from Allah's way and denying it. [ad-Durru'l-manthur]*

The author says: The traditions giving this and similar meanings are numerous from Sunni chains. And this meaning is also narrated in *Majma'u'l-bayan*; and some traditions say that the company consisted of eight persons, the ninth being their leader.

Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim and al-Bayhaqi have narrated from the chain of Yazid ibn Rawman from 'Urwah, that he said: "The Messenger of Allah sent 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh to Nakhlah, and told him: 'Stay there until you bring to us some news about (the activities and intentions of) the Quraysh.' And he did not order him to fight. And it was in the sacred month. And he (i.e. the Messenger of Allah) wrote for him a letter before informing him about the journey, and told him: 'Go out with your companions; when you have traveled two days, open (this) your letter and look into it and proceed to do what I have ordered you in it. And do not force any of your companions to go with you (against his wishes)' When he traveled for two days, he opened the letter and found in it (the words): 'Proceed further until you camp at Nakhlah, and bring for us whatever information reaches you about the Quraysh.' When he ('Abdullah ibn Jahsh) read the order, he told his companions: 'Hearing and obeying! Whoever among you desires martyrdom, should come with me, for I am proceeding on the order of the Messenger of Allah. And whoever among you dislikes it let him go back, because the Messenger of Allah has forbidden me to compel anyone of you (against his wishes).' The whole group proceeded with him until they reached Najran where Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas and 'Utbah ibn Ghazwan lost a camel which they rode alternately. They, therefore, remained behind to search for it; and the others went forward till they camped at Nakhlah. Then passed by them 'Amr al-Hadrami, al-Hakam Ibn Kaysan, 'Uthman and al-Mughirah ibn 'Abdullah; with them was the merchandise which they had brought. from at-Ta'if condiments and oil. When they saw them, Waqid ibn 'Abdullah rose high to show himself to them, and he had shaved his head. When they saw him with shaved head, 'Amr said: 'No harm will befall you from him.' And the companions of the Messenger of Allah consulted with one another about the polytheists; and it was the last day of *Jumada 'l-ukhra*. They thought: if we kill them it will be in the sacred month, and if we leave them, they will enter Mecca this night and they will be on guard. At last, they all decided to kill them. Waqid ibn 'Abdullah at-Tamimi shot an arrow at 'Amr al-Hadrami and killed him. 'Uthman ibn 'Abdullah and al-Hakam ibn Kaysan were captured, and al-Mughirah ran away and they could not catch him. And they took the caravan and came with it to the Messenger of Allah. He told them: 'By God! I had not ordered you to fight in the sacred month.' And he kept the matter of the goods and the captives in suspense and did not accept anything from it. When the Messenger of Allah said to them what he said, they felt ashamed and thought that they had fallen into perdition; and their brethren, the Muslims,

upbraided them harshly. When the report of the incident reached the Quraysh, they said: 'Muhammad spilled unlawful blood, and took property, and arrested men and desecrated the sacred month.' Then Allah sent down the verse: *They ask you concerning the sacred month about fighting in it...* When it was revealed, the Messenger of Allah retained the merchandise and freed the two captives on ransom. The Muslims asked: 'O Messenger of Allah! Do you hope that it will be (counted as) a *jihad*(religious war) for us? Then Allah revealed the verse:*Surely those who believed and those who fled (their home) and strove hard in the way of Allah these hope for the mercy of Allah; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.* And they were eight people, and the ninth was their leader, 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh." [ad-Durru'l-manthur]

The author says: There are other traditions showing that this verse: *Surely those who believed... Merciful*, was revealed about the group of 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh.

This verse proves that if someone performs an act of obedience, with the intention of coming nearer to Allah, but it turns out to be a mistake, not a good deed, then he is not counted as a sinner because he did it inadvertently. Also, the last sentence of the verse, mentioning the forgiveness of Allah, shows that divine forgiveness covers even those situations where there was no sin or error. Therefore, the use of the word "forgiveness" or its derivatives does not necessarily mean that the recipient of the divine forgiveness had committed a sin.

The traditions imply that "They ask" refers to the Muslims, not the polytheists who ridiculed the Muslims. This view is supported by the tradition of Ibn 'Abbas mentioned under the preceding verse: I did not see any people better than the companions of Muhammad. They did not ask him except thirteen questions till he was taken away (from this world), all of those questions are in the Qur'an. Among them are: *They ask you about the intoxicants and games of chance; They ask you about the sacred month...* Also, the context of the verse supports it, as the words: *and they will go on fighting with you...* are addressed to the believers.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 219-220

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِنَّهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ
 اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ 2:219
 فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْيَتَامَى قُلْ إِصْلَاحٌ لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ وَإِنْ تُخَالِطُوهُمْ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ
 لَأَعْنَتَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ 2:220

2:219 They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance, Say: In both of them there is a great sin and (some) profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit. And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever can be spared Thus does Allah make clear to you the signs that you may ponder.

2:220 About this world and the hereafter. And they ask you concerning the orphans. Say: To set right for them (their affairs) is good; and if you mingle with them, they are your brethren; and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well-doer; and if Allah had willed, He would certainly have made it hard for you; surely Allah is Mighty, Wise.

Commentary

Qur'an: They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance.:

According to the language, intoxicant (*khamr*) is every liquid which is made to intoxicate. The root word, *khamr* means to "to hide." The liquor is called *khamr* because it hides reason and does not allow it to discriminate between right and wrong, between good and bad.

From the same root is derived *khimar* i.e., the veil which covers the head of a women. *Khammartu'l-ina* means "I covered the opening of the pot." When yeast is added to dough, they say *ikhamarrati'l-ajin*. And the yeast itself is called *khamirah* because when it is mixed with flour, it covers the flour when it rises and ferments.

The Arabs did not know any alcoholic beverages except those made from grapes, dates and barley. Gradually, new kinds were invented and now its types and kinds are innumerable, with varying grades of intoxication. But all are intoxicant (*khamr*). *Maysir* according to the language is gambling. The gambler is called *yasir*.

The root word, *yusr* meansease. Gambling was called *maysir* because by it one might get wealth with ease without going to the trouble of earning and working.

The word *maysir* was mostly used for a particular method of gambling with arrows. It was also called *dazlam* and *aqlam* It was played by ten persons in the following manner:

A camel was purchased, slaughtered and divided into twenty four parts. There were ten arrows: each had a separate name and its specified share. Their names (with their shares in brackets) are given hereunder:

Fadhhdh (1); *taw'am* (2); *raqib* (3); *hils* (4); *nafis* (5); *musbil* (6); *mu'alla* The remaining three arrows drawn with the names of the participants; anyone on whose name one of the first seven arrows

was drawn took the number of the shares allotted to it; those on whose names the last named three arrows were drawn got nothing and had to pay the price of the camel.

Qur'an: *Say: In both of them... sin is greater than profit:*

Sin (*ithm*) is near to evil (*dhanb*) in meaning. It means a condition in the thing or in reason which prevents the man from getting the good. In other words, *ithm* is that evil which brings unhappiness and failure even in other affairs, and disturbs the felicity of life even in other matters.

Clearly, alcoholic drinks and games of chance fit this description.

The health hazards of alcohol have been described in untold numbers of books Written by ancient and modern physicians, in which they have listed the havoc created by it in the stomach, the intestines, the liver, the lungs, the nervous system, the veins and arteries, the heart and the organs of perception, i.e. the eyes, the tongue, etc. The data collected by them show the vast magnitude of the damage to the millions and millions of people who are attacked by a variety of diseases caused by this killing poison.

The social and moral disasters appearing in the wake of addiction to drink are too well-known to need any description. Depravity of character, debauchery, shamelessness, the leakage of secrets, scandals, slanders, destruction and damage to others, crimes, murder - name any immorality, alcohol will lead to it. In short, it nullifies all ethical laws and moral values upon which are based the felicity and bliss of this life and, more particularly, the values of chastity and probity. Who can protect society from a drunkard who does not understand what he says and does not know what he does. Look at the crimes which have wrecked havoc throughout the world and have made human life a misery; search for their causes, and behind almost all of them you will see the hand of alcohol, directly or indirectly manipulating the minds of the criminals.

Nobody can deny the damage inflicted by alcohol upon the mind. Is there any need to describe how it negates the reason, puts the thinking process out of equilibrium and distorts the feelings and perceptions, not only during intoxication, but even afterwards. This damage to the whole system of perception and reason is the biggest sin and disaster of alcohol, from which sprout all other sins and disasters.

Islam, as described earlier, has based its laws on true reason, and has most emphatically forbidden all such actions which hinder the proper functioning of reason. Intoxicants, games of chance, adultery, falsehood and other such sins come in this category. The activities which are most damaging to the faculty of reason are drinking alcohol (among the deeds) and speaking lies (among the words).

These activities which nullify the rule of reason, and especially the politics which is based on alcohol and lies, endanger humanity, and destroy the foundation of happiness. Whenever such a policy bears a fruit, it proves fat more bitter than the previous one. When a burden proves unbearable, they add on some more weight

And hope that the practice will make the bearer perfect, and would give him more strength! Such endeavours, result in failure; such activities end in loss. This one characteristic of Islam - that it has based its *shari'ah* on reason and has prohibited all such things which damage it - is enough to place it at the top of all the systems invented by human beings throughout the world.

Human beings, because of their animal tendencies, eagerly run towards the satisfaction of their lust. Lustful activities easily contaminate the environment, in contrast to chastity and piety. It is easy to acquire a bad habit and very difficult to leave it. That is why Allah legislated such laws gradually, and led people to the ultimate goal step by step and sympathetically. One of those widely-spread evils was the drinking of alcohol. And a cursory glance at the four verses revealed about the subject will show how, by easy stages, they were weaned from this bad habit.

First, Allah revealed, *Say: My Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those that are concealed, and sin and rebellion without justice, and that you associate with Allah that for which He has not sent down any authority, and that you say against Allah what you do not know.*(7:33)

This verse was revealed in Mecca, and it has clearly forbidden the sin *harrama*. Now we know that there is sin - great sin even - in alcohol, although at that time Allah did not clarify what sin was. This ambiguity was, perhaps, a sort of compassion; it was as though the *shari'ah* wanted to overlook that sin of theirs for the time being. The same is the reason for the indirect hint in another verse of the same Meccan period: *And of the fruits of the palms and the grapes you obtain from them intoxication and goodly provision (16:67)* It separated intoxication from "goodly provision" but stopped short of declaring it as a "bad provision."

Apparently people were not aware that intoxication was a great sin, until the verse was revealed: *O you who believe! Do not go near prayer when you are intoxicated until you know (well) what you say... (4:43)*

This verse was revealed at Medina, and it promulgated the partial prohibition of liquor in the best of the times and the best of the places - at the time of prayer in the mosque.

Reason and the context of the verse shows that this verse could not have been revealed after the verses of the chapters of *al-Baqarah* and *al-Ma'idah* (which will be described shortly), because those verses promulgate total prohibition. There was no reason why a partial ban should be imposed after a total prohibition. Also, we know that this prohibition was promulgated gradually, and such a case demands proceeding from an easier step to a, more difficult one, and not vice versa.

Then came the verse under discussion. It says that there is in intoxicants and games of chance *a great sin and (some) profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit.*

This verse, revealed after the above-mentioned verse 4:43, promulgates total prohibition of intoxicants and games of chance. It clearly says that "there is great sin" in these two evils. And verse 7:33, mentioned in the beginning, revealed at Mecca, had clearly prohibited sin.

This explanation exposes the absurdity of a commentator who says that this verse was not clear about the prohibition of liquor. First, let us give you a gist of what he says:

"This verse of the chapter of *al-Baqarah* was not clear about the prohibition of alcohol and gambling; the words of Allah that there is great sin in them only show that these are sinful acts, and sin means harm. Even if we say that every harmful thing is prohibited, it does not include those things which are partially harmful and partially beneficial. That is why there was a difference of opinion about alcohol among the companions of the Prophet. Some of them left drinking after the revelation of this verse, while others continued to drink. Perhaps, the drinkers thought that they could easily enjoy its profit safeguarding themselves from its harms. When the ground was thus prepared, Allah revealed the verse of the chapter of *al-Ma'idah* which totally and clearly prohibits these things: *O you believe! Intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (dividing by) arrows are an abomination of Satan's handy works; shun it therefore that you may be successful... Will you then desist? (5:93-94)*"

Now let us look critically at the above argument:

First: A major part of this argument rests on the assumption that sin means harm. But it is wrong. Just because in this verse it is followed by the words, and (some) *profit for men*, it does not imply that its meaning is "harm" or "loss", i.e. the opposite of "benefit." How can the word "sin" (*ithm*) be taken to mean "harm" in the verses listed below?:

And whoever associates anything with Allah, he devises indeed a great sin. (4:48)

And whoever conceals it (i.e. testimony), his heart is surely sinful. (2:283)

Surely I wish that you should bear my sin as well as your own sin. (5:29)

Every man of them shall have what he has earned of sin. (24:11)

And, whoever earns a sin, he earns it only against his own self. (4: 111)

There are many such verses.

Second: The verse did not say that the order was given "because" of the harm inherent in alcohol. It just promulgated the law. There was no justification for the companions to follow their own opinion in this case.

Even if we admit, for the sake of argument, that the verse gives the reason for that order, that reason is not the harm, but the greatness of the harm as compared with the profit. The verse says in clear words, *and their sin is greater than their profit. Such* a clear declaration leaves no room at all for the exercise of one's own opinion. Opinion has no place in the presence of a clear order of Allah and the Apostle.

Third: Let us suppose, for the time being, that the verse did not clearly say that liquor and gambling were forbidden. But did it not say in clear words that they were great sins? Was not this verse revealed at Medina? Had not verse 7:33, revealed years ago at Mecca, dearly prohibited the sin? What excuse can be offered by those companions who followed their own opinion in opposition to these verses of Mecca and Medina, which taken jointly clearly prohibit alcohol and games of chance?

Verse 7:33 prohibits all sins. And this verse under discussion uses the adjective 'great' (*kabir*) and 'greater' (*akbar*) for the sins of alcohol and gambling. In view of this nobody can remain in any doubt that these two evils are the greatest of all sins; nor can there remain any doubt about their absolute prohibition. The Qur'an has termed murder, the hiding of testimony, lying and slander etc. as "sin", but it has not used the adjective "great" for any sin except polytheism (*.. and whoever associates anything with Allah, he devises indeed a great sin. - 4:48*) and alcohol and games of chance.

In short, there is no doubt that this verse clearly prohibits these two sins.

Lastly the two verses of the chapter *al-Ma'idah* were revealed: *O you who believe! Intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (dividing by) arrows are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork; shun it therefore that you may be successful. Satan only desires to cause enmity and hatred to spring in your midst by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you off from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will you then desist? (5:93-94)*

The last sentence (*Will you then desist?)* shows that the Muslims had not desisted from drinking alcohol even after the revelation of the verse of the chapter *al-Baqarah* under discussion; and that there was a need for such a strong admonition.

This much about liquor. So far as gambling is concerned its social evils and the ruin caused by it in the structure of life are well-known, and need no description. But we shall further explain it in the fifth chapter.

Now we come back to the meaning of the words used in the verse. Sin (*ithm*) has just now been explained. Greatness (*kibr*) in volume is as numerousness (*kathrah*) in number. Their opposite are smallness (*sighar*) and paucity (*qillah*) respectively.

These two adjectives are relative ones. When there are two things, one of them may be greater than the other, which then will be called smaller than the first. But the first one which was called "greater" may be smaller than a third one. If there was no comparison, there would be neither the greatness nor the smallness; nor would there be an numerousness or paucity.

Probably people first became aware of greatness when they looked at the size of material things

around themselves. Later on they extended this concept to mental visions and ideas. Allah says: Surely it (i.e. hell) is one of the greatest (misfortunes). (74:35); a great (i.e. grievous) word it is that comes out of their mouths. (18:5); great (i.e. hard) to the *unbelievers* is that which you call *them to*. (42:13)

Izam has the same meaning as *kibar* both denote greatness. Apparently *izam* is derived from *'azm* (bone); as the greatness of the body of an animal or man is related to the size of the skeleton - the bones inside - the word *'azm* (bone) was metaphorically used for greatness, and gradually "greatness" became its first meaning.

Naf (profit) is opposite of *darar* (harm, loss) These words are used for the things which are desired or disliked because of other things; while good and bad are used for the things which are liked or disliked by themselves.

Profits for men: It refers to the monetary gains as well as the amusement and merry-making for which people indulge in these two sins.

Allah used here the plural form (profits); but while comparing it with sin He used the singular form (their sin is greater than their profit). As the comparison was in size, and not in number, there was no reason to use the plural which describes the number, not the size.

Qu'ran: *And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever can be spared.*

'Afw originally meant 'to go to a thing to get it.' Then, keeping in view various connections and relations, it came to be used for forgiveness, obliteration of footprints and moderation in spending. It is this last meaning which is intended in this verse, and that is why it has been translated as "whatever can be spared."

In this verse, the reply fits the question in the same way as was explained in the verse 2:215, *They ask you to what they should spend. Say: Whatever of good you spend, it is for the parents...*

Qur'an: *Thus does Allah make clear to you the signs that you may 'ponder about this world and the hereafter.*

Fi 'd-dunya wa 'l-akhirah literally means "in this and the hereafter." But it does not mean 'you may ponder while you are in this world and in the hereafter'. It refers to the subject upon which men are expected to ponder. That is why we have translated it "may ponder about this world ... "

The verse exhorts the believers to ponder on the realities and affairs of both the worlds. This world is a place which Allah has created, for you to live in and for you to earn in it what might be beneficial to you in your permanent home, i.e. the hereafter. That is the place where you will return to your Lord and He will give you the recompense for what you did in this world.

This verse urges people to enquire about, and investigate, the realities of existence, the percepts of the beginning and the end and the mysteries of nature; and to think and ponder upon the social concepts, moral and ethical values, and the laws of life governing individuals and groups. In short, man is expected to think about all the knowledge right from his beginning up to his returning to his Lord, as well as all the affairs coming between these points which have any bearing on the happiness and misery of mankind.

This verse also shows that although the Qur'an demands complete obedience from man towards the command of Allah and His Apostle, without any if and but, yet it likes people to ponder on those commands and their philosophy so that they may grasp their realities and, instead of blindly following the laws, may see the light of those brilliant teachings and follow that light to ultimate destination.

Thus Allah does make clear probably means the explanation of the philosophy behind the given laws and commands, and the clarification of the fundamentals of the faith and belief.

Qur'an: *And they ask you concerning the orphans. Say: "To set right for them (their affairs)*

is good."

There is a hint, a clear indication even, in this verse that it was revealed to lighten some burden - it allows mingling with the orphans, and then goes on to say: *and if Allah had willed, He would certainly have made it hard for you.* It shows that prior to this verse the rules concerning the guardianship of the orphans were hard and difficult, which had caused anxiety and Allah among the Muslims, and which led them to ask the question referred to in the verse.

There were some verses about the orphans, very severe in tone: *And give to the orphans their property, and do not substitute worthless (things) for (their) good (ones), and do not devour their property (as an addition) to your own property; this is surely a great crime. (4:2); As for those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, surely they only swallow fire into their bellies and soon they shall enter into burning fire. (4:10)* Apparently the verse under discussion was revealed after these verses; and the traditions, which will be quoted later, support this view.

The *ishah* (to set right) is used here as a common noun. It denotes, according to the usage of the Arabic language, really good management, not just a show; and the sentence, *and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well-doer*, points to this.

Qu'ran: *and if you mingle with them, they are your brethren:*

This sentence refers to the Islamic concept of the equality of all the believers. This concept nullifies all distinctions which are the basic cause of every mischief which appears in society. It abolishes various types of injustice and rebellion; putting oneself on a high pedestal, treating others as one's slaves, thinking of them as an inferior, and weak species. This abolition of differences creates equilibrium in various social weights; there appears a fine balance between a weak orphan and his powerful guardian, between a rich tycoon and a wretched beggar, and so on. Allah says: *The believers are but brethren. (49:10)*

Now, the verse under discussion allows the guardian to mingle with the orphan only when it is done like the mingling of two brothers who have equal obligation towards each other. If something is taken from an orphan's property, then something of equal value must be given to him and added to his property.

In this context, this verse runs parallel to the verse mentioned earlier, *And give to the orphans their property, and do not substitute worthless (things) for (their) good (ones), and do not devour their property (as an addition) to your own property; this is surely a great crime. (4:2)* A comparison between the two verses shows that the verse under discussion has somewhat lessened the burden of the guardians; and the sentence, *and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well-doer*, also hints at this relaxation of rigor. The meaning is: Now you may mingle with your wards, the orphans (and this is the relaxation of the previous rule); but the mingling should be as of two brother who have equal obligations towards each other. If this condition is fulfilled, then there should be no anxiety and fear on your part. If that mingling is with good intentions, and in order to set their affairs right for them, then it is good; and the reality cannot be hidden from Allah, and He will not reproach you just because you mingled and mixed with the orphans provided you did it for their good, like brethren, and Allah knows the difference between a mischief-maker and a well-doer.

Qur'an: *and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well doer:* Here the preposition, from (*min*) has been used after "knows" (*ya'lamu*); probably it is a hint that "knows" in this verse has the significance of "distinguishes"; and the sentence means, "Allah distinguishes the mischief-maker from the well-doer."

Anat means difficulty and hardship.

Traditions

'Ali ibn Yaqtin said: "al-Mahdi asked Abu'l-Hasan al-Kazim (a.s.) about whether intoxicants were prohibited in the Book of Allah because the people know that it is not allowed but do not know that it is prohibited.

"The Imam said: 'But it is prohibited.' He asked: Where in the Book of Allah is it forbidden? 0 Abu l-Hasan!' He replied: 'The word of Allah: *Say: My Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those, that are concealed, and sin and rebellion without justice* .' (7:33) Then the Imam explained: 'And as for sin, it is intoxicants themselves, because Allah said somewhere else, *they ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: "In both of them there is a great sin and (some)profits, for men, and their sin is greater than their profits.* " So the sin according to the Book of Allah is intoxicants and games of chance, and their sin is greater than their profit, as Allah has said.'

'al-Mahdi said: '0 Ali ibn Yaqtin! This is the legal decree of the house of Hashim.' I said: 'You spoke the truth, 0 leader of the faithful! Praise be to Allah who did not take this knowledge out from you, 0 people of the house!'. "

'Ali ibn Yaqtin says: "By God, al-Mahdi could not restrain, himself from saying to me, 'You spoke the truth, 0 Rafidi [*al-Kafi*]

The author says: The meaning of this tradition can be understood from the commentary.

There is a tradition narrated from Abu Basir that one of the two Imams (i.e. fifth or sixth - a.s.) said: "Verily Allah made a house for sin, then He made a door for the house, then He made a lock for the door, then He made a key for the lock; and (that) key of sin is intoxicants. [*al-Kafi*]

There is another tradition from Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.): "The Messenger of Allah said: 'Verily intoxicants are the head of every sin!'" [*ibid*]

There is a tradition narrated by Isma'il, in which he said: Abu Ja'far (a.s.) went into the Sacred Mosque; some Qurayshites saw him and said: 'He is the god of the people of Iraq.' Someone said: 'If you send one of you to him.' So a young man from among them came to him and asked: '0 Uncle! What is the greatest of the great (sins)?' He said: 'Drinking alcohol.'" [*ibid*]

There is a tradition narrated by Abul-Bilad, that one of the two Imams (al-Baqir or as-Saqid a.s.) said: "Allah has not been disobeyed with anything more powerful than drinking alcohol. Verily one of them leaves the obligatory prayers, and jumps upon his mother and daughter and sister, and he does not know." [*ibid*]

"An atheist asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.): 'Why did Allah prohibit alcohol when there is nothing more delicious than it (The Imam said: 'He prohibited it because it is the mother of all wicked things and the head of every evil. There come a time to the drinker of it when he loses his reason, then he does not know his Lord, and leaves no sin but that he commits it... [*al-Ihtijaj*]

The author says: The traditions explain one another and experience and observation support them.

A tradition from Jabir is reported that Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said: "The Messenger of Allah cursed ten persons concerning an alcoholic beverage - the one who plants it, the one who guards it, the one who squeezes its juice out, the one who drinks it, the one who serves it, the one who transports it, the one to whom it is transported, the one who sells it, the one who purchases it, and the one who eats its price." [*al-Kafi*]

Another tradition says that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "The Messenger of Allah said: 'Cursed is he, cursed is he who sits at a table where alcohol is drunk.'" [*ibid.*, al-Mahasin]

The author says: The above two traditions are confirmed by the words of Allah, *and do not help one another in sin and transgression. (5:3)*

as-Sadiq reports through his chains, from Abu Amamah that he said: "The Messenger of Allah said: 'There are four persons at whom Allah will not look (with mercy) on the day of resurrection - the one who is disobedient (to his parents), the one who helps a man and then reminds him of it, the one who denies the destiny (decreed by Allah), and the one who habitually drinks alcohol.'" [*as-Khisal*]

Ibn 'sh-Shaykh has reported in *al-Amali*, through his chains, from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that the Prophet said: "My Lord, Great is His Glory! has sworn thus: No servant of mine will drink alcohol in this world but that I shall make him drink on the day of resurrection from the boiling water (of hell) as much as he had drunk alcohol; (it would make no difference) whether after that he is punished or forgiven." The Prophet said: "Verily the one who drinks alcohol shall come on the day of resurrection, with blackened face, blue eyes, a slanting jaw-bone and running saliva, licking his tongue from his back side."

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said: "It is an obligation upon Allah (i.e. Allah has made it incumbent upon Himself) that He will make the drinker of alcohol drink what comes out from the vulva of fornicating women. From that vulva will come out pus and thick blood, its heat and stink will offend (even) the inmates of the fire." [*at-Tafsir, al-Qummi*]

The author says: These traditions may be supported by the word of Allah, *Surely the tree of Zaqqum is the food of the sinful, like molten brass; it shall boil in(their) bellies, like the boiling of hot water. Seize him, then drag him down into the midst of Hell; then pour over his head of the torment of the boiling water: Taste (it); you forsooth are the mighty, the honorable! (44:43-49)*

There are numerous traditions with the same meaning as described above.

There is a tradition narrated by al-Washsha that he heard Abul-Hasan (a.s.) saying: "*Maysir*" is gambling." [*al-Kafi*]

The author says: Traditions giving this explanation are numerous; and there is no doubt whatsoever about the meaning.

It is reported, under the verse, *And they ask you as to what they should spend... , that* Ibn 'Abbas said: "Verily, some people from the companions, when they were told to spend in the way of Allah, came to the Prophet and said: 'We do not know what this "spending" is which we have been ordered in our properties. So, what should we spend from it?' Then Allah revealed: *and they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: 'Whatever can be spared'* And before that, one used to spend his wealth until he no longer had anything left to give in alms, and until there remained no property to eat from." [*ad-Durru'l-manthur*]

It is narrated from Yahya that he was told that Ma'adh ibn Jabal and Tha'labah came to the Messenger of Allah and said: "O Messenger of Allah! Verily we have our servants and families; what, therefore, should we spend from our properties?" Then Allah revealed: *And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: 'Whatever can be spared' , "* [*ibid.*]

It is reported that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the word '*afw*'; which we have translated as "whatever can be spared" that is the middle (course). [*ibid., al-Ayyashi*]

And it is written that al-Baqir (a.s.) and as-Sadiq (a.s.) said that it is modicum, a sufficiency. And the tradition of Abu Basr interprets it as frugality, thrift. [*al-'Ayyashi*]

It is reported from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the verse: *And they who when they spend, are neither extravagant nor parsimonious, and (keep) between these the just mean ~25:67)* that he said: "This

(stage) is after this stage; it is the middle." [ibid]

al-Baqir (a.s.) said: "'awf is what is in excess of the maintenance of the year." [Majma'u'l-bayan]

The author says: The tradition express the same meanings in different words; and the last one gives an example of *awf*.

There are innumerable traditions showing the excellence of alms, its ways, place and quantity; some of which shall be quoted in the relevant places, God willing.

There is a tradition from as-Saqid (a.s.) about the verse: *And they ask you concerning the orphans...* that he said: "When the verse: (As for) *those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, surely they only swallow fire into their bellies and soon they shall enter burning fire*, everyone who had any orphan with him turned him out; and they asked the Messenger of Allah about turning them out. Then Allah revealed: *And they ask you concerning the orphans. Say: 'To set right for them (their affairs) is good; and if you mingle with them, they are your brethren; and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well-doer* [at-Tafsir, al-Qummi]

There is a tradition from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: When Allah revealed: *And do not approach the property of the orphan except in the best manner... (6:153) and those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly...*, every one who had an orphan with him went (to his home) and separated his (orphan's) food from his own food and his drink from his own drink; and he put some extra portion in the orphan's food, and kept it reserved for him till he ate it or it deteriorated and he threw it away. This system proved very hard for them, so they mentioned it to the Messenger of Allah. Then Allah revealed: *And they ask you concerning the orphans... and if you mingle with them, they are your brethren...* Then they mixed their food with their own food and their drink with their own drink. [ad-Durru'l manthur]

The author says: The same thing has been narrated from Sa'id ibn Jubayr, 'Ata and Qatadah.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSE 221

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكَاتِ حَتَّى يُؤْمِنَ وَلَأَمَةٌ مُؤْمِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ وَلَا تُنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّى يُؤْمِنُوا وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكُمْ أُولَئِكَ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيُبَيِّنُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ 2:221

2:221 And do not marry the idolatresses until they believe; and certainly a believing bondswoman is better than an idolatress, even though she should allure you; and do not give (believing women) in marriage to idolaters until they believe; and certainly a believing bondsman is better than an idolater, even though he should allure you; those invite to the fire, and Allah invites to the garden and to forgiveness by His leave; and makes clear His signs for men, so that they may be mindful.

Commentary

Qur'an: *And do not marry the idolatresses until they believe:*

Ar-Raghib has said in *al-Mufradat*: The original meaning of *nikah*, is '*aqd* (the marriage-tie). then it was metaphorically used for sexual intercourse. It is impossible that it could be the other way round, because all the words denoting sexual intercourse are but metaphors; they thought it indecent to mention it, just as they disliked to declare the act itself. It is not possible, for one who does not intend to utter an obscenity, to use the name of an unmentionable act for a decent thing like marriage.

This observation of ar-Raghib very good; but for this reasoning to be valid, the word '*aqd* should be taken to mean the marriage-tie, not the formulae of the proposal and acceptance of marriage. *Themushrikaat* (idolatresses) is the *ismu'l-fa'il* (active participle, i.e. the noun derived from an infinitive verb denoting its doer, of the verb *ishrak* which means "to ascribe a partner to Allah"; it is also called polytheism. It is well-known that polytheism may be open or hidden, and these two qualities may be of various degrees and grades. The same is the case with belief and disbelief.

The most open kind of polytheism is to believe that there is more than one god and to take and worship idols and treat them as intercessors before God. Less open is the polytheism of the people of the book, as they deny the prophethood of Muhammad (s.a.w.), and, especially their belief that 'Uzayr was the son of God, or Isa was the son of God, and so is their claim that they themselves are sons of God, and His beloved. All this is polytheism, but less manifest than that of the idolaters. More hidden than that is believing that apparent causes independently create their effects; and then relying on these causes.

The most hidden polytheism is the one from which only the chosen servants of Allah, with pure hearts, can escape. And that is to be forgetful of Allah and to divert attention to other than Him.

But there is an important point which must be cleared here. Attributing a verb, adjective or active participle (in its literal sense) to someone is one thing; but using that adjective or active participle as a nomenclature is an entirely different matter. If a believer neglected an obligatory act, it might be said that he denied it or disbelieved in it; but the nomenclature, unbeliever/disbeliever, cannot be used for him. Allah says: and for *the sake of Allah, pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men*

(upon) everyone who can afford the journey to it; and whoever disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-sufficient, independent of the worlds. (3:97) Here the verb, "disbelieves", has been used for him who neglects the pilgrimage, still he is not called an "unbeliever", he is a sinner; and if the adjective "unbeliever" or "disbeliever" is used for him at all, it must be conditional, e.g. "disbeliever in pilgrimage."

The same is the case with all active participles and adjectives used in the Qur'an, like righteous, devout, thankful, purified; and like sinner, unjust, etc. These terms cannot be used as a nomenclature in every place where the verb, adjective or active participle is used.

Accordingly, we cannot use the nomenclature, polytheist, for all those who indulge in hidden or open polytheism. "Idolater" or "polytheist" is a Qur'anic terminology and we should look at the Qur'an to know who is called a polytheist. The Qur'an does not use this term for the Jews or the Christians. Instead it invented for them a new term, "people of the book." And the term "disbeliever" (*kafir*) is general, covering all those who are outside the pale of Islam.

So far as the term, polytheist or idolater, is concerned, the Qur'an uses it in a context where it is known that the disbelievers, other than the people of the book, are meant. See, for example, the following verse: *nose who disbelieved from among the people of the book and the polytheists could not have separated themselves (from the faithful) until there had come to them the clear evidence (98:1); ... the idolaters are nothing but unclean, so they shall not approach the Sacred Mosque after this year (9:28); then slay the idolaters wherever you find them (9:5); How can there be an agreement for the idolaters with Allah and with His Apostle? (9:7); ... and fight the polytheists all together as they fight you all together... (9:36)etc.*

Now we come to the verse: *And they said: Be Jews or Christians, you will be tightly guided. Say: Nay! (We follow) the religion of Ibrahim the upright one, and he was not one of the polytheists (2:135)* The last sentence, "he was not one of the polytheists", is not an innuendo against the Jews and the Christians. To know its meaning, let us look at another verse: *Ibrahim was not a Jew, nor a Christian; but he was an upright (man), a Muslim, and he was not one of the polytheists. (3:67)*. The word "upright (man)" is an adverse allusion to the Jews and the Christians; it exalts Ibrahim above the soulless ritualism of the Jews as well as the dogmatism of the Christians, the materialism of the one and the misguided spiritualism of the other. It says that Ibrahim was on the middle path, neither a Jew nor a Christian. And then it uses the word "a Muslim", and shows that he was purely a Muslim, not ascribing any partner, associate or colleague to Allah; and then it adversely alludes to the polytheists by the words, "he was not one of the polytheists." Likewise, in verse 2:135, the word "the upright one" indirectly hints against the Jews and the Christians who had gone astray; and the sentence, "and he was not one of the polytheists" alludes to the idol-worshippers.

In short, this verse does not refer to the Jews and the Christians as polytheists.

Now we come to some verses where the active participle, polytheist (*mushrik*) has been used, for other than idol worshippers:

And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating other (with Him). (12:106) and woe to the polytheists who do not give zakat, and they are unbelievers in the hereafter. (41:6-7)

His (Satan's) power is only over those who befriend him and those who associate others with Him (Allah). (16:100)

These, verses have used the active participle, "polytheists", for those who, for example, befriend Satan and are under his power. Obviously, almost all the believers (except an infinitesimal minority, who are, friends of Allah, and are His truly righteous servants) would come under this definition. But

we would not be justified in giving them the name, "polytheists" because the active participle and the nomenclature are two different things.

This lengthy explanation shows that the apparent meaning of the verse under discussion prohibits marriage with idol-worshipping men and women only; marriage with the people of the book is not included in this verse.

In this context, there are no grounds at all for saying that, this verse abrogated verse 6 of the chapter, of *al-Ma'idah*; *This day have been made lawful for you. (all)good thinks; and the food of those who were given the book is lawful to you and your food lawftd for them; and the chaste (ones) from the believing women and the chaste (ones) from those who were given the book before you (are lawful for you) when you have given them their wage (dower) with chaste intention, not fornicating nor taking them for 'paramours in secret (5:6) Nor, is there any reason for saying that this verse (2:221) joined with the verse... and hold not to the ties of marriage of unbelieving women... (60:10), abrogates verse 5:6. Nor is it correct to say that the verse 5:6 has abrogated the two verses, 2:221 and 60:10.*

Why are the above opinions wrong?

It is because:

First: As explained above, the verse under discussion apparently says nothing about marriage with the people of the book, while the verse of the chapter of *al-Ma'idah* (5:6) is concerned only with marriage with the people of the book. As the subject matters of the two verses are totally different, there is no question of one of them abrogating the other.

So far as verse 60:10 is concerned, it speaks about not holding ties of marriage with unbelieving women, and at the first glance it Appears contradictory to verse 5:6 which allows marriage with chaste women of the people of the book. But a little more thinking will show (as will be explained later on) that this speaks about a man who accepts Islam and his wife remains a disbeliever, then he is forbidden to hold intact the marriage-tie with that woman, while the verse 5:6 speaks about performing a new marriage with a woman who is from the people of the book. The subject matters, therefore, of the two, verses are not the same. Accordingly there arises no question of abrogation at all.

Second: Even if we accept for the time being that verses 2:221 and 60:10 forbid marriage with a Jewess or a Christian woman, the context compels us to believe that they cannot abrogate verse 5:6 which allows that marriage. Verse 5:6 shows some relaxation of the rule and Allah describes it as His grace upon the believers. Such a verse cannot be abrogated. In Islam relaxed rules usually get the upper hand over strict ones. Therefore, if there were any abrogation, verse 5:6 would abrogate verses 2:221 and 60:10, and not vice versa.

Third: The chapter of *al-Baqarah* (ch. 2) was the first one revealed at Medina soon after *Hijrah*; and the chapter of *al-Mumtahanah* (ch. 60) was revealed at, Medina before the take-over of Mecca in 8 A.H.: while the chapter of *al-Ma'idah* (ch. 5) was the last one revealed - it abrogated some previous rules but no rule revealed in it was ever abrogated.

How could the verses revealed before the chapter 5 abrogate the verse of that chapter which was yet to be-revealed? .

Qur'an: *and certainly a believing bondswoman is better than an idolatress, even though she should allure you:*

The people at that time accorded no dignity to slave-girls and anyone marrying such a woman immediately became an object of scorn. This verse, by qualifying the word "bondswoman" with the adjective "believing" and leaving the word "idolatress" without any condition, emphasizes the

principle that a believing woman, even if she is a slave, is better than an idolatress even if she comes from a noble family and is rich and beautiful - the factors which usually attract a man towards a woman.

Someone has said that the word "bondswoman" (amah) here and the word "bondsmen" (amah) in the next sentence, mean slave woman and slave man of Allah - in other words, believing woman and believing man. But this interpretation is far-fetched.

Qur'an: *and certainly a believing bondsman is better than an idolater, even though he should allure you:*

The same comment as above.

Qur'an: *Those invite to the fire, and Allah Invites to the garden and to forgiveness by His leave:*

It explains the reason why marriage with idol-worshippers has been prohibited. The idolaters believe in falsehood, walk on the wrong path, and, thus, evil characteristics become firmly-rooted in their psychology. Disbelief and sin look attractive to them and their eyes lose the ability to see the light of truth. As a result, their whole life becomes an open invitation to follow them to eternal perdition. In short, by their actions and talks they try to allure and entice the believers to the fire of hell.

The believers, on the other hand, proceed on the path of true faith, and live a righteous and virtuous life; and by their good example in words and deeds invite people to the paradise and the Lord's forgiveness by His leave, as He allowed them to call the people into the right path, leading them to eternal bliss - paradise and forgiveness.

Apparently, it would have looked proper to say, "and these (i.e. the believers) invite to the paradise... ", as the contrasting sentence says: "those invite to the fire." But Allah used His own name instead of the believers to show that the believers in this invitation, nay, in all their activities and affairs, rely on their Creator and Lord; they are not independent of Allah, their Master. Allah says: ... and *Allah is the Master of the believers.* (3:68)

This sentence may be interpreted also in another way: The invitation to the garden and to forgiveness may be a reference to this law itself - the rule forbidding marriage with polytheists is in itself an invitation to paradise and the forgiveness of Allah.

Traditions

It is written about this verse that it was revealed about Marthad ibn Abi Marthad al-Ghanawi. The Messenger of Allah sent him to Mecca to bring some Muslims out; and he was a strong and brave man. A woman, 'Unaq by name, offered him her person, but he refused; they had been friends before the advent of Islam. Then she said: "Well, will you then agree to marry me?" He said: "Not before I seek permission from the Messenger of Allah" When he returned (to Medina), he asked permission to marry her. [*Majma'u'l-bayan*]

The author says: The same thing has been narrated in *ad-Durru l-manthur* from Ibn 'Abbas.

Al-Wahidi has narrated through the chain of as-Suddi from Abu Malik from Ibn 'Abbas about this verse that it was revealed about 'Abdullah ibn Rawahah. He had a black slave-girl; once he became angry and slapped her (on the face). Then he felt frightened, and coming to the Prophet told him the story. The Prophet said: "What is she? O 'Abdullah!" He replied: "She keeps the fast, prays, does *wudu* properly, and offers testimony that there is no god except Allah and that you are His Messenger." The Prophet said: "O 'Abdullah! She is a believing woman." 'Abdullah said: "By Him

Who sent you with truth! I shall surely set her free and then marry her." He did so. Some Muslims ridiculed him and said, "Lo! He married a slave-girl." They thought it better to establish marriage-ties with polytheist men and women, because they were of "honorable" families. Then Allah revealed: *and certainly a believing bondswoman is better than an idolatress [ad-Durru'l-manthur]*

Another tradition, quoted in the same book from Muqatil says that she was a bondswoman of Hudhayfah, whom he emancipated and married.

The author says: The above traditions are not contradictory. Maybe there were various such cases, and then the verse was revealed covering all of them.

There are some traditions showing that this verse abrogated verse 5:6, or was abrogated by it. We have shown the absurdity of these views, and we shall discuss those traditions when commenting on verse 5:6.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 222-223

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ قُلْ هُوَ أَذًى فَاعْتَزِلُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي الْمَحِيضِ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوهُنَّ حَتَّىٰ يَطْهَرْنَ فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ 2:222

نِسَاؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ فَأْتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّىٰ شِئْتُمْ وَقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ مُّلاَقُوهُ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ 2:223

2:222 *And they ask you about menstruation. Say it is a discomfort; therefore, keep aloof from the women during the menstruation and do not go near them until they have become clean; then when they have cleansed themselves, go in them as Allah has commanded you; surely Allah loves those who purify themselves.*

2:223 *Your women are a tilth for you, so go into your tilth when you like, and do good beforehand for yourselves; and fear Allah, and know that you are to meet Him, and give good news to the believers.*

Commentary

Qur'an: *And they ask you about menstruation. Say: It is a discomfort:*

mahid and *hayd* are verbal infinitives; the Arabs say: *hadati'l-mar'ah* when the natural system of the woman discharges the well-known periodic blood, which has its own special color, etc. and is a peculiarity of women. Its active participle (*ismu'l-fa'il*) is used in both masculine and feminine genders, because there is no risk of misunderstanding. They say *ha'id* and *haidah* i.e. the woman having monthly period; as they say *hamil* and *hamilah* i.e. the pregnant women.

Adha means discomfort and distress. Some people say that it is synonymous with *darar* (harm, loss). But it is not correct. The opposite of *darar* (harm, loss) is *naf'* (benefit, profit); but *naf'* is not the opposite of *adha*. Also people say *dawaun mudirrun* (harmful medicine), but if they said *dawa'un mudirrun* it would give another meaning; disagreeable or unpleasant medicine. Moreover, the Qur'an says: *They shall by no means harm you (lan yadurrukum) but with a distress (adha) (3:111)* There would be no sense if you read it as: "they shall by no means harm you but with a harm." In some other verses, also, it is difficult to interpret *adha* as *darar* (loss, harm): *Surely (as for) those who annoy (yu'dhuna) Allah and His Apostle... (33:57); O my people! Why do you give me trouble (tu'dhunani) and you know indeed that I am Allah's Apostle to you (61:5)*. Apparently, discomfort (*adha*) signifies the effect of a disagreeable thing, and there may be times when a situation can be a discomfort as well as a harm or loss.

Menstruation is called *adha* in the meaning described above - discomfort, distress, disagreeable.

Those who interpret *adha* as harm, say that the question was about sexual intercourse during the monthly period, and Allah replied that it was harmful. The physicians have said that at that time nature is occupied with cleansing the womb and making it ready for pregnancy, and sexual intercourse in the midst of that would create a disturbance which is harmful to the health.

Qur'an: *therefore, keep aloof from the women during the menstruation and do not go near*

them...

i'tizal means to withdraw, to retire, to avoid mingling. They say *'azalta nasibahu* when you separate his share and keep it in a place away from the others' shares.

Qurb (to be near) is the opposite of *bu'd* (to be far away, distant). It is used with the preposition *min*(from) and also without any preposition, as in this verse.

Keep aloof from woman during the menstruation means "do not establish sexual relation with them during the passing of blood."

People have had different views and customs about women in their monthly period. The Jews were extremely harsh in this matter. They ostracized such a woman even in food and drink. Her pots were separated, she took her meal apart from others, sat away from all the household, and slept alone. The Torah had ordained very severe rules concerning that period: about the woman as, well as about those who were unfortunate enough to go near her or even to touch her.

The Christians had no restriction at all about mingling, or even sleeping with them. The pagans of Arabia had no fixed rule. The Arabs of Medina and its neighborhood had adopted some of the Jewish customs, and had thus made the lives of rich women difficult for them. On the other hand some pagans liked to have sexual intercourse with them in the belief that if a woman became pregnant at that time, the child would be cruel and extremely fond of shedding blood - these were admirable qualities for a man among the Bedouins!

Apparently the words of this verse confirm the Jewish custom, but it is not so when we read the next sentence, then when they have cleansed themselves, go in to them as Allah has commanded you, we know that it means 'going in to them from their front'. It means that it was only this act, i.e. sexual intercourse in to their front, which was prohibited by the preceding sentences, and that the words, "keep aloof from them" and "do not go near them" are not used in their literal meaning; rather they are metaphors for sexual relations. Accordingly, this verse prohibits only this one action, and imposes no restriction whatsoever on mingling with them in food, drink, sleep, etc. In short, Islam adopted the middle course between the severe restrictions of the Jews and the free license of the Christians.

The word "menstruation" (*mahid*) appears in the question, and then again in the answer (*keep aloof... during the menstruation*) Why has the word been repeated instead of using a pronoun in the answer? It is because there is a difference in meaning of the two words: the first refers to the menstruation, and the second to its period.

Qur'an: *until they have become clean; then when they have cleansed themselves, go into them as Allah has commanded you:*

Cleanliness *taharah* and its opposite, uncleanness(*najasah*), are among the extensively applied concepts in Islam. They have their own comprehensive laws which cover a major part of religious commandments. The two words, because of their very common use, have become *al-haqi'qatu 'sh-shari'yyah* although they were "originally made to express these religious concepts."

The meaning of cleanliness is known to the whole of mankind in spite of the differences in their languages. It shows that the idea of *taharah* is well-known to all human beings whatever their origin and period.

Life depends on exploiting material things, and using them to achieve its goal. Man desires whatever he desires only because of its benefit, use and characteristics. The most basic and most comprehensive are the benefits concerned with feeding and reproduction.

Sometimes some changes occur in these material things which cause repulsion; and man wants to throw such things, away. Such changes appear mostly in taste, smell or color. When this change appears, the material becomes unsavory and repulsive. This change is called uncleanness(*najasah*).

Its opposite is *taharah* which implies that the thing is still in its original condition of benefit and use, which attracts the man to it.

Cleanliness and uncleanness are, therefore,, two mutually exclusive qualities of a thing: it has either a quality which makes it lie likeable or another which makes it repulsive.

Man in the beginning must have perceived these qualities within the sphere of the five senses; gradually the concept would have been widened to cover mental and spiritual, subjects, depending on whether those ideas were attractive or repulsive. Thus we come to the concept of. *taharah* and *najasah* in parentage, character, belief, action and word.

There are four words with nearly the same meaning: *nazafah*, *nazaha*, *quds* and *subhan*

Nazafah: It is the cleanliness of a thing after it had become unclean. It is exclusively used for the things which may be perceived by one of the five senses.

Nazahah: Its real meaning is "to be far away, distant." Its use for cleanliness is metaphorical - the thing is far from ugliness, uncleanness.

Quds and *subhan* are preserved for mental and spiritual subjects.

Near in meaning to *najasah* are *qadharah* (filthiness), *rijs* (dirtiness) and *rujz* (uncleanliness,)

Qadharah Its real meaning is "to be distant. The verbs and adjectives derived from this verbal infinitive are used for a she-camel which remains aloof from the drove, for an unsocial man who does not mingle with others, for a person isolated from others and for a thing which is disliked. Therefore, its use in the meaning of *najasah* must be metaphorical because an unclean thing is left and put aside until it is clean again.

Rijs and *rijz* Their original meaning is fright and aversion. Their use in the meaning of uncleanness is metaphorical.

Islam has extended the meaning of cleanliness and uncleanness to cover not only the things perceived by the five senses but also to ideas and thoughts. According to Islam, even general principles and social laws are either clean or unclean. For example, Allah says in this verse, *do not go near them until they have become clean...* (Here cleanliness refers to cessation of menstruation, a material cleanliness) Also, He says: *And your garments do purify (74:4);... but He intends to purify you... (5:6); These are they whom Allah does not intend to purify their hearts... (5:41); None shall touch it save the purified ones.(56:79)* Some of these verses refer to spiritual purifications and cleanliness.

The Islamic *shari'ah* treats some unclean things as *al-a'yanu 'n-najisah* (inherently unclean things). Some of them are the blood, urine, stool and semen of man and of some animals, corpses, dogs and pigs. It has ordered the believers to protect themselves from these things in prayers, food and drink.

Taharah is of two categories: From *khath* by which one becomes clean after coming into touch with the above mentioned inherently unclean things; and from *hadath* which comes through *wudu* or an obligatory bath as explained in the books of Islamic laws.

It was explained earlier that Islam is the religion of monotheism. This monotheism is the root to which all the branches owe their existence. Now the belief in monotheism is the highest cleanliness before Allah. After that come other fundamentals of faith, and they increase the spiritual purification of man. Then comes ethical righteousness, and the laws of *shari'ah* made for the good in this world and the hereafter. The verse, quoted above may be explained by keeping this principle in view. Also; it explains the verse of purity, *Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O People of the House! and to purify you a (thorough) purifying. (33:33)*

Now we return to the explanation of the words used in this verse under discussion: "until they have

become clean", i.e. until the blood stops. That is the beginning of the period of cleanliness (*tuhr*).

Then when they have cleansed themselves, i.e., when they have taken an obligatory bath or at least washed the part of body from where blood comes out.

go into them as Allah has commanded you: This command comes after the order forbidding sexual relation with them; therefore, it signifies only that the restriction is now lifted; in other words, it means that sexual relations with them are allowed after their becoming clean, not that it is obligatory. *Go into them* is a metaphor for that relation. It is an example of the character building of the Qur'an; as is the phrase, *as Allah has commanded you*. Sexual relations are generally regarded as an amusement. But the Qur'an draws man's attention to the fact that it is a thing ordered by Allah, the order being ingrained in his nature. We may call it a creative order - an order given not in words, but programmed into our creation and nature. Thus the Qur'an reminds us that it is an action without which the human species cannot survive; such an important function should not be treated as a sport or an amusement; it is one of the fundamental laws of nature.

This verse is similar to the words of Allah: ... *now be in contact with them and seek what Allah has written for you...* (2:187), and: ... *go into your tilth when you like, and do good beforehand for yourselves...* (2:223)

Apparently, the order to go into them refers to that "creative order" which is known because Allah has given human beings reproductive organs and has created in them the power and inclination which lead them to reproduce.

Possibly the "command" could be interpreted as a legislative order: that it was obligatory to marry for a sufficient number of people to ensure continuity of the human race. But such a meaning is far-fetched.

Some commentators argue that the words *as Allah has commanded you* prohibit going into the posterior of the women. But it is the weakest argument; this subject is difficult to prove from this verse. The argument cannot be based on the order, *go into them*, because, as explained earlier, this order, coming after a prohibition, signifies only the permission to establish sexual contact, it is not an obligatory rule. Therefore, if one were to ignore it one would not be committing an offence. Nor can it be argued on the strength of the words, *as Allah has commanded you*, because; the command referred to herein is the creative, not the legislative one, as we have explained just now. And even if we accept, for the sake of argument, that it is a legislative order, it would be obligatory for only "a sufficient number of people", as we have explained above. And going against an obligatory order is unlawful only, when that order is personally obligatory on oneself.

Qur'an: *Surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him) and He loves those who purify themselves*:

tawbah (usually translated as repentance) means returning to Allah. *Tatahhur* means purifying and cleansing oneself; in other words, turning away from dirtiness and returning to the original cleanliness. The meanings of both words come true when one obeys the command of Allah, and especially so in the matters of cleanliness and uncleanness. By doing whatever Allah has told one to do, and abstaining from what He has forbidden, one purifies oneself from the uncleanness of disobedience, and comes back to his Lord. That is why Allah has ended this verse on these words they are, therefore, applied to all the rules mentioned before them 'Keep aloof from the women during the menstruation and go into them, as Allah has commanded you.

The sentences, *Surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him) and He loves those who purify themselves*, are not limited with any qualification or condition. Therefore, they apply to all the grades of cleanliness,, as mentioned, earlier. And the forms *mutatahhirin* and *tawwabin* signify great

emphasis, These two factors taken together signify that Allah loves all kinds of repentance (be it by asking for His forgiveness, obeying all His commands or having true faith and belief) and all kinds of purification (be it by washing oneself, doing ablution, taking the obligatory bath, performing good deeds or acquiring true spiritual knowledge). Also, it signifies an increase by number: Allah loves repeated repentance and repeated cleanliness.

Qu'ran: *Your women are a tilth for you, so go into your tilth when you like*;, *harth* is an infinitive verb, meaning to "to till, to cultivate." It is also used for the land which is tilled or cultivated.

Anna is an adverb meaning "when", "whenever." In this sentence it is synonymous with *mata* (when) Sometimes It is also used for "where." Allah says: *OMaryam! Whence (anna), comes this to you? She said: It is from Allah. (3:36)*

If, in the verse under discussion, *anna* means "where", then its meaning would be, "where you like." If it means, "when", then it means, "when you like." In any case, it gives a sort of freedom to the couple, and that is why we cannot take the words, "so, go into your tilth", to be an obligatory order. No one gives a 'compulsory order and then leaves it in the hands of the doer to do as he likes.

The verse begins with the sentence, *Your women are a tilth for You*;after this reasoning comes the order, and there also, the word "tilth" is repeated, This emphasis shows that the freedom given to man of going in to the women is either about the place of the intercourse or about its time; but it, is not a freedom of entering anywhere in her body. She is a tilth and that idea must be kept in mind when approaching her.

If the order means, 'so go into your tilth at any place you like', then it is not concerned with the time of intercourse, and has no conflict whatsoever with the previous verse, *keep aloof from the women during the' menstruation and do not go near them..* If, on the other hand, it means, so go into your tilth at any time you like, then it shall be limited to the period of, purity from menstruation, because of the previous verse.

Just, to avoid any misunderstanding, it is necessary to point out that this verse could not have abrogated the verse of menstruation - no matter, whichever of the two was revealed first: The verse of menstruation gives two reasons why sexual relation in that period is forbidden - and both reasons are still valid, inspite of the verse of tilth. First, it says that menstruation is a discomfort and it continues to be a discomfort. Second, it shows that this order was given to avoid dirtiness and to remain clean, and Allah always loves those who remain clean, and pure; so much so that He counts keeping them cleansed as one of His graces upon them; *Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty, but He intends to purify you and that He may complete His favor on you... (5:6)*. Such a language cannot be abrogated by a verse like that of tilth. Why? Because this verse says that your women are your tilth, so come into your tilth when you like. Now, the reason for this putative "concession" was present even when the prohibition was ordained. If it could not stop its promulgation, how can it cause its abrogation after it had already been firmly established? Second, the verse of tilth ends on the words, "and do good beforehand for yourselves, and fear Allah, and know that you will meet Him." Such an ending would be out of place if the verse (of tilth) contained a concession.

The meaning of the verse is as follows: Women are to humanity as tilth is to an individual. Agricultural land is needed to preserve the seed and to produce food, so that the human race may continue to exist. Likewise, women are needed for the continuity of humanity. According to the system created by Allah, the woman's womb is the place where a child is made and develops from a microscopic sperm to a human being. As the original place of that sperm is the body of man, He created between the man and the woman a love and compassion and an attraction which excites the

man to seek the woman.

As the creative purpose of this mutual attraction is to pave the way for the continuity of the human race, there was no reason why it should be confined to one place and not another, or one time and not another, as long as it helped in achieving that goal and did not hinder any other obligatory work.

This explanation shows the relevance of the words *do good before hand for yourselves*, coming after the verse of tilth.

Someone has written that the verse of tilth gives permission to remove the male organ from the woman just before ejaculation. Such an interpretation is patently absurd. No less absurd is the view that the words, *do good beforehand* mean saying ... *bismi'llah*... (by the name of Allah) before intercourse.

Qur'an: *and do good beforehand for yourselves; and fear Allah, and know that you are to meet Him, and give good news to the believers.*

Obviously, these words addressed to males, or both males and females, are a sort of encouragement to keep the human species alive through marriage and reproduction, But is not an end in itself. Mankind and its continuity is desired only for the continuity of the religion of Allah, the dominance of monotheism and the divine worship through piety. Allah says: *And I did not create the firm and the human beings except that they should worship Me.* (51:56) When He commands them to do anything concerning their life in this world, it is done only to make it easier for them to worship their Lord; it is not done with the aim of encouraging them to submerge themselves in sexual desire and worldly attractions.

No doubt the apparent meaning of *do good beforehand for yourselves* is "reproduce and bring into this world new souls to replace those who are dying every day"; but it is not the final goal: the real aim is to keep the remembrance of Allah going on, by producing righteous people who will do good deeds, the recompense and reward of which will reach their forefathers who were instrumental in bringing those good-doers into the world. Allah says: ... *and We write down what they have sent before and their footprints*... (36:12)

This leads us to believe that the real meaning of *do good beforehand for yourselves* is 'send good deeds beforehand for the day of resurrection'. Allah says: ... *the day when man shall see what his two hands have sent before*... (78:40); ... *and whatever of good you send on beforehand for yourselves you will find it with Allah*... (73:20)

This verse under discussion (*and do good beforehand for yourselves, and fear Allah, and know that you are to meet Him ...*) is similar to verse 59:18: *O you who believe! Fear Allah, and let every soul consider what it has sent on for tomorrow and fear Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do.*

In short, the meaning of these sentences is as follows:

and do good beforehand for yourselves: Send on good deeds beforehand for the day of resurrection. Producing children and training them to be righteous servants of Allah and good members of the society is one of those good deeds.

and fear Allah: *taqwa* (fear of Allah, piety) consists of going into the tilth as commanded by Allah, neither exceeding the limits imposed by Him, neglecting the divine ordinance, nor committing unlawful acts.

and know that you are to meet Him. The order, in fact, means 'fear Allah whom you have to meet on the day of resurrection, lest your reckoning be severe'. The same is the significance of verse 59:18, mentioned earlier which says: *and fear Allah; surely Allah is aware of what you do.* It is not uncommon to use the verb "to know" for the meaning "to be on guard", "to safeguard" and "to look

out." Allah says: ... and *know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart...* (8:24); it means, 'be afraid of His intervention between you and your hearts.'

and give good news to the believers. Good deeds and fear of the day of reckoning are the chief characteristics of faith. Therefore, the talk was ended by giving good news to the believers. For this very reason, verse 59:18 began with the words: *O you who believe.*

Traditions

Ahmad, 'Abd ibn Hamid, ad-Darimi, Muslim, Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nasai, Ibn Majah, Abu Ya'la, Ibn al-Mundhir; Abu Hatim, an-Nahas (in *an-Nasikh*), Abu Hayyan, and al Bayhaqi (in his *as-Sunan*) have narrated from Anas: ... The Jews, when a woman of their house was in monthly period, turned her out of the house; they did not eat with her; did not drink with her, nor did they Eve with her in the same house. The Messenger of Allah was asked concerning this matter. Then Allah sent down the verse: *And they, ask you about menstruation, Say: It is a discomfort; therefore, keep aloof from the women during the menstruation...* The Messenger of Allah, therefore, said: 'Remain with them in the (same) houses, and do everything except sexual intercourse.' This report reached the Jews, and they said, 'This man does not want to leave anything to our customs without going against it.' Usayd ibn al-Hudayr and 'Abbad ibn Bishr came and said: 'O Messenger of Allah! The Jews are saying so and so. Should we not now establish sexual relations also with them?' On hearing it the face of the Messenger of Allah changed and we thought that he had become angry with them. Then they went out; and at the same moment some milk was brought to the Messenger of Allah as a present; so he sent it behind them and made them drink it. Thus they knew that he was not angry with them." [*ad-Durru'l manthur*]

It is reported from as-Sadiq about the verse, *And they ask you about menstruation* that the man who asked it was Thabit ibn ad-Dahdah. [*ibid*]

The author says: The same thing has been narrated also from *Maqatil*.

There is a tradition that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the word of Allah, *go into them as Allah has commanded you*: It is about seeking a child; therefore seek a child from where Allah has commanded you. [*at-Tahdhib*]

as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked: "What can the husband of a menstruating woman get from her?" He said: "Everything except the front part itself." [*al-Kafi*]

Another tradition is reported from the same Imam about the woman whose blood stops at the end of her usual period. The Imam said: "If her husband is overcome by sexual desire, then he should order her to wash her front part, then he may touch her, if he so wishes, before she takes her obligatory bath." Other tradition adds: "And the bath is preferable to me." [*ibid*]

The author says: There are numerous traditions of the same meaning. The word used in the Qur'an is recited *hatta yathurna* (till they have become clean); and it refers to the stopping of blood. Therefore, the Qur'an and these traditions support each other.

It is said that the difference between the two words, *yathurna* (they have become clean) and *yataharna* (they have cleansed themselves) is that the second form implies doing something by one's own choice; therefore, it would mean taking the bath; but the first does not imply any choice; thus it would refer to the stopping of blood.

Accordingly, sexual intercourse is prohibited *until they have become clean*, i.e., until the blood stops. As soon as the blood stops, relations are again allowed.

When they have cleansed themselves go into them: If the cleansing refers to washing it would mean that the washing, as described in this tradition, is *sunnah* (commendable); and if it means taking

the obligatory bath, then the verse would imply that it is commendable (*sunnah*) to go into them after they have taken their obligatory bath, as the above tradition says, 11 and bath is preferable to me." But in no case does this verse imply that going into them after stoppage of blood and before the bath is prohibited, because the moment of prohibition lasts until the blood stops.

There is a tradition about the words of Allah, Surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him), and He loves those who purify themselves, that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "The people used to cleanse themselves (after defecation) with cotton and stones etc. Then was instituted cleansing with water, and it is a good habit. Therefore, the Messenger of Allah ordered it and did it. Then Allah sent down in His Book: Surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him), and He loves those who purify themselves. [al-Kafi]

The author says: There are numerous traditions with this meaning, and it is said in some of them that the first man to cleanse himself with water was Bara ibn Azib; then this verse was revealed and the custom established.

There is a tradition in the same book from Salam ibn al-Mustanir that he said: "I was with Abu Jarir (a.s.) when Himran ibn A'yun entered and asked him concerning some things. When Himran wanted to stand up (and go back), he told Abu Ja'far (a.s.): 'I wish to inform you - May Allah prolong your life and may He grant us the benefit of your presence - that we come to you; and before we go out from your presence, our hearts become soft, our souls think no more about this world, and we disdain the wealth which people have in their hands. Then we go away from your presence, and when we mingle with people and traders, we (again) love this world.' Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said: 'It is these hearts; at one time they become hard, at another, soft.' Then the Imam continued: 'Surely, the companions of Muhammad (s.a.w.) once told him: "O Messenger of Allah! We are afraid of hypocrisy (appearing) in ourselves." He asked: "And why do you feel so?" They said: "When we are in your presence and you remind us (of Allah) and invite us (to piety), we become afraid (of the displeasure of Allah), and we forget the world and forsake it, so much so that we (seem to) see the hereafter and the garden and the fire; this all is so long as we are in your presence. But as soon as we come out of your presence, and enter these (our) houses, and feel the scent of our children and see our families, our condition changes almost completely, as though we had no conviction of anything. Do you fear that it is hypocrisy on our part?" Then the Messenger of Allah told them: "Not at all. Surely, these steps are of Satan who wants to attract you towards this world. By Allah If you continued in that condition which you have just described, you would indeed shake hands with the angels, and would walk upon the water. And had it not been that you commit sins and then seek pardon from Allah, He would certainly create (another) creation who would commit sins and then ask forgiveness of Allah, so that Allah would forgive them. Verily the believer is seduced, (but is also) often-returning (to Allah)." Have you not heard the words of Allah: Surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him), and He loves those who purify themselves. And Allah says: And that ask forgiveness of your Lord, then turn to Him... (11:3)'"

The author says: A similar tradition has been reported by *al-Ayyashi* in his *at-Tafsir*

The words of the Prophet, "if you continued in that condition... " point to the position of *wilayah* (friendship of Allah) which means keeping aloof from the world and fixing the eyes on to what is with Allah. We have explained it partly under verse 2:156.

His words, "And had it not been that you commit sins... allude to a mystery of the divine decree. And we shall talk about it under verse 15:21 (*And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure*) and other such verses.

The words, "Have you not heard... are of Abu Ja'far (a.s.) and are addressed to Himran. These

words interpret *tawbah* and *taharah* as returning to Allah by desisting from wrong and removing the filth of sins from the soul and the trust of mistakes from the heart. It is an example of deducing a conclusion by looking at a verse from one level while at another level a new result (but never in conflict with the first) may be obtained. For example, the verse, *None shall touch it save the purified ones* (56:79) proves at one level that none has the knowledge of the Book except the sinless members of the family of the Prophet, while, on other level, it declares that touching the writing of the Qu'ran without doing *wudu* or taking the bath is prohibited.

Creation progresses, taking from the treasures that are with Allah, until it reaches the last level of *ofmaqadir* (the measures, decrees) Allah says: *And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure.*(15:21)

Likewise, the decrees do not come down to us except after passing through various stages of reality. This subject will be further explained under the verse, *He it is Who has revealed the Book to you; some of its verses are decisive...* (3:7)

From above, it may be understood that the verse under discussion, at one level refers to returning the soul and heart to Allah by cleansing them from the dirt of sins (as mentioned just above), and, at another level, obliges one to take the bath; and at this level these two words would mean returning the body towards Allah by removing uncleanness.

This explains also the tradition of the Imam: "Allah sent down to Ibrahim (a.s.) uprightness (*hanifiyyah*) and it is cleanliness (*taharah*), and it is ten things - five in the head, and five in the body. That which is in the head is: trimming the moustache, keeping the beard, cutting the hair, cleansing the teeth, and picking the teeth; and that which is in the body is: removing the hair from the body, circumcision, cutting the nails, taking bath after *janabah* (i.e. after sexual intercourse or ejaculation during sleep), and cleansing by water after an evacuation of the bowel. This is the pure uprightness brought by Ibrahim; it was not abrogated, nor will it be abrogated up to the day of resurrection. ..*al-Qummi*. There are many traditions showing that the above things are a part of cleanliness. Some of them say: Indeed *nurah* (hair removing paste) is a purifier.

There is a tradition about the words of Allah: *Your women are a tilth for you...* narrated by Mu'ammār ibn Khallad that Abu l-Hasan ar-Rida (a.s.) told him: "What do you say about going into the women in their posterior? I said: 'I have been told that the people of Medina have no objection about it.' He said: 'Verily the Jews said that if a man comes (into her) from her behind, his child (regulating from that intercourse) will be cross-eyed. Therefore, Allah revealed: *Your women are tilth for You, so go into your filth from where you like*, that is, from their behind.'" [al-Ayyashi]

There is in the same book a tradition from as-Saqid (a.s.) that he said about this verse: "From her front and from her behind (but) in the vagina."

Another tradition in the same book reports that Abu Basir asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) about a man who enters into the posterior of his wife. The Imam expressed his abhorance of it and said: "Beware of the anus of women." Then he said: "Your women are a tilth for you, so go into your tilth as you like" only means "whenever you like."

The same book narrates from al-Fath ibn Yazid al-Jurjani that he wrote same question to ar-Rida (a.s.); and the same reply came: "You asked about the man who enters into a woman in her posterior; the woman is a plaything; she should not, be hurt, and she is a tilth as Allah has said."

The Author says: There are numerous traditions with this meaning narrated from the Imam of *Ahlu l-bayt* (a.s.) in *al-Kafi*, *at-Tahdhib*, and *Tafsirs* of al-'Ayyashi and al-Qummi. All of them show that the verse of tilth only proves that intercourse should be into the front part. Of course, there is a tradition in *Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi narrated by 'Abdullah ibn Abi Ya'fur in which he says: "I asked Abu

'Abdillah (a.s.) about going into women in their posterior; he said: "There is no haram in it"; then he recited the verse: *Your women are a tilth for you, so go into your tilth when (as) you like.*

But, apparently the meaning of "going into women in their posterior" means entering into vagina from behind; and the verse quoted supports this meaning, as has been seen in the tradition of Mu'ammār ibn Khalīd, mentioned above.

Ibn 'Asakir has narrated a tradition from Jabir ibn 'Abdullah that he said: "The Ansar (of Medina) used to go into their women lying down; and the Quraysh (of Mecca) used various postures. A Qurayshite man married a woman from Ansar and wanted to sleep with her (in his own way). She said: except in the way it should be done. The case was reported to the Messenger of Allah; so Allah revealed: so go *into your tilth when (as) you like.* That is, in any posture, standing, sitting or lying down, but it should be into the same passage." [*ad-Durru'l manthur*]

The author says: This meaning is narrated with numerous chains from various Companions, giving the same reason for its revelation. And the tradition of ar-Rida (a.s.) has already been quoted giving the same meaning. The words in this last tradition, "in one passage" allude to the rule that intercourse should be, in the front part only. There are numerous traditions showing that, going into their posterior is prohibited; the tradition are from numerous chains through numerous companions from the Prophet,

Even those traditions narrated by our Imams of Ahlu'l-bayt. which show that entering into their posterior is allowed but with the utmost abhorrence do not offer the verse of tilth as their proof, They argue on the basis of verse 15:71, which quotes Lut as saying: "He said: 'These are my daughters if you are to do (aught)'." Here Lut, (a.s.) offered his daughters to them, knowing well that they did not enter into the front part. And this was not abrogated by any Qur'anic verse. We shall talk about it there. Here it is enough to say that the verse of tilth has no relevance to this topic.

But, even according to the Sunni traditions, the ruling is not unanimous. It has been narrated from 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Malik ibn Anas, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri and others that they did not see any hAllah in that practice and they used the verse of tilth as their proof. Ibn 'Umar goes so far as to say that it was revealed specifically to legalise this practice.

It is reported on the authority of ad-Dar Qutni (in *al-Ghara'ib*. of Malik) through his chain to Nafi' that he said: "Ibn 'Umar told me, 'Keep the Qur'an before me, O Nafi!' Then he recited until he reached the verse, *Your women are a tilth for you, so go into your tilth when you like.* He asked me: 'Do you know, about whom this verse was revealed?' I replied: 'No!' He said: 'It was revealed about a man from Ansar who entered into the posterior of his woman; so people thought it a grave matter. Then Allah revealed: *Your women are a tilth for you, so go into your tilth when you like.*' Isaid: 'From her back side into her front part?' He said: 'No. But into her back side itself.' [*ad-Durru'l-manthur*]

The author says: This meaning has been narrated from Ibn 'Umar With numerous chains. Ibn 'l-Barr has said: "The tradition with this meaning from Ibn 'Umar is *sahih*(correct) well-known and famous."

Ibn Rahwayh, Abu Ya'la, Ibn Jarir, at-Tahawi (in his *Mushkilu'l-athar*) and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated with good chains from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri that a man entered into the posterior of his woman; people thought it bad of him; then the verse of tilth was revealed. [*ad-Durru l-manthur*]

al-Khatib has narrated in the "narrators of Malik" from Abu Sulayman al-Jawzjani that he said: "I asked Malik ibn Anas about intercourse with lawful women into their posterior. He told me: 'Just now I have washed my head (i.e. taken a bath) after (doing) it.'" [ibid]

at-Tahawi has narrated from the chain of Asbagh ibn al-Faraj from 'Abdullah ibn al-Qasim that he said: "I did not find anyone whom I follow in my religion who was doubtful about its legality, (meaning, entering into the backside of the women). Then he read: *Your women are a tilth for*

you. Then he asked. 'So what is more clear than this.' " [ibid].

There is a tradition in *as-Sunan* of Abu Dawud, from 'Ibn Abbas that he said: "Surely Ibn 'Umar, May' Allah forgive him, fell into error (in interpreting the verse of tilth, in this way). The fact is that there were some tribes of Medina, and they were idol worshippers, residing with some tribes of the Jews, and they were the people of the Book. And these Medinites thought that the Jews were superior than them in knowledge, and they, therefore, followed them in many of their customs. And those people of the Book did not go to the women but one posture only (i.e. lying down), and that was most comfortable to the Woman. And these tribes of Ansar of Medina adopted this method from them. Now these Qurayshite used very strange postures; and they enjoyed keeping them in various position - lying down, facing them or entering from their backside. When the emigrants came to Medina, one of them married a woman from Ansar and started doing like this with her. She complained of it to him and said:

'We were doing it in one way, you do like that or keep away from me.' This news spread, till it reached the Messenger of Allah. Then Allah revealed the verse: *Your women are a tilth for you, so go into your tilth when you like*. It means, facing them, from their back side or lying down, meaning in the place of child (i.e. in the place where conception may take place)."

The author says: as-Suyuti has narrated it through other chains also, from Mujahid from Ibn 'Abbas.

It is reported in the same book: Ibn 'Abdi'l-Hakam has narrated that ash-Shafi'i argued with Muhammad ibn al-Hasan on this subject. Ibn al-Hasan argued that "the tilth can be in the front part only." ash-Shafi'i said: "Then doing it anywhere except in the front part will be prohibited?" He agreed. He (ash-Shafi'i) said: "Do you think, if he did with her between her thighs or in the folds of her belly, is there any tilth in it?" He replied: "No!" He asked: "Will it then be unlawful?" He said: "No!" ash-Shafi'i said: "Then why do you bring an argument which you yourselves do not believe in?"

It is reported in the same book: Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi 'I-Hatim have narrated from Sa'id ibn Jubayr that he said: "Mujahid and I were sitting with Ibn Abbas when a man came to him and said: 'Will you not satisfy me about the verse of menstruation? He replied: 'Surely! Recite it.' He recited: *And they ask-you about menstruation... go into them as Allah has commanded you*. Ibn 'Abbas said: 'From where the blood was coming, you are ordered to go into the same place.' The man said: 'Then what about the verse: *Your women are a tilth for you, so go into your her when you like?*' He replied: 'O Woe unto thee! Is there any tilth in the posterior? If what you say were correct then the verse of menstruation would be abrogated, because if that place was not open (because of blood) you would go into this (other) place! But his verse means "whenever you like" in the night or day!

The author says: The last argument is defective. The verse of menstruation only says that in that period going into the front part of the women is prohibited. If, allegedly, the verse of tilth allows going into their posterior, it would cover a new subject, and there would be no conflict between it and the verse of menstruation. So, there would be no question of either abrogating the other. Moreover, we have already explained that the verse of tilth does not say that going into women in their posterior is allowed. Of course, some traditions narrated from Ibn 'Abbas argue that the words, "go into them as Allah has commanded you", prove that going into women in their posterior is forbidden. But we have already explained that it is the most defective argument, because the verse only says that entering into their front part is prohibited so long as they have not become clean. It says nothing about other matters; and the verse of tilth also says nothing except that one may go into one's tilth at any time,

This subject is from Islamic law; we have dealt here with only that side of it which was relevant to the subject of at-Tafsir.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 224-227

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا اللَّهَ عُرْضَةً لِأَيْمَانِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَتُصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ 2:224

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا كَسَبْتُمْ قُلُوبِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ 2:225

لِلَّذِينَ يُؤْلُونَ مِنْ نِسَائِهِمْ تَرَبُّصُ أَرْبَعَةِ أَشْهُرٍ فَإِنْ فَاءُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ 2:226

وَإِنْ عَزَمُوا الطَّلَاقَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ 2:227

2:224 *And make not Allah a target of your swearing (by Him) against your doing good and guarding (against evil) and making peace between men, and Allah is Hearing, Knowing.*

2:225 *Allah will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned, and Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing.*

2:226 *For those who swear (to abstain) from their wives is (ordained) a waiting for four months; then if they go back, then Allah is surely Forgiving, Merciful.*

2:227 *And if they resolved on divorce, then Allah is surely Hearing, Knowing.*

Commentary

QUR'AN: *And make not Allah... and Allah is Hearing, Knowing.*

"*al-'Urdah*" is derived from *al-'ard* which means to display a thing to show its fitness for the purpose for which it is made. For example, to display goods for sale, to show a house for rent, to offer food for consumption. Some of the uses of *al-'urdah* are: a target for shooting practice is called *al-'urdah* of the arrows; a horse readied for a journey is called *al-'urdah* for travel; a girl of marriageable age is called *al-'urdah* of marriage. All these are relevant to its original meaning. But the use of this word for a hindrance on the road (and other similar uses) have come into vogue later as metaphors.

"*al-Ayman*" is plural of "*al-yamin*" and means "oaths." Its original meaning is the right hand. As they strike by, raise, or give, the right hand when taking an oath, showing allegiance or concluding a deal, the word was metaphorically used for the oath, borrowing the organ of an action for the action itself, because of their mutual relationship. This same relationship also allows the use of the name of the action for its organ, as *as-sabbabah* (the one who abuses) is used for the forefinger which is often used to point with when abusing.

The meaning of the verse, then, shall be as follows (And Allah knows better!):

And do not use (the name of) Allah (like) a target upon which to attach your oaths which you have sworn to the effect that you will not do a good deed or will not guard yourselves against evil or will not make peace between people; because Allah does not like it that His name be made a means of desisting from what He Himself has ordered. (This meaning is supported by the traditions which will be quoted later.)

Based on this meaning, the verse can be analyzed grammatically in three ways:- a) *An tabarru* (literal meaning: that you do good) is in fact *an' la tabarru* (that you do not do good). In the

translation we have followed this meaning and the negative has been expressed by the word "against" (your swearing against your doing), Such an omission of the negative is common after "an" which turns the verb into an infinitive. See for example verse 175 of ch. 4: *Allah makes it clear for you (lest) you err.* (4:177)

b) Or there is no omission; and the words "your doing good ... " is governed by the negative "make not." The meaning, in this case, will be that Allah forbids you to take such oaths.

c) Or the *al-'urdah* (target) may imply excess, as a target is used for shooting practice. The verse, in this case, will be a prohibition of excessive swearing by the name of Allah. It will mean, "Do not swear every now and then by the name of Allah, because it will lead you to abstain from doing good, etc." A habitually swearing man does not care what he swears about. As he becomes used to it, it loses its importance, and it may encourage him to make a false oath. This much about his own attitude. So far as society is concerned, he will lose his respect, people will look down upon him - after all, swearing implies that the man himself is not sure that people will accept his words as true. If, in this way, he degrades his own words, why should other believe what he says. Ultimately, he will become a subject of the verse: and do not obey (i.e. accept the words of) any mean swearer. (68:10)

The words of Allah, "and Allah is Hearing, Knowing" are a sort of threatening, whatever meaning one accepts of the preceding sentence. But the first meaning (upon which our translation is based) is the most obvious.

QURAN: *Allah will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned... :*

A "*al-laghw*" (vain) action is that which has no effect. The effect of a thing varies according to variations in its attachments, etc. An oath may have an effect in so far as it is a word, or in so far as, it emphasizes speech; or thirdly in so far as it is a vow; or fourthly if it is broken, or if one perjures, and so on. In this verse the vain oath is contrasted with that (oath) which hearts have earned. It shows that the vain oath here means that which has no effect on the intention of the speaker, that is, such oaths which one utters (like 'No, By God', 'Yes, By God') without taking those words seriously.

"*al-Kasb*" (means to earn profits by a work or profession etc. Originally, it was used for the obtaining of those things which fulfill material needs. Then it was metaphorically used for any good or evil a man may get as a result of any of his actions, like earning praise and good, reputation through good character and social services, and earning good knowledge, superiority, and nobility by striving for them; or earning condemnation, abuse, and slander; or sin and error by one's evil actions. This is the meaning of *al-kasb* and *al-iktisab* Some people say that *al-iktisab* is used when one earns a benefit for one's own self; and *al-kasb* refers to earning a benefit whether it is done for one's own self or for others, as when a servant earns for his master, or a guardian for his ward.

In any case the active participle *al-kasib* and *al-muktasib* (both of which mean "one who earns") are used only for a human being.

The Meaning Of "Heart" In The Qur'an:

A "*al-laghw*" (vain) action is that which has no effect. The effect of a thing varies according to variations in its attachments, etc. An oath may have an effect in so far as it is a word, or in so far as, it emphasizes speech; or thirdly in so far as it is a vow; or fourthly if it is broken, or if one perjures, and so on. In this verse the vain oath is contrasted with that (oath) which hearts have earned. It shows that the vain oath here means that which has no effect on the intention of the speaker, that is, such oaths which one utters (like 'No, By God', 'Yes, By God') without taking those words seriously.

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evil a man may get as a result of any of his actions, like earning praise and good reputation through good character and social services, and earning good knowledge, superiority, and nobility by striving for them; or earning condemnation, abuse, and slander; or sin and error by one's evil actions. This is the meaning of al-Kasb and al-iktisab. Some people say that al-iktisab is used when one earns a benefit for one's own self; and al-kasb refers to earning a benefit whether it is done for one's own self or for others, as when a servant earns for his master, or a guardian for his ward.

In any case the active participle al-kasib and al-muktasib (both of which mean "one who earns") are used only for a human being.

The above explanation is a proof that the words "your hearts" in the verse refer to the man himself - his spirit and soul. The faculties of thought, understanding, love, hate, fear, and so forth, may be attributed (basing what one says on the common man's belief) to the heart, as hearing is attributed to the ears, sight to the eyes, and taste to the tongue. But the word "earning" can only be attributed to man. As the verse uses the expression, "for what your hearts have earned", it proves that the "heart" here stands for the 'soul', 'spirit'.

The same meaning applies to the verses: ... *his heart is surely sinful* (2:83) and: ... *and comes with a penitent heart.* (50:33)

When man looked at animals and at himself he found that perceptions and thinking sometimes become ineffective, for example, during epilepsy or lunacy, yet life continues, as it is witnessed by the heart-beat and the pulse. This led him to believe that the source of life is the heart; he thought that the spirit of life first attaches itself to the heart, and then it is from there that life extends to all parts of the body. He further believed that all the psychological faculties, such as perception, will, love, hate, hope, fear and other such things, belong to the heart because it is the seat of the psyche - the spirit. Of course, every organ is the source of its own function - the mind for thinking, the eyes for seeing, the ears for hearing, the lungs for breathing, and so on. But all are like tools which are used in the work they are made for; it is the heart that is the tool-wielder.

And it is a fact that physical research and experiments have not been able to pin-point the source of control which rules over the whole body. There is no doubt that the limbs and the organs of the body, even though they are different from each other and have different functions and duties to perform, are united under the control of one ruling power, and are really one unit.

It is not that the ancients were not aware of the mind and its functions. Man knew the importance of the head from the very beginning. Does one not see that all the nations and races, with their different languages, name the "authority" the "head", and with it its derivatives. For example *ar-ra's* (head), *ar-riyasah* (headship, meaning presidency) and *ar-ra'is* (head, that is, President). Then there are the phrases like head of a thread, the head (beginning) of a period, the head (starting-point) of a distance, the head (beginning) of a speech, the head (summit) of a mountain, a head (individual number) of animals or cattle, the head of the year (new year's day), etc.

Apparently, this is the reason why people attribute perception and thinking and sentiments (which are totally void of perception) like love, hate, hope, fear, will, envy, chastity, bravery, etc. to the heart. But by heart they mean the spirit which runs into or is attached, to the body. They attribute perceptions and sentiments to the heart, as well as to the spirit and soul, and also to their own selves. They say: I love him; my soul loves him, my heart loves him. Then the metaphorical use of the heart for spirit and soul came into general use; then this use was extended to the breast, because the breast contains the heart; and, therefore, to it were attributed the faculties of perception, action and the sentiments.

There are many such uses in the Qur'an: ... *He expands his breast for Islam...* (6:125) ... *your*

breast straitens at what they say (15:97) ... and the hearts rose up to the throats... alluding to the constriction of the breast (33:10); *Surely, Allah knows whatever is in your breasts. (5:7)*

A point to consider: Can these expressions not be a support for the common belief mentioned earlier, even if it is yet to be clarified? Shaykh Abu 'Ali ibn Sina is inclined to believe that it is the heart that perceives, and the brain is its tool.

Anyhow, now we come back to the verse. The sentence, "but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned", is a metaphor in a metaphor. The preceding sentence says: Allah will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths. The contrasting sentence should have been, "... for what is firmly considered of your oath." Instead it mentions the effect, that is, the sin, which will come into being if one breaks that vow. It is done to show that Allah looks only at the heart, as He says: ... and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it Allah will call you to account for it (2:284); There does not reach Allah their flesh nor their blood, but to Him reaches your piety... (22:37)

The words, "and Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing", hint at the undesirability of vain swearing and oath-taking, because such a thing should not be done by a believer. Allah says: Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers, and who keep aloof from what is vain... (23:1-3)

QUR'AN: *For those who swear (to abstain) from their wives... surely Hearing, Knowing:*

'*al-Ila'*' (to swear), in Islamic jurisprudence, means the swearing by husband that he will not go to his wife, provided it is done in anger with an intention to harm the wife. This is the meaning intended in this verse. The preposition "from" after the verb "swear" gives the meaning of distance; thus the verse implies the meaning of swearing to abstain and to remain aloof from the wife. The waiting of four months implies the same, because it is the period at the end of which cohabitation is, according to the *shari'ah*, obligatory on the husband.

"If they resolved on divorce." The verse means the intention followed by its implementation. It is also implied by the words, "Allah is surely Hearing, Knowing", because "Hearing" can be applied to the spoken words of the divorce, not its intention only.

The words at the end of verse 2:225, "Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing", show that if one goes back to his wife then one shall not be punished in the hereafter. So far as this life is concerned, he is obliged to pay its penalty, *al-kaffarah* because this penalty is not forgiven. Allah says: Allah does not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He calls you to account for the making of deliberate oaths; so its expiation is the feeding of ten poor men out of the average (food) you feed your families with, or their clothing, or the freeing of a neck; but whosoever cannot find (means) then fasting for three days; this the expiation of your oaths when you swear. And guard your oaths. (5:89)

The meaning of the verses is that if one swears to abstain from his wife, then the Muslim Qadi (judge) shall give him a time of four months to go back to her. If by the end of that period, he gives the penalty for the oath, and establishes sexual relations with her, then he shall get no punishment in the hereafter. If on the other hand, he decides to divorce her, that is another way out. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing.

Traditions

There is a tradition in at-Tafsir of al-'Ayyashi, from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the words of Allah: And make not Allah a target of your swearing, that he (the Imam) said: "It is the word of man: 'No, by God', 'Yes, by God'."

Another tradition in the same book, from al-Baqir and asSadiq (a.s.), about this verse, says: "That is, a man swears that he would not talk with his brother, and other such oaths, or that he would not talk with his mother."

Another tradition in al-Kafi from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about it says: "When you are called to make peace between two persons, do not say on oath that you will not carry out."

The author says: The first tradition gives one explanation of the verse, the second and third give another. There is another tradition of nearly the same meaning in at-Tafsir of al-'Ayyashi from al-Baqir and as-Sadiq (a.s.) that they said: "He is the man who makes peace between two persons, and carries the burden of the sin that is between them..." Apparently the tradition means that such a man should not swear that he will not try to do it: he should make peace between them, even if he has to carry the sin, and Allah will forgive him, and he will be an example of him who follows this verse.

There is in al-Kafi from Mas'adah from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said about the verse: Allah will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths... "Vain is the saying of a man, 'No, by God', and 'Yes, by God', without having any firm intention about anything."

The author says: The same meaning is narrated in *al-Kafi* from him by another chain; and in *al-Majma'u'l-bayan* from him and al-Baqir (a.s.).

There is a narration in al-Kafi from both Imams that they said: "If a man swears that he will not go near his wife, then she has not got any say or any right for four months; and he has no sin in not going to her in that period. If the four months pass away and he does not touch her, then, so long as she is silent and does not complain, he is absolved and free (from any responsibility). Then if she brings her case (before the Qadi), the husband will be told: either go back to her and touch her or divorce her. 'Resolve of divorce' means that he should leave her; then when she sees her monthly blood and (afterwards) becomes clean, he will divorce her. And he has, moreover, the right of *far-raj'ah* (returning to her; revoking the divorce) before the expiry of three monthly periods. So this is the *al-'ila'*, which Allah revealed in His Book, and which the Apostle of Allah ordained."

There is in the same book a tradition from as -Sadiq (a. s.) in which he says, inter alia: "And *al-'ila'* is that he says, 'By Allah, I shall not cohabit with thee so and so' or says, 'By Allah, I shall put thee to sorrow', and then puts her to sorrow."

The author says: There are some differences between Sunnis and Shi'ahs about some particulars of *al-'ila'*; but the discussion of it concerns Islamic jurisprudence.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 228-242

وَالْمُطَلَّاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
بُعُولَتُهُنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ 2:228
الطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتَانِ فَإِمْسَاكَ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا مِمَّا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا إِلَّا أَنْ يَخَافَا أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ
خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ 2:229
فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا تَحِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ حَتَّى تَنْكِحَ زَوْجًا غَيْرَهُ فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يَتَرَاجَعَا إِنْ ظَنَّا أَنْ يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ
اللَّهِ يُبَيِّنُهَا لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ 2:230
وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَّغُنَّ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لَتَعْتَدُوا وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ
نَفْسَهُ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُوعًا وَادْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ
بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ 2:231
وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَّغُنَّ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا تَعْضِلُوهُنَّ أَنْ يَنْكِحَنَّ أَرْوَاجَهُنَّ إِذَا تَرَاضُوا بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ذَلِكَ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ
بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ أَرْكَى لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ 2:232
وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ
نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَا تُضَارُّ وَالِدَةٌ بَوْلِدَهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ بِوَالِدِهِ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا
جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تَسْتَرْضِعُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَا آتَيْتُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
بَصِيرٌ 2:233
وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَرْوَاجًا يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَعَشْرًا فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ 2:234
وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا عَرَّضْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ خِطْبَةِ النِّسَاءِ أَوْ أَكْنَنْتُمْ فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ عِلْمَ اللَّهِ أَنْتُمْ سَتَدْكُرُونَهُنَّ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُوَاعِدُوهُنَّ سِرًّا إِلَّا أَنْ
تَقُولُوا قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا وَلَا تَعْزَمُوا عُقْدَةَ النِّكَاحِ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ الْكِتَابُ أَجَلَهُ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ
عَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ 2:235
لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ مَا لَمْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ أَوْ تَفَرَّضُوا لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً وَمَتَّعُوهُنَّ عَلَى الْمَوْسِعِ قَدَرَهُ وَعَلَى الْمُقْتِرِ قَدَرَهُ مَتَاعًا
وَإِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ وَقَدْ فَرَضْتُمْ لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً فَنِصْفُ مَا فَرَضْتُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يَعْفُونَ أَوْ يَعْفُوَ الَّذِي بَيْنَهُمَا عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ وَأَنْ
تَعْفُوا أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَى وَلَا تَنْسُوا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ 2:237
حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَى وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ 2:238
فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ فَرِجَالًا أَوْ رُكْبَانًا فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ فَأَدْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَمَا عَلَّمَكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ 2:239
نَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَرْوَاجًا وَصِيَّةً لِأَرْوَاجِهِمْ مَتَاعًا إِلَى الْحَوْلِ غَيْرِ إِخْرَاجٍ فَإِنْ خَرَجْنَا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي مَا فَعَلْنَا فِي 2:240
أَنْفُسِهِنَّ مِنْ مَعْرُوفٍ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ
وَالْمُطَلَّاتُ مَتَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ 2:241
كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ 2:242

2:228 And the divorced women should keep themselves in waiting for three monthly courses; and it is not lawful for them that they should conceal what Allah has created in their womb, if they believe in Allah and the last day; and their husbands have a better right to take them back in the meanwhile if they wish for reconciliation; and they have rights similar to those upon them in a just manner, and for the men is (right) a degree above them, and Allah is Mighty, Wise.

2:229 Divorce is twice; then keep (them) in fairness or let (them) go with kindness; and it is not

lawful for you to take any part of what you have given them, unless both fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah; then if you fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah, there is no blame on them for what she gives up (to become free thereby). These are the limits of Allah, so do not exceed them, and whoever exceeds the limits of Allah then these it is that are the unjust.

2:230 So if he divorces her she shall not be lawful to him afterwards until she marries another husband; then if he divorces her there is no blame on them both if they return to each other (by marriage), if they both think that they can keep within the limits of Allah, and these are the limits of Allah which He makes clear for a people who know.

2:231 And when you divorce the women and they reach their prescribed time then either retain them in fairness or set them free with fairness, and do not retain them for injury, so that you exceed the limits, and whoever does this, he indeed is unjust to his own self, and do not take Allah's signs for a mockery, and remember the favor of Allah upon you, and that which He has revealed to you of the Book and the Wisdom, admonishing you thereby; and fear Allah, and know that Allah is the Knower of all things.

2:232 And when you have divorced the women and they have ended their term (of waiting), then do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they agree among themselves in a lawful manner; with this is admonished whosoever among you believe in Allah and the last day; this is more profitable and purer for you; and Allah knows while you do not know.

2:233 And the mothers should suckle their children for two complete years for him who desires to make complete the time of suckling; and their maintenance and their clothing must be borne by the father according to usage; no soul shall have imposed upon it a duty but to the extent of its capacity; neither shall a mother be made to suffer harm on account of her child, nor a father on account of his child; and a similar duty (devolves) on the (father's) heir; then if both desire weaning by mutual consent and counsel, there is no blame on them; and if you wish to engage a wet-nurse for your children, there is no blame on you so long as you pay what you promised according to usage; and fear Allah and know that Allah sees what you do.

2:234 And (as for) those of you who die and leave wives behind, they should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten (days), then when they have fully attained their term, there is no blame on you for what they do for themselves in a proper manner; and Allah is aware of what you do.

2:235 And there is no blame on you respecting that which you speak indirectly in the asking of (such) women in marriage or keep (the proposal) concealed within your minds: Allah knows that you will soon mention them, but do not give them a promise in secret unless you speak in a proper manner; and do not resolve the marriage-tie until the prescribed term is completed, and know that Allah knows what is in your mind, therefore beware of Him, and know that Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing.

2:236 There is no blame on you if you divorce the women while yet You have not touched them or appointed for them a dowry, and make provision for them, on the wealthy according to his means, and on the straitened in circumstances according to his means, a provision according to usage; (this is) a duty on the doers of good (to other).

2:237 And if you divorce them before you have touched them and you have appointed for them a dowry, then (pay to them) half of what you have appointed. unless they remit or he remits in whose hand is the marriage-tie; and it is nearer to piety that you should remit, and do not forget generosity between you; surely Allah sees what you do.

2:238 Maintain the prayers and the middle prayer and stand up truly obedient to Allah.

2:239 *But if you are in danger, then (say your prayers) on foot or on horseback; and when you are secure, then remember Allah as He has taught you what you did not know.*

2:240 *And those of you who die and leave wives behind, (make) a bequest in favor of their wives of maintenance for the year without turning (them) out, then if they themselves go away, there is no blame on you for what they do of proper deeds about themselves, and Allah is Mighty, Wise.*

2:241 *And for the divorced women (too) provision (should be made) according to usage; (this is) a duty on those who guard (against evil).*

2:242 *Thus Allah makes clear to you His signs, so that you may understand.*

Commentary

These verses promulgate the laws concerning divorce and the period of waiting as well as about a divorcee suckling her child; in middle of it are some rules concerning prayer.

QUR'AN: *And the divorced women should keep themselves in waiting for three monthly periods:*

"at-Talaq" literally means to release from bonds, to remove the fetters. Then it was metaphorically used for releasing the women from the tie of marriage, and it was so exclusively used in this sense that eventually it became its real meaning.

"Yatarabbasna bi anfusihinna" (should keep themselves in waiting): *at-tarabbus*, is to wait, to hold back. This word is followed here by *"bi anfusihinna"* (literal meaning = concerning their own selves); it thus gives the meaning that they should not attach themselves to any man. In other words, it ordains the rule of *al-'iddah* (waiting period) of divorce.

"A woman is in *al-'iddah*" means that she is holding herself back from marrying again, lest the sperm of the original and subsequent husbands be mixed, and genealogies and consanguinity be corrupted.

The words "should keep themselves in waiting" thus not only legislate a law but also hint at its philosophy. It is not necessary for that philosophy and benefit to be found in every individual case; the laws are made keeping in view the good of the majority of people, not all.

The words thus mean: the divorced women should keep themselves in waiting, by not giving themselves to another husband, so that the sperm should not be mixed and consanguinity and parentage not corrupted.

It is an order, but the sentence (in Arabic) is constructed as a statement. This form of expression is used for emphasis.

"al-Quru" is the plural of *al-qur'*. This is used for the monthly period and also for the period of cleanliness; and is, thus, a word made with two opposite meanings, as some people have said. But the fact is that its root *q-r-* indicates collection, gathering, joining together, but not every collection and gathering, only that which is followed by dispersal and transmission. Keeping this in view, it is obvious that the original meaning of *al-qur'*, would have been the period of cleanliness, because it is the time when blood accumulates in the womb; then it was used also for the period of menstruation because it is the time when blood is discharged after its accumulation.

al-Qar' is also used for reading and reciting, because in recitation and reading, letters and words are first joined together and then proclaimed. The scholars of language have clearly said that *al-qar'* means collection and gathering. And that it indicates such gathering may be inferred from the following verses: *Do not move your tongue with it to make haste with it. Surely on Us is the collecting of it and "qur'anahu" the reciting of it. Therefore, when We have recited it, then follow*

its recitation (75:16-18). And a Qur'an which We revealed in portions so that you may read it to the people by slow degrees(17:106).

Both verses are concerned with the collection and revelation of the Book of Allah; and in both it is referred to as the Qur'an, not as the Book or the Furqan etc.

It is for the same reason that it is given the name Qur'an.

ar-Raghib says in his *al-Mufradaat: al-Qur'* in fact means the start of the menses after cleanliness. As it has two elements in its meaning - cleanliness and the following menses - it is used for both meanings, even separately. When a noun is made for a meaning with two elements, it is also used for those elements separately. For example *al-ma'idah* is used for a table upon which food is arranged; now it is often used either for the table only or the food only. But *al-qur'* was originally made for cleanliness only nor for the menses only. A girl who has not yet seen blood is not said to be in *al-qur'*; likewise a sick woman whose blood continues without stopping is not said to be in *al-qur'*.

QUR'AN: *And it is not lawful for them that they should conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they believe in Allah and the last day:*

The divorced woman should not conceal the fact of her being pregnant or her monthly period. Without this prohibition she might have been tempted to conceal it, so that she might soon complete the *al-'iddah* or that her husband might not get chance of revoking the divorce.

This prohibition of concealment has a proviso: "If they believe in Allah and the last day", while the basic law of the waiting period has no such clause. This clause shows that the order given is an essential requirement of the belief, and the women must adhere to it faithfully and scrupulously. It is as we say: Live with the people honestly if you want good.

QUR'AN: *And their husbands have a better right to take them back in the meanwhile if they wish for reconciliation:*

"*al-Bu'ulah*" " is plural of *al-ba 'l* which means the male spouse, so long as the couple are married. Later, the word acquired a shade of meaning of domination, strength and firmness, because of the position of the husband *vis-à-vis* the wife. Now, we find other usages all based on this meaning. For example, a horse rider is called its *al-ba 'l*; a high land is called *al-ba 'l*, there was an idol named *ba 'l*, and a date-tree is named *al-ba 'l* when it grows high.

"Their husbands": The pronoun "their" stands for "the divorced women". But the order is not for those who are given an irrevocable divorce; it is meant only for those divorced revocably.

"In the meanwhile" refers to the period of waiting.

The proviso, "if they wish for reconciliation", is very important. It shows that taking them back, that is, the revocation of the divorce, must be with good intention, with a wish to make amends. The husband should not revoke the divorce only to inflict harm and injury upon the woman, because, such a behavior is clearly forbidden in the verse, "and do not retain them for injury."

"*Ahaqq*" is the comparative (and superlative) and means "having more right". It always requires another person having less right. For example, the previous husband had a right to the divorcee, and the other proposers also have right to her, but the previous husband has more right to her, because of the previous marriage-tie.

But this meaning apparently is not correct here, because this verse is not talking about a fresh marriage; it is speaking about "taking them back", revoking the divorce; and it is a right which no one shares with him. So, why use the phrase "have a better right"? The fact is that there is a very interesting deletion in the verse. Its complete meaning is: their husbands have more (or a better) right to them than another proposer, and this right can be utilized by taking them back and revoking the divorce during the period of waiting.

This right exists only in revocable divorce; and it is this circumstantial evidence which proves that the order is only about such divorcees and not about those who have been given an irrevocable divorce.

The verse explains the law concerning only those divorcees with whom marriage has been consummated, provided they are at the age of menstruation and are not pregnant. For others, there are other verses.

QUR'AN: *And they have rights similar to those upon them in a just manner, and for the men is (right) a degree above them:*

"*al-Ma 'ruf*" variously translated in these verses as "a just manner", "fairness", a "lawful manner", "usage", a "proper manner" and "proper deeds") literally means "known". It refers to the things and usages established in society by the mutual dealings of its members, and recognized as just and good by general acceptance. This word has been repeatedly used in these verses - in twelve places. It shows how much importance Allah attaches to fairness and justice in matters concerning divorce. *al-Ma 'ruf* is a comprehensive word which covers the guidance of reason, the laws of religion, nobility of character and moral and ethical values.

As Islam has built its *shari'ah* on the foundation of nature, (*al-ma 'ruf* = known) in its eyes is that custom which is known to the people when they walk on the straight path of nature and do not deviate from it.

The natural law of society says that all the members of society should be treated equally, they should have as much rights as they have obligations. At the same time it decrees that every individual's personal perfection and attributes must be recognized. The ruler's authority, the people's subordination, the scholar's knowledge, the illiterate person's ignorance, all must be weighed in the scale of their usefulness for, and effect on, society; and with that recognition everyone should be given his proper right.

The same principle was applied by Islam concerning the rights and obligations of woman. It gave her as much right upon the husband as it ordained upon her for the husband. At the same time, it preserved her rightful value and place in her union with the man; and in this area, Islam found that men have a right a degree above women.

It is clear from the above that the sentence, "and for the men is (a right) a degree above them", is like a clause which completes the principle sentence. The whole sentence means that women, or divorcees, are equal with men, but that men are a degree above them; therefore, Allah has given the women as much right as is laid upon them, with the preservation of the authority of men over them.

We shall discuss this subject later on.

QUR'AN: *Divorce is twice; then keep (them) in fairness or let (them) go with kindness; and it is not lawful for you to take any part of what you have given them:*

"*al-Marrah*" means once; it is derived from *al-murur*(to pass). *ad-daf'ah*,*al-karrah* and *an-nuzlah* have the same meaning. *at-tasrah* means to send forth the cattle to pasture. *as-sarh* is a tree, the fruit of which is eaten by the camel. The Arabs say *sarrahtu'l-ibal* (I let loose the camel to feed on *sarh*). *at-tasrih* is derived from the same root, and is used in this verse as a metaphor for releasing the divorced woman by not taking her back during the waiting period.

"Divorce is twice": The divorce referred to here is the revocable divorce. That is why it has been followed by the words, "then keep (them) in fairness or let (them) go with kindness". The third divorce, after these two, is mentioned in verse 2:230, which says: *So if he divorces her, she shall not be lawful to him until she marries another husband.*

To let them go with kindness means to let them go free by not revoking the divorce. They are either

to be retained in fairness *bi-ma 'rufin* or to be freed with kindness "*bi ihsanin.*" The difference between these expressions is important. Retaining the divorcee by revoking the divorce could be done with a bad intention, to injure and harm her. For example, a man divorces his wife, then waits until she nearly completes the waiting period and then he revokes the divorce and takes her back; then again he divorces her and the procedure is repeated. Such things could be done to mentally torture the woman; and it is unjust, unfair and cruel; the *shari'ah* of Islam dislike such behavior. The revocation which is commendable in this religion is the one carried out for, and based on reconciliation, at which there is hope for the good companionship and love which Allah has created between husband and wife.

In the same way, letting her go could be done in an ugly manner; for example, quarrelling with her, showing rage and anger, and demonstrating a spirit of revenge. Such behavior is not allowed in Islam. The *shari'ah* says that this "letting her go" should be done in a manner recognized as noble by society and accepted as lawful by religion. It is this "fair dealing" which has been mentioned in the coming verse (*then either retain them in fairness or set them free with fairness 2:231*). But the verse under discussion goes a step further and commands the man, if he wishes to let her go, to do so "with kindness". The expression has been changed to prepare minds for the next rule: "and it is not lawful for you to take any part of what you have given them".

Obviously, the words "in fairness" and "with kindness" were necessary to prevent unscrupulous persons from misusing the law and defeating its purpose by following its letter but not its spirit. The real aim of the rule or revocation of divorce is to facilitate reconciliation. Therefore, it was necessary to ordain that it should be done "in fairness", not to inflict any harm upon the woman. Allah says in a coming verse: "and do not retain them for injury, so that you exceed the limits". Likewise, the purpose of the ordinance to "let her go" is to safeguard her rights, so that the man does not take back all or part of the dowry given to her. For this purpose the word, "in fairness" was not sufficient, because some societies might not think it bad to take back the dowry, in whole or part, at the time of divorce. Therefore, the expression was changed to "with kindness". Now it paves the way for the next sentence, "and it is not lawful... ", and compensates to some degree the loss that the woman suffers in the ruination of her family life and the breaking of the marriage-tie.

QUR'AN: Unless both fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah:

"Both fear" means both have an overriding opinion that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah. "Limits of Allah" are His commands and prohibitions, the things prohibited or made obligatory by Him.

The situation mentioned in this verse appears when their mentalities, characters and manners are opposed to each other, and thus hate becomes the predominant factor in, their relationship.

QUR'AN: Then if you fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah, then there is no blame on them for what she gives up (to become free thereby):

The change from the dual for "*khafa*" (both feared) of the previous sentence to the plural "*khiatum*" (you - three or more - feared) here indicates that the fear, suspicion or opinion should be a reasonable one, recognized as such by common people. Doubts based on evil suggestions, infatuations or hypochondria will not do. That is also the reason why the whole phrase, "that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah", has been repeated. If a pronoun were used (i.e., if you fear 'it') there would be a chance that the couple's unreasonable doubts and suspicions would become the basis of this rule. This repetition has removed the chance of such a misunderstanding.

"There is no blame on them": Before that, the husband was prohibited from taking any part of what he had given the wife. It means that the wife, on her part, was prohibited from giving him anything

back, because if she gave him anything while he was not allowed to take it, she would be cooperating with him in a sin and transgression. Now, this verse gives an exception to that general rule: In the *al-khul'* - form of divorce they are allowed to agree on an amount which the wife pays to the husband to get herself free. In this situation, there is no blame on the husband for taking it, nor on the wife in giving it. Hence the expression, "there is no blame on them".

QUR'AN: *These are the limits of Allah, so do not exceed them, and whoever exceeds the limits of Allah then these it is that are the unjust.*

"These" is the demonstrative pronoun, pointing to the above-mentioned laws. These are matters of social legislation coupled with ethical teachings and other academic subjects.

It may be inferred from these verses that one should not try to separate legislative rules from moral principles. It is wrong to stick to the letter of the law, neglecting the spirit behind it. This sanctimoniousness defeats the purpose of the *shari'ah*, negates the aims of religion and changes the bliss of life into misery. Islam is a religion of deeds, not of words; a *shari'ah* of action, not of dogma. The Muslims have only reached this level of retrogression and backwardness, because their whole attention was fixed on the body of the law, and they completely forgot that there was also a soul and spirit inside that body. The coming verse: " and whoever does this, he indeed is unjust to his own self", proves this assertion of ours.

This verse frequently changes the pronouns from plural to singular and from second person to third person and then returns to the original form. This style helps to hold the attention of the audience, and the variation of style refreshes the mind.

QUR'AN: *So if he divorces her she shall not be lawful to him afterwards until she marries another husband... clear for a people who know:*

This verse promulgates the law of the third divorce. If after the two divorces and returns mentioned above, he divorces her a third time, she shall be prohibited to him until she marries another husband.

It is the wife herself who is said to be prohibited, while prohibition applies to marrying her as well as to cohabiting with her. This mode of expression has been used because "she is prohibited" implies both meanings; and, accordingly, "until she marries another husband" also implies marriage followed by cohabitation. Then if he, that is, the second husband, divorces her there is no blame on them both, that is, the woman and her first husband, if they return to each other, that is, by means of a fresh marriage, after reconciliation and mutual consent. The verb used is "*yataraja'a*" which means, "both return to each other"; it is not the return or revocation after the first two divorces over which the husband has the right and which the women cannot refuse. This mutual return should be effected if they both think that they can keep within the limits of Allah. The words "limits of Allah" have again been repeated in the final sentences because these are other than those mentioned earlier.

This verse is a miracle of brevity and conciseness. Such a short verse contains fourteen pronouns all referring to different things, and although they are all near each other there is no ambiguity in the meaning, nor any difficulty in its understanding.

This verse and the two before it contain numerous common nouns and many metaphors without any adverse effect on their eloquence and elocution. For example, the phrase "*fa imsakun bima 'rufin au tasrihun bi ihsanin* (than keeping them in fairness or letting them go with kindness) contains four common nouns coming one after other. Also, there are the following metaphorical expressions:

"What you have given them" = Dowry

"If you fear" = If you have reasonable ground to believe.

"What she gives up" = The redemption paid in al-khul'.

"So if he divorces her" = The third divorce.

"She shall not be lawful to him" = He is prohibited to marry her again and cohabit with her.

"Until she marries another husband" = Until she marries and cohabits with him. (Notice the politeness of the Qur'an)

"If they return" = If they marry again.

Then there is the contrast between "keep" and "let go", and between "both fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah" and "both think that they can keep within the limits of Allah." Look also at the variation of style in "so do not exceed them" and "whoever exceeds them."

QUR'AN: And when you divorce the women and they reach their prescribed time, then either retain them in fairness or set them free with fairness, and do not retain them for injury, so that you exceed the limit:

"They reach their prescribed time": When their prescribed time is about to expire. The verb *al-bulugh*(to reach) is used not only for arriving at the destination, but also for coming near it. The reason of our opting for this meaning is clear from the next words, "then either retain them in fairness or set them free with fairness". The husband has neither of these options when her prescribed period has expired.

The words, "and do not retain them for injury, so that you exceed the limit", forbid retaining her with the intention of injuring her. A preceding verse had already prohibited taking back "any part of what you have given them" when one decides to let them go free. The only exception is *al-khul'*..

QUR'AN: *And whoever does this, he indeed is unjust to his own self, and do not take Allah's signs for a mockery;*

It describes the reason why retaining the woman with the intention of causing her harm is prohibited. Marriage completes the bliss of life. This bliss cannot be achieved unless both husband and wife are happy with each other, and complement each other to attain a natural perfection. Divorce disturbs that harmony; and revocation is an attempt to mend that damage, to join after separation and to unite after coming apart. How can this purpose be attained if he retains her so as to inflict harm upon her? The two purposes are diametrically opposed. Anyone who resorts to such ugly behavior is unjust to his own soul, because he drives it away from the straight path to which human nature leads. Obviously, he treats the signs of Allah as a joke. Allah has not ordained a soul-less *shari'ah* concerned only with the body of deeds, like giving, taking, keeping, letting go, etc. In fact, all these rules have been made for the common weal, to make up the deficiencies of society, and to perfect the bliss of human life. Then Allah combined these rules with good ethics to develop the psyche, and cleanse the soul. All the laws of Islam are finely meshed with fundamental knowledge, like the Oneness of God, and the Mastership of the Prophet and the Imams etc. If anyone confines his religion to the external rules and throws things out, he surely has taken the commandments and signs of Allah as a mockery.

QUR'AN: *And remember the favor of Allah upon you, and that which He has revealed to you of the Book and the Wisdom.. the Knower of all things:*

"The favor of Allah": The grace bestowed in the form of religion, or the reality of religion, that is, the blessings one gets after following the Divine Commandments, an example of which is the happy life one lives when husband and wife love and respect each other and when there is harmony in domestic life. Allah calls the blessings of the religion His favor. For example: *This day I have perfected your religion for you and have completed My favor on you... (5:3); ... so that He may complete His favor on you... (5:6);... so by His favor you became brethren... (3:103).*

Accordingly, the next words, "and that which He has revealed to you of the Book and the Wisdom, admonishing you thereby", would be a description of that favor; and the Book and the Wisdom would

refer to the body and soul of the *shari'ah* respectively - to its commandments and their philosophy.

Also, the favor may be taken to refer to all the Divine Graces - creative and otherwise. In this case, the verse would mean: Remember the mystery of your life, and think how it has been made into a perfect unit, and how the creative forces have established the wonderful harmony between husband and wife. Then heed to the admonition of Allah which He has addressed to you in the form of the commandments of *shari'ah*, and to their philosophy. If you ponder upon these matters you may hope to advance on to the road of blessings and bliss and you will not carelessly ruin the perfection of your life; and fear Allah and remember that He knows every thing; your appearance, therefore, should not differ from the depths of your reality. In short, you should not try to defeat the purpose of the law by apparently following the letter of the law.

QUR'AN: *And when you have divorced the women and they have ended their term (of waiting), then do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they agree among themselves in a lawful manner:*

Apparently the order in "do not prevent them" is addressed to guardians and other relatives against whose wishes the women cannot usually go. "Their husbands" means the husbands who had given them divorce. The verse forbids guardians and other relatives from preventing the woman from remarrying her husband if, after the expiry of the waiting period, both are reconciled to each other, and wish to re-establish the marriage-tie. It often happens that the relatives of the woman do not wish her to establish such a union again with the same husband, as they hate and dislike him because he divorced her in the first place. This verse says that they should not allow such feelings to become a hindrance in the path of such a reunion.

This verse does not prove in any way that marriage is not lawful without the permission of guardian:

First: because, even if it does not prove that guardianship has no effect on marriage, it surely does not prove that it has any such effect.

Second: There is no reason to say that the command, "do not prevent", is addressed to guardians only. Obviously, it is a general command addressed to all the relatives whose advice or pressure may create difficulty in such a re-marriage. Also, the order, apparently, is of an advisory nature, to draw the attention of the relatives to the benefits and gains which may accrue as a result of her re-marrying the same husband. That is why it has been recommended by the words, "this is more profitable and purer for you".

A commentator has said that the command, "do not prevent", is addressed to the husbands who give the divorce, and it forbids them to hide for some time the news of the divorce from the women so that they have to start their "period of waiting" late on receiving the news, and thus are prevented from entering into marriage early. Accordingly, the meaning would be like this: "And when you have divorced the women, (0 husbands!) and they have ended their term of waiting, then do not prevent them from marrying (other men who would be) their husbands." But this interpretation does not conform with the words of the verse. If that were the purpose of the verse, it should have said, 'do not prevent them from marrying' or 'from taking other husbands'. It would not have said, "their husbands" (Also, the verse says that they have already completed the; period of waiting; so where is the question of unnecessarily prolonging the period of waiting?)

"Fa-balaghna ajalahunna" literally means 'and they have reached their term'. But it means ending their term, as we have written in the translation. If the period of waiting had not ended, no guardian or relative could prevent her return to the husband: "and their husbands have a better right to take them back in the meanwhile". Moreover, in that case Allah would have said, "do not prevent them from

returning", not "from marrying".

QUR'AN: *With this is admonished whosoever among you believes in Allah and the last day:*

It is exactly the same admonition as the one in verse 2:228, "it is not lawful for them that they should conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they believe in Allah and the last day". These two commands have been tied especially with the proviso of belief in Allah and the last day, because it is the belief of *at-tawhid* (Monotheism, Oneness of God); and the religion of Monotheism encourages unity, not disunity; togetherness, not separation.

In these sentences, Allah has first used the singular pronoun (is admonished whosoever), then the plural (among you,) again the singular (believe in ...), then again He returns to the plural (for you). Basically, the verse is addressed to the Apostle of Allah together with his *ummah*; therefore plural pronouns are quite in order. Yet, sometimes the talk is addressed to the Apostle only, because he is the original recipient of the revelation, and others are addressed only through him. This happens mostly in those sentences in which no law or command is promulgated. So far as those verses are concerned which bring any law or command, almost all of them are in the plural form. This style alternatively widens the circle, then shortens it, then again widens it. This variation holds the attention of the audience and keeps them alert.

QUR'AN: *This is more profitable and purer for you:*

"*Azka*" is derived from *az-zakah* which means 'good and pleasant growth'; therefore, it has been translated here as 'more profitable'. Purity has been explained earlier. The demonstrative pronoun, "this", refers either to not preventing them from re-marrying their previous husbands, or to such re-marriage itself. The result in both cases is the same. Such a remarriage would create harmony in place of discord and would mend broken relationships. This would strengthen the feeling of unity and accord, from which would sprout healthy religious virtues. Such a re-marriage would augment the women's virtues of chastity and modesty, and would put a protective cover on their shame. Also, it would be purer for their souls because it would prevent them from thinking about other men when searching for the next husband.

Islam is the religion of *az-zakah* (good growth, purification), *at-taharah* (cleanliness) and knowledge. Allah says: ... *reciting to them his communications and purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the Wisdom...* (3:164); ... *but He intends to purify you...* (5:7). QUR'AN: *And Allah knows while you do not know: that is, except what He teaches you, as He says: ... and teaching them the Book and the Wisdom* (3:164); ... *and they cannot comprehend any thing out of His knowledge except what He pleases* (2:255). There is no conflict between this verse and the preceding one, "... which He makes clear for a people who know", as it means, 'who know by the teaching of Allah'.

QUR'AN: *And the mothers should suckle their children for two whole years for him who desires to make complete the time of suckling:*

The words used in this verse are "*al-walidat*" (those who give birth to) and "*mawludun lahu* he to whom the child is born). The more common words *al-umm* (mother) and *al-ab* (father) have not been used, because *al-umm* is more general than *al-walidah* - the grandmother, aunt and wet-nurse are also called *al-umm* (mother), but only the woman who gives birth to the child may be called its *al-walidah*. Likewise, *al-ab* is more general than *al-walid* (he from whose seed the child is born); and *al-ibn* (son) is more general than *al-walad* (the born child). The rule prescribed in this verse concerns especially the born child and the woman who bore it and the man to whom it was born. The verse has discarded even the word *al-walid* (father) and has used a longer word *mawludun lahu* (he to whom the child is born) because this new word gives in a nutshell the reason of this rule. As the

child is born to the father and is attached to him in most affairs the father is obliged to bear the full responsibility for it, feeding and clothing it, care of it and bringing it up. This includes feeding and clothing the child's mother, who feeds it from her breast. On the other hand, the mother is obliged not to harm the father of the child, because it is he who is ultimately responsible for that child, born of her womb.

A strange interpretation has been written by one commentator. He says: "Allah used the word 'he for whom the child is born' , instead of 'father' , to show that mothers are only a means of bearing children for fathers, but that children actually belong to fathers, and that is why, at the time of mentioning parentage, only the names of the fathers are shown, not those of the mothers. And al-Ma'mun ar-Rashid has said in a couplet 'And surely, the mothers of the people are but receptacles, where the seeds are deposited, and the sons are of the fathers only.'"

The poor fellow forgot that this very verse says in the beginning "*awladahunna*" (their, that is, the mothers' children): and again it says. "*bi waladiha*" (her child). More amusing is his attempt to argue on the strength of the poetry of al-Ma'mun. al-Ma'mun and his ilk are too worthless to have their words quoted in an explanation of the Qur'an. Many men of literature get confused between different disciplines; they are unable to distinguish literature from legislation, or social laws from the decrees of creation. They, therefore, offer evidence to solve a social problem or a mystery of creation.

In fact, the child belongs to both the father and mother as far as creation is concerned. But in social affairs, various nations follow various systems: in matriarchies, the child is attached to the mother; in patriarchies, to the father. This verse confirms this second system by referring to the father as "he to whom the child is born."

"*al-Irda*" (suckling) is on the paradigm of *al-ifal* from *ar-rida 'ah* and *ar-rada'*; both of which mean 'to suck milk from the breast'.

"*al-Hawl*" is "year." Its literal meaning is to turn, to change. The year is given this name because it turns and changes. "Two complete years": As the year is made up of many parts (e.g. 360 days), the word sometimes is used for even an incomplete period. If one stays in a place for, let us say, eleven months, he often says that he stayed there for a year. This is why the adjective, "complete", has been used to show that two whole years are intended here.

"For him who desires to make complete the time of suckling": It proves that the custody (guardianship) and suckling of the child is a right of the divorced mother, and is left to her discretion. Also deciding on the end of the prescribed period is her right. If she wishes to suckle the child for two complete years, she may do so: and if she does not want so, it is at her discretion. The husband has no say in it except when the divorced wife agrees to it by mutual counsel, as is described in the words, "if both desire weaning by mutual consent and counsel".

QUR'AN: *And their maintenance and their clothing must be borne by the father according to the usage; no soul shall have imposed upon it a duty but to the extent of its capacity:*

Allah has prescribed the maintenance and clothing of the mother, according to the level of *al-ma'ruf* (known, usual), that is, as is generally known and accepted in families of that status. The reason for this rule is given in the next sentence that Allah does not impose any duty beyond the capacity of His servants.

Upon this general and basic principle are based two rules mentioned after it: (1) The right of the woman concerning the custody and suckling of the child, and other related rules. The husband has no right to come between the child and its mother, by not allowing her to keep the child in her custody, or by preventing her from seeing it and so on. The rights of the mother must be accorded to her; otherwise, it will injure and harm her and put her under an unjustified mental and emotional strain. (2)

On her part, the woman is forbidden to injure and harm the husband, for example, by not allowing him to see the child.

The above two rules are ordained in the words, "neither shall a mother be made to suffer harm on account of her child, nor a father on account of his child". Why did Allah not use a pronoun? Instead of saying, "on account of his child", it could be said, "on account of him". But a pronoun in this place would have created an apparent contradiction. The sentence mentions the father as, "he to whom the child is born". The pronoun "him" would have referred to "her child" in the preceding sentence. So the purport of the supposed sentence would have been: nor shall he to whom the child is born be made to suffer on account of "her" child!

But the sentence in its present form does not give room for such a contradiction. Not only that; the actual style recognizes factors of creation as well as social legislation: it recognizes that in creation, the child belongs to both parents, and, therefore, it is referred to as "her child" and "his child"; then it shows that in social laws, it belongs to the father, who is, thus, referred to as the one to whom the child is born.

QUR'AN: *And a similar duty (devolves) on the(father's) heir:*

The duty imposed upon the father regarding the maintenance and clothing of the suckling mother devolves, if he dies, on his heir.

Some other meanings have been written for this verse which are not in conformity with its apparent meaning; we do not intend to quote them here. What we have written is according to the traditions narrated from the Imams of *Ahlu'l-bayt (a.s.)*, and is also in accord with the apparent meaning of the verse.

QUR'AN: *Then if both desire weaning by mutual consent... according to usage:*

This is an offshoot of the right of the mother and of the avoidance of harm to either party. The upbringing and suckling of the child is not an obligation on her; it is a right of hers and she may waive her right if she so wishes. Therefore, it is perfectly right if the parents agree by mutual counsel to wean the child before the completion of the two years. Also, the father may engage another wet-nurse for the child, if the mother returns the child to him and refuses to suckle it; or if she is sick or has not got enough milk or for any other reason. But it is incumbent upon him to give the wet-nurse her rightful dues without infringing any of her rights, as Allah says: "and if you wish to engage a wet-nurse for your children, there is no blame on you so long as you pay what you promised according to usage."

QUR'AN: *And fear Allah and know that Allah sees what you do.* It is an order to fear Allah and to be careful of one's obligations towards Him, which in present context means to obey these orders and to show fairness in their implementation. As these matters may be seen and observed, Allah reminds man to know that He sees what man does. Compare it with the ending of the previous verse which forbids husbands to retain their wives with the intention of inflicting harm upon them, and then reminds them that Allah knows every thing. As the intention cannot be "seen", man was reminded there that Allah "knows" every thing, and even his intention is not hidden from Him.

QUR'AN: *And (as for) those of you who die and leave wives behind, they should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten (days):*

"*at-Tawaffi*" means to cause to die. It is said when Allah gave him death, and the dead man is called *al-mutawaffa* (one who is given death).

"*Yadharun*" like *yad 'un* means "they leave", or "they shall leave." These two verbs have no past tense.

"*Ashran*" (ten) here means ten days. 'Days' was deleted as the meaning was clear.

QUR'AN: *Then when they have fully attained their term, there is no blame on you for what they do for themselves in a proper manner:*

"*Bulughu'l-ajal*" (reaching the term) means completing the waiting period of death, prescribed above. "There is no blame on you ... " is a way of expressing the widows' full authority on their own affairs; if they wish to enter into marriage again, they are free to do so, and no relative of theirs, or of their deceased husbands, has any right to interfere. The verse puts a stop to the foolish custom of some societies which, owing to ignorance, blind prejudice, miserliness or envy, do not like widows to remarry. It says that widows have a right to do so, and that right is recognized by the *shari'ah*; no one has any power to forbid a lawful action.

Various nations had various customs regarding the widow. Some, like the Hindus, burnt her alive with the dead husband; others, like many ancient tribes in Africa and elsewhere, buried her alive with the husband's body; some like the ancient Christians, did not allow her to marry again and she had to remain single until death released her from this chain; some others, like the Arabs of the pre-Islamic days, kept her secluded for one year, or, like some advanced societies of nowadays, for nine months: there are others who say that the deceased husband has a right upon the widow which prevents her from re-marrying for a certain period - without fixing that time. All these customs and traditions are based on the assumption that marriage basically joins two lives together, and is the manifestation of love and affection; and that this love has a sanctity which must be respected. This respect is binding on both the parties, and whoever dies first, the surviving spouse must show grace, dignity and decorum as a natural courtesy towards his or her departed partner in life. But this courtesy is more binding on the woman, because she is expected to be a model of modesty and chastity and has to protect herself from other men's eyes. It is not in keeping with her dignity to appear as cheap merchandise handled by various admirers one after another. The above-mentioned customs and traditions are based on this belief.

Islam has prescribed a term of nearly a third of a year for this waiting.

QUR'AN: *And Allah is aware of what you do:*

As the verse contained the rules of *al-'iddah* of death and the right of widows to remarry and as these legislations were about actions and were based on Divine wisdom, it was appropriate to remind the audience that Allah knows all about their actions, and He knows best what should be allowed and what should be forbidden; therefore, widows have to wait in one instance and have freedom in the other.

QUR'AN: *And there is no blame on you respecting that which you speak indirectly in the asking of (such) women in marriage or keep (the proposal) concealed within your minds:*

"*at-Ta'rid*", translated here as speaking indirectly, is speaking obliquely in a way that the hearer understands the real aim which the speaker does not want to declare openly. The difference between speaking indirectly and metaphor is that in speaking indirectly the apparent meaning also remains valid and the indirect meaning is inferred from it. For example, the suitor says to the woman: "I am a good companion, of generous nature." While the clear meaning also is valid, the purport of the talk is to let the woman know that if she married him she would be happy. But in metaphor the apparent meaning vacates its place for the metaphorical one. For example, one says about a brave man, "I saw a lion". Here real meaning of lion (the particular animal) is not valid at all.

"*al-Khatb*" means speaking and reiterating. "*al-khitbah*" and "*al-khutbah*" both are derived from it. The former means proposing to a woman asking her hand in marriage. The suitor is called *al-khatib* (plural: *al-khuttab*); the latter means a lecture. The lecturer is called *al-khatib* (plural: *al-khutaba'*)

"*al-Iknan*" is derived from *al-kann* and both mean 'to hide', 'to conceal'. But *al-iknan* is concealing an idea in the mind, as the verse says: "or keep concealed within your mind"; and *al-kann* is hiding or covering something with, or in, a material thing like a cloth, a house, etc. Allah says: *As if they were eggs carefully sheltered: (37:49); the like of the hidden pearls(56:23).*

The verse says that it is not improper to speak to such women indirectly, letting them know that you are interested in marrying them when they are free, or to hide this idea in your mind.

QUR'AN: *Allah knows that you will mention them... in a proper manner:*

It gives the reason of the above sentences. Mentioning such women in the context of marriage is a natural thing for you, and Allah does not forbid a thing which is ingrained in your nature.

This is one of the rules which clearly show that Islam is based on the foundation of nature.

QUR'AN: *And do not resolve the marriage-tie until prescribed term is completed:*

"*al-'Azm*" (resolve, determination) is to set the heart on a work with firm intention of doing it, so that no weakness remains in the effect of that resolve, unless that resolve itself is cancelled. "*al-'Uqdah*" (knot, tie) is derived from "*al-'aqd*" which means to tie. The verse likens the bond of marriage with the knot which joins two cords together so that they become one; thus the husband and wife become one by the marriage-tie.

The marriage-tie is connected in this verse with resolve and determination, which is a matter of the heart and mind. The verse thus indicates that the reality behind the marriage rite is something dependent on, and connected with, intention, faith and belief. Marriage is, in fact, a matter based on society's (or religion's) recognition, and has no existence outside common belief. It is the same as was described about ownership and other such matters under the verse 2:213. The verse, thus, contains an allegory and a metaphor.

"*Hatta yablughu 'l-kitabu ajalahu*"; "*al-kitab*" means 'written' that is, a prescribed rule, and it refers to the waiting imposed on the women who are in *al-'iddah*. Literally the phrase means, "until the prescribed rule reaches (the end of) its duration".

The verse thus means: Do not perform marriage with them until their prescribed waiting period has been completed.

It is clear from this verse that the talk in this and the preceding verses is about those women who are in the waiting period. Therefore, the definite article "the women" refers not to all women but to the previously-mentioned group. That is why it has been translated, "... in the asking of (such) women in marriage... "

QUR'AN: *And know that Allah knows what is in your mind; therefore beware of Him, and know that Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing:*

By mentioning the Divine attributes of Knowledge, Forgiveness and Forbearance, Allah warns the believers that the matters discussed in the two verses - proposing to women during their waiting period, and speaking to them obliquely about it, and giving them a promise in secret are extremely perilous things: Allah does not like them at all, although lie has allowed what lie has allowed.

QUR'AN: *There is no blame on you if you divorce the women while yet you have not touched them or appointed for them a dowry:*

To touch allegorically means to cohabit. '*aw tafridu lahunna fari'datan* literally means 'or appointed for them a (prescribed) duty', and it refers to fixing the dowry.

The verse means that it shall not be a hindrance in divorce if the marriage was not yet consummated, or if the dowry was yet to be fixed.

QUR'AN: *And make provision for them, on the wealthy according to his means, and on the*

straitened in circumstances according to his means, a provision according to usage:

"al-Mut'ah" and "al-mata'" is what may be used, or enjoyed. "matti'uhunna means 'give them usable, enjoyable goods or wealth'. The word, 'a provision' is the object of the verb. "make provision" between the verb and its object is placed the parenthetic clause, "on the wealthy... and on... to his means". "al-Musi is the active participle of "awsa'a" (he became wealthy). This paradigm is reserved for transitive verbs. Perhaps, this verb was originally used with an object: gradually the object was omitted and the verb became intransitive.

The verse says: It is incumbent upon you, if you divorce a woman when the dowry was not yet fixed, to make for her a provision according to usage. And it should be according to the means of the husband.

Accordingly, she is entitled to get an amount similar to the dowry of her equals like her mother, her sister, etc. But this order does not cover the case of a woman divorced before cohabitation, because her case is explained in the next verse.

QUR'AN: (this is) *a duty on the doers of good (to others):*

Apparently the attribute of doing good to others is closely connected with this legislation. As "doing good to others" is not incumbent, it follows that the order given above should be a recommendation, not a compulsory law. But clear traditions of *Ahlu'l-baytsay* that the order is compulsory and obligatory. Perhaps it may be inferred from this verse in this way: Allah has earlier said, "Divorce is twice; then keep (them) in fairness or let (them) go with kindness". There the Arabic word, for which we have used "Kindness", is *al-ihsan*, which in this verse has been translated as doing good to others. Anyhow, kindness and doing good is incumbent on those who let the women go, that is, those who give divorce. Therefore, the divorcers are obliged to be doers of good. And this verse orders the doers of good to make provision for the divorced women. In other words, it obliges the divorcers to make such provision. (And Allah knows better).

QUR'AN: *And if you divorce them before you have touched them... that you should remit:*

If you divorce them before the consummation of marriage and a dowry was already fixed, then you are obliged to pay them half the prescribed amount. Of course, if the women themselves or their guardians remit this amount then the half also would be waived.

The husband may also be termed the "one in whose hand is the marriage-tie". Therefore, if he has already paid the full dowry and if he remits it, then it will not be necessary for the divorced wife to pay back to him half of that amount. And, in any case, remitting the due portion of the dowry is nearer to righteousness and piety. One who gives up his rightful dues (which he is entitled to, according to *shari'ah*) shall more easily and readily turn away from what is not lawful, and shun what is forbidden.

QUR'AN: *And do not forget generosity between you; surely Allah sees what you do:*

"al-fadl translated here as generosity) originally means to exceed, to surpass. The same is the meaning of *al-fudul*. But *al-fadl* is used for excellence in virtue, nobility and merit, while *al-fudul* is used for unwarranted excesses, like chattering and gossiping.

The verse exhorts the separated couple to do good and be generous to each other by forgoing their own rights and giving the other party more than its due.

The comment about "surely Allah sees what you do" is similar to that given concerning the last sentence of the verse 2:234.

QUR'AN: *Maintain the prayers and the middle prayer and stand up truly obedient to Allah:*

"Hafizu" (maintain) is derived from *"al-hifz"* which means to take hold of a thing and preserve it. Mostly it is used for retaining ideas and perceived pictures in the mind. The middle prayer is the

prayer falling in the middle. The verse does not say which of the prayers is the middle one. It is explained in traditions which will be quoted later on.

"Stand up for Allah": The "L" (for) shows the aim, that is, purely for the pleasure of Allah. "Standing up" metaphorically means to start a work and be engaged in it." *"Qanitin"* is derived from *"al-qunut"* which means obedience, submission, surrender. Allah says: *All are obedient to Him " (2:116); And whoever of you is obedient to Allah and His Apostle... (33:31) .*

The meaning of the verse in short is: Remain engaged in the obedience of Allah, being submissive to Him, purely for His pleasure.

QUR'AN: *But if you are in danger... what you did not know:*

The conjunctive 'F' (but) joining this sentence in the subjunctive mood with the previous verse shows that there was a deleted (but understood) conditional clause, therein: "Maintain, if you are not in danger". *"ar-Rijal"* is plural of *ar-rajil* (pedestrian), *"ar-rukban"* is plural of *ar-rakib* (rider). This verse prescribes the rule of the prayer of danger.

"F" implies that maintaining the prayer and attending to it regularly is a rule which can never be relaxed. If you are not in danger, then perform it as you have been taught; but if there is any danger or risk, then do it in the best possible way, standing or walking on foot, or even riding. Then after the danger passes away and you are secure, perform it in the usual way, and remember Allah as He has taught you what you did not know. "K" (as) in "as He has taught you" is for analogy. "What you did not know" shows the magnitude of the favor of Allah; for this reason, it points to all the things taught by Allah, instead of mentioning only the teaching of the prayer.

The meaning of the sentence, thus, will be: So, remember Allah with a remembrance equal to His favor in teaching you the obligatory prayer among other teachings concerning the rules of the religion.

QUR'AN: *And those of you who die and leave wives behind (make) a bequest in favor of their wives of maintenance for the year:*

"Bequest" in this sentence is an object; its verb "bequeath" is deleted because it is easily understood.

The definite article *al-* (= the) in *"al-hawl"* (the year) shows that the verse must have been revealed before the rule of *al-'iddah* of death (waiting for four months and ten days) was promulgated. The women in pre-Islamic days used to wait, after the death of their husbands, for a whole year. And this verse directs the husbands to bequeath for them enough property with which they might maintain themselves during that period of waiting, without turning them out of the house. It was their right, and they could demand it. But they could as well forgo that right and go away. In that case, there was no blame on the heirs of the deceased husband for what they did of proper deeds about themselves.

This verse is like verse 2:180: *Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth, for parents and near relatives, according to usage, a duty (incumbent) upon those who guard (against evil).*

Obviously, the verse under discussion was abrogated by the verses of *al-'iddah* of death and inheritance.

QUR'AN: *And for the divorced women (too) provision (should be made) according to usage; (this is) a duty on those who guard (against evil):*

The command is in respect of all the divorcees. The proviso of piety, "those who guard against evil", implies that it is a recommendation, nor a compulsion.

QUR'AN: *Thus Allah makes clear to you His signs, so that you may understand:*

"al-'Aql" is "to tie", "to shackle". Accordingly, the faculty of perception is called *al-'aql*, because

it holds fast the perceived picture; the perceived idea or picture is also called *al-'aql*, as is the power by which man distinguishes between good and evil, and right and wrong. Its opposites, from various view-points, are insanity, idiocy, foolishness and ignorance.

The words used in the Qur'an for the various facets of perception are very many: nearly twenty. Their list, with their approximate meanings, is as follows:

al-Yaqin = Conviction, Certitude
az-Zann = Weightier, Supposition
al-Hisban = Reckoning, Consideration
ash-Shu'ur = Sense
adh-Dhikr = Remembering
al-Irfan = Knowledge, Recognition
al-Fahm = Understanding
al-Fiqh = Knowledge
ad-Dirayah = Comprehension
al-Fikr = Thinking
ar-Ra'y = Opinion
az-Za'm = Assumption
al-Hifz = Preservation
al-Hikmah = Wisdom
al-Khubrah = Full Knowledge
ash-Shahadah = Witness
al-'aql = Intellect, Sense, Reason
al-Qawl = Saying, i.e. Opinion
at-Fatwa = Decree, Decision
al-Basirah = Insight

al-Yaqin (conviction): When the conviction is so strong that the mind does not entertain the opposite idea at all.

If an idea and its opposite both are equally balanced in mind, so that no side is heavier than the other, it is called *ash-shakk*, that is, doubt.

But if one side has more weight than the other, the weightier side is called *az-zann*, and the lighter one *al-wahm* that is, fancy, illusion.

al-Hisban (reckoning, consideration) is nearer to *az-zann* in meaning. But its use in this meaning is allegorical, as is the case with *al-'add*. Both words mean "to count". When it is said, "He counted Zayd among the braves", it is implied that he thought Zayd to be brave.

ash-Shu'ur (sense) is derived from *ash-sha 'r* (hair); therefore implies a finer perception. It is mostly used for sensing the material things. Hence the five senses are called *al-masha'ir*

adh-Dhikr (remembering) is to recall the picture stored in the memory after its absence from the sense: or to prevent its absence from the senses.

al-'lrfan and *al-ma 'rifah*, that is, knowledge, recognition, is conformity of the picture obtained in the mind with the ideas or pictures already stored in the memory. That is why it is said that *al-'irfan* is the knowledge after a previous knowledge.

al-Fahm (understanding) is the reaction of an outside factor by which a picture is created in the mind.

al-Fiqh (knowledge) is deep etching of the above-mentioned picture in the mind.

ad-Dirayah (comprehension) is even deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the subject,

so that even hidden and less-known points become known and clear. That is why it is mostly used when the importance of the subject matter is to be shown. Allah says: *The sure calamity! What is the sure calamity? And what would make you "comprehend" what the sure calamity is!* (69:1-3); *Surely We sent it down on the night of destiny. And what will make you comprehend what the night of destiny is!* (97:1-2)

al-Fikr (thinking) is the review of the known factors to discover the unknown.

ar-Ra'y (opinion) is the opinion reached at through thinking and consideration. Mostly it is used for "practical knowledge that is, what should be done and what not: rather Than for theoretical subjects like physical sciences.

Nearer to it in meaning are *al-basirah* (discernment, insight); *al-ifta'* (the giving of a decision) and *al-qawl*(saying). But the use of "saying" in meaning of view is metaphorical, putting an inseparable thing for its companion (as the saying necessarily shows the decided opinion of the one who says).

az-Za 'm (assumption) indicates a picture in mind, whether it is a confirmed or a probable idea.

al-Ilm (knowledge) is the comprehension which does not allow the opposite.

al-Hifz (preservation) is to save the known picture protecting it from change and deterioration.

al-Hikmah (wisdom) is the knowledge which is confirmed and precise.

al-Khubrah (fullknowledge): Full academic knowledge, so that the knowledgeable person perceives all the conclusions from the premises.

ash-Shahadah (witnessing) is to get the thing in specie, either through the five senses, or the internal perceptive powers like the feeling.

Apart from the last-mentioned five words, the meanings of all others are more or less related to matter, movement and change. Therefore, they are not attributed to Allah. We do not say that He, for example – presumes, thinks, guesses or senses etc.

But the last five words are free from such defects in meanings. They do not have any shade of deficiency. They are therefore used for Him. He says: ... *and Allah knows what you do* (2:234); ... *and Allah knows every thing* (4:176); *and your Lord is the preserver of all things* (34:21); *and He is the Knower, the Wise* (12:83) ; *surely He is a witness over all things* (41:53).

Now we return to our original discussion. *al-'aql* is the faculty of perception which holds fast the perceived picture, according to the Creation of Allah. It knows truth and falsity in theoretical matters, and good and evil and the benefit and harm in the practical field. First it recognizes itself, then it perceives the sensual phenomena through the five senses, then it turns to the inner feelings and through them becomes connected to the outside world - like will, love, hate, hope, fear and similar emotions and sentiments. Then it analyses the perceived ideas and pictures, and re-arranges them, generalizing and particularizing them. Then it forms an opinion in theoretical matters and decides its own course of action in practical ones. This in short, is *al-'aql* that is, reason and its function.

But sometimes some forces overpower man by subduing all other powers. For example, lust and anger subjugate all the other faculties, either vanquishing them completely or weakening them. Thus man deviates from the middle path, straying to excess or deficiency in his moral and ethical life. In short, reason does not function as it should normally do, even though it seems to work. It is like a judge who basis his judgment on false testimony or faked evidence. His judgment will be a perversity of justice, even though he does not mean to be unjust. He will be called a judge but at the same time he will not be a judge. Likewise, when a man chooses his course of action on the basis of wrong premises, he is not working reasonably, even though this exercise is tolerantly given the name of "reason." It is because the man by such an exercise goes against the dictates of healthy nature and right

path.

"Reason", as defined by the divine representatives, is that which benefits a man in his religion, and leads him to the true knowledge and virtuous deeds. If it is not so, it is not "reason", even if it helps him in distinguishing between worldly good and bad affairs. Allah says: *And they shall say: Had we but listened or pondered "na'qil" we would not have been among the inmates of the burning fire (67:10); Have they not traveled in the land so that they should have hearts with which to understand, or ears with which to hear? For surely it is not the eyes which become blind, but blind become the hearts which are in the breasts(22:46).*

The two verses use the verb *al-'aql* for the knowledge which man acquires on his own and the verb "to hear" for the perception acquired with the help of others, provided both are done through true nature. Allah says: *And who forsakes the religion of Ibrahim but he who makes himself a fool... (2:130).*

This verse, as explained earlier, is a contraposition of the tradition: "*al-'aql* (reason, wisdom) is that by which the Beneficent (Allah) is worshipped... "

Now it is obvious that when Allah uses the word *al-'aql* it refers to the perception which a man gets when his nature is healthy and perfect. This explains the meaning of the words of the verse, "Thus Allah makes clear to you His signs so that you may understand." The clarifying creates knowledge and knowledge is the foundation of wisdom and understanding, as Allah says: *And these examples, We set them forth for the people. and none understand them but the learned (29:43).*

Traditions

There is a tradition in *as-Sunan* of Abu Dawud from Asma', daughter of Yazid ibn as-Sakan al-Ansariyyah, that she said: "I was given divorce in the days of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and there was no waiting period for a divorce. When I was divorced, the (rule of) waiting period of divorce was revealed: *And the divorced women should keep themselves in waiting for three monthly courses.*" Thus, she was the first woman about whom the (rule of) waiting period for divorce was sent down.

And there is a tradition about this verse in *at-Tafsir of al-'Ayyashi* from Zurarah that he said: "I heard Rabi'ah ar-Ra'i saying: 'In my opinion, *al-aqra* '(period) which Allah has ordained in the Qur'an is the period of purity between two menstruations, and not the menstruation itself.'" Zurarah said: "Then I came to Abu Ja'far (a.s.) and narrated to him what Rabi'ah had said. He (the Imam) said: 'But he did not say it by his own opinion: it has reached him from 'Ali (a.s.).' I said: 'May Allah put your affairs right for you ! Was 'Ali (a. s.) saying so? He said: 'Yes! He had said, "Surely *al-qur*' *is at-tuhr* (the period of purity); the blood accumulates in that period and when the time comes it is expelled. " ' I said: 'May Allah put your affairs right for you! (What do you say) If a man divorces his wife in the period of purity, without cohabiting with her (in that period), in the presence of two just witnesses?' He said: 'When she enters into her third menstruation, her waiting period is finished and she becomes lawful for another husband... '"

The author says: This meaning is narrated from him (the Imam) from various chains. Zurarah asked "whether 'Ali (a.s.) was saying so?" because it is generally believed by the Sunnis that 'Ali (a.s.) said that the word meant the period of menstruation and not of purity. (It is reported in *ad-Durru'l-manthur* from ash-Shafi'i, 'Abdu 'r-Razzaq, 'Abd ibn Hamid and al-Bayhaqi from 'Ali [a.s.] that he said: "It is allowed to her husband to return to her until she bathes from the third menstruation, and [then] she becomes lawful to [another] husband.) But the Imams of *Ahlu'l-bayt* deny it; and attribute to him the word that *al-aqra*' is the period of purity, not menstruation, as was mentioned in the above

tradition. This opinion has been attributed to other companions also, like Zayd ibn Thabit, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, and 'A'ishah; and it has been narrated from all of them.

There is in *Majma'u'l-bayan* from as-Sadiq (a.s.) explaining the words of Allah: *And it is not lawful for them... conceal what Allah has created in their wombs*, that he said: "Pregnancy and menstruation. "

It is written in *at-Tafsir* of al-Qummi: "Surely Allah has delegated to women (the information of) three things: purity, menstruation and pregnancy."

It is written in the same book about the words of Allah: *And for the men is (right) a degree above them*, that the Imam said: "The right of men over women is superior to the right of women over men."

The author says: This is not contradictory with their equality in the ordainment of rights.

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsir* of al-Ayyashi about the verse: *Divorce is twice; then keep (them) in fairness or let (them) go in kindness*, from Abu Ja'far (a.s.) that he said: "Verily Allah says: '*Divorce is... go in kindness*'; and letting them go in kindness is the third divorce."

And there is a tradition in *at-Tahdhib* from Abu Ja'far (a.s.) that he said: "Divorce, according to the *sunnah*, is that he divorces her once, that is, in her period of purity, without cohabiting (in that period), in the presence of two just witnesses, then leaves her until her period of waiting expires. Thus she becomes completely separated from him. Then he may become one of the suitors, she may marry him if she so wishes; and not, if not. And if he wants to revoke the divorce, he should keep witnesses to return her (to himself) before the expiry of her period of waiting; and in this case, she will remain with him after that divorce... "

Hasan ibn Faddal is reported in *Man la yahduruhu'l-faqih* as saying: "I asked ar-Rida (a.s.) of the reason why the woman who is divorced (twice and returned twice) during her period of waiting, is not lawful to her husband until she marries another husband. He (the Imam) said: 'Surely Allah allowed him to give divorce twice, as He said: *Divorce is twice, then keep (them) in fairness or let (them) go in kindness*, that is, in the third divorce. And because he entered into what Allah dislikes, that is, divorce, He prohibited her to him, so that she would not be lawful for him until she marries a husband other than him; so that people should not treat divorce lightly and the women should not be harmed... '"

The author says: It is the *madhhab* of *Ahlu'l-bayt*, as narrated by the Shi 'ite sources, that divorce with one word or in one sitting is not but only one divorce, even if he said: "I divorce thee three divorces". But the Sunnis have contradictory traditions about it. Some show that it would be only one divorce, others say that it would be three and some narrate it from 'Ali and Ja'far ibn Muhammad (as-Sadiq - a.s.). But it appears from some Sunni traditions, narrated by Muslim, an-Nasa'i, Abu Dawud (in their *as-Sihah*) and others that it was 'Umar who, two or three years after receiving the caliphate, validated pronouncement of three divorces with one word. It is reported in *ad-Durru'l-manthur*: 'Abdu 'r-Razzaq, Muslim, Abu Dawud, an-Nasa'i, al-Hakim and al-Bayhaqi have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "It was (the system of) divorce during the days of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and Abu Bakr and two years during the caliphate of 'Umar that three divorces (i.e., in one sitting) were (counted as) one. Then 'Umar ibn al-Khattab said: 'Surely the people are making haste in a matter in which they were given time. Therefore, (it would be good) if we sanction it.' He then validated it."

And it is reported in *as-Sunan* of Abu Dawud from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "'Abd Yazid Abu Rukanah divorced Umm Rukanah and married a woman from the tribe of Muzinah. Then she (i.e., the new wife) came to the Prophet and said: 'He does not satisfy me even as much as this hair. (She said it taking out a hair from her head.) Therefore, separate between him and me.' On hearing it the Prophet

felt enraged and called Rukanah and his brother, and asked his companions: 'Do you see that this resembles him (Abu Rukanah) in this and this, and that in this and this?' They said: 'Yes.' Then the Prophet told 'Abd Yazid: 'Give her divorce.' He did so. Then (the Prophet) said: 'Take back your wife, Umm Rukanah.' He said: 'I have given her three divorces, O Messenger of Allah!' The Prophet said: 'I know. Yet you take her back.'" Then he recited, *O Prophet! when you divorce women, divorce them for their prescribed time...* (65:1).

It is reported in *ad-Durru'l-manthur* from al-Bayhaqi from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "Rukanah divorced a woman three times in one sitting; then he grieved for her. So, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) asked him: 'How did you divorce her?' He said: 'I divorce her thrice in one sitting.' The Messenger of Allah said: 'Then take her back if you so wish.' So he took her back." Therefore, Ibn 'Abbas was of the opinion that the divorce can be given (once) only in every period of cleanliness: and that it is the *sunnah* which Allah has ordered, "Divorce them for their prescribed period."

The author says: This meaning is narrated in other traditions also. So far as the "sanction" given by 'Umar is concerned, the arguments against it are like those described in the subject of *mut'atu'l-haj*.

The word of Allah, "Divorce is twice", has been offered as a proof that three divorces in one word (e.g., I give thee three divorces, or, I divorce thee thrice) are not effective at all. The words 'twice' and 'thrice' are not used for a thing effected by one word, and all -Muslims accept this principle when they talk about *al-li'an* (mutual imprecation).

The author of *Majma'u'l-bayans* says about the word of Allah, "or let (them) go with kindness": Two interpretations have come down to us of this phrase; first, that it is the third divorce, second, that the woman should be left to complete her period of waiting, so that she becomes completely free of the marriage-bond. It is narrated from as-Suddi and ad-Dahhak; and the same meaning is reported from al-Baqir and as-Sadiq (a.s.).

The author says: As you see, there is a difference in the traditions about the meaning of this phrase.

It is reported in *at-Tafsir* of al-Qummi about the words of Allah, "and it is not lawful for you to take any part of what you have given them unless both fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah; then if you fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah, there is no blame on them for what she gives up to become free thereby:" as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "The *khul'* (Redemption) is not effected except when the woman tells her husband, 'I shall not fulfill for you your vow' and 'I will surely go out without your permission' and 'I will surely get other man to sleep in your bed' and 'I will not take the obligatory bath of *al-janabah* on your account' (i.e., I will not sleep with you); or she says, 'I will not obey any order of yours or let you give me divorce'. When she says such things, then it is allowed to him to take back from her all that he had given her and all that he can get from her which she gives him. When both are agreed on it, he will divorce her in her period of cleanliness in the presence of the witnesses. Thus (on expiry of her waiting period) she separates from him with one divorce; and now he may be one of those who want to marry her. And if she so wishes, she may marry him again, and if she so wishes, she may reject him. If both remarry, she will be with him, and yet two more divorces (like this) may be given to her. And he should make a condition with her (when he takes ransom from her for giving her divorce), like that made in case of *al-mubarat* (Mutual Freeing), that 'if you take back anything from this ransom given me by you, then I have more right on you' (i.e., the divorce will become a revocable one)."

And he (the Imam) said: "There is no *al-khul'*, *al-mubarat* or *at-takhyir* (option) except in a period of cleanliness without cohabitation (in that period) taking as witnesses two just men. And if a woman who obtains divorce as *al-khul'*, marries another husband and then he (also) divorces her, it is lawful for the first husband to marry her."

And he said: "The husband has no right to revoke the divorce in case of *al-khul'* and *al-mubarat*, except when the woman changes her decision (and agrees to return to him); then he shall return to her whatever he took from her (and then may revoke the divorce)."

It is reported in *Man la yahduruhu'l-faqih* from al-Baqir (a.s.) that he said: "When the woman said to her husband the sentence, 'I shall not obey any order of yours', whether she elaborates it or not, it becomes lawful to him to take (ransom) from her (to give her *al-khul'*) and he has no right to get her back (i.e., to revoke the divorce)."

It is written in *al-Durru'l-manthur*: Ahmad has narrated from Sahl ibn Abi Hathmah that he said: "Habibah bint Sahl was married to Thabit ibn Qays ibn Shammas; but she disliked him; he was an ugly man. So she came and said: 'O Messenger of Allah! Surely, I will not see him; and had it not been for fear of Allah, I surely would have spat in his face'. So he asked her: 'Will you give him back his garden which he gave you as dowry?' She said: 'Yes.' Thereupon she gave him back his garden and (the Messenger of Allah) separated them. And this was the first *al-khul'* in Islam."

at-Tafsir of al-Ayyashi quotes al-Baqir (a.s.) as saying in the explanation of the word of Allah: *These are the limits of Allah, so do not exceed them...* "Verily, Allah was displeased with one who fornicates, and therefore He prescribed for him a hundred lashes. Now if someone becomes enraged and increases it, then I repudiate him before Allah; and this is the word of Allah: *These are the limits of Allah, so do not exceed them.*"

It is reported in *al-Kafi* from Abu Basir that he asked (Imam as-Sadiq - a.s.) about the woman who is not allowed to her (former) husband until she marries another husband. He (the Imam) said: "It is that woman who is divorced then returned, then (likewise) divorced the third time; it is she who is not lawful to that husband until she marries another husband and he tastes her sweetness.

The author says: *al-'Usaylah* (translated here as sweetness) means sexual intercourse. It is written in *as-Sihah*: *al-'Usaylah* is used in the meaning of sexual intercourse. That enjoyment was likened to *al-'asal*, that is, honey, and then was given diminutive form by adding "h" (because *al-'asal*, is mostly used as a feminine); so it became (*al-'usaylah*). Also it is said that it was given the feminine form because it means 'a piece or portion of honey' as they refer to a piece of *adh-dhahab* (gold) as *adh-dhahabah*.

And the words of the Imam, "and he tastes her sweetness" are based on the words of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) which he used in the incident of Rifa'ah, "No! Until you taste his sweetness and he tastes your sweetness." The incident is reported in *al-Durru'l-manthur* as follows: "al-Bazzaz, at-Tabarani and al-Bayhaqi have narrated that Rifa'ah ibn Samu'al divorced his wife. Then she came to the Prophet and said: 'Messenger of Allah! 'Abdu'r-Rahman married me and he has not but like this.' (Saying it she pointed to a fringe of her dress.) The Messenger of Allah kept ignoring her talk; at last he told her: 'You want to return to Rifa'ah? No! Until you taste his (i.e., 'Abdu'rRahman's) sweetness and he tastes your sweetness.'"

The author says: This tradition is well-known; and has been narrated by a multitude of Sunni narrators of the books of *as-Sihah* and others, as well as by some Shi'ah ones. And although the wordings of the various narratives are different from each other, most of them contain these words.

It is written in *at-Tahdhib* that as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked the question whether the *mut'ah* marriage (with a second husband) would make the woman lawful (for the first one), to which he replied: "No! Because Allah says: *So if he divorces her she shall not be lawful to him afterwards until she marries another husband; then if he divorces her there is no blame on them both if they return to each other; and there is no divorce in the mut'ah.*"

The same book quotes Muhammad ibn Mudarib as saying "I asked ar-Rida (a.s.) whether a eunuch

could make the woman lawful (for her first husband). He (the Imam) said: 'He cannot make her lawful.'"

It is written in *at-Tafsir* of al-Qummi under the words of Allah: *And when you divorce the women and they reach their prescribed time... and do not retain them for injury.* , that the Imam said: "When he divorces her, he is not allowed to take her back (i.e., to revoke the divorce) if he does not really want her."

It is reported in *Man la yahduruhu'l-faqih* that as-Sadiq (as.) said: "It is not proper for a man to divorce his wife and then to take her back (to revoke the divorce) when he does not really want her and then divorce her again. It is the injury which Allah has forbidden. (It is improper) except that he divorces her and then takes her back and he intends to retain her.

It is narrated in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi under the words of Allah: *And do not take Allah's signs for a mockery.* , from 'Umar ibn al-Jami' through his chain to 'Ali (a.s.) in a tradition in which he said, *inter alia*: "And whoever from this *ummah* read the Qur'an and (even then) entered the hell, then he was from among those who took the Allah's signs for a mockery... "

It is reported in *as-Sahih* of al-Bukhari about the words of Allah: *And when you have divorced the women and they have ended their term...* , that the sister of Ma'qil ibn Yasar was divorced by her husband, then he (the husband) left her alone until her waiting term was completed. Then again he proposed to her. Thereupon Ma'qil refused. Then the verse was revealed: *... then do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they agree among themselves in a lawful manner...*

The author says: This meaning has been quoted in *al-Durru'l-manthur* from al-Bukhari as well as other compilers of *as-Sahih* like an-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, at-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud and others.

It is reported in *ad-Durru'l-manthur* from as-Suddi: This verse was revealed concerning Jabir ibn 'Abdullah al-Ansari. He had a cousin (daughter of his uncle); her husband gave her one divorce, and her period of waiting expired. Then the (said) husband wanted to take her back (i.e., to remarry her). But Jabir refused saying, "You divorced our cousin and now you want to marry her second time!" And the woman herself wanted (to marry) her husband. Thereupon Allah sent down the verse: *And when you have divorced the women...*

The author says: According to the *madhhab* of *Ahlu'l-bayt*, a brother or a cousin has no guardianship or authority over the woman in the matters of marriage. Therefore, if either tradition is accepted, it would mean that the prohibition in the verse: *... then do not prevent them from marrying their husbands...* , is not concerned with the scope of guardianship nor does it promulgate any rule except showing that it is improper to come between a man and his wife (or would-be wife). Or that this dislike or prohibition of such interference is addressed to everyone who might prevent the woman from such remarrying, whether they be a guardian or not.

It is narrated in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi, under the words of Allah: *And the mothers should suckle their children for two complete years ...* , that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "As long as the child is in the suckling-period, he is between both parents equally; thereafter, when he is weaned, the father has more right upon him than the other relatives. And if the father finds someone to suckle the child for four dirhams, and the mother says that she would not suckle him but for five dirhams, then he may take the child away from her; but it is more comforting, more uplifting and more clement to the child that he be left with his mother."

The same book reports that the same Imam said about the words of Allah, "neither shall a mother be made to suffer harm on account of her child, nor a father on account of his child": The woman used to resist with her hand when the man wanted to cohabit with her, saying. "I shall not allow you; I fear to become pregnant on my child." And (likewise) the man used to say to the woman, "I shall not sleep

with you; I am afraid that you will conceive, and thus I shall cause the death of my child." Therefore, Allah forbade the man to make the woman suffer harm, and the woman to make the man suffer.

It is narrated in the same book about the words of Allah: *And a similar duty* (devolves) *on the (father's) heir*, that one of the two Imams (al-Baqir or as-Sadiq - a.s.) said: "It is about maintenance. The duty of the heir (in this respect) is like that of the father."

Another tradition in the same book about this verse says that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "It is not proper for the heir to make the woman suffer harm (for example) to say, 'I shall not let her child visit her', and to inflict harm on her child, if they have something with him; and he should not be parsimonious for him."

There is a tradition in the same book from Hammad from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said: "There is no suckling after weaning." Hammad said: "I told him, 'May I be your ransom, and what is the weaning?'" He said: "The two years mentioned by Allah."

The author says: "The two years" is the quotation from the verse, and that is why he (the Imam) explained it as "mentioned by Allah."

It is reported in *ad-Durru'l-manthur*: "It is narrated by 'Abdu 'r-Razzaq (in *al-Musannaf*) and Ibn 'Adi from Jabir ibn 'Abdullah that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: 'There is no orphan after puberty, and there is no suckling after weaning; and there is no (fast of) silence of the day up to the night, and there is no joining in the fast (i.e., fasting two days without breaking the fast at night), and there is no vow in a sin, and there is no maintenance in the sin, and there is no oath cutting the relationship, and there is no returning to nomadic life after *al-hijrah* (emigration), and there is no emigration after the conquest (of Mecca), and there is no oath (vow) for a wife with the husband nor for a child with his father nor for a slave with his master (i.e., without their permission), and there is no divorce before marriage, and there is no emancipation before owning.'"

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsir* of al-Ayyashi from Abu Bakr al-Hadrami that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "When it was revealed: *And (as for) those of you who die and leave wives behind, they should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten (days)*, the women came arguing with the Messenger of Allah and said: 'We shall not wait'. The Messenger of Allah told them: 'It was (your custom) that when a woman's husband died she took the dropping (of a camel) and threw it behind her in her private room and then sat down (therein); then when the same day (i.e., date) came after a year, she took (the dropping) and broke it and applied it (to her eyes) as antimony; and then she could marry. Now Allah has put down (reduced) from you eight months.'"

It is narrated in *at-Tahdhib* from al-Baqir (a.s.) that he said: "In every marriage, when the husband dies it is (incumbent) upon the woman (whether she is a free woman or a slave), and by whatever system the matrimonial bond was established (whether *bymut'ah*, permanent marriage or slavery), to observe the waiting period of four months and ten days."

It is narrated in *at-Tafsir* of al-Ayyashi from Muhammad ibn Muslim that he asked al-Baqir (a.s.): "May I be your ransom! Why is the waiting period of a divorced woman three menstruations or three months and that of the woman whose husband dies four months and ten days?" He (the Imam) said: "As for the waiting period of three months for a divorced woman, it is (prescribed) to make sure that there is no child in the womb. And as for the waiting period of a woman whose husband dies surely Allah has laid down a provision for the women and one upon them: The provision made for them is in *al-'ila'*, a period of four months, as He says: *For those who swear* (to abstain from their wives is ordained) *a waiting for four months*. It is, therefore, not lawful for anyone (to abstain from the wife) for more than four months; because Allah knows that it is the furthest limit to which a woman may keep her sexual desire under control. And the provision made against them is that He ordered her to

observe waiting period, when her husband dies, for four months and ten days. In this way, He (Allah) took from her for him at the time of his death what He took from him for her during his lifetime.

The author says: This meaning is also narrated from ar-Rida and al-Hadi (a.s.) from other chains.

It is written in *at-Tafsir* of al-Ayyashi from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the words of Allah: *And there is no blame on you respecting that which you speak indirectly in the asking of (such) women in marriage:* "The women in her 'iddah, you speak to her in a graceful manner to attract her towards yourself. And you do not say, 'I do this and this' or 'I perform like this', hinting at indecent things." And another tradition says: "You tell her, when she is in her 'iddah, 'O so-and-so! I do not like but only that which pleases you; and if your 'iddah expires, you will not find me missing, God willing; and you should not keep yourself (alone). All this (you may say) without resolving the marriage-tie."

The author says: There are other traditions of the same meaning from the Imams.

The *at-Tafsir* of al-Ayyashi quotes as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he explained the words of Allah: *And if you divorce them before you have touched them ...*, in these words: "When the man divorces his wife before cohabiting with her, then she shall get half of her dowry; and if he had not appointed for her a dowry, then (for her) is a provision according to usage, on the wealthy according to his means and on the straitened in circumstances according to his means. And there is no waiting period for her and she may immediately marry whoever she wishes.

There is a tradition in *al-Kafi* from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the man who divorces his wife before cohabiting with her: "On him is half of the dowry, if anything was fixed (as dowry); and if nothing was fixed then he should give her a provision as other women of her status are provided for."

The author says: This tradition explains the words, "a provision according to usage."

al-Kafi, *at-Tahdhib*, *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi and other books narrate from al-Baqir and as-Sadiq (a.s.) under the words of Allah: "In whose hand is the marriage-tie", that both Imams said: "It is *al-wali* (the guardian of the marriage)."

The author says: There are numerous traditions giving this explanation. And there are some Sunni traditions narrated from the Prophet and 'Ali (a.s.) that it means "the husband."

It is narrated in *al-Kafi*, *Man Ia yahduruhu'l-faqih*, *at-Tafsir* of al-Ayyashi and that of al-Qummi, about the words of Allah: *Maintain the prayers and the middle prayer*, through numerous chains from al-Baqir and as-Sadiq (a.s.) that: "Surely, the middle prayer is the noon prayer."

The author says: It is what is narrated from the Imams of *Ahlu'l-bayt (a.s.)* in their traditions with one voice. Of course, some of those traditions show that it is the Friday prayer. But it appears from the same traditions that they treat the noon and the Friday prayers as one prayer, not two. It is narrated in *al-Kafi* and *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from Zurarah from al-Baqir (a.s.) - and the wording quoted here is from *al-Kafi* - that he (the Imam) said: "Allah says: *Maintain the prayers and the middle prayer*, and it is the prayer of the noon, the first prayer the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) prayed, and it is (in) the middle of the day and between the two prayers of the day-time - the dawn and afternoon prayers." And he said: "And this verse was revealed and the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) was on a journey, so he (the Holy Prophet) recited *qunut* in it and continued it likewise in the journey and at the home-town, and he added two *rak'ahs* for him who is in his home-town. And those two *rak'ahs* added by the Prophet were dropped on Friday, for him who is in his home-town, because of the two sermons recited by the Imam. Therefore, he who prays on Friday without congregation, shall pray four *rak'ahs* of noon prayer like all other days... "

This tradition, as you see, counts the noon and the Friday prayers as one prayer, and says that it is the middle prayer. But most of these traditions are *al-maqtu* (i.e., their chain of narrators are broken, or do not reach a *ma'sum*); and those that are connected to a *ma'sum*, their texts are not free from

confusion, like the above-mentioned tradition of *al-Kafi*. Moreover it does not clearly fit the meaning of the verse. And Allah knows better.

It is reported in *ad-Durru'l-manthur*: Ahmad, Ibn al-Mani', an-Nasa'i, Ibn Jabir, ash-Shashi and ad-Diya' have narrated through the chain of az-Zibriqan: "Verily, there was a group of the Quraysh, and Zayd ibn Thabit passed by them and they were assembled. So they sent two of their boys to him to ask him about the middle prayer. And he said: 'It is the noon prayer'. Then the boys came to Usamah ibn Zayd and asked him (the same question). And he said: 'It is the noon prayer. Verily, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) used to pray the noon prayer in the summer and there would not be behind him except one or two lines, and the people were in their siesta or at their trade. Thereupon, Allah sent down the verse: *Maintain the prayers and the middle prayer and stand up truly obedient to Allah*. Then the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: "The men should desist (from that behavior) or most surely I shall burn down their houses." "

The author says: The same reason has been narrated by Zayd ibn Thabit and others from other chains.

And know that there is much difference of opinion regarding the meaning of "the middle prayer", much of it arises because of differences in the Sunni traditions. It has been said that it is the dawn prayer, and it has been narrated from 'Ali (a.s.) and some companions. Others say that it is noon prayer, and it has been reported from the Holy Prophet and a number of the companions. Again it is said that it is the afternoon prayer, and this also has been reported from the Prophet and a number of companions - as-Suyuti has narrated in *ad-Durru'l-manthur* more than fifty traditions of this meaning. Some say that it is the evening prayer. Other say that it is hidden among the prayers as the Night of Destiny is hidden among the nights of Ramadan. This is reported in some traditions from some companions. And also it is said that it is the night prayers; and, lastly, that it is the Friday prayer.

It is reported in *Majma'u'l-bayan* about the words of Allah; *And stand truly obedient to Allah, that al-qunut*(obedience) is the invocation in the prayer during the standing posture, and it is narrated from al-Baqir and as-Sadiq (a.s.).

The author says: Also it is narrated from some companions.

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsir* of al-Ayyashi that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about this verse: "*(al-Qunut* means) one's going towards prayer and maintaining (i.e., praying) it in its time, so that nothing diverts one's attention or keeps him from it."

The author says: There is no conflict between the two traditions, as one may easily understand.

It is reported in *al-Kafi* about the words of Allah: *But if you are in danger, then* (say your prayers) *on foot or on horse back ...* , that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "When he is afraid of a beast or a thief, he will say *at-takbir* and point (for the actions of prayer)."

And there is another tradition in *Man la yahduruhu'l-faqih* from the same Imam about the prayer when marching on: "It is *at-takbir* and *at-tahlil*." Then he (the Imam) recited this verse.

There is another tradition in the same book from the same Imam: "If you are in a fearful land and are afraid of a thief or a beast, then say the obligatory prayer and you are on your (riding) animal."

And the same book quotes a tradition of al-Baqir (a.s.) "He who is afraid of a thief shall pray by sign while (riding) on his mount."

The author says: There are numerous traditions of this meaning.

It is reported in *at-Tafsir* of al-Ayyashi from Abu Basir that he said: "I asked him (the Imam) about the words of Allah: *And those of you who die and leave wives behind, (make) a bequest in favor of their wives of, maintenance for the year without turning (them) out*. He (the Imam) said: 'It is abrogated.' I said: 'And how was it?' He (the Imam) said: 'It was (a custom) that when a man died, his

wife was maintained from his capital for one year; then she was turned out without any inheritance. Then it was abrogated by the verse of one-fourth and one-eighth. Now the woman is given maintenance from her own share."

There is another tradition in the same book that Mu'awiyah ibn 'Ammar said: "I asked him (the Imam) about the words of Allah: *And those of you who die...* He said: 'It is abrogated; the verse: ... *they should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten* (days), abrogated it, and the verse of inheritance abrogated it."

It is reported in *al-Kafi* and *at-Tafsir* of al-Ayyashi: as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked about a man who divorces his wife, should he make provision for her? He said: "Yes. Does not he like to be one of the doers of good? Does not he like to be one.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSE 243

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ مُوتُوا ثُمَّ أَحْيَاهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ 2:243

2:243 *Did you not see those who went forth from their homes, and they were (in) thousands, for fear of death; then Allah said to them "Die "; (and) afterwards He gave them life; most surely Allah is Gracious to people, but most people thank (Him) not.*

Commentary

QUR'AN: *Did you not see those who went forth from their homes, and they were (in) thousands, for fear of death:*

"To see", in this verse means "to know." It implies that the thing described here is so obvious that to know it is to see it. Other examples of this expression are: *Did you not see that Allah created the heavens and the earth with truth.*' (14:19); *Did you not see how Allah has created the seven heavens one above another?* (71:15).

az-Zamakhshari has said that the phrase "Did you not see" is an idiom used to express wonder and astonishment. It implies, "Are you not surprised that ... " "*hadhara 'l-mawt*" may mean 'for fear of death' (as translated here); or it may mean, 'they were afraid of death, a great fearing'.

QUR'AN: *Then Allah said to them "Die ";(and)afterwards He gave them life:*

The order was 'creative', not 'legislative'. It does not mean that they did not die of a 'natural' cause, as the traditions say that they died of the plague.

Instead of saying, 'Then Allah gave them death and afterwards gave them life', Allah used this expression, because it more forcefully shows the effectiveness of His order and supreme domination of His power. The use of the imperative mood in matters of creation is a more forceful style; likewise, it is more eloquent and emphatic to use a news style while ordaining a legislation ("you shall not take other's property unjustly"). "Afterwards He gave them life" implies that they were raised from death to life, and that they remained alive for some time. Had they been resurrected just as an example and warning for others, or to complete the proof, or to explain some other reality, Allah would have pointed it out, as is customary in the Qur'an. (See, for example, the story of the people of the Cave.)

Moreover, the next sentence, "most surely Allah is Gracious to people", also shows that they were not raised for only a short time.

QUR'AN: *But most people thank (Him) not:*

The repetition of the word "people" here (instead of pronoun) reflects on the low level of their thinking. Moreover, the word "people" in the preceding sentence ("most surely Allah is Gracious to people") refers to the particular group that was raised from dead; while in this sentence it stands for the whole of mankind.

This verse has some connection with the next verses which describe the importance of *jihad*, fighting in the way of Allah - *jihad* also gives a new life to the nation when it is dead.

A commentator has said that this verse is a parable to illustrate the condition of the *ummah* - how it remains backward and dies when foreigners bring it under their yoke and keep it under their rule and domination, and how later on it rises to defend its rights and snatches its freedom from that colonial power, and thus becomes alive again. The following is the gist of his argument:

"The verse does not refer to any historical event of either the Israelites (as many traditions say) or others (as some others say). Otherwise, it would have been essential to mention that it happened in this or that nation, or to disclose the name of the prophet concerned, as the Qur'an invariably does in all its stories. Moreover, the Torah also does not mention it in the history of the prophet Hezekial (a.s.). This proves that the traditions narrated in this connection are from Jewish mythology which were taken over by the Muslims.

"Apart from that, there is only one death and one life in this world, as is shown by the Qur'anic words: *They shall not taste therein* (i.e., in the Paradise) *death except the first death* (44:56). *They* (i.e., the inmates of Fire) *shall say: "Our Lord! Twice didst Thou make us subject to death, and twice hast Thou given us life"* (40:11). Therefore, there cannot be two lives in this world.

"Obviously, the verse is a parable: A nation was attacked by powerful enemies, who humiliated and subjugated them. The enslaved nation did not defend its freedom and went out of their homes, even though they were in thousands, in great numbers, but they were afraid of death. Thereupon Allah said to them, "Die, the death of disgrace and ignorance." Because ignorance and inertia is death, as knowledge and self-respect is life. Allah says: *O you who believe! Answer* (the call of) *Allah and His Apostle when he calls you to that which gives you life* (8:24). *Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth?* (6:122).

"The nation died, that is, they were disgraced and overcame by their enemies and remained in that condition. Afterwards, Allah again gave them life, by inspiring them to rise against their oppressors and to defend their rights. So, they stood up and drove their oppressors out and became independent. Those were the people to whom Allah gave life a second time, although so far as their identity was concerned, they were not the same people who had died the death of disgrace. But as both groups were of the same nation, Allah counted them as one people who first died and then were raised to life again. Allah has used similar expressions in various places in the Qur'an. For example, He says, addressing the Jews of the Prophet's time: *And We delivered you from Pharaoh's people who subjected you to severe torment...* (7:141). *Then We raised you up after your death that you may give thanks* (2:56).

"Lastly, if this verse were not taken as a parable, it would have no connection with the verses following it, which are about fighting in the way of Allah."

This interpretation is based on some patently false premises:

First: It is based on the rejection of miracles, or at least some miracles, like giving life to the dead. But we have proved the existence of miracles. Moreover, here we are dealing with the Qur'an, and the Qur'an loudly declares the existence of miracles, like raising the dead, etc. Even if we fail to prove such miracles through intellectual reasoning, the irrefutable fact remains that the Qur'an believes in them.

Second: It claims that the Qur'an proves the impossibility of more than one life in this world. But the verses describing the raising of dead (in the stories of Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa and 'Uzayr) clearly and

definitely prove that dead animals and persons were again raised to life in this world.

Moreover, a life in this world is not to be counted as two lives simply because a death intervenes in between. The story of 'Uzayr is clear on this point: He remained dead for a hundred years; but on raising again he was not even aware of that death.

Third: It is a false assumption that the Qur'an ought to have identified the nation or the prophet concerned, if it were the narration of a real event.

The style of speech differs according to its time, place and context. Sometimes details are given; on other occasions only a passing reference is made. For example, the Qur'an refers to a people (without identifying them in any way): *Cursed be the fellows of the ditch of the fire (kept burning) with fuel, when they sat by it, while they were witnesses of what they did with the believers (85:4-7). And of those whom We have created are a people who guide with the truth and thereby do justice (7:181).*

Fourth: The claim that if this verse were not a parable it would have no connection with the subsequent verses, has no meaning at all.

The Qur'an was revealed little by little, and there is no need to search for any connection between two adjacent verses unless they are clearly in one context and obviously revealed all together.

The truth is that the verse narrates a real event.

What style, eloquence and force would be in a verse which most of the hearers believe to be a real event, while in reality it is but a parable having no factual basis at all.

Moreover, it is an invariable habit of the Qur'an to distinguish a simile or parable from other modes of expression. For example: *Their parable is like the parable of one who... (2:17). The likeness of this world's life is only as... (10:24) . The similitude of those who were placed under the Torah... (62:5)and so on.*

Traditions

It is reported in *al-Ihtijaj* from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said, inter alia, in a tradition: "Allah made alive again a people who left their homes fleeing from the plague; they were innumerable. So Allah gave them death for a long time until their bones decayed, their limbs disintegrated and they all became dust. Then Allah sent a prophet, named Hezekiel, at a time when He wished to show him His creation. So He called them, and their bodies re-composed and their souls returned, and they stood up in the same shape as they had died, not a single one was missing from their group. Then they lived after that for a long time.

The author says: This interpretation has been narrated by al-Kulayni and al-'Ayyashi in some detail, and at the end of that tradition are the words, "and about them was revealed this verse."

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 244-252

- 2:244 وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ
- 2:245 مَن ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْسُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ
- الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا عَمِلُوا عَلِيمٌ
- 2:246 عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ
- وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا قَالُوا أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِنَ الْمَالِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مَلَكَهُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ
- 2:247 وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ التَّابُوتُ فِيهِ سَكِينَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ آلُ مُوسَىٰ وَآلُ هَارُونَ تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُم إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ
- 2:248 فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ بِنَهَرٍ فَمَن شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَن لَّمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا اللَّهِ كَمْ مِّن فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ
- 2:249 وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوا لِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ
- 2:250 فَهَزَمُوهُم بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُدُ جَالُوتَ وَآتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ
- 2:251 تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
- 2:252
- 2:244 And fight in the way of Allah, and know that Allah is Hearing, Knowing.
- 2:245 Who is it that will lend to Allah a goodly loan, so He will multiply it for him manifold, and Allah holds and extends and to Him you shall be returned.
- 2:246 Did you not see the chiefs of the children of Israel after Musa, when they said to a prophet of theirs: "Raise up for us a king (that) we may fight in the way of Allah." He said: "May it not be that if fighting is ordained for you, you would not fight?" They said: "And what reason have we that we should not fight in the way of Allah, and we have indeed been turned out of our homes and our children." But when fighting was ordained for them, they turned back, except a few of them, and Allah knows the unjust.
- 2:247 And their prophet said to them: "Surely Allah has raised Talut to be a king over you." They said: "How can he hold kingship over us while we have a greater right to kingship than he, and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth?" He said: "Surely Allah has chosen him over you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique, and Allah grants His Kingdom to whom He pleases, and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.
- 2:248 And their prophet said to them: "Surely the sign of his kingship is, that there shall come to You the Ark in which there is tranquility from your Lord and residue of the relics of what the family of Musa and the family of Harun have left, the angels bearing it: most surely there is a sign in this for those who believe."
- 2:249 So when Talut departed with the forces, he said: "Surely Allah will try you with a stream; whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me, and whoever does not taste of it, he is surely of me,

except he who takes with his hand as much (of it) as fills his hand," but with the exception of a few of them they drank from it. So when he had crossed it, he and those who believed with him, they said - "We have today no power against Goliath and his forces." Those who thought that they would meet their Lord said: "How often has a small party vanquished a numerous host by Allah's permission, and Allah is with the patient ones."

2:250 And when they went out against Goliath and his forces they said: "Our Lord, pour down upon us patience, and make our feet firm and help us against the unbelieving people."

2:251 So they routed them by Allah's permission and Dawud slew Goliath, and Allah gave him kingship and wisdom, and taught him of what He pleased. And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder: but Allah is Gracious to the creatures.

2:252 These are the signs of Allah: We recite them to you with truth: and most surely you are (one) of the apostles.

General Comment

All these verses were obviously revealed together. The connection between the obligation of fighting, the exhortation of a goodly loan to Allah and the moral of the story of Talut, Dawud and Goliath needs no explanation. The *import* of the verses is to show how fighting in the way of Allah strengthens the collective life, what the spirit is by which a nation goes forward in its worldly and religious life, and what gives it its real happiness and felicity. Allah declares that *jihad* is obligatory for the Muslims, calls them to spend in His way, by contributing in preparation for war so that their military power increases and they are ready for their enemies. This spending has been called "lending to Allah" because it is done in His way. Also, it very forcefully exhorts the hearers to spend in His way to gain nearness to Him. Then comes the story of Talut, Dawud and Goliath, so that the believers who are told to fight should take lessons from it. The moral is that the kingdom and victory belong to faith and piety, even if its adherents be small in number: and defeat and destruction is the fare of hypocrisy and sin, even if its followers be numerous. See how the Israelites lived in disgrace and servitude as long as they remained inert and idle, and were too lazy to do anything to improve their condition. But when they stood up to fight in the way of Allah and sought help from the word of truth, Allah helped them to vanquish their enemy, even though only a few of them were really truthful. Look at the majority of them turning back when fighting was prescribed for them, and objecting to the appointment of Talut, and drinking from the stream, and saying that they had no strength to fight against Goliath and his armies. In spite of all these shortcomings Allah made them victorious; they vanquished their enemy by the permission of Allah; Dawud slew Goliath and kingdom was established in them. They were given a new life and their power and sovereignty came back to them. It was not but because of a word which faith and piety made them utter when they stood before Goliath and his forces: "Our Lord, pour down upon us patience and make our feet firm and help us against the unbelieving people." Thus should the believers follow in the footsteps of the good people of previous nations, because they shall have the upper hand if they are believers.

Commentary

QUR'AN: *And fight in the way of Allah:*

It makes fighting obligatory and compulsory. Here and everywhere in the Qur'an, the order of fighting has the stipulation, "in the way of Allah." It is to forestall any possible misunderstanding that this important religious duty was ordained to establish the worldly domination of the Muslims over other nations and to spread the kingdom of the Muslim's as many modern Muslim scholars think. The proviso, "in the way of Allah", shows that this order was given to spread the domination of religion, by which the people could prosper in both worlds.

QUR'AN: *And know that Allah is Hearing, Knowing:*

It is a warning to the believers - they should not utter a single word against any order given by Allah and His apostle, nor should they dislike in their hearts any such order as the hypocrites do. They should not be like the Israelites when they first objected about Talut, saying, "How can he hold kingship over us ...", and then said, "We have today no power against Goliath and his forces", and retreated and turned away when fighting was prescribed for them, and drank from the stream after Talut had forbidden them to do so.

QUR'AN: *Who is it that will lend to Allah a goodly loan, so that He will multiply it for him manifold:*

The meaning of loan is well-known. Allah has named what is spent in His way as a loan to Himself, to exhort people to spend, and because it is done in His way, and also because it will surely be returned to them manifold.

The style has been changed from the imperative mood of previous verse (*And fight in the way of Allah*) to the interrogative here (*Who is it that will lend?*) to refresh and enliven the mind of the audience - an order is always received with a feeling of helplessness, but not so an invitation and exhortation.

QUR'AN: *And Allah holds and extends and to Him you shall be returned:*

"*al-Qabd*" is to hold a thing towards oneself. *al-bast* is its opposite. "*al-Bast*" is a rendering of *al-bast* - 'Sin' of which has been changed to 'Suad' because it is joined to 'T' (b) which is pronounced with a full voice, and *Suad* also has a full voice.

This sentence mentions three attributes of Allah: He holds, He extends and to Him all are to return. It is to remind the Muslims that whatever they spend, lending it to Him shall not be in vain, nor should they be surprised at how it will be increased manifold. Because Allah holds and extends - He decreases whatever He pleases and increases whatever He pleases; and they are to return to Him, and then He will repay them the said loan a goodly repayment.

QUR'AN: *Did you not see the chiefs of the children of Israel... in the way of Allah:*

al-Mala' is said to mean a group of people having the same opinion. It is derived from *al-mal'* (to fill), because it fills the eyes by its greatness and prestige. The request, "Raise up for us a king (that) we may fight in the way of Allah", implies that the king, Goliath by name, had subjugated them and treated them so badly that they had lost all traces of a free life, like their homes and children. It happened after Allah had saved them from the people of Pharaoh by raising among them Musa and making him their head, and after the rule of the successors of Musa had come to an end. Then the hardship increased to such an extent that their slumbering self-respect was awakened by the shock of it, and their elders went to a prophet of theirs asking him to raise for them a king to remove their internal differences and unite their power which had become ineffective because of disunity, so that they could fight under his command, in the way of Allah.

QUR'AN: *He said: "May it not be that if fighting is ordained for you, you would not fight?"*:

The Israelites had asked their prophet to raise for them a king, so that they could fight under him in the way of Allah. But it was not in the power of the prophet; it was the prerogative of Allah. That is

why the prophet attributed the appointment and the order of fighting to Allah. But he did not mention the divine name clearly. In their reply he questioned them about their possible disobedience, and he knew by divine revelation that they would surely disobey. Therefore, he did not mention the name of Allah clearly, but only indicated that the authority is from Him and of Him only. How did he indicate it? By using the word "written" (lit. translation: "if fighting is written on you") and writing, in the meaning of ordaining, is done only by Allah.

Although, the prophet knew that they would not obey the command of Allah, he put this matter in the form of a question, so that the proof might be completed against them by their protests of sincerity, as their reply showed.

QUR'AN: *They said: 'And what reason have we that we should not fight in the way of Allah, and we have indeed been turned out of our homes and our children':*

Their dispersal from their homes meant that they could not manage their affairs as they had been sent away from their ancestral abode. Thus "turned out of our homes" alludes to their inability to look after their homes and to benefit from them. It is this meaning that justifies the use of this verb, "turned out of" in connection with children.

QUR'AN: *But when fighting was ordained for them, they turned back, except a few of them, and Allah knows the unjust:* It is an offshoot of their prophet's question (*May it not be that... you would not fight?*) and their reply (*And what reason have we that we should not fight ?*). The words, "And Allah knows the unjust", show that the question of the prophet was based on divine revelation that they would surely turn away from fighting.

QUR'AN: *And their prophet said to them: "Surely Allah has raised Talut... he has not been granted an abundance of wealth?":*

The announcement, "Allah has raised" was a reminder to them that they were mistaken in asking the prophet to raise a king for them so that they would fight. The prophet attributed this raising to Allah to teach them that it was a prerogative of Allah.

The declaration about Talut prompted them to protest. In their eyes, Talut had two defects, which made him unfit for kingship. The first "disqualification" was alluded to in their words narrated by Allah: "How can he hold kingship over us while we have a greater right to kingship than he." They did not think it necessary to elaborate why they were more deserving; it means that it was an obvious thing. The fact is that the house of prophethood and the house of kingship were well-known among the Israelites - the two houses were highly respected because of these two graces of Allah. And Talut was from neither. That is why they objected that they - the people of the house of kingship or both kingship and prophethood - had a greater right to kingship than Talut; Allah had put kingship in their family, how could they accept its transfer to someone else?

This objection was a result of their belief that Allah cannot abrogate or change any of His orders; they said: the hand of Allah is tied up. (Their hands be shackled!) Their prophet replied to this objection when he said: "Surely Allah has chosen him over you."

The second "disqualification" is described in their words, "and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth." Talut was a poor man. Their prophet replied to it by saying: "and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique."

QUR'AN: *He said: "Surely Allah has chosen him over you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique":*

al-Istifa' and *al-istisfa'* means to choose. Its root is *as-safw* (clearness, choice); *al-bastah* is expansion and power. These sentences are the replies to their objections:

Objection 1: They had a greater right of kingship than Talut because they were from the chosen

family.

Reply: It was a distinction given to their family by Allah. Now that Allah has chosen someone else, he has a greater right than they; and now his family will have precedence over theirs and he has become nobler and higher in rank than they. The superiority follows the choice of Allah.

Objection 2: "and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth."

Reply: Kingship is establishment of supreme authority over a group of people. Its only purpose is to unite the people under one will and join them together by creating a relationship with all of them. Everyone shall progress on the road of perfection without colliding with one another. No one shall be given preference without justice; no one shall be kept behind without justice. In short, kingship was created so that the ruler should manage the society in such a way that every member might reach his deserved perfection. To achieve that object, the king must have two qualities: (1) Knowledge of all that is good for his people and all that is bad; (2) Physical strength to implement and enforce what he thinks is good for the people.

Allah points this out in the words, "and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique." So far as wealth is concerned, to count it among the necessities of kingship is foolishness.

Then He concisely put all these arguments in one sentence: "and Allah grants His Kingdom to whom He pleases." The kingdom belongs to Allah alone; nobody has any right in it, except what Allah bestows from it on any one. Even then it really belong to Allah only - see how the word "kingdom" is qualified here by possessive pronoun "His." When you keep this reality in view, you will know that Allah has full authority to do in His kingdom as He pleases and as He wills. Nobody has any right to say 'why' or 'how'. One cannot ask why Allah did this or that, because He is the Real cause; nor can one enquire how and by which means He did it, because Allah is the Perfect cause and He does not need any supplementary causes. Therefore, the Israelites should not have asked why He transferred the kingdom from one family to another, or why He gave it to someone who had neither a big family nor abundant wealth.

It is true that Allah bestows His bounty and grace as He wishes and upon whom He pleases. Still, it is not done at random or without reason. When we say, "Allah does what He wishes and gives His kingdom to whom He pleases" we do not mean that Allah does not have any object in view in His actions. Nor do we say that He acts haphazardly; that if there occurs any benefit from it, well and good, and if not, then what does it matter; after all, the kingdom is His, He may do whatever He pleases. What we actually mean is this: Allah is the final and real cause of every creation, with matter and without matter. Benefit and usefulness also, like all other things, are His creation. In view of this, Allah, in His actions, cannot be governed by any aim and object, as we are; when He does a work (and whatever He does is good) or creates a thing (and whatever He creates is beautiful), His action is beneficial to His creatures. But He is not subservient to any benefit.

The above explanation serves to resolve the apparent contradiction in this verse: The authoritative declaration, "Allah grants His kingdom to whom He pleases", seemingly cannot be reconciled with the reasons given earlier, "He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique." Had there been any discordance between His absolute power to do as He pleases, and His actions being full of benefit and reason, the two arguments could not be advanced side by side, let alone be complementary to each other.

The last sentence of the verse, "and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing", makes it even more clear. "Ample-giving" shows that He cannot be restricted by anyone or anything in bestowing His bounties or in any other action. "Knowing" shows that all His actions are done by His true knowledge which is never wrong. In other words, He does whatever He pleases, and He never does but what is

beneficial.

"*Wasi*" (translated here as "Ample-giving") is the active participle of *al-wus'ah* and *as-sa'ah* which is the capacity of a body to accommodate another body, like the capacity of a water pot to hold water, that of a box for things packed in it, and that of a house to accommodate its residents. Then it was borrowed for riches: but not for every wealth and not in all conditions; it is used for riches when the possibility of spending and giving is taken into consideration. It is as though the wealth has the capacity to be spent and given. It is this meaning in which Allah is called *al-wasi*, that is, the Possessor of wealth who has power to give whatever He pleases.

QUR'AN: *And their prophet said to them: "Surely the sign of his kingship is that there shall come to you the Ark in which there is tranquillity":*

"*at-Tabut*" (translated here as "Ark") means chest. It is on the paradigm of *fa'lut* from *at-tawb* (to return). A chest is given this name because man returns to it every now and then.

Meaning of "as-Sakina"

As-Sakinah (tranquillity) is derived from *as-sukun* which is opposite of movement. *as-sakinah* is used for tranquillity of the heart. When a man is of stable mind and is not perturbed in taking a firm decision, he is said to have *as-sakinah*. It is a virtue of a wise man who has a strong will. Allah has made it a characteristic of *al-iman* (faith) in its higher degree, and has counted it as one of His most valuable gifts.

Man, according to his nature, bases his action on reasoning. He arranges logical premises, analyses the benefits of a particular action, and sees how it will effect the bliss of his life and bring the good of the society as a whole. Then he decides what to do and what not to do.

When man goes forward on the path of nature in the process of his reasoning, and his only aim is to gain real benefit and happiness in life, then his thinking is accompanied by peace of mind and tranquility of heart without any nervousness and perturbation. On the other hand, if he clings in his life to the world and follows his low desires, he becomes confused, and his thought and will-power are distorted by his unhealthy vision. As a result, he goes astray from the path of truth: or remains undecided, confused and irresolute in his decisions and cannot perform any difficult and dangerous task which requires strong will-power and firm feet.

A believing man, because of his belief in Allah, relies on a firm support and an unshaken pillar of strength. He bases his life on true knowledge where doubt and confusion cannot intrude: sets forth in his actions in the light of divine commandments which he is sure are the most perfect guide. He knows that his affairs are not in his own hands: he is, therefore, not afraid of any possible loss: and if any harm comes to him, he is not sorry about it. He is not puzzled when he has to distinguish good from evil.

But a disbeliever has no guardian to look after his affairs. His good and evil are in his own hands. He wanders in the darkness of confusion, undecidedness and uncertainty, because his thoughts are permeated by low desires, specters of unreality, and unhealthy feelings.

Allah says:

... *and Allah is the Guardian of the believers* (3:68).

That is because Allah is the Guardian of those who believe, and because the unbelievers have no guardian for them (47:11).

Allah is the Guardian of those who believe; He brings them out of darkness into the light;

and (as to) those who disbelieve, their guardians are the Satans who take them out of the light into the darkness (2:257).

Surely We have made the Satans to be the guardians of those who do not believe (7:27).

It is only the Satan that frightens his friends... (3:175).

The Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins you to be niggardly, and Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance... (2:268).

... and whoever takes the Satan for a guardian rather than Allah, he indeed shall suffer a manifest loss. He gives them promises and excites vain desires in them; and the Satan does not promise them aught but (in)deception... (it is) a promise of Allah, true (indeed); and who is truer of word than Allah? (4:119-122).

Now surely the friends of Allah - they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve (10:62).

These verses, as you see, put all fear, grief, perturbation and deception on the side of disbelief; and the opposite virtues on the side of faith.

Even more clear is the verse:

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

It shows that the disbeliever gropes about awkwardly in his journey of life because he has fallen in utter darkness and cannot see any thing. But the believer has a divine light by which he sees his path and knows what is good for him and what is bad. It is because Allah has bestowed upon him a fresh and new life in addition to this material life which he shares with the disbelievers. That new life accompanies this light which illuminates its path. Allah says: *O you who believe! Fear Allah and believe in His Apostle: He will give you two portions of His mercy, and make for you a light with which you will walk, and forgive you... (57:28).*

Again He says: *You shall not find a people who believe in Allah and the latter day befriending those who act in opposition to Allah and His Apostle, even though they were their (own) fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their kinsfolk; these are they into whose hearts He has written (impressed) faith, and whom He has strengthened with a spirit from Him (58:22).*

It shows that this new life is from a spirit from Allah, and is accompanied by a firm faith deeply impressed into their hearts. These believers are strengthened by a spirit from Allah, which confirms the faith into their hearts, gives a new life to their bodies and creates a brilliant light to lead them forward.

It is easy to see that the import of this verse is similar to that of verse 4 of chap. 48: *He it is who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the believers that they might have more of faith added to their faith - and Allah's are the hosts of the heavens and the earth, and Allah is Knowing, Wise.*

"Tranquility" in this verse corresponds with the "spirit" in the previous one; and "having more of faith added to their faith" of this one corresponds with "impressing the faith into their hearts" of the previous one. This conformity becomes more obvious when we look at the sentence, "and Allah's are the hosts of the heavens and the earth", because the Qur'an often uses the term "hosts" for the angels and the spirit.

Similar in the meaning are the verses: *... then Allah sent down His tranquility on His Apostle and on the believers, and made them keep the word of guarding (against evil), and they were entitled to it and worthy of it (48:26); and So Allah sent down His tranquility upon him and strengthened him with hosts which you did not see... (9:40).*

From the above discussion, it may be inferred that *as-sakinah* is a divine spirit, or accompanies a

divine spirit, by divine command; it creates tranquility in heart, firmness of purpose and peace of mind. This does not involve us in far-fetched interpretations which would remove the word from its real meaning. And the traditions on this subject should be interpreted in this light.

QUR'AN: *And residue of the relics of what the family of Musa and the family of Harun have left, the angels bearing it... :*

"*al-Al*" of a man means those of his family who are most closely related to him; and, when used without any condition, it includes also the man himself. Therefore, the phrase here means *Musa*, Harun and their most closely related family-members. "The angels bearing it" shows the state of the Ark. The words of Allah, "most surely there is a sign in this for those who believe", like the words at the beginning of the verse, prove that they had asked their prophet for a proof of the truth of what he had told them, "Surely Allah has raised Talut to be a king over you."

QUR'AN: *So when Talut departed with the forces... they drank from it:*

"*al-Fasl*" here means to depart from a place; the same is the meaning of the word in 12:94, "And when the caravan had departed." Sometimes it means "to cut", that is, to separate two things, as Allah says: *And He is the best of separators* (between truth and falsehood) (6:57). Thus, the verb is used sometimes transitively and at other times intransitively.

The word "*al-jund*" signifies a dense concentration of something. The army is called *al-jund*, because people are densely concentrated in it. In this verse, the word is used in plural, and it shows that their number was very great - and this was after the people had "turned back except a few of them" (2:246).

The whole talk is a comment on the condition of the Israelites and how they "fulfilled" the covenant made with Allah. All together they pleaded that a king be raised for them, and made a very strong covenant to fight under him, and they were so numerous that when they all turned back except a few of them, those few were "forces"; and those forces also were of no avail because they drank from the stream; thus, what was left, was a residue of the residue, and among them were also those who had taken a handful of water, and as a result were overcome by cowardice and hypocrisy. And then Allah declares how a handful of believers, who were forbearing in the way of Allah, were given victory over the huge armies of Goliath.

"*al-Ibtala'* is to test; "*al-nahar* " is the place in which a stream flows; "*al-ightiraf* " and *al-gharf* is to raise a thing in the hand and get it, for example, raising water in the hand to drink it.

The position of the exceptional clause in this verse requires special attention: *Allah will try you with a stream; whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me, and whoever does not taste of it, he is surely of me, except he who takes with his hand as much (of it) as fills the hand.* It would appear at the first glance that the words, "except he who takes with his hand ... " should have come after the sentence, "whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me." But the fact is that this is not related at all with those who would drink from the stream. The Qur'an mentions that those who would drink were not from Talut, and that is that. Then it changes the word "drink" to "taste" and says, "and whoever does not taste of it, he is surely of me." Only then comes the exceptional clause. Had this clause been put after the first sentence, "whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me", it would have signified that he who took only a handful of water was of Talut. This in its turn would have meant that the whole army from the beginning was of Talut, and then those who drank from the stream were cut off from him. But the present sequence, in which two categories have been mentioned - one of those who would drink and the other of those who would not drink - shows that the real position of the soldiers of the army was at that time undecided and unknown. It was only after the test of the stream that the reality was to be known. Those who would drink from it would be known to be not of Talut; and those

who would not even taste of it would be known to be of Talut. After these two separate sentences comes the exceptional clause, which removes those who would take a handful of water from the first group - but it does not put them in the second one. If there were only the first sentence, the exceptional clause would have given the meaning that by taking a handful of water one would not be cut off from Talut, that is, would remain of him. But now that two separate categories have expressly been mentioned, removal from one group does not automatically mean inclusion in the other.

In short, the position of the exceptional clause shows the existence of three groups: those who were not of Talut, those who were of him, and the takers of handful of water. After crossing the stream, two later groups remained with Talut. That is why there appeared so much difference in their states; one group was forbearing, the other was restless; one had full confidence in Allah, the other was perturbed and troubled.

QUR'AN: So when he had crossed it... Allah is with the patient ones:

"al-Fi'ah" means a group of people. A glance at the verses is sufficient to show that those who said, "We have today no power against Goliath and his forces", were those who had taken a handful of water; and those who replied them were those who had not tasted of it. "Those who thought that they would meet their Lord": The "thought" here means "certainty", that is, "those who were sure ...". Also, it may be an allegorical style to show that in their humility they did not believe themselves worthy of meeting their Lord. They did not say, "It is possible for a small party to vanquish a numerous host." Instead they said, "How often has a small party vanquished ...". Thus they put forward a fact as their argument (instead of a theoretical possibility) to make the reply more convincing.

QUR'AN: And when they went out... against the unbelieving people:

"al-Buruz" is to appear. From it is derived *"al-baraz"* which means to appear or set forth for battle. *"al-Ifragh"* means to pour a liquid material in a mould. In this invocation, they beg Allah to pour down upon them patience according to their capacity. It is a very fine allegory. "Make our feet firm" is another allegorical expression which signifies determination, steadiness and firmness in front of the enemy, so that they do not flee from him.

QUR'AN: So they put them to flight... taught him of what He pleased:

"al-Hazm" means to repel, to drive back.

QUR'AN: And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder; but Allah is Gracious to the creatures:

It is obvious that the disorder of the earth means the disorder among those who are on the earth, that is, the disorder in human society. If society's disorder brings in its wake disorder on the earth's surface, it would also have to be included in the meaning of this verse, not because of itself but because of its being a result of society's disorder.

This verse hints at a philosophical reality, which is as follows:

The felicity and good of the human species is incomplete if there is no society and no mutual assistance. This factor depends on unity, to a certain degree, in society, so that various individuals may join together to form a single group. The group together becomes a single unit; metaphorically speaking, it becomes as though it has a single body and a single soul. It acts and reacts like a single individual. Social unity, and the place in which it occurs, that is, the assembly of human individuals, is just like unity in creation, and the place in which it occurs, that is, the universe. We know that unity in this system of creation results from the action and reaction occurring in the components of the universe. The various creative causes struggle with each other, repel, or are repelled by opposing forces, and it is as a result of this constant action and reaction that various parts of this system remain

connected with each other. Otherwise, the universe would have ceased to exist.

Likewise, the system of human society is based on action and reaction, on repulsion and overpowering; otherwise the various members of society could not remain bound with each other, and society would have ceased to exist; in short the felicity of the species would have vanished. If we suppose that there is no repelling each other, in this meaning, (i.e., overpowering others and making them obey the victor's will), every individual member will do what he thinks fit, even if it goes against the interest of the other members (whether those interests are lawful is not our concern at this juncture); and those other members will have no means to prevent him from that course of action. Thus the unity of the members will cease to exist and society will be finished. We have described this subject fully under verse 2:213; where it was explained that the basic factor upon which society is founded is the human instinct of subjugating others for one's own benefit; and mutual assistance and civilization is a side product of this instinct, it is a secondary cause.

This repulsion and overpowering is an overwhelming factor in human society. Man tries to make others do what he wants, and to repel them from what he does not like. It is seen in war as well as in peace, in comfort as well as in discomfort, in ease as well as in hardship. Man does it instinctively; he becomes conscious of it only when someone opposes his will, and then he begins the process of the said repulsion as he thinks necessary. That repulsion has degrees of strength and weakness. War is one of those degrees.

This natural instinct is seen in action when a believer repulses his oppressor in defense of his lawful rights; and it is also seen when someone uses it to protect his unlawful gains. Nature bestows its bounties on the believers and the unbelievers alike. It is not that a believer has a nature separate from that of the unbeliever. If this trait of repelling and overpowering were not present in human nature, no body would have defended anything, whether it be a lawful right or an unlawful gain.

It is this natural trait from which man gains so many benefits - first, society is founded on it, then he makes others follow his own will, and through it he keeps what he has gained, lawfully or otherwise, and it is through it that he tries to get back what has been taken from him unjustly: and lastly it is through this trait that he makes the truth live after it has died, and tries to keep society on the path of eternal bliss. In short, it is a natural factor from which man derives many more benefits than harm.

"Perhaps" it is these things which are referred to in this sentence: *And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder.* The next sentence supports this interpretation: *And Allah is Gracious to the creatures.*

There are some interpretations which are not so appropriate: Some commentators have said: The repulsion mentioned here means the repelling of the unbelievers by the believers, as the context shows. Also, another verse may be quoted in its support: *And had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, certainly there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered (22:40).*

Comment: The meaning in itself is correct as far as it goes; but it is not the whole meaning. What the verse means by the good of the earth, is a comprehensive and continuous good which keeps society alive; not any particular good which appears for a short time and then disappears, like in the story of Talut and in some other events.

Others have said: This verse refers to the fact that Allah saves the sinner from perdition and destruction, because of the righteous one. Many traditions from both Sunni and Shiite chains of narrators mention this fact: A tradition of Jabir is recorded in *Majma'u'l-bayan* and *ad-Durru'l-manthur*, that he said "The Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) said: 'Verily Allah, because of the good of a Muslim man, makes good his child and the child of his child, and the people of his house, and of the

houses around it; and they remain in the protection of Allah so long as he remains in them."

Another tradition, in *al-Kafi* and *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi, quotes as-Sadiq (a.s.) as saying: "Verily Allah, repels (the misfortune) from that of our Shi'ahs who does not pray, because of the one who prays, and if they all unite on neglecting the prayer, all of them would perish. And verily, Allah repels from that of our Shi'ahs who does not pay *zakat*, because of the one who pays it, and if they all unite on its non-payment, all would perish. And verily, Allah repels from that of our Shi'ahs who does not perform *hajj*, because of the one who performs it, and if they all unite on neglecting the *hajj*, all would perish."

Comment: The two verses mentioned earlier obviously do not fit the meaning of these two traditions; although it may be said that these traditions give examples as to how Allah repels some people by some others.

Someone has said: The verse means that Allah repels the oppressors with other oppressors.

Comment: Its absurdity is too obvious.

QUR'AN: *These are the signs... you are (one) of the apostles:*

This verse is a sort of epilogue to conclude the story. Also the last sentence, "and most surely you are (one) of the apostles", creates a clear connection with the next verse.

Traditions

'Abdu'r-Razzaq and Ibn Jarir have narrated from Zayd ibn Aslam that he said: "When the verse was revealed: *Who is it that will lend to Allah a goodly loan, so He will multiply it...*, Abu 'a-Dardah came to the Prophet and said: 'O Prophet of Allah! Do I not see our Lord asking a loan from us from the same which He has given us for ourselves?! And verily I have two plots of lands, one in the higher region, and the other in the lower one; and verily I dedicate the better one as *sadaqah* (alms).' And the Prophet used to say: 'How many pampered clusters of dates Abu 'a-Dardah has got in the Garden!'" (*ad-Durru'l-manthur*)

The author says: This tradition has been narrated through numerous chains.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "When the verse was revealed: *Whoever brings good deed, he shall have better than it (27:89)*, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: 'O Allah! Increase for me.' So, Allah sent down the verse: *Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it (6:160)*. The Messenger of Allah (again) said: 'O Allah! Increase for me.' Then Allah revealed, *Who is it that will lend to Allah a goodly loan, so He will multiply it for him manifold*. Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah knew that "many" from Allah cannot be counted and has no limit. (*al-Ma'ani*)

The author says: at-Tabarsi in *Majma'u'l-bayan* and al-'Ayyashi in his *at-Tafsir* have narrated a similar tradition. And a tradition nearly like it has been narrated from Sunni chains also.

The words of the Imam, "Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah knew": The end of the verse hints at it, "and Allah holds and extends", because no limit can be put on the bounty of Allah; He has said: *And the bounty of your Lord is not confined (17:20)*.

A tradition of Abu'l-Hasan (a.s.) recorded in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi says that this verse is about the gift for the Imam.

The author says: A similar tradition is narrated from as-Sadiq (a.s.) in *al-Kafi*, it gives an example of a general rule.

Majma'u'l-bayan says about the words of Allah, "when they said to a prophet of theirs" that the prophet was Ushmu'il who is Isma'il in Arabic.

The author says: Sunni traditions also confirm it. And Ushmu'il is Samuel of the Bible.

al-Qummi narrated from his father from an-Nadr ibn Suwayd from Yahya al-Halabi from Harun ibn Kharijah from Abu Ja'far (as.) saying: "Verily, the Israelites, after the death of Musa, indulged in sins, and changed the religion of God, and acted arrogantly against the commandments of God; and there was a prophet among them, who ordered them (to do good) and forbade them (evil), but they did not obey him. (And it is narrated that he was the prophet, Armiah¹ - may the peace of Allah be upon our prophet and him!) Thereupon, Allah gave Goliath mastery over them; and he was a Coptic.² He humiliated them, and killed their men, and turned them out of their homes and their properties, and kept their women as slave girls. Therefore, they resorted to their prophet and said: 'Ask Allah to raise up for us a king, so that we may fight in the way of Allah. And there was the prophethood in one house of the children of Israel and kingship and rulership in another house. And Allah had not kept the prophethood and kingship in one house; that is why they asked their prophet to 'raise for us a king, so that we may fight in the way of Allah.' Thereupon their prophet said to them: '*May it not be that if fighting is ordained for you, you would not fight?*' They said: '*And what reasons have we that we should not fight in the way of Allah, and we have indeed been turned out of our homes and our children.*' And it happened as Allah said: *But when fighting was ordained for them, they turned back, except a few of them; and Allah knows the unjust.* And their prophet said to them: '*Surely Allah has raised Talut to be a king over you.*' Then they were enraged by this (appointment), and said: '*How can he hold kingship over us, while we have a greater right to kingship than he and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth?*' And the prophethood was in the house of Lawi³, and the kingship in the house of Yusuf; and Talut was from the house of Benjamin⁴, the full brother of Yusuf, and was, thus, from neither the house of prophethood nor from that of kingship. Then their prophet said to them: '*Surely, Allah has chosen him over you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique, and Allah grants His Kingdom to whom He pleases, and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.*' And Talut was the greatest of them in physique, the most powerful and knowledgeable of them all, but he was a poor man. So, they vilified him because of his poverty, and said that he had not been given an abundance of wealth. Thereupon, their prophet said to them: '*Surely the sign of his kingship is that there shall come to you the Ark in which there is tranquility from your Lord and residue of the relics of what the family of Musa and the family of Harun have left, the angels bearing it.*' And it was the chest which was sent by Allah and Musa's mother put him in it and threw it in the river; and it was among the Israelites and they sought blessings through it. When Musa was about to die, he put inside it in the tablets, and his coat of mail and whatever signs of prophethood he had, and gave it in trust to his successor, Yusha'⁵ And the Ark remained in them until they made slight of it, and the children played with it in the streets. Thus, the Israelites remained with honor and dignity as long as the Ark was with them, but when they committed sins and profaned the Ark, Allah took it away from them. When they asked their prophet, Allah raised Talut as king over them, and he let them in the fight then Allah returned the Ark to them, as he said: '*Surely the sign of his kingship is that there shall come to you the Ark in which there is tranquility from your Lord and residue of the relics of what the family of Musa and the family of Harun have left, the angels bearing it.*' And he (Abu Ja'far) said: "The residue is the children of the prophets." (*at-Tafsir, al-Qummi*)

The author says: The sentence, "And it is narrated that he was the prophet, Armiah" is another tradition, parenthetically inserted in this tradition.⁶

"And it happened as Allah said": It means that a majority of them turned back and only a small minority of them obeyed the order to fight. And some traditions say that this minority was sixty

thousand souls. It has been narrated by al-Qummi in his *at-Tafsir* al-Qummi narrated from his father from al-Husayn ibn Khalid from ar-Rida, a.s.) and by al-'Ayyashi in his *at-Tafsir* from al-Baqir (a.s.).

"And the prophethood was in the house of Lawi and the kingship in the house of Yusuf." Some people say that the kingship was in the house of Yahudha.⁷ But there is an objection on it: There was no king among the Israelites before Talut, Dawud and Sulayman. So how can it be said that "before Talut" kingship was in the house of Judah? This objection is strengthened by the traditions of the Imams of *Ahlu'l-bayt* that the kingship was in the house of Yusuf, because the kingship of Yusuf is accepted by all.

"The residue is the children of the Prophets": This sentence is a conjecture of the narrator. The Imam explained the words, "the family of Musa and the family of Harun" with the words. "the children of the prophets": and the narrator fancied that it was the explanation of the word, "residue." And this view is supported by the tradition recorded in the *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi that as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked about the words of Allah, "and residue of the relics of what the family of Musa and the family of Harun have left, the angels bearing it", and he replied: "The children of the prophets."

Muhammad ibn Yahya narrated from Muhammad ibn Ahmad from Muhammad ibn Khalid and al-Husayn ibn Sa'id from an-Nasr ibn Suwayd from Yahya al-Halabi from Harun ibn Kharijah from Abu Basir from Abu Ja'far (a.s.) saying in a tradition, inter alia: "And Allah reports the words of Talut: *'Surely Allah will try you with a stream; whoever then drinks from it, lie is not of me, and whoever does not taste of it, he is surely of me.'* But all of them drank from it, except three hundred and thirteen men, among them were those who took a handful of water as well as those who did not drink at all. When they went out against Goliath, those who had taken handful of water said, *'We have today no power against Goliath and his forces'*; and those who had not taken it said, *'I often has a small party vanquished a numerous host by Allah's permission, and Allah is with the patient ones.'*" (*al-Kafi*)

The author says: That there remained with Talut only three hundred and thirteen men (equal in number to the Muslim "army" in the battle of Badr) is mentioned in numerous traditions from Shi'ah and Sunni chains. The details that those who said: "We have today no power ... " were those who had taken a handful of water, and those who said, "Flow often a small party... were those who had not tasted it at all, may be inferred from the position of the exceptional clause in the verse, as we have already explained.

al-Kulayni narrated through his chains from Ahmad ibn Muhammad from al-Husayn ibn Sa'id from Fadal ibn Ayyub from Yahya al-Halabi from 'Abdullah ibn Sulayman from Abu Ja'far (a.s.) who said about the words of Allah, *surely the sign of his kingdom... the angels bearing it*: "They bore it in the shape of a cow." (*al-Kafi*)

It will have been noted that we have quoted the complete chain of narrators of this tradition, although generally we do not do so in this book. We omit the chains where the traditions are in conformity with the Qur'an, because then there is no need to mention the chains of narrators. But where the tradition mentions a thing which is not in the Qur'an, and which cannot be inferred from it, then it is necessary to quote the complete chain. Still, we write in this book only those traditions which are correct according to the chains of the narrators, or are supported by the context or other associations.

al-'Ayyashi writes in his *at-Tafsir* a tradition from Muhammad al-Halabi that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Dawud had four brothers; and their father was an old-aged man; and Dawud had remained behind to look after the sheep of his father. Talut departed with his forces. Dawud's father called him (and he was the youngest) and said: 'O my son! Take to your brothers this (food) which we have prepared for

them, so that they may get strength to overcome their enemy.' And he (Dawud) was short of stature, dark, with very little hair, but pure of heart. So, he went away, and (by that time) the two forces had reached near to each other."

At this juncture, another tradition of Abu Basir says that he heard the Imam saying: "Then Dawud passed by a stone, and it said: 'O Dawud! Take me and kill Goliath with me, because, verily, I have been created to kill him.' So he took it and put it in his bag in which he kept the stones for his sling which he used in the herding of his sheep. On entering the army camp, he heard them greatly magnifying the affair of Goliath. So he said to them: 'Why are you so overwhelmed by his affair? By Allah! If I see him I will kill him.' Thereupon, they started talking with each other about it till he was brought before Talut. Talut asked him 'O young man! How much strength do you have? And what experience have you of yourself?' Dawud said: 'It happens that if a lion attacks a goat of my herd and catches it; then I overtake him, catch his head, open his jaws and rescue the goat from his mouth.' (Hearing this) Talut said: 'Bring me a full-size coat of mail.' It was brought unto him and he put it in Dawud's neck, and lo! His body filled it completely. Thereupon, Talut and those Israelites who were present there were awe-struck by him; and Talut said: 'By Allah! Most probably Allah will kill him (Goliath) by him.'

"When the morning came and people gathered around Talut, and the people (of the two forces) stood against each other, Dawud said: 'Show me Goliath.' When he saw him, he took the stone, and putting it in his sling, threw it towards him, and it hit him between his eyes, reaching to his brain; and (Goliath) fell down from his stead; and people cried: 'Dawud has killed Goliath.' Then the people made him their king until nobody was heard talking about Talut. And the Israelites gathered around Dawud; and Allah sent down Zabur to him, and taught him the handicraft of iron, making it soft for him; and ordered the mountains and the birds to join him in glorifying God." The Imam said: "And nobody was given a voice like him. Thereupon Dawud lived among the Israelites, hidden from them; and he was given strength to worship (God)."

The author says: The Shi'ah and Sunni traditions unanimously say that Dawud killed Goliath by a sling.

'Ali (a.s.) said: "The tranquility which was in the Ark, was a pleasant breeze from the Garden; it had a face like that of a human being." (*Majma'u'l-bayan*)

The author says: This meaning has been narrated in *ad-Durru'l-manthur* - from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah and Ibn Jarir, through the chain of Salman ibn Kuhayl from 'All (a.s.); - and from 'Abdu'r-Razzaq and Abu 'Ubayd and 'Abd ibn Hamid and Ibn Jarir and Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abi Hatim and al-Hakim (and he has said that the tradition is "correct"), and Ibn 'Asakir and al-Bayhaqi (in his *ad-Dala'il*), through the chain of Abu al-Ahwas from 'Ali (a.s.).

al-Qummi narrated from his father from 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Khalid from ar-Rida (a.s.) saying: "The tranquility is a breeze from the Garden, it has a face like that of a human being." (at-Tafsir)

The author says: The same meaning has been narrated by as-Sadiq (as.) in *Ma'ani'l-akhbar* and by al-'Ayyashi in his *at-Tafsir* from ar-Rida (a.s.).

These traditions explaining the meaning of *as-sakinah* (tranquility) are not *mutawatir*; yet, if they are accepted as correct, they may be interpreted in the following way, so as to fit the meaning of the verse of the Qur'an:

"The tranquility has a face like that of a human being." It means that it is one of the stages of spiritual perfection. At that stage, the soul remains tranquil and at peace with the commands and decrees of Allah. Such expressions, explaining a reality in an allegorical way, are found in many traditions of the Imams'. According to this interpretation, tranquility would mean the spirit of faith,

and that is the meaning we have given to it earlier. And it is in this light that the following tradition of Abu'l-Hasan (a.s.), mentioned in *Ma'ani'l-akhbar*, should be seen and interpreted: "(Tranquility) is the spirit of God, which speaks; when they differed among themselves on any matter, it spoke up and informed them (of truth)... " Obviously, it means that it is the spirit of faith and it guides the believer to the truth about which the people differ.

Footnotes:

1. Jeremiah, in the Bible.

2. Goliath was a Philistine. The area had political connection with Egypt. Perhaps it is in this sense that he has been called a Coptic.

3. Levi, in the Bible.

4. Benjamin, in the Bible. 3. Joshua, in the Bible.

5. Joshua in the Bible

6. As mentioned in a previous tradition, the prophet was Samuel, and not Jeremiah

7. Judah in the Bible

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 253-254

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّن كَلَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٍ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ
 وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا اقْتَتَلَ الَّذِينَ مِن بَعْدِهِمْ مِّن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ وَلَكِنِ اخْتَلَفُوا فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ آمَنَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ كَفَرَ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا اقْتَتَلُوا
 وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيدُ 2:253

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمْ يَوْمٌ لَّا بَيْعُ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ وَلَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ 2:254
 2:253 *These apostles, We have made some of them to excel others; among them are some to whom Allah spoke, and some of them He exalted by degree (of rank); and We gave clear (evidence) to Isa, son of Maryam, and strengthened him with the holy spirit. And if Allah had pleased, those after them would not have fought one with another after clear arguments had come to them; but they differed; so there were some of them who believed and others who denied; and if Allah had so pleased they would not have fought one with another, but Allah does what He intends.*

2:254 *You who believe! Spend out of what We have given you, before the day comes in which there is no bargaining, neither any friendship nor intercession; and the unbelievers - they are unjust.*

General Comment

These two verses do not differ much in context from the preceding verses which ordained fighting and spending in the way of Allah. Then came the story of Talut, in this context, so that the believers might learn important lessons from it, and that story ended on the words, "and most surely you are one of the apostles" which are immediately followed by the opening sentence of this verse, "These apostles, We have made some of them to excel the others." Thereafter, it describes why those who came after those apostles fought one with another. (In the story of Talut also, there was a restrictive phrase, "after Musa" to describe "the chiefs of the children of Israel.") Then it reverts to the exhortation of spending in the way of Allah before the final day comes.

All these similarities in context strongly support the view that these two verses are connected with the previous ones, and that all of them were sent down together.

The verse purports to remove a common misunderstanding, which is as follows:

The apostleship, especially when it was accompanied by clear evidence, that is, arguments and miracles to prove its truth, should have ended the scourge of fighting. It could have happened in one of the two ways: (1) When Allah sent the apostles and gave them clear signs for the specific purpose of guiding people to their bliss in both worlds, it would have been proper if He had also prevented them from fighting among themselves and united them all in the truth. So, why is there so much fighting going on among the followers of those apostles? This objection becomes all the more telling after the advent of Islam which counts unity as one of the pillars of its *shari'ah* and the basis of its laws. (2) The sending of the apostles and the giving to them of the clear signs was done for the specific purpose of creating faith in peoples' hearts. Belief and faith is a spiritual characteristic, which cannot be created by force and coercion. Then what the use of fighting once the prophets and the apostles had

been sent.

We have explained this objection together with its reply in the commentary of the verses of fighting.

In this verse, Allah gives the following reply: The fighting among the followers of the apostles occurred because the said followers differed among themselves. Had they not differed, there would not have been any fighting among them. The cause of the fighting was, therefore, their difference. It is true that if Allah so wished, there would not have occurred any difference; and thus there would not have been any fighting. Alternatively, He could have disconnected the cause, that is, the difference, from its effect, that is, fighting; so that even if there was difference, there would not have occurred any fighting. But Allah does what He wishes; and He has decreed that the effect will follow its cause; also, that the people will have freedom of choice, and that there will not be any compulsion for them to follow a certain course.

And that is why they differed, and were not prevented from it, and that is why the said difference caused the fighting.

Commentary

QUR'AN: *These apostles, We have made some of them to excel the others:*

It demonstrates the greatness of the apostles and the grandeur of their status. That is why the demonstrative pronoun "*tilka*" (those) has been used, which is meant to point to a distant object. The verse shows the excellence given by Allah to some of them over others - some of them have been given more excellence than the others. But all of them are great, as the apostleship in itself is an excellence, which all of them share. There is a difference among the apostles, of their grades and ranks; and there is a difference among their followers, as the verse describes. But the two types of differences have nothing in common: The difference among the apostles is only in their ranks and grades, but they all are one in the basic excellence of apostleship; and the conflict of the people of the apostles is the one which is found between belief and disbelief, between affirmation and negation. It goes without saying that the two differences are quite separate from each other. And that is why Allah has used separate words for each. The difference in the rank and grade of the apostles has been named excellence, and it has been attributed to Allah, "We have made some of them to excel others." The conflict of the followers of the apostles has been called a difference, and it has been attributed to the men themselves, "they differed."

The verse ends on the topic of fighting, and the preceding verses were also concerned with admonition to fight in the way of Allah, and with a story about it. It obviously means that the sentences under discussion, "These apostles... with the holy spirit", are a prologue to make the meaning of the next sentences clearer. It shows that the institution of apostleship, in spite of all its blessings and good, has not been able to end fighting among the people, because the said fighting is initiated by the people themselves.

The apostleship has a high, towering excellence; and its good and bliss have everlasting freshness; whenever you look at it you will see a new beauty, and whichever aspect you ponder upon, you will find a new virtue. This excellent institution, in spite of its brilliant splendor and awe-inspiring magnificence, in spite of its accompanying clear evidence and miracle, is not able to eradicate the differences of people in belief and disbelief. It is so, because this difference is caused by the people themselves. Allah has mentioned this fact in various verses: *Surely the religion with Allah is Islam; and those to whom the book had been given did not differ, but after knowledge had come to them,*

out of envy among themselves (3:19). Mankind was but one nation... and none differed about it but the very people who were given it revolting among themselves (2:213).

The fact remains that if Allah had so wished He could have prevented this difference and the resulting fighting by His creative decree. But Allah has established a system of cause and effect in the universe, and difference is the established cause of conflict and fighting. Also, if He had so wished, He could have forbidden it by His legislative decree; or He could have refrained from giving the believers the order to fight in His way. But He gave this order; and made it a criterion of faith, "so that Allah may separate the impure from the pure", "and most certainly Allah will know those who believe and most certainly He will know the hypocrites".

In short, fighting among the people of the apostles cannot be avoided, as there is always the possibility of people differing because of envy and revolt. The apostleship and its clear evidence are sufficient to refute wrong beliefs and clear away doubts. But envy, revolt, obstinacy and other such moral defects cannot be removed and the earth cannot be purged of them except by fighting in the way of Allah, which will better the condition of humanity. Experience proves that in many cases arguments alone were not effective unless they were supported by the sword. That is why Allah ordered His apostles, whenever necessary, to stand in support of truth and fight in His way. He so ordered in the days of Ibrahim and the prophets of the children of Israel, and after the Apostle of Allah came. More details have already been given under the verses of fighting.

QUR'AN: *Among them are some to whom Allah spoke, and some of them He exalted by degree (of rank):*

In these sentences the pronouns and verbs have been changed from the first person of the preceding one (*We have made some of them to excel*) to the third person. The reason - and Allah knows better - may be as follows:

Meritorious epithets are of two kinds: First, that which in itself is enough to show the merit and honor of the person or thing so described; for example, the clear evidence and the miracle, and being strengthened with the holy spirit, which has been mentioned in respect of 'Isa (a.s.). There is no doubt that these epithets are, *per se*, splendid and lofty. Second, that which in itself has no value unless it is related to a great subject, and its merit and honor depend upon the prestige of the doer; for example, being spoken to, *per se*, has no virtue, but if one is spoken to by a great personality it bestows an honor to the man who is spoken to. And it carries a very great splendor if one is spoken to by Allah. Likewise, being raised in rank, *per se*, has no virtue unless it is done for example, by Allah.

In this light, we may easily appreciate the great eloquence of the Qur'an in changing the pronouns in three sentences "among them are some to whom Allah spoke, and some of them He exalted by degree (of rank); and We gave clear (evidence) to 'Isa... " When Allah described the virtues of being spoken to and being raised in rank, He changed the pronouns to the third person clearly mentioning the name, 'Allah', as the bestower of these merits. When the epithets reached clear evidence, etc., which were honored in themselves, the pronouns reverted to the first person of the starting sentence and said: "and We gave clear evidence to 'Isa son of Maryam".

The commentators advance various opinions as to who is meant by the two sentences. It is said that "some to whom Allah spoke" refers to Musa, as verse 164 of chap. 4 says: *And We spoke to Musa (directly) speaking (to him)*, and as several other verses testify. Also, it is said that it means the Apostle of Allah, Muhammad (s.a.w.), because Allah spoke to him on the night of the ascension when Allah brought him near Himself to such a degree that all intermediate links vanished completely, and Allah addressed to him His revelation directly without any intermediary. He says: *Then he (i.e., Muhammad) drew near, and he became pending (i.e., in between the Creator and His creatures); so*

he was the measure of two bows or closer still. And He revealed to His servant what He revealed (53:8-10). A third interpretation is that the speaking means revelation in general, because revelation is a secret speaking, and it has been termed speaking in the verse, *And it is not for any man that Allah should speak to him except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger so that he reveals by His permission what He pleases* (42:51). But this last interpretation does not conform with the preposition "*min*" (from, among) which denotes that not all, but only "some", of the apostles were given this distinction - and revelation was not confined to only a few of them, it was common to all.

The most appropriate interpretation is that it refers to Musa (a.s.), because Allah's speaking with him was already mentioned in a chapter of Meccan period (which was revealed long before this chapter 2, which is a Medinite chapter): *And when Musa came at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him... He said: "O Musa! Surely I have chosen you above the people with My message and with my speech..."* (7:143-144). Obviously the fact that Musa was spoken to by Allah had been well understood when the verse under discussion was revealed.

Likewise, various interpretations have been offered for the sentence, "and some of them He exalted by degree (of rank)."

It is said that it refers to Muhammad (s.a.w.), as Allah raised him in status and exalted over all the apostles, because He:

- sent him towards all the men -: *And We have not sent you but to all the men...* (34:28);
- made him a mercy to the worlds -: *And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds* (21:107);
- made him the Last of the prophets -: *... but he is the apostle of Allah and the last of the prophets...* (33:40);
- gave him the Qur'an, which is the guardian over all books and explains clearly everything, and is protected from the alterations of wrongdoers, and, in short, is a miracle which will last up to the end of the world -: *And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth, verifying what is before it of the book and a guardian over it* (5:48); *And We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything...* (16:89); *Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian* (15:9) ; *Say: If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Qur'an, they could not bring the like of it, even though some of them were aiders of the others*(17:88).
- and gave him especially the established and upright religion which is responsible for all the good of this world and the next -: *Then set thy face upright to the established religion* (30:43).

Another interpretation is that it refers to various prophets who were raised in status in one way or the other. For example, the following prophets:

- Nuh (a.s.) -: *Peace be on Nuh in all the worlds* (37:79).
- Ibrahim (a.s.) -: *And (remember) when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, then he fulfilled them. He said: "Surely I will make you Imam for mankind..."* (2:124): *And make for me a truthful tongue (i.e., goodly mention) among the posterity* (26:84);
- Idris (a.s.) -: *And We raised him to a high station*(19:57);
- Yusuf (a.s.) -: *We raise the degrees of whomsoever We please* (12:76);
- Dawud (a.s.) -: *And We gave to Dawud Psalm* (4:163); and likewise various other prophets.

A third interpretation is that the words, "These apostles", in the beginning of the verse, refer to those apostles only who have been mentioned in this chapter of the Cow, like Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa, 'Uzayr, Armiah, Ushmu'il, Dawud, and Muhammad, the peace of Allah be on them all. Out of them Musa and 'Isa have especially been mentioned in this verse, and from among the rest it is Muhammad

(s.a.w.) who has been raised in degrees of rank over the others.

A fourth interpretation: "These apostles" refers to only those who have been mentioned in the preceding story; and they are Musa, Dawud, Ushmu'il and Muhammad. Musa's distinction has been mentioned, and that is his being spoken to. Then comes the topic of raising the degrees of rank, and from the above list, no one is more deserving for it than Muhammad (s.a.w.). Probably, that was the reason why 'Isa had to be mentioned in this verse by name because in the preceding story he was not mentioned at all.

But a well balanced interpretation would be as follows:

There is no doubt that the exalted rank of the Prophet, Muhammad (s.a.w.), is included in the meaning of this sentence; but there is no reason to suppose that the sentence refers only to his excellence or only to those prophets who are mentioned in the story of Talut or in the chapter of the Cow, because all such view are arbitrary and without any justifiable reason. It is quite obvious that the verse is general; "these apostles" refer to all the apostles sent by Allah, and "some of them lie exalted by degrees of rank" covers all those apostles who were exalted by Him in any way.

Someone has said: The context shows that the sentence, "some of them He exalted... ", refers only to Muhammad (s.a.w.). The verse gives a lesson to those nations that fight among themselves, after their apostles, even though their religion is one - and only three such nations were present when the verse was revealed: the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims. Therefore, it was appropriate to mention their apostles especially; Musa and 'Isa have already been described in the verse, and it means that the remaining sentence, "some of them He exalted. .", specifically refers to Muhammad (s.a.w.).

Comment: The Qur'an decrees that all the apostle were sent to all of mankind, as Allah says: ... *We do not make any distinction between any of them...* (2:136). The apostles brought them clear signs, arguments and miracles. This fact in itself should have been enough to cut at the root of mischief and disorder, and to prevent fighting among their followers. But those followers differed with one another because of their rebellion, envy and worldly desire. This was the basic cause which gave rise to the fighting. Therefore, Allah ordains fighting when the good of mankind depends upon it, so that He may manifest the truth of what was true by His words, and cut away the root of the wrongdoers.

This context shows that the verse is not particularly concerned with any nation; rather its import is general.

A Talk about the Speech of Allah

QUR'AN: *And We gave clear (evidence) to Isa, son of Maryam, and strengthened him with the holy spirit:*

In this sentence, the original "first person" pronouns have been used; and we have already explained the reason for this. A question arises as to why only 'Isa, and no other prophet, has been mentioned here by name. The reason is this: What has been mentioned in his excellence - giving clear evidence and strengthening with the holy spirit - are things common to all apostles. Allah says: *Certainly We sent Our apostles with clear evidence (57:25); He sends down the angels with spirit by His commandments on whom He pleases of His servants, (saying): Give the warning...* (16:2).

But these otherwise common factors were found in 'Isa in a rather special way. All his miracles - raising the dead, creating the bird by breathing into it, giving sight to the blind, curing lepers and giving information of the unseen - had a very special relation with the life and the spirit. Therefore, those factors were mentioned as the special excellence of 'Isa, and his name was clearly mentioned. Had Allah only said, "and We gave clear evidence to some of them and strengthened him with the

holy spirit", it would not have pointed especially to 'Isa, because, as you know, these two factors were common to all apostles. It was necessary to mention the name to show that these were given to 'Isa in a rather special way. Moreover, 'Isa himself was a clear evidence of the power of Allah, as he was born without a father. Allah says: *and made her (Maryam) and her son a sign for the worlds (21:91)*. Thus, the son and his mother together were the signs of Allah, and it was their special distinction.

QUR'AN: And if Allah had pleased, those after them would not have fought one with another after clear arguments had come to them:

Here Allah again refers to Himself in the third person, because the context demands a clear declaration that the divine will cannot be obstructed and His power cannot be foiled. All happenings, in all their positive and negative aspects, are under divine control and authority. It is the attribute of godship which emanates unlimited power and unrestricted authority; and that is why the divine name, Allah, had to be clearly mentioned to emphasize the fact that if Allah had so willed, they would not have fought. This force could not be produced by saying, "if We had so willed ... " And it is for the same reason that the divine name, and not the pronoun, has been repeated in the next sentences, "and if Allah had so pleased they would not have fought", and "Allah does what He intends."

QUR'AN: But they differed; so there were some of them who believed and others who denied: We have already described why

Allah attributed the difference to the people, and not to Himself. He has declared several times that the difference in belief and disbelief appeared among people because of their envy, rebellion and evil desire; and such things cannot be attributed to Allah.

QUR'AN: And if Allah had so pleased they would not have fought one with another, but Allah does what He intends:

We have already explained this. If Allah had so wished, He could have disconnected the cause, the difference, from its effect, the fighting. But Allah does what He intends, and He has decided that the difference will cause the fighting, according to the system of cause and effect which He has decreed in this world.

In short, the verse says that the apostles sent by Allah are His servants, very near to Him, above mankind in their excellence: they have been exalted, some above others, in the degrees of their ranks but they all equally share the basic excellence of apostleship. They came to their peoples with clear arguments and miracles: they clearly pronounced the truth and unmistakably showed the right path. It might have been expected that their followers, after them, would not have abandoned the unity, love and mutual regard in the cause of the religion of Allah. But there was another factor, lurking about, and that was their envy and rebellion, which divided them up into believers and non-believers; and this difference spread and affected all aspects of their lives. If Allah had so wished, He could have taken away the causative power of this difference, and then it would not have led to fighting. But He did not wish so, and let the system of cause and effect take its course; and He brings out what He wishes.

QUR'AN: O you who believe! Spend... and the unbelievers - they are unjust:

The meaning is quite clear. The last sentence implies that not spending in the way of Allah is unbelief and injustice.

Traditions

al-Baqir (a.s.) said about the words of Allah: *These apostles* "There is in this (verse) that which may be a proof that the companions of Muhammad did differ (among themselves) after him, so there were some of them who believed and others who disbelieved." (*al-Kafi*)

Asbagh ibn Nubatah said: "I was standing with the Leader of the faithful, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) on the day of the Camel.

There came a man and stood before him and said: 'O Leader of the faithfuls! These people (i.e., the enemies) said *takbir (Allahu Akbar)*, and we said it; and they said *tahlil (la ilaha illa'llah)* and we said it; and they prayed and we prayed. Then, on what (ground) are we fighting them?' He ('Ali - a.s.) replied: 'On (the basis of) this verse: *These apostles, We have made some of them to excel others; among them are some to whom Allah spoke and some of them He exalted by degree (of rank); and We gave clear(evidence) to Isa, son of Maryam, and strengthened him with the holy spirit. And if Allah had pleased, those after them would riot have fought one with another - so we are those after them - but they differed; so there were some of them who believed and others who disbelieved; and if Allah had so pleased they would not have fought one with another, but Allah does what He intends. So we are those who believed and they are those who disbelieved.*' Thereupon, the man said: 'These people are unbelievers, by the Lord of the Ka'bah!' Then he attacked and fought them until he was killed; may Allah have mercy on him!" (*at-Tafsir*, of al-'Ayyashi)

The author says: This event has been narrated by al-Mufid in his *al-Amali*, and by ash-Shaykh in his book of the same name, and by al-Qummi in his *at-Tafsir*. This tradition shows that 'Ali (a.s.) interpreted "disbelief" in this verse in a general sense, which includes hidden disbelief as well as open disbelief which is termed *al-kufr* (infidelity) in Islam and with which Islam deals in a special way. It is well-known from traditions and history that 'Ali (a.s.) did not treat his opponents (in the battles of the Camel, Siffin and Nahrawan) like any group of the unbelievers - they were not dealt with like unbelievers, whether from the people of the book or others, nor like the apostates. The only implication of this special treatment is that he thought them to be unbelievers in their hearts but not openly. And he (a.s.) used to say: "I fight against them on the interpretation (of the Qur'an), not on (its) revelation."

The verse clearly supports this meaning. It says that the clear evidence brought by the apostles did not prevent the fighting of their followers because they differed among themselves; and such a difference cannot be removed by those arguments and evidence because it is not based on reason but on envy and rebellion. The verse thus describes the phenomenon mentioned in the following verses:

And people were naught but a single nation, then they disagreed; and had not a word already gone forth from your Lord, the matter would have certainly been decided between them in respect of that concerning which they disagree (10:19).

Mankind was but one people, so Allah sent the prophets... and none differed about it but the very people who were given it after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves; whereupon Allah guided, by His will, those who believed to the truth about which they differed (2:213) ... and they shall continue to differ, except those on whom your Lord has mercy... (11:118-119).

All this shows that difference about the book, that is, about the religion, between the followers of the apostles, after the departure of those apostles, cannot be avoided. Allah says particularly about this *ummah*: *Or do you think that you would enter the Garden while yet the like of those who have passed away before you has not come upon you? (2:214).* And He informs us of the complaint of His Apostle on the Day of Resurrection: *And the Apostle cried out: "O my Lord! surely my people treated this Qur'an as a forsaken thing" (25:30).* In these, and many other verses, this factor has been explicitly or implicitly mentioned.

And it is a fact that difference in the Muslim *ummah* started in the days of the companions. History and *mutawatir* and near *mutawatir* traditions clearly show that, in the troubles and discords which

started soon after the Apostle, the companions themselves dealt with each other in this same way. In their own eyes they were treading the path of the discord and difference mentioned in these verses. And none of them claimed that he was above any difference on account of *'ismah* (sinlessness) or good tidings given to him by the Apostle, or *ijtihad*, nor did anyone say that he was not included in these verses. (We do not include *Ahlu'l-bayt* of the Prophet in the term 'companion'.)

More details of this difference is beyond the scope of this book.

al-Mufid narrates in his *al-Amali* from Abu Basir that he said: "I heard Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) say: 'Allah, Great is His name, was ever Omniscient in His person and there was nothing to be known; and He was ever Omnipotent in His person and there was nothing to be ordained.' I said: 'May I be your ransom! Was He then ever Speaking?' He said: 'Speech is created.' There was Allah and He was not speaking, then He created speech."

Safwan ibn Yahya said: "Abu Qurrah, the traditionalist, asked ar-Rida (a.s.) and said: 'Tell me, may I be your ransom! About Allah's speaking to Musa.' He (the Imam) said: 'Allah knows better in which language He spoke to him.' Abu Qurrah caught his own tongue and said: 'I am asking you about this tongue.' Thereupon Abu'l-Hasan (a.s.) said: 'Glorified is Allah from what you say! And may Allah protect you (from thinking) that He might resemble His creatures or might speak like they speak; rather, He, Glorified be He, there is nothing like Him, nor there is any speaker or doer like Him.' (Abu Qurrah) said: 'How?' (The Imam) said: 'The speech of Allah with His creature is not like the speech of a creature with another creature; and He does not speak with a mouth and tongue; rather He says to it: 'Be' and it is. It was by His will He addressed (His) command and prohibition to Musa without any meditation in His Self.'" (*al-Ihtijaj*)

'Ali (a.s.) said in a sermon: "Speaking, not by meditation, Wishing, not by contemplation." (*Nahju'l-balaghah*)

In the same book, he ('Ali - a.s.) says, *inter alia*, in another sermon: "He Who spoke to Musa (directly) speaking, and showed him of His great signs, without limbs and organs and without implements, sound or uvula."

The author says: The traditions narrated from the Imams of *Ahlu'l-bayt* with this meaning are numerous, and all of them show that the speech of Allah (to use the terminology of the Qur'an and *sunnah*) is an attribute of action, and not an attribute of Person.

About the Speech of Allah

Philosophers point out that when a speaker conveys his thought to the mind of a hearer, by means of words, it is popularly called speech and talk, and its net result is that the hearer understands and the speaker is understood. The reality of speech is "what conveys an idea to the other party"; rather particulars -the medium of words, and their being produced by the passage 'of air through the larynx, mouth, and lips and their entering the ears of the hearer - are inconsequential; they are not essential to the reality of speech. Whatever describes the intended meaning is speech; even the movement of your hand to call someone to your side or to indicate to him to sit down, etc. is your speech, albeit without your uttering a single word.

Taking this as their basis, the philosophers say: the things found in the universe depend on their causes for their existence and for their characteristics. By their existence they pronounce the existence of their causes; and by their characteristics and faculties they show the characteristics and faculties of their causes. Therefore, every "effect" is a speech for its cause, and by this speech that cause talks

about its own perfection.

And all existing things taken separately or jointly, and their aggregate, the universe, are, in this way, the speech of God; by this speech, God describes His perfect attributes which are otherwise hidden from us. Allâh is the Creator of the universe, and the universe is His creation. In the same manner, He speaks via the medium of the universe about His names and attributes, and the universe is His speech.

They go even further: They say that deep thinking leads one to the belief that the ultimate "speech" is God Himself. We say that the universe leads to the Creator; but leading is a quality of existence and nothing in the universe exists on its own. Every thing exists because God has given it existence. When a thing leads to the Creator, it does so by the existence and qualities given to it by the Creator. In other words, it is the Creator Himself Who leads to Himself through His creation. In the same way, it is He Himself Who leads to His creation. He Himself leads us to Himself; in this sense ' He is the speech and the Speaker and the meaning; and at this stage, we may say that His speech is His person or an attribute of His person. Also, He Himself, by creating the universe, leads us to His power and wisdom; the universe is, thus, His speech to lead us to the Creator; and in this sense, speech (i.e., the universe) is an attribute of His action.

The author says: Quite apart from the question of the correctness of this interpretation, the words of the Qur'ân do not support it.

Speech, as mentioned in the Qur'ân and *sunnah*, is something different from the Speaker and the hearer. Allâh says: *Among them are some to whom Allâh spoke* (2: 253); *and Allâh spoke to Musâ (directly) speaking* (4:164); *and Allah said: "O 'Isa'!"* (3:55); *and We said: '10 Adam!-* (2:35); *Surely We have revealed to you* (4:163); *informed me the All-knowing, the All-aware* (66:3); there are numerous similar verses. Obviously, the speech or talk mentioned in them cannot mean the Person of Allâh by any stretch of imagination.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSE 255

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ 2:255

2:255 *ALLAH is He besides Whom there is no god, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist; slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep; whatever is the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His Permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything of His Knowledge except what He pleases; His Chair (Knowledge) extends over the heavens and the earth; and the preservation of them both tires Him not; and He is the Most High, the Great.*

Commentary

QUR'AN: Allah is He besides Whom there is no god, the Everliving, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist:

In the chapter of the Opening, some explanation was given of the name, "Allah", and it was mentioned that it ultimately means "The Being Who concentrates in Himself all the attributes of perfection"; it makes no difference whether it is derived from *alaha 'r-rajul* (the man was bewildered; yearned for) or from *alaha* (worshipped). "He besides Whom there is no god": It has been explained under verse 2:163. Its literal translation is, "there is no god except He." It shows that other deities worshipped besides Allah, in fact have no existence at all.

"Ever-living": "*al-hayy*" is on a paradigm which denotes perpetuity; the word, therefore, means not only living but Ever-living. Man, in the very beginning, found out that there were two kinds of things around him: first, those things whose condition do not change as long as they exist, like stones and other such materials; second, those which go on changing, like trees, animals and man himself. He also found that after sometimes such things start to deteriorate, and even lose consciousness; still they exist: until at a certain point when their existence come to an end. Thus he realized that there was something else, besides the senses, which keeps one alive and which is the source of all the senses and their perceptions. He called it "life", and its absence was named "death." It is life which is the source of knowledge (perception) and power.

Allah has mentioned this life in many places as an accepted fact: *Know that Allah gives life to the earth after its death (29:17); And among His signs is this, that you see the earth still, but when We send down on it the water, it stirs and swells; most surely He who gives it life is the Giver of life to the dead (41:39); Neither are the living and the dead alike (35:22); We have made of water every thing living (21:30).* These verses describe all three kinds of living things, the vegetable, the animal and the human being.

Likewise, Allah describes various types of life; ... *and are pleased with the world's life and are content with it...* (10:7); *They shall say: "Our Lord! twice didst Thou make us subject to death and*

*twice hast Thou given us life... " (40:11), The two lives referred to in this verse are the life of *al-barzakh* = the period after death in this world and before the Day of Resurrection) and the life on the Day of Resurrection. Thus, there are various types of life, as there are various types of living things.*

Although Allah mentions the life of this world as an accepted fact, in various other verses of the Qur'an He describes it as an unsound, imperfect and insignificant thing, as He says: ... *this world's life is nothing compared with hereafter but (only a) means*(13:26); ... *coveting the (transitory) goods of this world's life...* (4:94); ... *desiring the adornments of this world's life...* (18:28); *And this world's life is naught but a play and an idle sport...* (6:32); ... *and this world's life is naught but means of deception* (57:20). So these are the attributes used for this world's life. It is a means, and a means is sought to obtain an end and to reach a goal, it is not an end in itself. It is a transitory thing, and transitory things go away soon. It is an adornment, and an adornment is used to attract eyes towards the things adorned: in other words, what catches the eyes is not the real thing, and the real thing does not attract the eyes. It is a play, and a play keeps you oblivious of the really important responsibilities. It is a vain sport, and a vain sport is indulged in for imaginary, not real, reasons. And it is a means of deception, and such a thing deceives man.

A comprehensive verse, which also explains the abovementioned ones, is the following:

And this life of the world is nothing but a sport and a play; and as for the next abode, the most surely is the life - did they but know! (29:64).

The life of this world, in comparison to the life hereafter is not a real life, as the above-mentioned verse shows. It is transitory, while the life hereafter is the real life, because that life will not end; death will not reach it. Allah says: ... *in security; they shall not taste therein death except the first death* (44:55-56); *They shall have therein what they wish and with Us is more yet* (50:35).

Thus, there will be no death in the life hereafter, and there shall be no deficiency in that life nor there shall be any annoyance for them. But the first factor, that is, security is the basic characteristic of that real life.

The life hereafter, therefore, is the real life because there is no death in it; and, as Allah Himself has declared in many other verses, it is He Who controls it. Obviously, the life hereafter is also dependent and not independent. It has not got this characteristic of eternity by itself; it is a gift given to it by God.

Going a step further, it will be realized that the real life is only that which 'cannot' be overtaken by death. The life hereafter 'will not' be overtaken by death; but it 'can' be overtaken, if God so pleases. Therefore, that also is not "real" life. Real life is that in which non-existence at any stage is impossible; which is essential being; in other words, where life is not acquired by the person, but the person is life itself and life is the person himself. Allah says: *and rely on the Ever-living Who dies not* (25:58). Thus, the only real life is Divine Life, Essential Being.

The above discourse shows that the exclusiveness in the verse: *He is the Living, there is no god but He*(40:65) is real, not relative: In reality, He is the only Living One, because real life, unconquered by death or deterioration, is His alone.

In the verse under discussion, as in a similar verse: *Allah there is no god but He, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting...* (3:2), the word "Allah" is the subject, "there is no god but He" is its first predicate, "the Ever-living" is the second and "the Self-subsisting ... " the third predicate. Accordingly, the meaning would be "Allah is the Ever-living... "; and life would be reserved for Allah only; others would get life only when He bestows it on them.

"*al-Qayyum*" (the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist) is on the paradigm of *fay 'ul* from the verb *al-qiyam* to stand); as is *al-qayyam* on the paradigm *offay'al*, in the same meaning. It is a

paradigm which is used to show the maximum degree of a quality. The original meaning of the verb (to stand) has, by association, been extended and now it is used for protecting a thing, accomplishing a task and managing it, bringing up a thing, looking after it and having power over it. Allah clearly said that He "stands" with the affairs of His creation, that is, watches it, looks after it and brings it up and has all power over it. He says: *Is it He then who stands over (i.e., watches) event soul as to what it earns?* (13:33). Another verse is more comprehensive: *Allah bears witness that there is no god but He* (and so do the angels and those possessed of knowledge), *standing with (maintaining) justice, there is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise* (3:18). He maintains His creation with justice. He does not give and does not withhold but with justice - and existence is nothing except giving and withholding. He gives to everything what it deserves. Lastly, He declares that this maintaining with justice is according to His two great names, the Mighty, the Wise: by His Might He maintains every thing; and by His Wisdom He does justice to it.

Allah is the origin of every thing. Existence as well as all attributes, qualities and the effects of every thing begin from Him. All other "origins" originates from Him. He stands over every thing in the real and comprehensive sense of "standing", as explained above. There is no weakness or flaw in His "standing": and other things cannot stand except by Him. This attribute is reserved for Him in both ways: "Standing" cannot be found except in Allah, and Allah is never anything but standing. The former is understood by the syntax of the sentence: Allah is the "Standing." The latter is understood by the next sentence: "Slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep."

This discourse leads us to believe that the name *al-qayyum* (The Standing) is the basis for all the divine names which refer to His attributes of action in any way, like the Creator, the Sustainer, the Originator, the Resurrector, the Bestowal of life, the Giver of death, the Forgiver, the Compassionate, the Affectionate and so on.

QUR'AN: *Slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep:*

"as-Sinah" means drowsiness, *"an-nawm"* is sleep, the inert condition in which the muscles are relaxed and the consciousness suppressed by natural factors in the body of an animal or a human being. *"ar-Ru'ya"* (dream) is something else; it is the vision which passes through the mind in sleep.

A criticism has been leveled against this sentence that is contrary to the sequence demanded by rhetoric: when two things are thus mentioned in an affirmative sentence the weaker point is mentioned first and then one progress to the stronger one; for example, we say, "Zayd can carry a load of fifty kilogram, even a hundred." But in a negative sentence the sequence is reversed: it goes from stronger to weaker point: for example, "he cannot carry a load of a hundred kilogram, let alone fifty "he does not spend hundreds of pounds on himself, let alone tens." According to this rule, as the sentence here is negative, it should have been written thus: "Sleep does not overtake Him nor slumber."

REPLY: The sequence does not always follow the affirmativeness or negativeness of the sentence. Look, for example. as the sentence, "he is too weak to carry a load of twenty kilogram or even ten." It is an affirmative sentence, and still the stronger point comes first. It would be against the norms of rhetoric, if the weaker point, that is. 10 kilogram were mentioned first. In fact. the only correct procedure is to look at the context and see what it demands. Now, look at this Qur'anic sentence. Sleep is more contrary to the attribute of "Standing" in comparison to slumber. Therefore, eloquence demanded that, first, slumber he denied, and then the stronger point, sleep, be negated. The meaning, thus will be: The weaker factor (slumber) has no effect on His power and standing, nor does even the stronger one (sleep).

QUR'AN: *Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His, who is he that can intercede with Him but by His Permission?*

The perfect and comprehensive "Standing" of Allah means that He owns, in real ownership, the heavens and the earth and what is in them. That is why His attribute of "Standing" is followed here by a declaration of that ownership. It was for the same reason that the attribute of "Standing" was joined with the declaration of His Oneness: His Oneness would not be complete if He were not "Standing."

There are two sentences here, both of which are followed by other sentences to remove chances of misunderstandings. The sentence, "whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His", is followed by the sentence, "who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission?" And the next sentence, "He knows what is before them and what is behind them", is followed by the words, "and they cannot comprehend anything of His Knowledge except what He pleases."

"Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His": Allah owns everything, and has authority over them all. Things and all their attributes, properties and traits exist because of God and by Him. The verse, from the word "the Self-subsisting" up to this sentence, proves that the total authority is Allah's alone. There is no work connected with anything, right from its existence up to its ultimate end, that is not done by Him and does not proceed from Him.

On realizing this eternal truth, one might wonder about the system of "cause-and-effect" prevalent in this world. What is the significance of these causes? How could they have any influence on any effect when nothing has any effect or power except Allah?

The sentence, "who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission?" answers this speculation. These causes are intermediaries in such affairs. In other words, they are intercessors who cause the bringing of a thing or effect into being, by the permission of Allah. Intercession means being an intermediary in bringing about a good or averting an evil. There is no doubt that an intercessor has some influence on the affairs of the thing for which he intercedes. Such influence could be contrary to the complete authority and total sovereignty of Allah, had it not been based on the permission of Allah Himself. But every cause draws its effectiveness only from the decree of Allah Himself. There is no cause and no instrument which is independent of the will of Allah. Every cause is a cause, because Allah has made it so. Therefore, whatever effect and influence it has on anything is in fact done by Allah. Ultimately, there is no authority except that of Allah, and no "standing" except His.

As already explained, intercession means being an intermediary in the world of cause and effect - it may be a creative intercession, that is, being an intermediary cause of creation; or a legislative intercession, that is, interceding in the award of recompense on the Day of Judgment, as is clearly mentioned in the Qur'an and *sunnah* (as was described in the commentary on verse 2:48). The sentence, "who is he that can intercede with Him ... " is preceded by a description of His "Standing" and total authority; these two attributes cover His power and authority in both creation and legislation. Therefore, the intercession mentioned in this sentence must cover both creative and legislative intercessions.

The context of this verse, so far as intercession is concerned, is like the following verses: *Surely your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods, and He is firmly established on the 'Arsh (Throne) regulating the affair; there is no intercessor except after His permission; this is Allah, your Lord; therefore worship Him; will you not then ponder? (10:3); Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six periods, and He is firmly established on the 'Arsh(Throne); you have not besides Him any guardian or any intercessor; will you not then ponder? (32:4)*. It was described in the topic of intercession that it includes creative causation as well as legislative intercession. Every cause intercedes with Allah for its effect, and becomes a medium for bestowing the grace of existence on it, by adhering to

the divine attributes of grace and mercy. The system of "cause-and-effect" is found in intercession as well as in prayer and invocation. Allah says: *All those who are in the heavens and the earth do beseech Him; every day He is in a (new) splendor (55:29); And He gave you of all that you ask Him (14:34)*. This aspect has been described in the commentary on verse 2:186.

QUR'AN: *He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases:*

The sentence comes after the topic of intercession, and in its context it is like the following verses: *Nay! They are honored servants; they do not precede Him in speech and (only) according to His commandment do they act. He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they do not intercede except for him whom He approves, and for fear of Him they tremble (21:26-28)*.

Apparently, the pronouns of the third person plural in the verse under discussion refer to the intercessors, who are implied in the preceding sentence. To say that "He knows what is before them and what is behind them" is to say that He encompasses them completely. He has given them permission to intercede: but it does not mean that they can do anything without His prior permission. Nor may others take undue advantage of that intercession.

The following two verses throw light on the same subject: *And we do not come down but by the command of your Lord; His is whatever is before us and whatever is behind us and whatever is between these, and your Lord is not forgetful (19:64); The Knower of the unseen! So He does not reveal His secret to any, except to him whom He chooses of an apostle; for surely He makes a guard to march before him and after him, so that He may know that they have indeed delivered the messages of their Lord, and He encompasses what is with them and He takes account of every thing (72:26-28)*. These two verses show that Allah encompasses the angels and the prophets, so that they cannot do anything without His permission; they cannot descend unless bidden to do so, and cannot deliver except what He wishes them to deliver. It may be inferred that "what is before them" refers to what is seen by them; and "what is behind them" to what is not seen by them and is far away from them. In other words, the two phrases refer to the seen and the unseen. In short, the sentence says that Allah knows very well what is present with them and what is yet to come to them; and then the talk is completed by the words, "and they cannot comprehend any thing out of His knowledge except what He pleases." He knows them and encompasses what they know, but they cannot comprehend His knowledge except what He pleases.

We have proved that the intercessor, in this verse, means both creative causes and legislative interceders. The pronouns used in three places in this verse are those of the third person plural, masculine gender, normally used for rational beings. Someone might think that these pronouns could not be used for creative causes (as these causes are not "people" or rational beings). It is not so. Intercession, interceding, glorifying the Creator and offering thanks to Him are normally the acts of rational beings; and for this reason the Qur'an mostly uses such pronouns even for inert or lifeless things, when it declares them

to perform such deeds. Allah says: *... and there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification (17:44); Then He directed Himself to the heaven and it was vapor, so He said to it and to the earth; Come both willing or unwillingly. They both said: We come willingly(41:11)*. In both verses the pronouns of rational beings have been used for "everything" and for the heaven and the earth. There are many similar verses.

The sentence, "and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases", shows total authority and perfect management. Perfect management demands that the subordinate should not know what is to happen next; otherwise, he might try to wriggle out of a

forthcoming unpleasant situation, and the plan of the manager might be put in disorder. It is easy to see in the light of the above discussion the import of this sentence: it wants to show that the management of all affairs is in the hands of Allah only, and it is done by His knowledge and by His control of the intermediary causes which He Himself has created. So far as these intermediary causes are concerned (and especially those with life and intellect), their effectiveness and their knowledge is derived from His knowledge, will and pleasure - and ultimately is a reflection of divine knowledge and power. And none of them can proceed against the will and decree of Allah in any way.

The sentence, moreover, shows that knowledge (not "the thing known") is of Allah only. No creature has any knowledge except what Allah is pleased to bestow upon him. It is the same as when Allah has said that power, honor and life belongs to Him only. For example: ... *and O that those who are unjust could see, when they see the chastisement, that the power is wholly Allah's, and that Allah is severe in requiting (evil) (2:165); Do they seek honor from them? Then surely all honor is for Allah (4:139); He is the Living, there is no god but He (40:65).* The following verses also may be brought as evidence that knowledge belongs to Allah only: *surely He is the Knowing, the Wise (12:83); and Allah knows while you do not know (3:66).* There are many other verses of the same meaning.

The verb of knowledge in the preceding sentence has been changed to the verb of comprehension here and it has raised the verse to a very high plane of eloquence.

QUR'AN: *His Chair (knowledge) extends over the heavens and the earth:*

"al-Kursi" means chair. Metaphorically it sometimes is used for kingdom; thus the chair of king means the sphere of his authority and the region under his sovereignty.

The preceding sentences show that the whole universe belongs to Allah and is encompassed by His knowledge. This sentence also says that His "Chair" extends over the whole universe. It is reasonable to believe that the extension of the "Chair" refers to all-encompassing divine authority. The "Chair", thus, would mean the divine position by which the heavens and the earth are maintained, possessed, managed and known. Ultimately, the "Chair" would be a degree of divine knowledge. And extension of the chair would mean maintenance and preservation of everything that is in the heavens and in the earth, with all its characteristics; and that is why the sentence is followed by the words, "and the preservation of them both tires Him not."

QUR'AN: *"and the preservation of them both tires Him not, and He is the Most High, the Great":*

"al-Awd" means to tire, to weigh down, to depress. Although, the objective pronoun after the verb "tires" is generally taken to refer to "Allah" (as is seen in the translation), equally correctly it may be taken to refer to the "Chair" and then it would be translated as "tires it not." The declaration at the end of the verse that 'the preservation of the heavens and the earth tires Him not' is befitting to its beginning: "Slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep."

This verse, in short, says that there is no god except Allah, for Him is Life and to Him belongs the attribute of *al-qayyumiyyah* (Standing, Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist), in its unrestricted sense without any weakness or defect. That is why the verse ends on the words, "and He is Most High, the Great." He is Most High: the hands of creatures cannot reach Him and can in no way weaken His authority or enfeeble His being. He is Great: the great number of the creatures does not overwhelm Him, and the magnitude of the heavens and the earths does not tire Him.

This sentence also shows that eminence and greatness in their true sense are for Allah only. This restriction is real, because eminence and greatness are parts of perfection, and every perfection in its real sense is found in Allah only. Also, the restriction may have been used to strengthen the claim that

the eminence and greatness are reserved for Allah only - the heavens and the earth are insignificant before His majesty and greatness.

Traditions

Al-'Ayyashi narrates in his *at-Tafsir* from as-Sadiq (a.s.) "Abu Dhaka said: 'O Messenger of Allah! What is the best of that which has been revealed to you?' He said: 'The verse of the "Chair." The seven heavens and the seven earths in the "Chair" are but like a ring thrown in a vast open space.' Then he said: 'And surely the excellence of *al-'Arsh* (the Throne) over the chair is like that of the open space over the ring.'"

The author says: as-Suyuti has quoted the first part of this tradition in *ad-Durru'l-manthur* from Ibn Rahwayh (in his *al-Musnad*) who has narrated it from 'Awf ibn Malik from Abu Dhaka; and also he has quoted Ahmad, Ibnu 'd-Daris and al-Hakim (who said that it is correct) and al-Bayhaqi (in his *Shu'abu'l-'iman*) who have narrated it from Abu Dharr.

Ahmad and at-Tabarani have narrated from Abu Amamah who said: "I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! Which (verse) revealed to you is the greatest?' He said: 'Allah is He besides Whom there is no god, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist; the verse of the Chair.'" (*ad-Durru'l-manthur*)

The author says: as-Suyuti has also narrated the same thing through al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (in his *Tarikh*) from Anas from the Prophet.

In the same book he quotes ad-Darimi who has narrated from Ayfa' ibn 'Abdullah al-Kala'i that he said: "A man said: 'O Messenger of Allah! Which verse in the Book of Allah is the greatest?' He said: 'The verse of the Chair; *Allah is He besides Whom there is no god, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist...* '"

The author says: This verse was named "the verse of the Chair" in the early period of Islam during the lifetime of the Prophet; and was thus described by the Prophet himself as the traditions quoted from him and the Imams of *Ahlu'l-bayt* and the companions prove. That this verse was given a special name shows how much importance was attached to it. It could only be because of the highest nobility of its meaning and the elegance and grace of its style. It establishes the pristine belief of the Oneness of God (*Allah is He besides Whom there is no god*), and then goes on to the attribute of "standing" which is the foundation of all His names which describe His attributes of action. Then it gives details of those attributes in all small and big things and affairs of the universe, showing that whatever emanates from His authority is a part of that authority. It is because of these fine points that the traditions have called it "the greatest verse of the Qur'an." It deals in detail with various aspects of monotheism and divine authority. Of course, there are some other verses which deal with this subject, for example; *Allah is He besides Whom there is no god; His are the very best names* (20:8). But it lacks the details which have been given in this verse of the Chair. It is for this reason that some traditions have said that the verse of the Chair is the chief of all the verses of the Qur'an. See for the proof the tradition narrated in *ad-Durrul-manthur* from Abu Hurayrah from the Prophet. Some other traditions say: Every thing has a summit, and the summit of the Qur'an is the verse of the Chair. It has been narrated in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from 'Abdullah ibn Sinan from as-Sadiq (a.s.).

at-Tusi has narrated in his *al-Amali*, through his chains from Abu Amamah al-Bahili that he heard 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) say: "I do not think that a man who enters into Islam on attaining wisdom, or was born in Islam (i.e., in a Muslim family) should pass a night's darkness... " (At this juncture Abu

Amamah interrupted by asking, "and what is the meaning of a night's darkness?" 'Ali [a.s.] said: "the whole night") "until he recites this verse: *Allah is He besides Whom there is no god...* ";and he recited the complete verse up to the end: *and the preservation of them both tires Him not; and He is the Most High, the Great.* Then he said: "If you but knew what it is (or, as another version says, "what is in it") you would not leave it on any condition. Surely, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said, 'I have been given the verse of the Chair from the treasure (that is) below *al-'Arsh* (the Throne); and no prophet before me was given it.'" Then 'Ali (a.s.) continued: "I have not spent a single night, since I heard it from the Messenger of Allah, without reciting it ... "

The author says: This has been narrated in *ad-Durrulmanthur* quoting 'Ubayd, Ibn Abi Shaybah, ad-Darimi, Muhammad ibn Nasr, Ibnu 'd-Darts and ad-Daylami, all from 'Ali (a.s.). There is a multitude of traditions, from both Sunni and Shiite sources, about the excellence of this verse. The tradition of the Prophet quoted in this tradition ("I have been given the verse of the Chair from below the Throne") has been narrated in *adDurrul-manthur* on the authority of al-Bukhari (in his *at-Tarikh*) and Ibnu 'd-Daris from the Prophet. It may be inferred from it that the Chair is below *al-Arsh* and is encompassed by it. We shall describe it later.

Zurarah said: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) about the words of Allah: *His Chair extends over the heavens and the earth* - whether the heavens and the earth encompass the Chair or the Chair extends over the heavens and the earth? He said: 'Verily, every thing is in the Chair.'" (*al-Kafi*)

The author says: In many traditions the same point has been emphasized in reply to similar questions. This question looks strange, because nobody has ever recited the verse in a way which could justify such confusion. Apparently, the questions were based not on the recital of the Qur'an but on the common understanding that the Chair was a particular body kept over the heavens or over the seventh heaven (i.e. above the material world), and from there the affairs of the material world were managed. That being the picture of the Chair in their minds, it was reasonable to suppose that the heavens and the earth encompassed the Chair because it was placed over the heavens as a wooden or iron chair is placed over a floor. And with this background it would seem more appropriate to say that the heavens and the earth encompassed the Chair. And that gave rise to the question as to why Allah, instead, said: "His Chair extends over the heavens and the earth?" A question of the same type was asked about the *Arsh* and the reply was given that the extension (or encompassing) was not as a material thing encompasses another material thing.

Hafs ibn al-Ghiyath said: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) about the words of Allah: *His Chair extends over the heavens and the earth.* He said: 'His knowledge.'" (*Ma'ani'l-akhbar*)

There is another tradition in the same book from the same Imam about this verse which says: "The heavens and the earth and whatever is between them is in the Chair, and the Throne is that knowledge which no one can measure."

The author says: These two traditions show that the Chair is one of the levels of the knowledge of Allah. Many other traditions supports this interpretation.

As will be explained later, there exists a level of knowledge which is not limited or measured. In other words, there is a world, on a higher plane than ours, whose constituents are not bound by material dimensions. They exist and at the same time are known to Allah. And that knowledge also is unlimited. God willing, we shall describe it in detail when commenting on the verse 10:61: ... *and there does not lie concealed from your Lord the weight of an atom in the earth or in the heaven, nor any thing than that nor greater, but it is in a clear book.* This boundless knowledge has been referred to in the tradition of the Imam in these words, "and the *Arsh* is that knowledge which no one can measure." The import of the tradition is not to show the great number of the known things, because

number is not unlimited and anything which is created is finite. What the tradition wants to say is that the limitations and restrictions of this material world are not found in that world. Existence, on that level, is perfect and the conditions, dimensions and distinctions of this material world are not found there. It is as Allah says: *And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure (15:21).*

When those existing things are known by unlimited knowledge, that is, when they exist without any limitation attached to them, that knowledge is called *al-Arsh* (The Throne); and when they exist in the world of limitations and known with those limitations, that knowledge is called *al-Kursi* (The Chair)

At this stage we may probably say that the words, "He knows what is before them and what is behind them" allude to this plane of knowledge. What is before them (i.e. the future) and what is behind them (i.e. the past) is not what is with them (i.e. the present). It refers to a plane where past, present, and future lose their limitations of time, and are all equally present.

Hannan said: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) about the Throne and the Chair. He replied: 'Verily, the Throne has many diverse attributes. Allah uses in the Qur'an various adjectives to describe its various aspects. He says: *the Lord of the great Throne (9:129)*. It means; Lord of the great kingdom or authority. And He says: *The Beneficent (God) on the Throne is firm (20:5)*. It means that He is firm in His kingdom. And it is the knowledge of the "how" of the things. Also, the Throne, although together with it, is distinct from the Chair; because they are two of the greatest doors of the unseen, and they both are unseen. And they are together in the unseen, because the Chair is the manifest door of the unseen, from which appears creation and from which all the things come. And the Throne is the concealed door of the unseen in which is found the knowledge of the states, conditions and existence; of measure and limit; of will and intention; as well as the knowledge of words, actions and omissions, and the knowledge of the beginning and the return. Thus, the two are two gates of knowledge joined together, because the dominion of the Throne is other than the dominion of the Chair, and its (the Throne's) knowledge is more hidden than the knowledge of the Chair. That is why Allah said, "the Lord of the great Throne"; that is, its attribute is greater than that of the Chair, and both are joined in it." (Hannan says) "I said: 'May I be your ransom, then why did it become associated with the Chair in excellence?' He (the Imam) said: It was associated with it because the knowledge of the state and condition is found in it. And in it are found the manifest doors of *al-bada'* (the decree hidden from other); as well as its reality and the dimensions of its joining and separating. Therefore, they are two neighbors, one of which contains the other in itself. And by similitude are turned those who know, and so that they may offer proof for the truth of their claims. Because He chooses especially whom He pleases for His mercy, and He is the Mighty, the Powerful.'" (at-*Tawhid*)

The author says: The words of the tradition, "the Chair is the manifest door of the unseen", may be understood in the light of the short explanation given earlier. The level of the knowledge of measured things is nearer to our material world than infinite knowledge which has no limits. Further explanation will be given under verse 7:54: *Surely your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods of time, and He is firm on the Throne.* "And by similitude are turned those who know": It is an indication that the words, throne, chair and similar other expressions, are similitude which have been given to people for their understanding, and only those who have knowledge understand this.

as-Sadiq (as.) said, *inter alia*, in a tradition: "Every thing which Allah has created is in the receptacle of the Chair, except His Throne, because that is too great for the Chair to encompass." (*al-Ihtijaj*)

The author says: Its meaning may be understood from the earlier discourse. And it is in conformity with other traditions. Contrary to it there is a tradition which says that the Throne is that knowledge which Allah gave to His prophets and apostles and the Chair is that knowledge which no one was made aware of. It has been narrated by as-Saduq through Mufaddal from as-Sadiq (a.s.). But in view of all other traditions, it can only be surmised that the narrator was confused and changed the names, Throne and Chair, from their proper places. If this is not accepted then the tradition will have to be discarded like the one that is attributed to Zaynab al-'Attarah.

al-'Ayyashi narrates in his *at-Tafsir* from 'Ali (a.s.) that he said: "Verily the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them is created in the hollow of the Chair; and it has four angels who bear it by the order of Allah."

The author says: as-Saduq has narrated it from 'Ali (a. s.) through Asbagh ibn Nubatah. It is the only tradition narrated from *Ahlu'l-bayt* which says that there are angels who bear the Chair. But other traditions mention such bearers only for the Throne; and it is in conformity with the Book of Allah, as He says: *Those who bear the Throne and those around it celebrate the praise of their Lord... (40:7); and above them eight shall bear on that day the Throne of your Lord (69:17)*. It may be said that the Chair is somewhat joined with the Throne, as a manifest side of a thing is joined with its hidden side; and in this way the bearers of one may be called the bearers of the other.

al-'Ayyashi narrates in his *at-Tafsir* from Mu'awiyah ibn 'Ammar that he asked as-Sadiq (a.s.) about (the verse), *Who is it that can intercede with Him but by His permission?* He said: "We are those intercessors."

The author says: It has also been narrated by al-Barqi in *al-Mahasin*. *You* know that the intercession in this verse is common to creative and the legislative interceding, and therefore includes the intercession of the Prophet and the Imams. This tradition, thus, gives an example of the intercessors.

URAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 256-257

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنِ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ 2:256
 اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَاؤُهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُم مِّنَ النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ 2:257

2:256 *There is no compulsion in the religion; truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error; therefore, whoever disbelieves the rebels (false deities) and believes in Allah, he indeed has laid hold on the strongest handle, for which there is no break off; and Allah is Hearing, Knowing.*
 2:257 *Allah is the Guardian of those who believe; He brings them out of the darkness into the light; and (as to) those who disbelieve their guardians are the rebels, they take them out of the light into the darkness. They are the inmates of the Fire, in it they shall abide.*

Commentary

QUR'AN: *There is no compulsion in the religion; truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error:*

"*al-Ikrah*" means to compel someone to a work without his willingness. "*ar-Rushd*" is to get at the reality of an affair; to reach the right path. "*al-Ghayy*" is its opposite. These two words are more general than "*al-huda*" (to find the path which leads to the destination) and "*ad-dalal*" (not to find such path) respectively. Obviously, when the word "*ar-rushd*" is used for reaching the right path it is done in the way of applying a general word for a particular example: a walker reaches reality when he travels on the right path. Thus the words "*ar-rushd*" and "*al-huda*" are made for two different meanings, but one is used for the other because of a special associations. Allah says: ... *then if you find in them maturity of intellect: rushdan*" (4:6); *And certainly We gave to Ibrahim his rectitude: rushdahu*" before (21:51).

The same applies to "*al-ghayy*" and "*ad-dalal*". That is why we have mentioned before that "*ad-dalal*" is to deviate from the right path but with knowing and remembering the goal and destination; while "*al-ghayy*" is to deviate from the right path without even remembering the goal and destination - without knowing what one wants and where one wants to go.

"There is no compulsion in the religion" negates and disapproves compulsion and coercion in religion. Religion is a set of truths which are believed in, and some of them are then acted upon. In short, religion is belief and faith, it is a matter of conscience, and such a thing cannot, be created by coercion and compulsion. One may force someone to do a certain physical action against his will but he cannot be forced to believe against his will. Belief follows reason and understanding; and nothing but reason and understanding can create it.

"There is no compulsion in religion" may be treated as a bit of information or a piece of legislation. If it is information of a creative decree, it will give rise to a legislative order that compulsion should

not be used in matters of belief and faith. And if it is an order in the form of information then the meaning is clear. Apparently, this alternative is more correct, because the next sentence (truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error") gives the reason for this legislation. And this prohibition of compulsion for religion is based on a factor of creation: the fact that compulsion can influence physical action but not matters connected with the heart and conscience.

Truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error": As mentioned above, it gives the reason for the prohibition of compulsion. A wise person resorts to compulsion only when the truth of the order cannot be explained, either because the person so coerced has no capacity to understand it or for some other reasons. But there is no need for compulsion in an important matter whose advantages and disadvantages are clearly defined and the reward and punishment of accepting and rejecting well-explained. A man, in such a clear matter, should be free to choose his course of action himself - whether he takes it or rejects it, whether he wants the rewards of obedience or is prepared to take the punishment. The realities of religion have been explained, and its path well-laid; the divine revelation and prophetic explanation have illuminated this highway to the utmost degree. It has now been made clear that the religion is truth, that the only right thing is to accept it and follow it; and that if one deviates from this road he will fall in perdition. Why should anyone, after all these clarifications, compel others to follow the religion?

It is one of the verses that show that Islam is not based on the sword and killing, and that it does not allow Muslims to compel or coerce others to accept Islam. It is contrary to the view held by many Muslims and non-Muslims alike that Islam is the religion of the sword. They bring as their evidence the legislation of *jihād* which is one of the pillars of Islam.

We have already clarified, while writing the commentary on the verses of fighting, that the fighting ordained by Islam is not for the purpose of material advancement nor for spreading the religion by force. It was ordained only for reviving the truth and defending the most precious treasure of nature - the faith of monotheism. Where monotheism is accepted by the people - even if they remain Jew or Christian - Islam does not fight with them. Therefore, the objection arises from clouded thinking.

The verse: "There is no compulsion in the religion", is not abrogated by the verse of the sword, although some writers think so. The order is followed by its reason: "truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error." Such an order cannot be cancelled unless and until its reason is also abrogated. So long as the reason is valid the rule must remain valid. There is no need to emphasize that the verse of the sword cannot negate the clear distinction of the right way from error. For example, the verses: ... *and kill them wherever you find them...* (4:89) and: *And fight in the way of Allah...* (2:190), have no effect whatsoever on the clear distinction of truth from falsehood; and therefore they cannot abrogate an order based on that distinction.

In other words, this order is based on the fact that the right way is made clearly distinct from error. And this distinction is as valid after the revelation of the verses of fighting as it was before that. And as the cause is not changed, the effect, that is, the said order, cannot be changed or cancelled.

QUR'AN: *Therefore, whoever disbelieves in the rebels (false deities) and believes in Allah, he indeed has laid hold on the strongest handle, for which there is no break off:*

"*at-Taghut*" means rebellion and transgression. This paradigm conveys an intensification of the meaning of the root like *al-malakut* (great kingdom) and *al-jabarut* (great power). *at-Taghut* is used for the agents and causes of rebellion and transgression like false deities and idols, satans, jinn and wrong leaders among the human beings; and, in short, everyone who is followed without the permission of Allah. This word is common for masculine and feminine genders, as well as for singular, dual and plural numbers.

In this sentence, disbelief in the rebels has been mentioned before belief in Allah. This sequence keeps in view the next sentence (*he indeed has laid hold on the strongest handle*). When one wants to lay one's hold on a thing, one has to discard all other things before that. In other words, one has first to leave unwanted things, then comes the stage of holding fast to the desired thing. Therefore, the verse mentioned first the rejection (of the rebels) and then the belief (in Allah). "*al-Istimsak*" means to hold fast: "*al-'urwah*" notes that part of thing which is made to hold it by, like the handle of a bucket, or of a pot. Also, this word is used for evergreen plants and trees. Its root meaning is attachment; it is said '*arahu andi'tarahu* both of which mean was attached to him."

The sentence, *he indeed has laid hold on the strongest handle*", is based on allegory. It conveys the idea that belief in Allah has the same relation with eternal bliss that a pot's handle has with that pot and its contents. You cannot be sure of your hold unless you keep the handle in your grip; likewise, one cannot be hopeful about eternal and real bliss unless one believes in Allah rejecting all false deities.

QUR'AN: *For which there is no break off and Allah is Hearing, Knowing:*

"*al-Infisam*" is to be cut off, to be broken. The phrase, *for which there is no break off*" describes the condition or state of the handle, and emphasize the phrase, *the strongest handle.*" The next sentence, *and Allah is Hearing, Knowing*", points to the fact that belief and disbelief are matters connected with the heart and the tongue.

QUR'AN: *Allah is the Guardian of those who believe... in it they shall abide:* Some explanation has been given, in a previous verse, of bringing out of the darkness into the light." It has been described there that this bringing out and other such phrases express real things, and that they are not used in any allegorical sense. There are two other interpretations given by other commentators of the Qur'an, which we shall quote here before commenting upon them:

First Interpretation: This bringing out of the darkness into the light and other such phrases are allegorical expressions. They are used for man's actions and physical stillness and movements, and for the good or evil results of such actions. Accordingly, *light*" is used for correct belief which removes the darkness of ignorance, the confusion of doubt and the perplexity of the heart. Also it is a metaphor for good deeds because its connection with the right path is clear and its effect on bliss self evident. And the *light*" has all these attributes and qualities. On the other hand, *darkness*" is metaphorically used for wrong belief, confusion and doubt as well as for evil deeds. According to this interpretation, the bringing out from darkness into the light (attributed to Allah) and taking out of light into the darkness (attributed to the rebels and false deities) refer to only true and wrong beliefs and good and evil deeds respectively - there is nothing other than those beliefs and deeds. Allah or the false deities do not do any action (like bringing out) in this respect, nor is there any effect of such action (like light and darkness).

Second Interpretation: Surely Allah does the actions like bringing the people out of the darkness into the light, giving life, bestowing abundance and mercy and similar things. And surely there appear effects of such actions, like light and darkness; the soul and mercy; and the coming down of the angels. But our intellect cannot comprehend it and our senses cannot perceive it. Even then, we believe, as we have been told by Allah - and Allah speaks the truth - that these things do exist and that they are the actions of Allah, although we do not understand them.

This interpretation, like the first one, treats words like light, darkness, taking out, etc. as metaphors. The only difference between the two is that the first one says that the light and the darkness are our correct and wrong deeds and beliefs; and this one says that the light and the darkness are things other than our beliefs and deeds, but we have no way of knowing them or comprehending and understanding

them.

Both the interpretations are far from the truth. One has failed to reach the target, the other has overshot it. The fact is that these things, which Allah has said He creates and does when we obey Him or disobey Him, are real things; there is no allegory in such expressions, but these divine actions are related to our beliefs and deeds - are inseparable from them. And we have already explained this. Of course, it is admitted that the sentences, "He brings them out of the darkness into the light", and "(they) take them out of the light into the darkness", are metaphors and mean "He guides them" and "they misguide them" respectively.

In other words, there are two separate matters to decide: 1) Whether the light, darkness and other such expressions refer to some real things in this life or are merely metaphors? 2) If they refer to some real things then, is the use, for example, of the word "light" for guidance real or metaphorical? According to what we have already explained, such expressions refer to real things in this life. And using the word "light", for example, for guidance is metaphorical.

And in any case, the two sentences mentioned above, are metaphors to denote guidance and misguidance. If we were to interpret them in their literal sense, it would mean that the believer and the disbeliever both have light and darkness together. Allah brings the believers out of the darkness into the light", if literally interpreted, would mean that the believer was first in the darkness! Conversely, the second sentence would mean that the disbeliever was first in the light! How can this meaning be correct about the overwhelming majorities of believers and disbelievers who are born in believing or disbelieving families and remain in light or in darkness (as the case may be) from their birth? Such literal interpretation would mean that a child remained in light and darkness at one and the same time; and when, on attaining majority, he accepts the true faith by his own choice, he is removed out of the darkness into the light, and if he disbelieved, he was taken out of the light into the darkness. The absurdity of such an interpretation is quite obvious.

(Of course, it may be said that man in his creation, has the light of natural faith. But it is a general light, which needs details and particularization. In this way, he has the natural light; but, at the same time, is in darkness, so far as detailed knowledge and good deeds are concerned. And, looking from these different angles, it is possible for the light and the darkness to be present in one place at one time. When the believer acquires correct faith, he goes out from that darkness into the light of knowledge and good deed. And the disbeliever, by his disbelief goes out from the natural light into the darkness of disbelief and evil deeds.)

Allah in both sentences has used the word "light" (in the singular) and the word "darkness" (in the plural). It is to indicate that truth is one - there is no difference in it; and that falsehood is multifaceted, diverse and variable - there is no unity in it. Allah says in another place: *And (know) that this is My path, the straight one, therefore follow it; and follow not (other) ways, for they will scatter you away from His path* (6:153).

Traditions

Abu Dawud, an-Nasa'i, Ibnu 'l-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, an-Nahhas (in his *an-Nasikh wa 'l-mansukh*), Ibn Mandih (in his *al-Ghara'ib*), Ibn Hibban, Ibn Marduwayh, al-Bayhaqi (in his *as-Sunan*), ad-Diya' (in his *al-Mukhtarah*) have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: (It was customary for) a woman of the Ansar that if her child died in infancy, she would make a vow that if her child lived she would turn him into a Jew. Thus, when the tribe of Nadir was banished (from Medina), there were many children of the Ansar among them. They said that they would not leave

their sons (to migrate). Then Allah sent down the verse: *There is no compulsion in the religion.*" (*ad-Durru'l-manthur*)

The author says: The same thing has been narrated, by other chains, from Sa'Id ibn Jubayr and ash-Sha'bi.

'Abd ibn Hamid, Ibn Jarir and Ibnu'l-Mundhir have narrated from Mujahid that he said: (The tribe of) Nadir had suckled some people from the tribe of Aws. When the Prophet ordered their banishment, their foster sons from the Aws said: 'We shall go with them and enter into their religion.' But their families prevented them and compelled them to (accept) Islam. Then came down the verse about them: *There is no compulsion in the religion.* (*ad-Durru'l-manthur*)

The author says: This thing too has been narrated from other sources. It is not in conflict with the preceding tradition (about the vow of the women of the Ansar), as both may be correct.

Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Jarir have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said about the words of Allah: *There is no compulsion in the religion*: It was revealed about a man from the Ansar (from the clan of Banu Salim ibn 'Awf), named al-Husayn, who had two Christian sons, and he himself was a Muslim. So he said to the Prophet: 'Should I not compel them, because they have refused, but (remain) the Christianity.' Thereupon, Allah sent down this (verse) about him." (*ad-Durru'l-manthur*)

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "The light is the progeny of Muhammad and the darkness are their enemies." (*al-Kafi*)

The author says: This tradition gives examples of the light and the darkness, or explains its inner meaning or interpretation.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 258-260

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِي حَاجَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ قَالَ أَنَا أُحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي بِالسَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ فَبُهِتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ 2:258
 أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا قَالَ أَنَّى يُحْيِي هَذِهِ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا فَأَمَاتَهُ اللَّهُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتَ قَالَ لَبِثْتُ يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ قَالَ بَلْ لَبِثْتَ مِائَةَ عَامٍ فَانظُرْ إِلَى طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ يَتَسَنَّهْ وَانظُرْ إِلَى جِمَارِكَ وَلِنَجْعَلَكَ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَانظُرْ إِلَى الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ نُنشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوهَا لَحْمًا فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ قَالَ أَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ 2:259
 وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى قَالَ أُولَمْ تُؤْمِنُ قَالَ بَلَى وَلَكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلَى كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ 2:260

2:258 Did you not see him who disputed with Ibrahim about his Lord, because Allah had given him the kingdom? When Ibrahim said: "My Lord is He Who gives life and cause to die", he said: "I give life and cause death." Ibrahim said: "So surely Allah brings the sun from the east, then bring it (you) from the west." Thus he who disbelieved was confounded; and Allah does not guide aright the unjust people.

2:259 Or like him who passed by a town, and it had fallen down upon its roofs; he said: "How will Allah give it life after its death?" So Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him to life. He said: "How long have you tarried?" He said: "I have tarried a day, or a part of a day." Said He: "Nay! You have tarried a hundred years; then look at your food and drink - years have not passed over it; and look at your donkey; and that We may make you a sign to men; and look at the bones, how We assemble them together, then clothe them with flesh." So when it became clear to him, he said: "I know that Allah has power over all things."

2:260 And (remember) when Ibrahim said: "My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead." He said: "What! and do you not believe?" He said: "Certainly, but that my heart may be at ease." He said: "Then take four of the birds, then cut them (into pieces), then place on every mountain a part of them, then call them, they will come to you flying; and know that Allah is Mighty, Wise."

Commentary

The three verses describe the Oneness of the Creator and His Omnipotence. They have, therefore, some connection with the preceding verses; and possibly these were revealed together with them.

QUR'AN: Did you not see him who disputed with Ibrahim about his Lord:

"*al-Muhajjah*" is to bring a proof against the opposite party's, to prove one's own claim or to refute the other party's argument. The basic meaning of *al-hujjah* is intention; now it is generally used for "proof" by which one intends to prove one's claim. The phrase "about his Lord" is connected with the verb "disputed." The pronoun in "His Lord" refers to Ibrahim, as may be inferred from the next sentence, "Ibrahim said: 'My Lord is He Who gives life and causes to die.'" The man who disputed with Ibrahim was the king of his time; and according to history and traditions, he was the Babylonian king, Namrud (Nimrod).

We may understand the nature of this argument and the subject of the dispute, if we look at the context of the verse and reflect upon the behavior of mankind in the past as well as in the present.

Man, by his nature, has always remained submissive to the powers about him which effect, in one way or the other, his life. No student of anthropology, who has studied the behavior of the ancients, or has looked at the present generations of various nations, can have any doubt about it. We have described it in preceding discourses; and also it has been pointed out that man, by his nature, accepts that there is a Creator for the universe, Who has brought it into existence, and Who manages it. Every man, by the dictate of nature, believes this - be he a monotheist (a follower of the prophets), a polytheist (like an idol-worshipper) or an atheist (like a materialist). Nature's demand cannot be negated so long as man is man (although the effect of it may at times become weaker or dormant).

Primitive man, in his simplicity, thought of every thing in the light of his own experience. He saw that he performs different acts by means of his different organs and limbs; and likewise, in society's structure, various people discharge various duties and functions. And the natural phenomena in the world happen because of their respective natural causes which are closely related to them. Yet, his nature led him to believe in a Creator who had all the affairs of the universe in His hand. Not surprisingly, he thought that every phenomenon of the world had a special deity of its own - and all those deities were under the authority of a Supreme God. Sometimes he named them deities for various things; for example, the deity of the earth, the deity of the rivers, the deity of fire, the deity of wind, etc. At other times, he attributed these functions to the stars, and especially to the planets, the sun and the moon, ascribing to each various faculties believing that each of them affected this world of ours in its own way. This belief was held by the Sabaeans. The next stage was to make images and statues for those lesser deities. Then he started to worship those idols so that the particular image might intercede on behalf of the worshipper with its particular deity, which in its turn was expected to intercede with the Supreme God - thus ensuring bliss and success for the worshipper in this life and after death.

That also explains why the idols were made in different shapes in different tribes. Views and opinions as regards the attributes of various species and the conceptions of their related deities could not be the same in two nations; and even in one nation they changed with the times. Sometimes other considerations and inclinations crept into the system. Gradually, the idols usurped the place of the said deities, and even the Supreme God was relegated to obscurity. Worshipers intended to give their devotion more and more to what was near them, which they could see and touch, and thus they tended to forget what was beyond their five senses. In this way, idols took the place of the Creator. All this happened because initially they thought that those lesser deities had some influence and control over the affairs of their lives - that the will of those deities dominated their own will and that those deities' management prevailed over their own plans and management.

When some powerful personality appeared on the scene and took the reins of the kingdom in his hands, he often exploited this trend of thought; he had their affairs and their lives in his hands, and it was easy for him to claim for himself the status of divinity, declaring himself to be a god. This is what was done by Pharaoh, Namrud and many others. It is interesting to note that such people included themselves in the list of deities, while, like their subjects, they continued to worship the idols of their nations. But invariably they always ended up by usurping the dominant position for themselves. In this design of theirs the same process of thought helped them which had raised the idols' status in their people's eyes: the king's influence, authority and hold over his people were more manifest than those of the other deities. Pharaoh declared before his people: *"I am your most high Lord"* (79:24). And he made this claim of supremacy while continuing to worship the other deities. Read for proof the words

of Allah giving the import of the talk of the courtiers of Pharaoh with him showing the danger from Musa (a.s.): "... *and to forsake you and your gods?*" (7:127). The same was the claim of Namrud as may be inferred from his assertion: "I give life and cause death."

The above discourse may easily explain this dispute between Ibrahim (a.s.) and Namrud. Namrud believed that there was a Supreme God. Otherwise, he would not have been confounded by the argument of Ibrahim (a.s.), "So surely Allah brings the sun from the east, then bring it (you) from the west." If he had not believed in a Supreme God, he could have said that it was he (i.e., Namrud) or some other deity, who brought the sun from the east, and not Ibrahim's Allah. Apart from the Supreme God, he and his people believed in some other deities too. The life story of Ibrahim provides ample proof that they worshipped the sun, the moon and the stars, as well as idols. Also read the talk of Ibrahim with his uncle on the subject of idols, and see how he shattered their idols (except the big one). All of it shows that Namrud believed in the divinity of Allah, as well as in other deities, but at the same time claimed to be a god - indeed the highest god - himself. That was why he tried to prove his own divinity in this dispute with Ibrahim, and did not even mention the other, lesser, deities.

Now we should look at the dispute. It was Ibrahim's claim that his Lord is Allah, and no one else. Namrud said: "No! I am your Lord and the Lord of everyone else." Ibrahim argued: "My Lord is He Who gives life and causes to die." Namrud said: "I give life and cause death." He wanted to show that he held the power which Ibrahim attributed to his Lord; therefore, Ibrahim should submit to him, and worship him, neither Allah nor other lesser deities deserved to be worshipped. Note that he did not add "and" in his reply; he did not say, "and I give life..." Why? Because the conjunctive "and" would have meant that he shared this power with Allah; and he did not want to admit any such "partnership" he wanted to be worshipped as the most supreme Lord of the universe. And it was for this very reason that he did not say either, "and the gods give life ..."

He could not honestly refute the argument of Ibrahim; so he resorted to sophism, fallacy and deception. When Ibrahim mentioned life and death, he meant life and death as we find them in living things. His argument was that these living things could only be created by One who was the source of life. Lifeless nature cannot bestow life on others when it has no life itself. Nor can other living things give life to others, because their life is their existence and their death their extinction - and a thing cannot create or destroy its own self.

If Namrud had interpreted Ibrahim's argument honestly, he could not have refuted it at all. But he resorted to deception, interpreting life and death with an allegorical meaning. "To give life" really means, for example, to create a living fetus; but it may be used equally correctly (but in metaphorical way) if you rescue someone from an extremely dangerous situation. Likewise, "to cause to die" really means the act of God by which a soul departs from a body; but metaphorically it may be used for murder, etc. Taking advantage of this metaphorical usage, Namrud ordered two prisoners to be brought before him; one he ordered to be killed and the other was set free. It was at this stage that he uttered the words, "I give life and cause death." The courtiers were taken in by this ruse and accepted the "truth" of the argument. Ibrahim was not in a position to unmask the fallacy of this reply; he saw how Namrud has duped the audience with his deception and how blindly they agreed to his sophism. Nobody would have agreed with Ibrahim even if he had tried to expose that fallacy. Therefore, he switched to another clearer argument which his obstinate opponent could not twist in any way, and said: "So surely Allah brings the sun from the east; then bring it (you) from the west."

Those people (or some of them) believed the sun to be a deity. (Look at the story of Ibrahim, concerning the stars, the moon and the sun in the Qur'an 6:77-78) But they also believed that these sources of light and their various phases, rising, setting, etc., were ultimately in the hands of Allah,

who, according to them, was Lord of Lords, God of gods. When a doer does an act by his own free will, he may just as easily reverse that action if he so changes his intention; the direction of his action follows his will. Therefore, when Ibrahim put this argument before Namrud, he was confounded. He could not say: "The rising of the sun from the east has been, since the very beginning, a matter of chance; it needs no cause", because commonsense demands a cause for an effect. Nor could he say: "This system is not caused or controlled by Allah", because he himself professed to believe in the Lord of Lords who controlled the sun, etc. And he could not say: "It is I who bring it from the east"; because Ibrahim had already closed this line of argument by saying, "then bring it (you) from the west." He was thus ignominiously humiliated and disgraced. "And Allah does not guide aright the unjust people."

QUR'AN: *Because Allah had given him the kingdom?*

The import of this sentence is like one's saying: "He mistreated me because I did good to him." The speaker wants to say: I did good to him; it was to be expected that he also would do good to me; instead, he misbehaved towards me. An Arabic proverb points to this very trait of human nature: "Be on guard against the evil of him to whom you did good." A poet says: *His sons rewarded Abu'l-Ghaylan, for his old age and good deeds, as was rewarded Sinimmar. I*

In this sentence L (because) is deleted but understood. It puts a reason in place of its opposite. This style puts the accusation in a sharper perspective. The rebellion and transgression of Namrud would have been understandable if there had been any non-generosity shown towards him by Allah. But Allah did nothing to him except good and He gave him the kingdom too. Therefore, this generosity was mentioned as the cause of his rebellion, to emphasize his ingratitude. In a way, it is like the verse: *And Pharaoh's family took him (Musa)up, so that he might be an enemy and a grief for them(28:8).*

This is one reason why his getting the kingdom has been mentioned here. There is another reason too: to show that his claim was absurd *ab initio*. He claimed to be god because of the kingdom which was given to him by Allah; he did not own it himself. He had become Namrud, the king, the mighty and powerful, because, Allah had made him so. Strip him of this bounty of Allah and what was left of him? Just a common man with no special quality or attribute. That is the reason why Allah did not mention him by name; he was described just as the one who disputed with Ibrahim about his Lord. This was done to show his insignificance and lowliness.

Why did Allah say that it was He who gave Namrud the kingdom? In previous discourses it has been shown that this cannot be objected to. The kingdom, like all other powers and authorities, is a bounty and grace of Allah; He gives it to whom He pleases and man has been give the knowledge of God in his nature, and because of that natural instinct he inclines towards Him. Now, if he made good use of that kingdom putting every thing in its place, it would be a bliss and blessing for him, as Allah says: *And seek by means of what Allah has given you the future abode... (28:77)*. And if he transgressed the limits and deviated from the right path, it would become a curse and perdition for him, as Allah says: *Did you not see those who changed Allah's favor for ungratefulness and made their people to alight into the abode of perdition? (14:28)*. It has already been explained that every thing is attributed to Allah, but in a way that is befitting to His majesty, glory and sanctity - from the view of the good points of that thing, and not from that of its bad points.

One commentator has erroneously thought that the pronoun, "him", in the phrase, "because Allah had given him the kingdom" refers to Ibrahim. According to him, it means that Namrud disputed with Ibrahim because Allah had given Ibrahim the kingdom; that it refers to the kingdom of Ibrahim mentioned in the Qur'an: *Or do they envy the people for what Allah has given them of His grace? So*

indeed we have given to Ibrahim's children the Book and the wisdom, and We have given them a great kingdom (4:54). According to that commentator, the kingdom in the verse under discussion cannot refer to that of Namrud, because it was a kingdom of oppression and sin; it cannot be said that such a kingdom was given by Allah.

But this assumption is wrong because:

First: The Qur'an attributes such a kingdom and many similar things to Allah. For example, it quotes the believer from the family of Pharaoh as saying: *O my people! Yours is the kingdom this day, being masters in the land...* (40:29) ; and the words of Pharaoh himself are quoted (without any adverse comment): *O my people! Is not the kingdom of Egypt mine?* (43:51). And at the same time it declares: *... to Him (i.e. Allah) belongs the kingdom...* (64:1). This verse confines the kingdom to Allah; there is no kingdom but of Him and from Him. The Qur'an quotes Musa (a.s.) as saying: *Our Lord! Surely Thou hast given to Pharaoh and his chiefs finery and riches in this world's life...* (10: 88); and Allah says about Qarun: *... and We had given him of the treasures, so much so that its keys would certainly weigh down a company of men possessed of strength...* (28:76); and He says addressing his Prophet: *Leave Me and him whom I created alone, and I gave him vast riches...* (74:11-12); there are many similar references.

Second: Such an interpretation does not fit the obvious meaning of the verse. The verse shows that Namrud was disputing with Ibrahim about the latter's belief and monotheism, not that he had any argument with him about his kingdom. The kingdom was already in Namrud 's hands and Ibrahim had no worldly kingdom for which Namrud could have disputed with him.

Third: Everything is attributed to Allah, as explained earlier, and kingdom is no exception. There is no snag in attributing it to Allah.

QUR'AN: *When Ibrahim said: "My Lord is He Who gives life and causes to die":*

Life and death are found even in vegetation; but Ibrahim (a.s.), in this argument, meant the life and death found in animals and human beings, or he kept in view their general meaning which included human life and death. The evidence for this meaning may be seen in the reply of Namrud: "I give life and cause death." Obviously Namrud, by this claim, did not mean the giving of life to vegetables (through tilling and farming), or animals (by breeding them and bringing the male and female together). This type of life giving was not special to him; any human being could do it. The traditions also support our interpretation: he had two prisoners brought before him, he freed one and killed the other, and then he said: "I give life and cause death."

Ibrahim (a.s.) selected for his proof the authority of giving life and causing death, because nature, having no life or sense itself, cannot give life to any thing; and more evidently, it cannot be supposed to give life to animals and humans as it is accompanied by sense and perception. And the same is the case with death. Such a clear and indisputable proof failed to convince the people of Namrud. Their intellectual degradation and mental confusion had sunken far lower than the level which Ibrahim (a.s.) had credited them with. They thought that the life and death referred to included the metaphorical meaning of freeing from prison and killing. Thus, Namrud claimed, and they vouched that he gave life and caused death.

This talk shows how low the level of intellectual development was in that time, as far as abstract and non-material ideas were concerned. Do not be misled by their advanced civilization, signs of which are found in the archaeological remains of the Babylonia of the Chaldeans and the Egypt of the Pharaohs. Material advancement is one thing, and progress in abstract and nonmaterial ideas is something else. We see the same phenomenon in this world of ours which has made a fantastic advancement in the material field, and has sunk so terribly low in morality, ethics and spiritual

knowledge.

Ibrahim (a.s.) did not put before them the argument that the whole universe needed an Omnipotent, Omniscient Originator of the heavens and the earth. He had used this method in his early days; and Allah quotes him as finally saying: "Surely I have turned my face, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am not of the polytheists (6:79). No doubt, those people, forced by natural instinct, believed vaguely in a Supreme Creator. But their intellectual capacity was too limited to let them clearly and truly understand about that Creator. Had Ibrahim (a.s.) put this argument before them, they could not have appreciated it at all. Look, at what they understood from his argument: "My Lord is He Who gives life and causes to die!"

QUR'AN: *he said: "I give life and cause death":*

Therefore, I am that Lord of yours who, you say, gives life and causes death.

QUR'AN: *Ibrahim said: "So surely Allah brings the sun from the east, then bring it (you) from the west":*

Thus he who disbelieved was confounded: When Ibrahim (a.s.) saw that his argument based on giving life and death had been twisted by his opponent, and that the public had been misled by that deception, he thought it would be useless to clarify what he meant by giving life and causing death. Instead, he switched to another argument. Even then, he based this second argument on his opponent's claim in the first argument. That is why he began the second argument with "So"; it shows a connection with the preceding sentence, and its import is as follows: If what you say is correct, and you are my Lord, and the Lord, as we both accept, manages and looks after this universe, then Allah manages the sun by bringing it from the east; so show your authority by bringing from the west. It will clearly prove that you are the Lord, as Allah is the Lord of everything, or that you are Lord of Lords. Thus, the disbeliever was confounded.

Ibrahim (a.s.) offered his second argument as an offshoot of Namrud's claim, to remove the chance of someone thinking that Namrud's argument was complete, perfect and irrefutable. And he changed the word "my Lord" (used in the first argument) to "Allah" (in this argument) because the opponent had misused that adjective and claimed that it referred to him. To remove the chance of that, type of sophistry, Ibrahim (a.s.) used the proper name, "Allah."

It has been described earlier that it was not possible for Namrud to reply to this argument in any way, and, as a result, he was confounded and remained silent.

QUR'AN: *And Allah does not guide aright the unjust people:*

Apparently it gives the reason for Namrud's being confounded, not for his disbelief. Allah did not guide him, and, therefore, he was humiliated; had Allah guided him aright, he would have been able to reply to Ibrahim. It does not say that Allah did not guide him and therefore he became an unbeliever. Obviously, the talk centers around his dispute and argument, and is not about his belief.

The word "unjust people" hints at the cause of not being guided. Allah does not guide them because they are unjust. The same point has been kept in view wherever such sentences have been revealed. Allah says: *And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah while he is invited to Islam? And Allah does not guide the unjust people (61:7); The similitude of those who were placed under the Torah, then they did not hold it, is as the similitude of the donkey bearing books; evil is the similitude of the people who belie the signs of Allah; and Allah does not guide the unjust people (62:5). "Transgression" is likewise the cause of not being guided, as Allah says: but when they turned aside; Allah made their hearts turn aside; and Allah does not guide the transgressing people (61:5).*

In short, injustice is to turn aside from the path of justice, and to leave aside what should be done,

and to do what should not be done. It diverts man from his intended goal, and leads him to disappointment and failure in the life hereafter. This fact is made abundantly clear in many verses of the Qur'an, which puts much emphasis on it.

Good and Evil Deeds *vis-à-vis* Guidance and Misguidance

QUR'AN: *Or like him who passed by a town, and it had fallen down upon its roofs:*

"*al-Khawiyah*" means empty. The Arabs say *khawati 'd-dar* to indicate that "the house became empty." "*al-'Urush*" is the plural of *al-'arsh* (trellis); it is a roof-like structure standing on poles or pillars used as support for climbing plants, like vines. Allah says: *garden trellised and untrellised* (6:141). This word is also used for *as-saqf* (roof). But there is a difference. *as-saqf* is only a roof or house-top which is laid on the walls: *al-'arsh* is the top together with its poles or pillars. Because of this difference, it is idiomatic to say for a ruined village that, "*hiya khawiyatan 'ala 'urushiha*" which literally means, "it is empty in its trellis": but it would be wrong to say, "empty on its roof."

Many explanations have been given by the commentators for the conjunctive "Or" in "Or like him who... " It is said that:

1) It is in conjunction with "him (he) who disputed with Ibrahim", in the previous verse; and "K" (like) is in place of *mithl* (like). The meaning accordingly is, "Or have you seen like him who passed... " This commentator thinks that the word "like" in this context indicates that it is a separate proof.

2) The word "like" is extra. The meaning, accordingly will be "Did you not see him who disputed with Ibrahim... or him who passed... "

3) The conjunction is of meaning, and not of words. The meaning is, "Have you seen like him who disputed... or like him who passed... "

4) It is the continuation of the argument of Ibrahim in reply to his opponent's claim. According to this interpretation. Ibrahim told Namrud that if he claimed to give life then he should give life like him who passed by a town...

But you will notice that none of the above explanations is satisfactory.

The author believes that the conjunction is of meaning, as claimed in the third explanation, but not in the way described there. Allah had earlier said: "Allah is the Guardian of those who believe: He brings them out of darkness into the light: and (as to) those who disbelieve, their guardians are rebels: they take them out of the light into the darkness." It had shown that Allah guides the believers to the truth, and that He does not guide the disbelievers; instead they are misled by the guardians whom they have taken for themselves. Now Allah gives three examples showing three consecutive methods of His guidance. Guidance is of three types, or, let us say, three stages:

First: Guidance through reasoning and argument, as is seen in the story of Namrud who disputed with Ibrahim about his Lord. Allah guided Ibrahim to the truth, and his opponent was misguided by his disbelief. In this story the guidance of Ibrahim is not mentioned clearly; rather more attention is given to his opponent's affairs, and it has thrown light on a new fact: "Allah does not guide aright the unjust people."

Second: Guidance through demonstration, as is seen in the story of him who passed by a town which had fallen down upon its roofs. In it, what had seemed difficult to him (i.e. "how Allah would make a thing alive after its death?") was shown to him actually happening. He was given death and then made alive. In this way he was guided to the truth through demonstration.

Third: Guidance by demonstrating the fact and simultaneously unveiling its cause. It is the most effective method and the highest stage of guidance. This method was used in the third story, in which

Ibrahim, by the permission of Allah, made the four birds alive.

Let us suppose that a man has not seen cheese and has some doubt about it. His Doubts may be removed if someone who has seen and tasted it testifies before him about it. The second and more effective method is to show him a piece of cheese and make him taste it. The third and the most effective way of removing the doubt would be to put a pot of milk before him and make cheese from it before his eyes and then let him taste it.

The three verses describe these three consecutive stages. Each one begins in a different style. "Did you not see him who... ", "Or like him who passed by a town... ", "And (remember) when Ibrahim said... " Each of these styles could have been used to describe the three events. It could have been said: Allah guides the believers to the truth; have you not looked at the story of Ibrahim and Namrud, or at the story of him who passed by a town, or at the story of Ibrahim and the birds. Alternatively, it could have been said: Allah guides the believers to the truth; either as He guided Ibrahim in his dispute with Namrud (and it was one way of guidance), or as He guided him who passed by a town (and it was another way of guidance), or as He did in the event of Ibrahim and the birds (and it was the third way of guidance).

Thirdly it could have been said: Allah guides the believers to the truth; remember the episodes which prove it - remember the story of the dispute, and remember him who passed by a town, and remember when Ibrahim said: *"My Lord! show me how Thou givest life to the dead."*

But Allah used a different style for each verse, as it is more refreshing for the mind, and excites a new interest in each episode.

Now we may revert to the original topic, how this verse is in conjunction with the preceding one. The conjunctive "or" in "or like him" joins this sentence with a deleted but understood word in the preceding verse. The reconstructed sentences would be like this: Either like him who disputed with Ibrahim... or like him who passed by a town. Likewise, the conjunctive "and" in the next verse joins it with deleted but understood words in the preceding two verses. The sentences then would be like this: Remember the story of dispute... and remember him who passed by a town... and remember when Ibrahim said ...

Allah has not disclosed the identity of him who passed by. Nor has the name of the town or the people who used to live in it been mentioned. Nor have those been identified for whom the said passerby was made a sign. It would appear that their identities should have been disclosed as it would have removed many doubts. But a far more important consideration made it necessary to keep all these details vague.

The sign shown, that is, giving life to the dead, was a very compelling and overwhelming one, as was the guidance resulting from it; also, the passerby had used words which reflected his thought that it was not an easy task. Therefore, the norms of eloquence demanded that it be described as a very insignificant affair, so that the said passerby as well as the audience of the Qur'an would not be overawed by it; and so that they could appreciate that it was not a big task as far as the power of Allah was concerned. Have you not seen that great people talk about great affairs and about their great officers and nobles in a very ordinary manner; they want to emphasize that such affairs or such people have no greatness for the speakers. The same principle has been applied here: bare facts have been mentioned, but all details as to who, where and when have been omitted; it is to show that this affair was not an important one in the eyes of Allah. It was for the same reason that the name of the opponent of Ibrahim (in the first story) was omitted, and the names of the birds and the hills, and the number of pieces the birds were cut into, and so on, in the third story.

Only the name of Ibrahim (a.s.) has been mentioned in the two stories. The Qur'an accords him a

special honor and distinction. For example: *And this was Our argument which We gave to Ibrahim against his people; We exalt in dignity whom We please... (6:83); And thus did We show Ibrahim the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that he might be of those who are sure (6:75).* The same special consideration prompted mentioning his name in the two stories.

The point mentioned above also explains why Allah mentions the matters of giving life and causing death, in most places, as a very unimportant and insignificant thing; as He says: *And He it is Who originates the creation, then returns it, and it is most easy to Him; and His are the most exalted attributes in the heavens and in the earth, and He is the Mighty, the Wise (30:27); He said: "O my Lord! how shall I have a son, and my wife is barren, and I myself have reached indeed the extreme degree of old age?" He said: "So shall it be; your Lord says: It is easy to Me, and indeed I created you before, when you were nothing" (19:8-9).*

QUR'AN: *he said: 'How will Allah give it life after its death?'*

"It" refers to the "town"; but it metaphorically means "people of the town." It is like the words of the Qur'an: *And ask the town in which we were... (12:82);* that is, "the people of the town."

He uttered these words because he felt that it was a very great thing and that it manifested the power of Allah as few other things did; not that he thought life-after-death improbable. That is why he said at the end of the episode, "I know that Allah has power over all things." He did not say, 'Now I know', as the wife of the chief of Egypt had said: *Now has the truth become established... (12:51)*. Further details will be given later.

Furthermore, the passer-by was a prophet to whom Allah had spoken, and was a sign sent to the people; and the prophets are sinless. They can never entertain any doubt or suspicion about Resurrection, which is one of the pillars of the religion.

QUR'AN: *So Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him to life:*

The clear meaning is that he was given death by the taking out of his soul, remained dead for a hundred years, then was made alive by the returning of his soul to him.

One commentator has given a strange explanation of this verse. He says: The "death" mentioned in this verse means a coma, that is, a prolonged loss of consciousness in which the subject remains barely alive but has no sense or feeling. It may continue for days, months and even years, as is evident from the story of the Fellows of the Cave and their sleep in the cave which lasted for three hundred and nine years: then they were awakened. Allah has used that sleep and re-awakening as a proof of Resurrection. Therefore. this story too is like that one.

The said commentator goes on to say: The known duration of coma does not exceed a few years. A coma lasting for a hundred years is an unusual occurrence, but He who puts a man in a coma for a few years also has the power to keep him in that condition for a hundred years; and when it comes to accept what is clearly mentioned in the Qur'an, we believe that we should only see whether it is possible or impossible: and if it is possible we must accept it. Allah has offered this episode of keeping him in a coma for a hundred years and then returning his senses and feelings to him after such a long period as a proof that life can be returned to the dead after a gap of thousands of years.

This was his explanation. Let us suppose for the time being that the Fellows of the Cave were kept in a coma - the word used for them in the Qur'an is "asleep", not comatose. But how could their supposed coma infect this passerby? The Qur'an clearly says: "Allah caused him to die." Death means loss of life; and not coma. A commentator has no right to invent a meaning for a word. He has used analogy where no one has allowed it, and that is in the matter of finding the meaning of a word. And if Allah could keep that passer-by comatose for a hundred years when it is not an usual occurrence, why could not He keep him dead for a hundred years and then resurrect him? One unusual occurrence is

like another, according to the said commentator. So why invent one meaning and reject the other which incidentally is the real meaning? The trouble with him is that, for his own reasons, he thinks that the resurrection of the dead in this world is impossible - without giving any reason to support his belief. That is why he has misinterpreted the next sentences, "and look at the bones, how We assemble them together, then clothe them with flesh ." We shall comment upon it afterwards.

In short, the meaning of the words: "Allah caused him to die... then raised him to life", is quite clear, and no doubt can be entertained about it, especially when we look at the preceding and following sentences "How will Allah give it life after its death?": "look at your food and drink - years have not passed over it": "and look at your donkey": "and look at the bones."

QUR'AN: *He said: "How long have you tarried:?" "He said I have tarried a day or a part of a day." Said He: "Nay! You have tarried a hundred years"*

"al-Labth" is to tarry, to stay to abide. The uncertainty in the reply, "a day or a part of a day", shows that the time of day of his resurrection was different from that of his death - for example, the forenoon and afternoon. He thought that he had slept and was now woken, then he looked at the difference in the time, and was uncertain whether a night has passed while lie was still asleep. Therefore, he said "a day " (if a night has passed), "or a part of a day (if he had woken up the same day). Allah said: "Nay you have tarried a hundred years."

QUR'AN: *"then look at our food and drink - years have not passed over it;... then clothe them with flesh":*

There are many apparently puzzling things in these sentences: The word. "look", has been repeated three times, when, at a first glance, only one would have been enough; there is mention of food, drink and a donkey, when apparently there was no need for it: and the sentence, "and that We may make you a sign to men", has been written in between, when seemingly it would have been more appropriate after the next sentence about assembling the bones and clothing them with flesh. Moreover, what he had wondered about, the resurrection of bodies after a long gap, after undergoing all types of deterioration, had been clearly demonstrated by his own resurrection; then what was the need to tell him to look at the bones? But if we ponder deeply on the various implications of this verse, all these doubts will be removed. Let us look at the story, which is as follows:

The verse make it clear that the passer-by was a virtuous servant of Allah, who was well aware of divine power and majesty, and followed His commandments. Not only this, he was a prophet whom Allah had spoken to. The clear implication of his words: "I know that Allah has power over all things", is that he was fully aware of the power of Allah even before this episode. And the style of the sentences, "then raised him to life. He said: 'How long have you tarried?'" implies that he was well accustomed to being spoken to by Allah, and that it was not the first revelation. Otherwise, the sentence should have been somewhat like this: 'then when He raised him to life, He said ... ' See how the first divine talk with Musa has been mentioned: *So when he came to it, a voice called. O Musa (20:11); And when he came to it a voice called from the right side... (28:30).*

He had departed from his home for a place which was at some distance from his town. This is inferred from the facts that he rode on his donkey, and took food and drink for his provisions. On the way, he passed by a town which had fallen "on its roofs." It was not his intended destination; but as he passed by it, he stood there, seeing in it a warning lesson for mankind, a town turned into ruins, whose inhabitants had perished, overtaken by death all together, whose rotten bones were scattered everywhere in full view of the passers-by. He pointed to the dead and said: "How will Allah give it life after its death?" He did not mean "How will this town be populated again?" Otherwise, he would have used the word *"yu'ammir"*(willmake populated), and not *"yuhyi"* (will make alive) which he

did use.

Moreover, a ruined town may become inhabited again, and there is nothing extraordinary in this development to cause wonder and awe. How do we know that the bodies and bones were in full view of the passers-by? Because if they had been buried and he had stood looking at their graves, Allah would have clearly mentioned the graves, instead of the town.

Anyhow, he stood taking lessons from the scene before his eyes. He was over-awed by it and thought about the length of time involved, and the continuing deterioration of the parts of the body until it turns into dust. At this stage, he said: "How will Allah give it life after its death?" This question was based on two factors: The length of time, (How will Allah give it life after such a long gap since its death?) and the deterioration of the body (How will it be resurrected when all its parts and limbs have been scattered and untold number of changes have come over it?) Therefore, Allah explained both questions together. The first question was answered by giving him death and resurrecting him after a hundred years. The second question was answered by giving life to the bones of his donkey under his own eyes.

Thus, Allah gave him death and then raised him from the dead. The two things happened at different times of the day, as has been explained above. Allah asked him: "How long have you tarried?" He replied: "I have tarried a day or a part of a day." Obviously, he was given death in the early part of the day, and resurrected in the afternoon. Had it been the other way round, he would have said, "a day" without any hesitation. Allah pointed out to him: "Nay! you have tarried a hundred years." Thus he realized that he had thought a hundred years like a day or a part of a day. This was the reply to his question about the length of time.

Then Allah gave him the proof of his remaining dead for a hundred years by saying, "then look at your food and drink - years have not passed over it; and look at your donkey." As he had not realized that he had died and had been brought to life after such a long time, the information that he had tarried a hundred years was liable to be doubted (not necessarily by him), because his body had not changed at all; and if a man dies and a hundred years pass over him, his body usually undergoes innumerable changes until the bones rot and turn into dust. To remove this possible doubt, Allah ordered him to look at his food and drink which had not changed a bit all this time; and to look at his donkey whose bones had rotted. The condition of the donkey would indicate the length of time and the condition of the food and the drink would show him the possibility of remaining in one condition for such a long period without undergoing any change.

It shows that the donkey had also been given death and had become rotten. But the Qur'an, in its unsurpassed good style, did not like to mention the donkey's death when it had said that the prophet had been caused to die.

In this way Allah made him realize that his amazement, which was based on the length of time, was not appropriate. He himself admitted that a hundred years were to him like a day or a part of a day. It was the same feeling which the resurrected will show on the Day of Resurrection. Thus he became aware that the time passed between death and resurrection, whether short or long, has no effect whatsoever on the power of Allah Who rules over everything. His power is no subservient to time and space. Changes, whether big or small, which occur in a body, make no difference to His power. Giving life to old dead bodes is as easy to Him as resurrecting new ones. Old and new, far and near, are all equal to Him. As He says: *Surely they think it to be far off, and We see it nigh (70:6-7); .. the matter the Hour is but as the twinkling of an eye or it is still nearer... (16:77)* .

"And mat We make you a sign to men": The conjunction "and " signifies that there was some other purpose also. It means: We did We did so that We may explain to you certain things and so that We

may make you a sign to men. 'Thus there were two aims. the purpose of showing him how Allah assembled the bones and clothed them with flesh was to show him how He gives life to the dead; and the purpose of causing him to die and to make him alive again was to demonstrate that fact to him and to make him a sign for other men. That is why the sentence, "and that We make you a sign to men", was written before the mention of the bones and their being clothed by flesh.

The above discourse also shows why the word "look" has been repeated thrice in this verse. Each order has a special purpose which is not shared by the other two.

Allah gave him death and then made him alive. In this way, he himself experienced what most people will feel on the Day of Resurrection; as Allah says: *And at the time when the Hour shall come, the guilty shall swear (that) they did not tarry but an hour; thus they used to utter lies. And those who are given knowledge and faith will say: Certainly you tarried according to the decree of Allah till the Day of Resurrection; so this is, the Day of Resurrection, but you did not know (30:55-56).*

Then Allah explained to him the second aspect of his question: How will the parts and components of the body return to their original shape, after all those innumerable changes"

So Allah told him to "look at the bones, how We assemble them together, then clothe them with flesh." Obviously, it refers to the bones of the donkey, and not to those of the dead people of the town. Otherwise, not he alone, but all the resurrected people of the town would have become "signs" of Allah to the mankind.

The commentator whose misinterpretation of "death" and "life" we have commented upon earlier explains away this sentence in a strange way as well. He says that the "bones" refer to the bones in a living body; the fact that they grow and are clothed with flesh is a proof of resurrection. The Creator Who gave it life and growth is surely the Resurrector of the dead; surely He has power over everything. Allah has argued for resurrection in a like manner by referring to the dead earth which is made alive again with vegetation.

Such an interpretation is obviously absurd.

The explanation which we have given above show that the whole story beginning from: "So Allah caused him to die" up to the end of the verse is one single reply to the prophet's question, "How will Allah give it life after its death?" There is no repetition in it at all.

QUR'AN: *So when it became clear to him, he said:*

"I know that Allah has power over all things": He returns, after the demonstration, to the knowledge which he already had before that. It seems that when the question as to how Allah could make it alive came into his mind, he satisfied his curiosity by remembering the all -encompassing power of Allah. Then Allah made the matter clear to him by demonstrating how He gives life to the dead. After this re-assurance, he clearly knew the truth of his previous knowledge, and spoke to Allah in these words, the import of which is as follows: Thou hast always guided me aright; and what I had always known about Thy Omnipotence was not to be doubted; it was the truth which I should always rely upon.

One may find examples of such re-assurance everywhere. Many are the times when a man has definite knowledge of a subject, then some thought occurs in his mind which goes against that, not because of any doubt or ignorance, but because of some other factors. Thereupon he satisfies himself about the previous certainty, till the doubt is removed. Then, he returns to his previous knowledge and says: 'I know that it is so'. In this way his knowledge is confirmed and his perplexity is removed.

In short, the sentence, "I know that Allah has power over all things", does not mean that before it became clear to him, he was in some doubt about the power of Allah. Such an interpretation would be

wrong, because

First: He was a prophet, who was spoken to by Allah. And the prophets cannot be ignorant of Allah's person and attributes; and especially of His Omnipotence which is an attribute of person.

Second: Had he been ignorant of Allah's power, he would have said, "Now I know..." or "Now I knew..." But he said: "I know", that is, from before.

Third: What he had seen was a proof that Allah had power to give life to the dead. It did not prove that He had power "over all things." But he said that he knew that Allah had power over all things. It shows that this knowledge was not based on that demonstration.

Of course, it is possible that a man of lesser strength of character would be stunned and bewildered by such a manifestation

of divine power, and would declare, forgetting all other things, that He Who gives life to the dead has power over all things. But it would be just a conjecture, based on fear and awe; it would be wiped out as soon as that fear or awe was removed. Moreover, it would not be acceptable to him who has not experienced that fear or awe. In any case, such an illogical conclusion cannot be relied upon. But we see in this verse that Allah confirms his declaration by putting it under His seal of approval. It naturally, follows that this knowledge had not come to him as a result of that manifestation.

In other words, if he had acquired that knowledge through that manifestation, then all he would have known was that Allah had the power to give life to the dead. He should therefore not have said that Allah had the power over all things. Such talk would be wrong in fact, and would be beneath the dignity of a prophet.

QUR'AN: *And (remember) when Ibrahim said: "My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead":*

It has been explained earlier that the conjunctive "and" is related to a deleted (but understood) word, "remember"; and that that deleted word governs the adverb "when." Someone has said that the word "when" is governed by "What! and do you not believe?" But this is patently wrong.

The plea of Ibrahim, "My Lord ! show me how Thou givest life to the dead", proves

First: that he asked for demonstration, not for logical reasoning. The prophets (and especially a prophet like Ibrahim, the friend of Allah) are too great to believe in resurrection on the Day of Judgment without any logical reason. A belief without reason is either blind following, or also is based on defective intellection. And neither of these two can be attributed to Ibrahim (a.s.). Moreover, he used the word "how" which is used to ask about the state and condition of a thing, not about the thing itself. When you say: "Have you seen Zayd?", the question is about the seeing itself. But if you say: "How did you see Zayd?", the seeing is already known and accepted; the question is only about the condition of it and its particulars. When Ibrahim (a.s.) asked, "how Thou givest life to the dead", he already knew by logic and reason that Allah gives life to the dead: now he only wanted to see now it was done.

Second: that the question asked by Ibrahim (a.s.) could mean either of the two following things:

1) How could the material parts of a dead man come together after being scattered hither and thither, and how could they accept life and become alive? In other words. how could they be governed by the power of Allah?

2) How does Allah bestow life on the dead. The first question is concerned with the effect and the result; the second one with the reason and the cause. This second aspect is in a way the kingdom, which Allah mentions in the Qur'an: *His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it, "Be", and it is. Therefore, glory be to Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of all things, and to*

Him you shall be brought back (36:82-83).

Which of the two questions did Ibrahim (a.s.) ask? He asked the second one, and not the first, because:

a) he asked "how Thou givest life." He wanted to see the action of Allah. The effect of the action on the dead was not his primary concern; otherwise he would have asked "how the dead become alive";

b) if he only wanted to see how dead bodies respond to life, Allah could have given life to any dead animal before the eyes of Ibrahim (a.s.), and there would have been no need to make it happen in Ibrahim's hands;

c) if he wanted to see how a dead body comes to life, then the story should have been ended on something like, "Know that Allah has the power over all things", and not on the words actually used, "Know that Allah is Mighty, Wise." The Qur'an always uses the appropriate adjectives at the end of verses. The first meaning of the question concerns the power of Allah and if that was the purpose of Ibrahim (a.s.) in asking, the attribute of power should have been mentioned at the end. But Allah used the attributes of Might and Wisdom which are more appropriate for bestowing of life, rather than for the acceptance of life by matter,

A commentator has interpreted this verse in a strange way, which is given hereunder. (Our comments on this interpretation will be given afterwards.) He says:

When Ibrahim (a.s.) said: "My Lord! Show me... ", he only wanted to "know" how the dead were given life; he did not want to "see" how it was done. And the reply does not go beyond that information. The said commentator further says: There is nothing in this verse to show that Allah ordered him to give life to the birds. Nor that Ibrahim (a.s.) did as he was ordered. Not every order is intended to be complied with. Information is often given in the imperative mood. Suppose that someone asks you how ink is made. You tell him: "Take this and that material and then mix it in this way, and your ink shall be ready." You want to explain to him how ink is made; not that you are ordering him to make ink then and there, even though you use the imperative mood.

He further says: There are many verses in the Qur'an in which information has been given in the form of an order. This particular verse gives just a similitude for the resurrection of the dead. It tells Ibrahim: Take four birds, make them tame and train them so that they obey your call. (The birds are the fittest of all animals for such training.) Then put each bird on a mountain, and then call them. See how swiftly they come to you, their separation and their distance from you shall not prevent them from coming to you, flying. The same is the similitude of the decree of your Lord. When He intends to give life to the dead, He calls them with the word of creation, "Be alive", and they at once become alive. It is the same as was in the beginning of creation. He said to the heaven and to the earth, "Come both willingly or unwillingly "; they both said, " We come willingly ."

The said commentator has given two "proofs" for his interpretation:

First: The word of Allah, "*fa-surhunna*" according to him means "make them inclined." That is, tame them and make them affable towards yourself. It is because of this meaning that it is followed by the preposition "*ila*" (to). The verb *sara* when followed by *ila* gives the meaning of inclination.

He says that it is wrong to say (as commentators have done) that *fa-surhunna* means, "then cut them into pieces after killing them." This interpretation is not in conformity with the preposition mentioned above.

He further says: Some commentators have said that the preposition is related to the word "*fa-khudh*"(then take). and the verse in effect says, "then take to you four of the birds, then cut them into pieces." But such an interpretation is against the clear sequence of the words.

Second: Apparently, the pronouns in the words *fa surhunna* (make them inclined), *"minhunna* (a part of them). *"ud 'uhunna"* (call them) and *"ya'tinaka"* (they will come to you), all refer to the "birds." If we accept the interpretation of the commentators that Ibrahim (a.s.) was told to cut the birds into pieces and that after mixing their parts, he was to put portions of them on mountains, and after that he was to call them, then the pronouns would differ in their meanings: the first two would refer to the birds, and the third and fourth to the pieces of the birds. And such a thing is against the apparent meaning of the Qur'an.

The said commentator wrote the above-mentioned two arguments. Another commentator, who agrees with him, has added three more "proofs", which we append below:

Third: What is the meaning of "showing how a thing is created?" Does it mean demonstrating how the scattered parts and components are joined and assembled and how they change back to their original living shape? If yes, then it could not be shown by cutting the birds into pieces, mixing them together and putting small portions on far away hills. How could Ibrahim (a.s.) see from such a distance what changes and movements were occurring in the smallest atoms of the pieces? Or, does it mean showing him how Allah gives life to the dead? In other words, does it mean comprehending the reality of the creative decree? But the creative decree is the divine will which brings things into being; and the Qur'an openly says, and Muslims agree, that it is impossible for a human being to comprehend the creative decree of Allah; the attributes of Allah cannot be subjected to "how."

Fourth: The words of the Qur'an "then place on every mountain... " point to some delay, and it is in conformity with the idea of taming and training. The same is the import of the words *fa surhunna* which should be translated, "then make them inclined." The idea of killing the birds and cutting them into pieces does not conform with the "delay" implied in *"thuma"* (then).

Fifth: If the events occurred as most of the commentators say, then the verse should have ended on the divine name "Powerful" and not on "Mighty, Wise"; because "Mighty" is the one who cannot be comprehended.

The author's comments: The above was the interpretation of this group. But if you ponder on the explanation given by us earlier, you will realize that none of their arguments are valid. The plea of Ibrahim (a.s.) begins with the word, "show me" then come the words, "how Thou givest life ... "; and the verse goes on describing how this "giving life" was performed in the hands of Ibrahim (a.s.) himself. Add to it the words, "then place on every mountain a part of them"; clearly "a part" refers to a part of the bird, not a complete and alive bird. All this clearly negates the interpretation offered by these people.

Now let us look at their arguments.

Reply to the first argument: *fa surhunna* definitely means, "then cut them into pieces." The preposition *ila* (to) is used here to imply inclination. This implication of it was described in the commentary of the words *"arrafaathu ila nisa'ikum* (to go into your wives) (in verse 187 of this chapter). Thus, its complete meaning is: cut them into pieces inclining them towards you.

Reply to the second argument: All the four pronouns refer to the birds. Now comes the question: how could the pronouns in "call them" and "they will come to you" refer to the birds, when there was no bird at all, when only the pieces of those birds had remained? This question arises because the said commentator does not know the difference between mere verbal speech and creative speech. See, for example, the verse: *Then He directed Himself to the heaven and it was a vapor, so He said to it and to the earth: "Come both, willingly or unwillingly". They both said: "We come willingly"* (41:11). Here Allah addressed the heaven, while it was non-existent; only its matter was present at that time. Likewise, Ibrahim (a.s.) was told to call the birds, while they did not exist; only

their pieces existed at that time. Then there is the verse: His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it, 'Be', and it is (36:82). Here a nonexistent thing is addressed by the creative speech "Be."

The fact is that verbal speech requires an addressee to exist before the speech. But the opposite is true in the case of creative speech. There, the existence of the addressee follows that speech. In this case, the talk, address or speech means "creation"; and existence is caused by creation. In the above-mentioned verse 36:82 "and it is" (i.e., existence) depends on the creative word "Be" (i.e., creation).

Reply to the third argument: We believe that the second alternative is correct: that Ibrahim (a.s.) wanted to see how Allah gives life to the dead; he did not want to see how a dead body accepts life.

The said commentator has argued against this alternative. He says that it implies comprehension of the will of Allah, which, being an attribute of Allah, is impossible to comprehend.

But the fact is that the will of Allah is an attribute of action, and is inferred from divine actions like creating, giving life, and so forth. What is impossible to comprehend is the Person of Allah, as He says:... *they do not comprehend Him in knowledge*(20:110).

Will is deduced from action. It is creation accompanied by the existence of the created thing. It is the word "Be" mentioned in verse 36:82: "... that He says to it 'Be' and it is." This word, "Be", is the kingdom of everything that is mentioned in the next verse: *Therefore glory be to Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of everything...* (36:83). And Allah has said that He had shown Ibrahim (a.s.) the great kingdom of His creation: *And thus did We show Ibrahim the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that he might be of those who are sure* (6:75).

Obviously, among the great kingdom shown to Ibrahim (a.s.) was this giving life to the birds, mentioned in this verse.

Why are these people so confused? It is because they do not understand the force behind such miraculous happenings. They think that when Ibrahim (a.s.) called the birds and they became alive, or when 'Isa (a.s.) said to a dead body, "Rise up by permission of Allah" and it rose up, or when Sulayman (a.s.) ordered the wind to blow and it did so, it was because of some effective cause which was hidden in those words by Allah; or because of the thinking process of these prophets which showed itself in these words (made of letters), as our words lead one to their meanings. These people do not realize that all this was based upon these prophets' spiritual connection with the divine power which can never be overpowered; and with Allah's Omnipotence which knows no bounds and which is the real power that brings everything into being.

Reply to the fourth argument: The delay inferred from the word *thumb* (then) is found in cutting the birds into pieces as well, dividing and mixing the parts and putting them on various mountains. This matter needs no elaboration.

Reply to the fifth argument: This argument, in fact, goes against the objector. What he wants to prove is that Allah only explained to Ibrahim (a.s.), in an academic and theoretical manner, how the things were made alive; He did not show it to him by demonstration. If that was the case, then the verse should have been ended on the adjective "Powerful", instead of "Mighty, Wise." We have explained earlier that the adjectives "Mighty" and "Wise " are more appropriate for our explanation of the verse.

Another commentator has interpreted this verse in another wrong way. He thinks that what Ibrahim (a.s.) wanted to see was how a dead body accepts life and becomes alive; that his question was concerned with the effect and the result, not with its reason and cause. His argument is as follows:

Ibrahim (a.s.) did not ask about any religiously essential matter. He only wanted to know how the dead become alive, so that he might have knowledge of it. It is not necessary for true belief to know

"how" the dead are resurrected. Thus Ibrahim (a.s.) wanted to acquire some knowledge which was not necessary for true belief. This view is supported by the mode of the question: "how?" This particle is used to ask about a state or condition. If you say "How does Zayd judge between people?", the fact that he does judge between people, is already known to you. What you want to know is only the condition under which, and the manner in which, he does this work. On the other hand, if you want to enquire about the fact of his judging, you would say "Does Zayd judge between people?" It proves that Ibrahim (a.s.) already knew and believed that Allah gives life to the dead: he only wanted to know how it was done. Then why did Allah tell him: "What! and do you not believe?" This question was asked to remove any possible misunderstanding about Ibrahim's faith. The mode of questioning, used by Ibrahim, is mainly to ask about the state and condition. But it is also used, at times, to show the disability of the person so addressed. Someone claims that he can lift an extremely heavy weight, and you tell him "Well, show me how you lift it." This question shows your conviction that he is unable to do so. As Allah knew that Ibrahim (a.s.) had not meant any such thing in his question. He put this counter-question to him, so that he might clarify this point in unambiguous words, and might thus remove any misunderstanding that the wording of the first question could have caused. In this way, his pristine faith was clearly confirmed and no hearer could entertain any doubt about it. The words "but that my heart may be at ease" mean that Ibrahim (a.s.) wanted his heart not to wonder hither and thither thinking about various ways in which a dead body might become alive again. He wanted it to be at ease by seeing it with his own eyes. That his heart was not at ease before had no adverse effect on his faith in the power of Allah to give life to the dead. And when he was shown how the dead were made alive, nothing was added to his already perfect faith. He just acquired some knowledge which was not very necessary for the faith.

Then, after a long discussion, he says: This verse shows the excellence of Ibrahim (a.s.). He was at once shown what he had asked for, and that, also, in the easiest way; while 'Uzayr' was shown what he wanted to know after undergoing death for a hundred years.

The author's comments: Our previous explanation is enough to show that Ibrahim (a.s.) wanted to know how Allah gives life to the dead and not as to how the dead accept life. He wanted to see the cause, not the effect. That is why he said, "how Thou givest life to the dead" (active voice); and did not say, "how the dead are made alive" (passive voice). Then there is the fact that the whole episode was made to happen through the activities of Ibrahim (a.s.) himself. If he had wanted to see only the effect (and not the cause), it would have been enough to show him any dead body coming alive, as was shown to the one who passed by a town when it had fallen upon its roofs; Allah told him to "look at the bones, how We assemble them together, then clothe them with flesh." There would have been no need to make everything happen through the agency of Ibrahim (a.s.) himself. The trouble is that these people measure the spiritual condition of the prophets with the measure of their own common spirits, and in this way fail to understand how the prophets receive divine knowledge and how they perform miracles. They do not appreciate the difference between showing a prophet how the dead became alive and making him the active agent to give life to the dead: for them, both have the same significance! They have lost touch with divine realities, and fallen into this error. And the more they search for the truth, the farther they go from it. See how he interprets the "ease of heart." He says that Ibrahim (a.s.) wanted his heart not to wonder hither and thither thinking about the various ways in which a thing might be made alive. This alleged wondering hither and thither is a nonsense that is utterly impossible for a prophet like Ibrahim (a.s.).

Moreover, if Ibrahim (a.s.) had wanted to see how dead bodies come alive, the reply was not an answer to his query at all. He said, "how Thou givest life to the dead ." The word used in the question

is "*al-mawta* " (the dead ones); it is plural and general. He might have meant the dead men, or the dead ones in general, including dead human beings and all types of animals. But Allah showed him only the resurrection of four birds.

Then the said commentator has shown, according to his thinking, the superiority of Ibrahim (a.s.) over 'Uzayr (whom he identifies as the passer-by, mentioned in the preceding verse). He thinks that the two stories have the same significance; both men wanted to see how the dead were made alive and both were shown. But, as we have mentioned earlier, neither story is concerned in any way with that question. And he has been unable to see the brilliant exposition and deep realities which the two verses contain.

Lastly, if the verse intended just to explain how the dead come alive, it would have been appropriate to end it on the adjective "Omnipotent", or "Powerful", and not on "Mighty, Wise." See, for instance, the following verses:

And among His signs is this, that you see the earth still, but when We send down on it the water, it stirs and swells: most surely He Who gives it life is the Giver of life to the dead; surely He has power over all things (41:39). As you see, the verse explains "how" the dead are given life, and it ends on the attribute of Omnipotence.

Have they not seen that Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth and was not tired by their creation, is able to give life to the dead? Aye! He has surely power over all things (46:33). Here again the "how" is explained through a simile, and the verse ends on the attribute of power.

QUR'AN: *He said: "What! and do you not believe? " He said: "Certainly, but that my heart may be at ease":*

'*Bala* (certainly) is used to negate a negative question; and thus the negative of the question becomes positive. For example, Allah asked the souls: "*Am I not your Lord? "* *They said: "Certainly* "(7:172). Had they replied, *na 'am* (yes), it would have become infidelity. *at-Tamaninah* and *al-itminan* is the quiet of the heart after its being troubled and agitated. It is derived from the words, *itma'annati'l-ard* (the earth was depressed) and *ardun mutma'innah* (low land) which are used when the earth becomes low, so that if the water comes in, it stays therein and if a stone falls in, it remains motionless.

Allah said: "and do you not believe?" Had He said, 'do you not believe?', it would have shown that the original question ("*Show me how Thou givest life to the dead*") was asked because of disbelief; and it would have become an admonition and reproach. By adding "and", Allah showed that Ibrahim's question was quite in order, but it should not be associated with disbelief in resurrection. "*wa*" (and) is a conjunctive and it joins two words, phrases or sentences. When Allah added it in His question, it changed the import of the sentence. Now it means: Your question is in order, but it is associated with disbelief in resurrection? Without this conjunctive, it would have meant: Do you ask it because you do not believe? It would have turned it into a censure and reprimand.

"Belief" mentioned in the divine question is general, it is not used with any condition or restriction. It signifies that one cannot believe in Allah if one is doubtful about the resurrection of the dead. No doubt the question "and do you not believe?" was asked in the context of giving life to the dead. But the context does not restrict the general meaning of the word. "Belief", therefore, retains its unconditional meaning, and shows that nobody could be a believer unless he believed in resurrection.

Likewise, the words of Ibrahim (a.s.) quoted by Allah "that my heart may be at ease" are unconditional. It means that he wanted to acquire total tranquility and to cut at the roots of all types of fancies and imaginations. Human imagination is bound to the senses; all its activities are confined within the circle of the things perceived by these senses. It shrinks from those things which are known

through reason only, even when a man believes them to be true, like those principles of metaphysics which are beyond the sphere of matter and which cannot be known through any of the five senses. The mind resists those realities even when their premises are sound and certain. There always remain some vague doubt about the authenticity of those conclusions. Such doubts and conflicting ideas become strengthened by inclinations and desires, although the spirit firmly accepts the truth of those principles and believes in them unconditionally. Thus, belief and faith should remain firm and intact: the imagination should only harm it by a slight distress, which we may call pricks. A man sleeps in a dark room in which is placed a dead body. He knows that the dead person is just a lump of matter without any sense or will; it cannot harm anybody in any way. But the imagination refuses to accept this truth, it goes on thinking fantastic things concerning that dead body; and it frightens the man to such an extent that it may happen that he loses the balance of his mind, or even dies because of terror.

This example shows that the existence of some thoughts or fantasies conflicting with the sure truths, is not always contrary to faith and belief. But surely it annoys the spirit and robs it of its tranquility and ease. Such an imaginary distress cannot be removed except by demonstration or sensual perception. That is what is meant by the saying: Seeing has an effect which knowledge does not have. For instance, Allah informed Musa (a.s.), when he was at his appointed place, that his people had gone astray and were worshipping a calf. Hearing it, he believed it. Yet, his distress and anger showed itself only when he returned to them and saw them with his own eyes, in their idolatry. Then his violent grief reached its highest point; he threw down the tablets and seized his brother by the head dragging him towards himself.

From this and the previous explanations it is clear that Ibrahim (a.s.) had not asked to see a phenomenon which could be perceived through the senses; that is, he did not want to see how the parts and pieces of a dead body accept life after death. He wanted to see the action of Allah in giving life to the dead. But this action could not be seen, although it was not unrelated to a perceived phenomenon, that is, the acceptance of life by the pieces of the dead bodies. Thus Ibrahim (a.s.) had in fact asked for an evident truth and certainty.

QUR'AN: *He said: "Then take four of the birds, then cut them (into pieces), then place on every mountain a part of them, they will come to you":*

The word "*surhunna*" (cut them into pieces) is derived from *sara; yasuru* (he cut/he inclined; he is cutting/he is inclining). Another recitation is *sirhunna*, derived from *sara; yasiru* with the same meanings. The context shows that it means "cut them." The preposition, "*ila*" (to) gives a hint of inclination, as was explained earlier. The meaning, then, will be: cut them (into pieces), inclining them towards you; or, incline them towards you cutting them into pieces.

Anyhow, the above sentences are the answer to the prayer of Ibrahim (a.s.) when he said: "My Lord! show me how Thou givest life to the dead." Obviously, the answer should fit the question. The norms of eloquence and the wisdom of the speaker leave no room for verbosity; a wise and eloquent speaker does not allow his speech to be encumbered by unnecessary words which have no bearing on the intended meaning. This is especially so with the Qur'an, the best speech, revealed by the best of speakers to the best of hearers. The story is not as simple as it appears at first glance. Had it been so, the answer would have been completed by the giving of life to any dead body in any manner, and the extra details would have been deemed unnecessary. But the facts tell us otherwise: Allah included in it many extra particulars and details. It was decided that the dead to be given life should be from among the birds; they should be alive, should be four in number, they should be killed and their parts and pieces be mixed together, then the mixed matter should be divided into many portions; then every portion should be placed in places distant from each other like the peak of this mountain and summit

of that hill; then they should be given life through Ibrahim (a.s.), that is, the very man who had asked for it; and thus they should all gather around him alive and none the worse for their experience.

All these details and peculiarities must have had some connection with the aim of the story. The commentators have written many reasons for these points, which only add to the readers' confusion (as may be seen in the more extensive books of exegesis of the Qur'an).

However, these particulars must have been related to the question. We find that there are two aspects in the question of Ibrahim (a.s.) which require special attention:

First: His use of the active voice, "how Thou givest life." He wanted to see the giving of life, in-as-much as it is an attribute of Allah. He did not want to see it from the other side, that is, how the various parts of a dead body accept life after death.

Second: His use of the plural, "dead ones", which is an added particular.

Keeping these two matters in view, we find that the answer fits the question perfectly, there is nothing unnecessary or extraneous in it.

The first aspect was fully answered by making it happen through Ibrahim (a.s.) himself. The words "then take", "then cut them" and "then place", were all essential for this purpose. Finally Allah said, "then call them, they will come to you flying." Their coming to Ibrahim flying, that is, their life, was caused by Ibrahim's call. Allah made his call the cause of the giving of life to the dead birds - and there is no bestowing of life except by the decree of Allah. The call of Ibrahim, by order of Allah, had a sort of connection with the decree of Allah which gives life to all. In this way, Ibrahim saw this bestowing with his own eyes, and saw how the divine decree creates life. Had the call of Ibrahim (a.s.) not been connected with the decree of Allah (*Who, when He intends a thing, say to it 'Be', and it is*), and had it been connected, like our own talk, with the images in his mind only, it could not create anything, could not give life to any dead thing.

The second aspect, the use of the plural, "dead ones", shows that the multiplicity of the dead had some bearing on the question. The bodies, after they had died, their components disintegrated, their shapes altered and their conditions totally changed, could not be recognized, nor could there remain any connection or attachment between their former parts; they became lost in the darkness of nothingness, like forgotten myths that exist neither in reality nor in the imagination. Ibrahim (a.s.) wanted to see how the life-giving power of Allah would encompass them when there was nothing to be encompassed.

This same question was asked arrogantly by Pharaoh, and Musa (a.s.) replied to him by knowledge. Allah says quoting this talk: (Pharaoh)said: *"Then what is the state of the former generation?"* He (Musa) said: *"The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a book; errs not my Lord, nor does He forget"* (20:51-52).

Anyhow, this aspect of the question was answered by Allah when He ordered Ibrahim (a.s.) to take four of the birds (perhaps, the birds were chosen for this demonstration because it could be carried out on them easily and without delay) so that he might observe their ways, see their distinguishing features and particular shapes, and thus might know them perfectly. He was then ordered to kill them, chop and mince them, mixing their small particles completely together. Then he was required to divide that mixture into portions and put each portion on a separate mountain, so that there should not remain any chance of recognition. Then he was to call them, and they would come to him flying. By this demonstration, he would see that the re-establishing of separate identities and the bestowal of life follows the call; and that the call was addressed to their souls. The body follows the soul, it is not the other way round. The body is a dependant of the soul, and not vice versa. The body has the same relation to the soul that a shadow has to the body. The shadow appears when the body exists; it

inclines according to the inclination of the body; and when the body ceases to exist, the shadow becomes extinct. Likewise, when Allah creates a living thing, or gives life to a dead animal or man, the creative decree affects, originally, the spirit, and the material parts follow the spirit and come into being, because of the special bond created by Allah between the spirit and its body - the bond which is preserved by Allah and which we cannot comprehend. In this way, the identity of the body follows the identity of the spirit, without any gap and without any hindrance. Allah refers to it in His words, "they will come to you flying", that is, without any delay whatsoever.

The same principle has been enunciated in verse 32:10-11, *And they say: "What! when we have become lost in the earth, shall we then indeed be in a new creation?" Nay! they are disbelievers in the meeting of their Lord. Say: "The angel of death who is given charge of you causes you to die, then to your Lord you are brought back. "* We have explained to some extent this verse while discussing the non-materiality of the soul; further details will be given in a proper place, God willing.

"Then take four of the birds": He was given this order so that he might identify them perfectly. Thus there would be no room for doubt when they had been made whole and alive again. Also he would observe their particulars and peculiarities, and then would see how all distinctions had been lost after death.

"Then cut them (into pieces), then place on every mountain a part of them": Kill them, cut them into pieces, mix those pieces all together and divide the portions on the mountains found in your locality. In this way, the parts of each bird would be scattered here and there, and they would not be recognizable.

This order indicate that this event occurred after Ibrahim (a.s.) had migrated from Babylonia to Syria; because there are no mountains in Babylonia.

"Then call them": Call the birds 'O peacock!, O this!, O that!' The pronoun "them" refers to the "four birds." If Allah had wished Ibrahim to call the pieces of the birds, He would have said "*nadihinna*" (cry out to them), because the pieces were on far away mountains, and not *ud'uhunna* (call them) which is used for calling someone nearby. The order to "call them" indicates that he was to call the birds (i.e., their spirits) themselves. "They will come to you flying." That is, they will get their own bodies and shapes, and will acquire all their faculties and powers including flying.

QUR'AN: *And know that Allah is Mighty, Wise:*

He is Mighty; if a thing ceases to exist, it is not lost to Him. He is Wise; He does not do a thing but by its proper method. He creates bodies by creating souls, and not the other way round.

Traditions

About the words of Allah: *Did You not see him who disputed with Ibrahim about his Lord: at - Tayalisi and Ibn Abi Hatim have narrated from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib that he said: "He who disputed with Ibrahim about his Lord was Namrud (Nimrod), son of Kan'an." (ad-Durru'l-manthur)*

Abu Ali at-Tabrisi has said: "There is a difference of opinion as to the time when this dispute occurred. It is said that it was when he shattered the idols, before he was thrown into fire. (It is reported from Muqatil.) Also it is said that it was after he was thrown into fire, and it had become cool and safe for him. (It is reported from as-Sadiq - a.s.)" (*Tafsiru'l-burhan*)

The author says: The verse does not say when the dispute had taken place. But it may fairly be inferred that it was after Ibrahim had been thrown into fire. The stories written in the Qur'an about the

early period of Ibrahim (a.s.) - when he argued with his uncle and other people and then shattered the idols, give us to understand that he first met Namrud when he was taken to his court accused of breaking their idols: and Namrud ordered him to be burnt alive. At that time Namrud was too busy in sentencing him to have any dialogue with him about his Lord: whether it was Allah or Namrud. Also, if this event had occurred at that time, Namrud would have disputed with him on behalf of the idols, and not for establishing his own divinity.

There are many traditions, narrated by the Sunni and the Shi 'ite narrators that the one "who passed by a town and it had fallen down upon its roofs" was the prophet, Armiah. Other traditions say that he was 'Uzayr. But both types of traditions are "solitary", (i.e., not *mutawatir*) and one is not bound to accept any of them. Moreover, the chains of some are weak. The Qur'an too is silent about the passer-by's identity, and the Bible does not mention this story.

The story given in those traditions is long, and there are some differences among them. In any case, those traditions are beyond the scope of our book. Those wishing to read them should look for them into other books.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) told in a tradition about the words of Allah: *And (remember) when Ibrahim said: 'My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead... ':* "And this verse is allegorical; it means that he (Ibrahim - a.s.) asked about 'how'?, and 'how' is an action of Allah, Mighty and Great is He; (it is a thing that) if a knowledgeable person did not know it he cannot be faulted for it nor can any defect be attributed to his belief in monotheism ... " (*Ma 'ani'l-akhbar*)

The author says: The meaning of this tradition may be understood from our earlier explanations. 'Ali ibn Asbat says that Abu'l-Hasan ar-Rida (a.s.) was asked about the words of Allah: *He (Ibrahim) said: 'Certainly! but that my heart may be at ease. ' "Was there any doubt in his heart?"* The Imam said: "No! but he wanted an increase (in it) from Allah ... " (*at-Tafsir*, al-'Ayyashi)

The author says: This matter has been narrated in *al-Kafi* from as-Sadiq (a.s.) and al-'Abdu 's-Salih (a.s.). Its meaning has been explained earlier.

al-Qummi narrated from his father from Ibn Abi 'Umayr from Abu Ayyub from Abu Basir from as-Sadiq (a.s.) saying "Verily Ibrahim saw a dead body on a river-bank; aquatic carnivores were eating it, then they attacked each other and some of them ate the others. Ibrahim was astonished (to see it) and said: 'My Lord! show me how Thou givest life to the dead.' Allah said: 'What! and do you not believe?' He said: 'Certainly, but that my heart may be at ease.' Allah said: 'Then take four of the birds, then cut them into pieces, then place on every mountain a part of them, then call them, they will come to you flying; and know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.' Thereupon, Ibrahim took a peacock, a rooster, a pigeon and a crow. Then Allah said: 'Cut them into pieces and mix their flesh together and place them separately on ten mountains.' Thereafter he (Ibrahim - a.s.) called them and said: 'Be alive by the permission of Allah.' The birds began assembling, the flesh and bones of each joining together with its head; and they flew towards Ibrahim. (Seeing it) Ibrahim said: 'Verily, Allah is Mighty, Wise.'" (*at-Tafsir*)

The author says: al. 'Ayyashi has narrated it in his *at-Tafsir* from Abu Basir from as-Sadiq (a.s.); and it has been narrated through Sunni chains from Ibn 'Abbas.

The words of the Imam: "Verily, Ibrahim saw a dead body... *My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead*", describe the reason why Ibrahim asked this question: he had just seen the pieces of the body being disjoined and scattered, and their condition changed. He observed their dispersal in all directions and the deterioration in their condition which was to such an extent that nothing of the original body remained there.

Question: The tradition apparently says that the doubt was that which is known as the doubt of the eater and the eaten; because it mentions that the carnivores attacked each other and some of them ate the others, and that the wonder and question of Ibrahim (a.s.) was based on this phenomenon.

Comment: There are two doubts: 1) the scattering and dispersal of the parts of the bodies, the change in their properties and shapes, in short, their complete extinction so that apparently nothing remained to accept the life; 2) the parts of one animal become the parts of another animal; how could the two animals be resurrected whole? The part of one is also the part of another; whichever is resurrected whole, the other one will be incomplete. This is called the doubt of the eater and the eaten.

The answer given by Allah - that the body follows the soul - is sufficient to remove both doubts. But what Ibrahim (a.s.) was ordered to do was not related to the doubt of the eater and the eaten; it was directly concerned with the first doubt dispersal of the parts and total extinction, even though the basic answer removes both doubts.

What the tradition mentions some of the carnivores eating the others is not intended to be a part of the explanation of the verse.

The Imam (as-Sadiq - a.s.) has said: "Thereupon, Ibrahim took a peacock, a rooster, a pigeon and a crow." Some other traditions say that the birds were a vulture, a duck, a peacock and a rooster. It has been narrated by as-Sadiq in *'Uyunu'lakhbar* from ar-Rida (a.s.). It has also been reported from Mujahid, Ibn Jarir, 'Ata' and Ibn Zayd. Still others say that it was a hoopoe, a sparrow-hawk, a peacock and a crow. It has been narrated by al-'Ayyashi, through Ma'ruf ibn Kharabbudh, from al-Baqir (a.s.): and is reported from Ibn 'Abbas too. Another Sunni tradition quotes Ibn 'Abbas as saying that the birds were a crested crane, a peacock, a rooster and a pigeon. There is only one name which appears in every report: peacock.

The Imam said: "place them separately on ten mountains." That the mountain were ten is unanimously mentioned in the traditions of the Imams of *Ahlu'l-bayt*. Someone has put their number as four; another as seven.

'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Jahm said: "I was present in the court of al-Ma'mun and with him was ar-Rida ('All ibn Musa). al-Ma'mun said to him: 'O Son of the Messenger of Allah! Is it not your belief that the prophets were sinless?' He said: 'Certainly.' Then he (al-Ma'mun) asked him (ar-Rida - a.s.) about some verses of the Qur'an, and said to him, among others: 'Now tell me about the words of Allah: *"My Lord! show me how Thou givest life to the dead."* He said: *"What! and do you not believe?"* He said: *"Certainly, but that my heart may be at ease."* ar-Rida said: 'Verily Allah, Blessed and High is He!, had revealed to Ibrahim: "I am going to take from my servants a friend; if he asks me to give life to the dead, I will grant his prayer." It came into the heart of Ibrahim that he was that friend. Therefore, he said; *"My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead."* Allah said: *"What! and do you not believe?"* Ibrahim said: *"Certainly, but that my heart may be at ease about Thy friendship..."* (*'Uyun 'l-akhbar*)

The author says: We have expressed our views (while discussing about the Garden of Adam) about 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Jahm and about this tradition which he has narrated from ar-Rida (a.s.).

However, this tradition throws some light on the fact that the status of the friendship of Allah brings with it the granting of prayers. The language supports this too. *al-Khallah* means 'need'. The friend is called *al-khalil* because when friendship is perfect, one friend describes his needs to the other friend - and why should one describe his need if his friend cannot fulfill it?

Footnotes:

1. Sinimmar, an architect of repute, built the palace, al-Khawarnaq, for King Nu'man. When it was

completed, he was thrown down from the roof and thus died. The King gave this order so that he could not build such a palace for anyone else.

2. 'Uzayr = Ezra or Ezrah of the Apocrypha. He is known as Esdras in the Roman Catholic Bible.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 261-274

- 2:261 *The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears, in every ear there are a hundred grains; and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases; and Allah is Ample-giving, All-knowing.*
- 2:262 *Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah, then do not follow up what they have spent with reproach or injury, for them is their reward with their Lord, and they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve.*
- 2:263 *A kind word and forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury; and Allah is Self-sufficient, Forbearing.*
- 2:264 *you who believe! do not nullify your charity by reproach and injury, like him who spends his wealth to be seen of men and does not believe in Allah and the last day. So his parable is as the parable of a smooth rock with (some) earth upon it, then a heavy rain falls upon it, so it leaves it just a bare stone. They shall not gain anything of what they have earned. And Allah does not guide the unbelieving people.*
- 2:265 *And the parable of those who spend their wealth seeking the pleasure of Allah and keeping firm their souls is as the parable of a garden on an elevated ground, upon which heavy rain falls so it brings forth its fruit twofold; but if heavy rain does not fall upon it, then light rain (is*

enough). *And Allah sees what you do.*

2:266 Would anyone of you like that he should have a garden of palms and vines with streams flowing beneath it; he has in it all kinds of fruits; and old age has overtaken him and he has weak offspring, when (lo!) a whirlwind with fire in it smites it so it gets burnt up. Thus Allah makes the signs clear to you, that you by reflect.

2:267 O you who believe! spend (benevolently) out of the good things that you have earned and of what We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and do not aim at what is bad of it, that you may spend (in charity), while you would not take it yourselves unless you connived at it; and know that Allah is Self-sufficient, Praiseworthy.

2:268 Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins you to abomination; and Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance; and Allah is Ample-giving, All-knowing.

2:269 He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good; and none but men of understanding mind.

2:270 And whatever alms you give or (whatever) vow you vow, surely Allah knows it; and the oppressors shall have no helpers.

2:271 If you give alms openly, it is well, and if you hide it and give it to poor, it is better for you; and this will remove from you some of your sins; and Allah is aware of what you do.

2:272 To make them walk in the right way is not incumbent on you, but Allah guides aright whom He pleases; and whatever good thing you spend, it is to your own good, and you do not spend but to seek Allah's pleasure; and whatever good thing you spend shall be paid back to you in full, and you shall not be wronged.

2:273 (Charity is) for the poor who are besieged in the way of Allah - they cannot go about in the land; the ignorant man thinks them to be rich on account of their self-control (from begging); thou wouldst recognize them by their countenance; they do not beg from men importunately; and whatever good thing you spend, surely Allah knows it.

2:274 Those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and openly, for them is their reward with their Lord, and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.

General Comment

The context of the verses indicates that they must have been revealed all together. Their theme is spending in the way of Allah. They begin with a parable to show that charity increases in the hands of Allah, one to seven hundred or even more, by the permission of Allah. Another parable shows that this increase is sure to happen; it cannot fail. They go to forbid insincerity in spending, that is, spending to show others how generous one is, and give one more parable to demonstrate the futility of this, that such spending does not increase and bears no fruit. Also, they admonish the believers not to follow charity with reproach and injury, because these two evils nullify alms and make their reward forfeit. Then they say that spending should be from their good and lawful wealth, and not from unlawful or worthless things, as it shows niggardliness and miserliness. Thereafter they prescribe who should be given charity - the poor men who are besieged in the way of Allah. Finally it again reminds them of the great reward of charity which they shall find with Allah.

In short, the verses exhort the believers to spend and explain to them the following things:

First: The purpose of spending: It should be to seek the pleasure of Allah, not to show off to people.

Second: The fashion and condition of this good work: It should not be followed by reproach and

injury.

Third: The quality of the wealth to be spent: It must be lawful and good, not unlawful or worthless.

Fourth: The qualification of the receivers: It should be given to those poor who are besieged in the way of Allah.

Fifth: The rewards of such spending in this world and in the next.

Spending in the Way of Allah

One of the two pillars of Islam is the Rights of the people; and spending for the welfare of the people is one of the things to which Islam pays the utmost attention. It exhorts a believer to spend for this purpose, and has laid down the rules and opened up the ways for such spending - some of these ways are obligatory and others highly recommended: *zakat*, *khums* (the one-fifth tax), penalties to expiate certain illegalities, various types of redemption, obligatory spending and recommended charities. Then there are laws to establish and regulate endowments, settlements for residence, or for life, wills, gifts and many similar things.

All this has been done to improve the living standards of the poor classes - the people who cannot meet their expenses without help from others. The intention of Islam is to raise their level to bring them nearer to the people of means.

On the other hand, it has strictly forbidden the rich people from pompous living and showing off their wealth. It has allowed them to live in a reasonable and honorable manner; but has prohibited extravagance and the squandering of wealth in a lavish style which is above the reach of the average person.

The aim of both sets of rules was to create a community life that would be neither too low nor too high, whose various groups would be nearer to each other, and would have a fairly uniform standard of life. Such a society would give life to the institution of unity and cooperation; and would eradicate conflicting designs and uproot enmity and antagonism. The Qur'an holds that the true religion must organize life in all its multifarious activities, putting it in order in such a way that man's bliss is guaranteed in this life as well as in the next one. Such a religion will bless man with true knowledge, noble character and pleasant life; he will be free in this life to enjoy the bounties given to him by Allah, and to remove from himself unpleasant things and all types of misfortune.

This will be possible only when society enjoys a good life and all its members share its bliss equally or almost equally. This, in its turn, demands that all their needs are fulfilled and the condition of society reformed. All this needs money and wealth. The way to get that money for this most important purpose is by contributions from the members of society - they are required to spend- out of what they have earned by their labor. Surely the believers are brothers to each other; and the earth is of Allah, and property and wealth belong to Him.

This is a fact, the truth of which was demonstrated by the Prophet during his lifetime when he had the authority in his hands. He showed its correctness and demonstrated how it created a stable society, growing, developing and bearing good results.

It was this society for which the Leader of the faithful, 'Ali (a.s.) felt nostalgia, and the passing away of which he remembered sorrowfully, in one of his speeches:

"You live in a period when the steps of virtue are moving backwards, and the steps of evil are moving forward; and Satan is increasing his eagerness to ruin people. This is the time when his equipment is strong, and his traps have been widely spread and his prey has become easy (to catch).

Cast your glance wherever you like. Do you see (anything) except a poor man suffering (the pangs of) poverty, or a rich man changing Allah's favor for ungratefulness, or a miser trampling the right of Allah to increase his wealth, or an arrogant person (who behaves) as though his ears hear any counsel with difficulty." (*Nahju'l-balaghah*, Sermon 129).

The passage of time has proved the validity of this Qur'anic system - that the various classes should be brought together, the poor should be helped through "spending", and the rich forbidden extravagance, pomposity and vanity. When western culture took the upper hand, people's ideals and outlook changed. They clung to the earthly life, tried their utmost to acquire and keep all worldly trinkets coveted by animal greed and sensual desires, and adopted for it whatever means they could. The result: wealth was confined within a limited circle, the pleasures of life were reserved for a wealthy minority, and the only share of the lower class in it was deprivation. The upper classes continued to swallow each other like cannibals, until a very select group monopolized the blessings and bliss of this life and the vast majority, that is, the common people, were denied even the right of life.

This behavior generated all evil tendencies on both sides; it gave rise to the saying, "Every man for himself." No one leaves anything nor does he spare anything. It has resulted in a class struggle, and open enmity between the two groups, the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots, each side wanting to exterminate the other. This was the basic cause of the World Wars and the emergence of Communism. Truth and nobility have been cast aside, peace of mind and tranquility of heart have departed from the world, and the human species on the whole does not have any feeling of joy in life. This is the position which the chaos of human society has reached today - what tomorrow holds is more grievous and horrible.

One of the most damaging factors in this social disorder is the closure of the gate "spending", and the opening of the doors of interest. Allah has explained the evil of this in seven verses coming after these verses of "spending"; Allah had warned the mankind that if interest becomes widespread, the world will fall in disorder. It is one of the prophecies of the Qur'an which has been fulfilled in these days. When the Qur'an was revealed, interest was a fetus; now it has been born from the womb of western economy and is growing by leaps and bounds.

To understand what we have just mentioned, read the following verses:

Then set your face uprightly for the (right) religion in natural devotion (to the truth); the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no alteration in the creation of Allah; that is the right religion, but most people do not know turning to Him. And be careful of (your duty to) Him, and keep up prayer and be not of the polytheists, of those who, divided their religion and became sects, every sect rejoicing in what they have with them. And when harm afflicts men, they call upon their Lord, turning to Him; then when He makes them taste of mercy from Him, lo! some of them begin to associate (others) with their Lord, so as to be ungrateful for what We have given them; but enjoy yourselves (for a while), for you shall soon come to know... So give to the near of kin his due, and to the needy and the wayfarer; this is the best for those who desire Allah's pleasure, and these it is who are successful. And whatever you lay out as interest, so that it may increase in the property of men, it shall not increase with Allah; and whatever you give in charity, desiring Allah's pleasure - it is these (persons) that shall get manifold... Disorder has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, so that they may return. Say: "Travel in the land, then see how was the end of those (who were) before (you); most of them were polytheists." Then set thy face upright to the right religion before there comes from Allah the day which cannot be averted;

on that day they shall become separated (30:30-43).

There are verses of the same import in the chapters of Hud, Yunus, the Night journey, the Prophets etc. We shall explain them later on.

This is apparently the reason why these verses of spending exhort the believers and give so much emphasis to "spending."

Commentary

QUR'AN: The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain... :

"The way of Allah" means anything which leads to the pleasure of Allah; any religious purpose for which work is done. The phrase in the verse is unconditional, although it comes after the verses of "fighting in the way of Allah", and although the phrase "in the way of Allah" is combined in many verses with fighting. But such recurring usage does not restrict the phrase to fighting.

Some scholars have said: The words, "as the parable of a grain growing seven ears... " actually mean, "as the parable of him who sowed a grain that grew seven ears... " The "grain growing seven ears" is the parable of property spent in the way of Allah, and not ."of those who spend" that wealth. And it does not need much explanation.

This interpretation, although sound in itself, is not in total conformity with the Qur'an. On deep contemplation, we find that an overwhelming number of the Qur'anic parables are of this same style. See, for example, the following verses:

And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who shouts to that which hears not but a call and a cry... (2:171). As we see, it is the parable of him who calls the disbelievers, not of the disbelievers themselves.

The likeness of this world's life is only as water which We sent down from the sky; by its mingling, the herbage of the earth which men and cattle eat grows; until when the earth puts on its golden raiment and it becomes garnished, and its people think that they have power over it, Our command comes to it, by night or by day, so We render it as reaped, as though it had not been in existence yesterday; thus do We make clear the signs for a people who reflect (10:24).

... the parable of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp... (24:35).

Look also at other parables mentioned in these very verses:

So his parable is as the parable of a smooth rock...

And the parable of those who spend their wealth seeking the pleasure of Allah and keeping firm their souls is as the parable of a garden on an elevated ground...

There are many such verses and all of them have one thing in common - all restrict themselves to the main element of the likeness, the essential ingredient of the parable; and omit other factors for the sake of brevity.

A parable is an actual or imagined story which has a marked resemblance to the subject matter in some aspects; it creates a picture in the mind which helps to fully grasp the idea for which the parable has been used. For example, there are the Arabic proverbs, "I have neither she-camel nor he-camel"; and, "In summer you wasted the milk." These sayings remind the hearer of the related true stories by fitting the story to the topic at hand, and at once the picture flashes before his mind's eyes in clear perspective. That is why it is said that proverbs do not change.

Another example: "The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is as the

parable of the one who sows a grain, it growing seven ears, in every ear there are a hundred grains." This is an imaginary story.

The basic element of a parable - the essential ingredient of the similarity that produces the clear and well defined image of the topic - is sometimes the whole story; and occasionally a part of the story. Examples of the former are

And the parable of an evil word is as an evil tree pulled up from the earth's surface; it has no stability(14:26), The similitude of those who were placed under the Torah, then they did not hold it, is as the similitude of the donkey bearing books (62:5).

The example of the latter, where the basic element is only a part of the story, is this parable under discussion - spending in the way of Allah has been likened to the grain growing seven ears, every ear having a hundred grains. This is the basic element of analogy; but in explaining it we earlier added the words, "of him who sows"; it was added just to complete the story.

In the Qur'anic parables, where the basic element of the analogy is the whole story, Allah has mentioned it without any omission. But where that element is only a part of the story, only that part has been described and others have been left out. Why should the full story have to be described when the purpose of the parable is fully served by the short version. Moreover, this style creates alacrity in the hearer's minds - they do not find what they anticipate and an unexpected picture is flashed before their minds' eyes. But it fully serves the purpose: it is different from the anticipated picture and yet it is the same. This is brevity through alteration in its finest way; and the Qur'an uses it whenever necessary.

QUR'AN: *Growing seven ears, in every ear there are a hundred grains:*

"as-Sunbul" (ear of corn, spike) is on paradigm of *fun 'ul* It is said that its root meaning is to draw a curtain. The ear of corn was given this name because it hides the grains in their husks.

A most foolish objection has been leveled against this verse, that it is a simile of a thing which is not found in the world - no ear contains a hundred grains.

Reply: It is not necessary for a similitude that the picture compared with be found outside the imagination. Analogies with imaginary ideas and images are found by their thousands in every language.

Moreover, ears containing a hundred grains, and a single seed yielding seven hundred grains are very often found in many places.

QUR'AN: *And Allah multiplies for whom He pleases; and Allah is Ample-giving, All-knowing:*

Allah gives more than seven hundred to whom He pleases: He is Ample-giving; no one can put any hindrance on His generosity; nor can anyone restrict His grace. Allah says: *Who is it that will lend to Allah a goodly loan, so He will multiply it for him manifold(2:245).* In this verse, "manifold" is unrestricted; there is no numerical limit to it.

Someone has said: This sentence means, "Allah increases this much, that is, seven hundred for one, for whom He pleases." According to this interpretation seven hundred would be the limit of multiplication.

But if we accept this interpretation as correct, then this sentence would show the cause of the previous statement (*.. seven ears, in every ear there are a hundred grains*). In that case, it should have begun with the word *inna* (verily, surely, indeed). See for example another verse, where the causative sentence begins with the word "surely": *Allah is He Who made for you the night that you may rest therein and the day to see; most surely Allah is Gracious to men (40:61).* There are many verses in the same style.

The seven-hundred-fold reward is unrestricted - it is not restricted to the Hereafter. The promise is as valid for this world as it is for the Hereafter.

And on reflection, one has to support this idea. You spend your property in the way of Allah; you may be thinking at first that you have lost that property without getting anything in exchange. But if you ponder a little on this matter you will appreciate that mankind is like one living body; it has various limbs and organs, all of different shapes and with distinctive names, but all of them are united in the goal of life, all are joined together in each other's effects and benefits. If one of these limbs loses its health, becomes weak or falters in its function, the whole body is adversely affected and fails to reach its goal. The eyes and the hands are two organs with different names and separate functions. But man has been given his eyes so that he may distinguish objects from each other through light, color and distance. When this task is accomplished, the hands come into action to take hold of what man should acquire for himself, and to repulse what should be repulsed. If the hands fail in their function, man has to make up the loss through other limbs; but, to begin with, it creates untold misery and hardship for him, and also decreases the normal functions of those limbs to the extent they are used as substitutes for the hands. But if other limbs were to send to the ailing hands some of the blood cells and energy from their own stock and the hands to become restored to health, the whole body would grow better and every limb would share in the benefits - the benefits which may be hundreds and thousands times more than the small amount of blood, etc., which it expended for the hands.

Likewise, when a man spends for the betterment of the condition of another, it saves the beneficiary from evils which are generally caused by poverty; he feels love for the benefactor in his heart, his tongue speaks his name with respect; and he busies himself in his work with more vigor and energy and thus prospers. The whole of society feels its good effects, and as a member of that society, the benefactor also shares in that social upliftment. This is more evident when the spending is done for social services like education, training, etc. This much about general spending.

When that spending is done in the way of Allah, seeking His pleasure, the increase is sure to occur without fail. If wealth is spent, but not for the pleasure of Allah, then it is done for selfish aims - the rich man spends on a poor man to avert his evils from himself. Or he thinks that if the poor man becomes self-supporting, the whole of society will become a better place to live in, and in this way the benefactor will live in it more happily. This type of spending is a sort of subjugation of the poor who is exploited by the rich for selfish purposes. Such a charity creates bad effects in the poor. Sometimes these hard feelings accumulate and then burst out in riots and revolutions.

But the spending which is done only for the pleasure of Allah is free from these defects; it creates only good, and only bliss and blessings result from it.

QUR'AN: Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah, then do not follow up what they have spent with reproach or injury, for them is their reward with their Lord, and they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve:

"al-Itba'" is used with both transitive and intransitive meanings. It means 'to follow' and 'to pursue'; and 'to attach one thing to other'. This word has been used in these two meanings in the verses: *Then they pursued them at sunrise (26:60) ; And We attached to them a curse in this world . (28:42).*

"al-Mann" means to say what may turn charity into annoyance, for example, to tell the beneficiary: "I gave you this and that." The root-meaning of this word, as has been said, is "to cut ." The word has been used in this meaning in the verse... *for them surely is a reward never to be cut off (41:8).*

'al-Adha" is immediate harm, a little injury. *"al-Khawf"* (fear) is the expectation of harm or trouble. *"al-Huzn"* (grief) is the sorrow which greatly disturbs the soul, and which is caused by a real or almost real misfortune.

QUR'AN: A kind word and forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury... : "Kind word"

is that which is not disliked by the common man. It may vary according to circumstances. "*al-Maghfirah*"(forgiveness) literally means to cover. "*al-Ghina*"(self-sufficiency) is the opposite of need and poverty. "*al-Hilm*" (forbearance) means to remain silent when confronted with disagreeable words or actions.

The contrast between a kind word and forgiveness, on the one hand, and charity followed by injury, on the other, shows that the "kind word" means that if one wants to turn away a suppliant without fulfilling his need and the suppliant has not uttered unpleasant words, one should express one's good wishes and utter good words to him. The "forgiveness" refers to the same situation, provided the suppliant has said unpleasant things about the intended benefactor. In both cases, if one uses a kind word and forgives the suppliant it is far better than fulfilling his need and then following it with reproach and injury. Such reproach, in fact, shows that the benefactor thinks that what he has spent is a great wealth, and that he is annoyed with the people's requests and supplications. But a believer should be far above such moral defects and petty thoughts. The believer must mould himself on the attributes of Allah. And Allah is Self-sufficient: no bounty is great in His eyes; He gives and bestows whatever He wishes. Also He is Forbearing: He makes no haste in meting out punishment to evil-doers; He does not become angry on His creatures' follies. It was to point out this important matter that the verse ended the sentence, "and Allah is Self-sufficient, Forbearing."

QUR'AN: *O you who believe! do not nullify your charity by reproach and injury:*

The verse proves that charity becomes forfeited if it is followed by reproach and injury.

Some people say that this verse shows that subsequent sins (and especially big ones) nullify the good deeds preceding them. But this inference is uncalled for. The verse only talks about reproach and injury *vis-à-vis* charity.

The topic of forfeiture (of deeds) has already been explained in detail.

QUR'AN: *Like him who spends his wealth to be seen of men and does not believe in Allah and the last day:*

As the verse is addressed to the believers, and as one who does a good deed to show to men is not a believer (because he does not do that deed for the sake of Allah) the prohibition was not extended to showiness; it was confined to reproach and injury, because there is no danger of showiness for a believer. The verse likens the almsgiver who follows his alms with reproach and injury to the one who spends to show off to men; and the likeness is in the forfeiture of charities, although there is a difference between both. The charity of one who spent to show off to men was null and void *ab initio*; while that of the one who followed it with reproach and injury was correct and valid to begin with, but was later nullified because of these sins.

The verb "does not believe" has the same form and tense as the preceding one, "spends"; it does not say "did not believe." This similarity of tense shows that the disbelief here implies the showing person's disbelief in the divine call of spending and in His promise of its great reward. Had he believed in the divine call to the believers to spend in His way, and also in the last day when the promised reward would be given, he would have done his good deed to seek the pleasure of Allah and would have longed for the reward of the last day, instead of doing it to be seen by men.

It shows that disbelief here does not imply that the showy person does not believe in Allah at all. Also it proves that doing a deed with the intention of showing off to men implies that such a doer has no faith in Allah and the last day, in so far as that deed is concerned.

QUR'AN: *So his parable is as the parable of a smooth rock... does not guide the unbelieving people.:*

The pronoun, "his" refers to "him who spends his wealth to be seen of men"; the parable is for

him. "*as-Safwan*" and "*as-safa*" are smooth rock. The same is the meaning of "*as-said*"

"*al-Wabil*" is heavy rain, descending with force. The pronoun in "They shall not gain" refers to "him who spends to be seen of men", because "him" stands for the whole group of showy persons. The sentence "They shall not gain anything of what they have earned" describes the reason for the analogy; and it is the common factor of the two sides of this simile. The sentence "And Allah does not guide the unbelieving people" describes the general principle: a man who does a deed to show to people is in that particular respect an unbeliever, and Allah does not guide such people. This sentence, therefore, gives the reason for the forfeiture mentioned in this verse.

The man who spends to show off to people can get no reward for such spending. Look at a smooth rock, upon which is some earth, then a heavy rain falls upon it. Now, rain, and especially a heavy downpour, is the apparent cause of the earth coming to life again; it makes it green and adorns it with plants. But if earth settles on a smooth rock it cannot remain in place in a heavy rainfall; it is washed away and the bare rock is left there for everyone to see - the rock which cannot absorb water, nor can it nourish a seed to grow. Rain and earth both together are the most important causes of plant life and growth; but as their place was a smooth rock their effect was totally nullified, although none can attribute any fault or defect to these two life-giving ingredients.

Thus is the case of the man who does a good deed but not with intention of seeking the pleasure of Allah; his action becomes totally null and void, even when the deed, for example, spending in the way of Allah, is among the most effective causes of getting divine reward. But the heart of such a man is like that smooth rock; it is unable to receive divine mercy and grace. And thus he gets nothing of what he had earned.

The verse shows that the acceptance of a deed depends on sincere intention and on the pure aim of seeking the pleasure of Allah. Sunnis and Shi'ahs have narrated from the Prophet that he said: "Verily, deeds are according to intentions."

QUR'AN: And the parable of those who spend their wealth seeking the pleasure of Allah and keeping firm their souls:

"Seeking the pleasure of Allah" means doing what Allah has ordered His servant to do. When the master gives an order to his servant and the servant complies with that order, the master faces him, pleased with him. Likewise, Allah orders His servant concerning certain things and when the servant obeys His command Allah turns towards him with pleasure and mercy.

The phrase "and keeping firm their souls" has been interpreted in various ways:

a) It means "certitude and confirmation."

b) "*at-Tathbit*" (to keep firm) means *at-tathab-but* (to make sure). The phrase means that they want to make sure where they spend their wealth.

c) It means to make sure how they spend: if it is for the pleasure of Allah, they spend it; if there is any shade of impurity in intention, for example, and eagerness to be seen by men, they desist from spending.

d) It means keeping the souls firm in obedience to Allah.

e) It means establishing the soul firmly in faith by making it accustomed to spending property for the sake of Allah.

Obviously, these interpretations do not fit the verse unless one is prepared to stretch the meaning of the word "keeping firm" beyond its linguistic limit. Probably a more appropriate interpretation (and Allah knows better!) may be as follows:

Allah, first, unconditionally praised spending in His way, and mentioned that it had a very great reward in the presence of Allah. Then He excluded two kinds of spending, because Allah is not

pleased with them and no reward will be given for them:

1) spending to show off to people, and such a deed is null and void *ab initio*;

2) spending that is followed by reproach and injury, for although such a deed is valid initially, it becomes nullified because of the subsequent sins of reproach and injury.

In these cases the deed is nullified, either because the doer does not seek the pleasure of Allah from the very beginning (as in the first case) or because his soul changes the initial correct intention and seeks worldly satisfaction through reproach and injury (as in the second case).

Now Allah describes the condition of His good servants who spend purely for His sake. These are they who spend to seek the pleasure of Allah and then "keep firm their souls" on this pure intention without following it with bad deeds which could nullify it.

In short, "seeking the pleasure of Allah" means that the doer of a good deed should not contaminate his intention with showiness or other such things which would indicate that his action is for other than Allah. And "keeping firm their souls" means that he should fix his soul firmly in that pure and uncontaminated intention.

This "keeping firm" is done by the soul on the soul. Grammatically, "*tathbitan*" (keeping firm) is "*at-tamyiz*" (accusative of specification); "*min*" (from) shows origination; "*anfusihim*" (their souls) is the subject "from" which the action of "keeping firm" originates; its object is another "*anfusahum*" (their souls) which is deleted but understood. Accordingly, the phrase means that their souls keep firm their souls.

Alternatively, the word, "keeping firm" may be "*al-maf 'ulu'l-mutlaq*" (cognate accusative) for emphasis of a deleted but understood verb of the same meaning.

QUR'AN: *As the parable of a garden on an elevated ground... what you do:*

The root word *ar-raba'* means increase. "*ar-Rabwah*" means a good earth which increases its growth and gives a high yield. The word is also used as *ar-rubwah* and *ar-ribwah al-Ukul* " is what is eaten. *al-Aklah* means one morsel. "*at-Tall*" is a drizzle, which has little effect.

The parable has been revealed to show that spending which is done to seek the pleasure of Allah cannot fail to bring about a good effect. The spending was done for Allah and its connection with Allah has continued; therefore, divine care always looks after it, making it grow and flourish; it must surely bring forth its fruits. Of course, the degree of care varies according to variation in the degree of purity of the intention; and the strength of the deed is correlated with the firmness of soul.

There is a garden on a good earth; a heavy rain falls on it and it brings forth its fruits abundantly - although the yield may vary in quality and quantity, according to the amount of rain which falls on it.

As there is bound to be such variation, the verse ended on the sentence, "and Allah is aware of what you do." He never has any doubt in the matter of rewards; the rewards of various deeds are never confused in His eyes; He does not give this one's recompense to that one, and that one's to this one.

QUR'AN: *Would anyone of you like... that you may reflect:*

"*al-Wudd*" (is to love, to long for, to yearn) "*al-jannah*" is a clump of trees, their branches touching each other. "*al-Jann*" means to cover, to shield. A garden is called *al-jannah* because it covers the earth and protects it from the rays of the sun, and the like. This word is used for a clump of trees only, not for the plot of land upon which those trees stand. That is why it is correct to say, as the verse says, "streams flowing beneath it"; if the word included the earth, the phrase would have been wrong. When the plot or earth is intended, the expression is changed: ... *a lofty ground having meadows and springs* (23:50). On the other hand, the phrase, "garden beneath which rivers flow", repeatedly occurs in the Qur'an.

The preposition "of", in "a garden of palms and vines", is for description; it describes the main type of trees and fruits; it does not give a full list of them. If the major part of a garden contains palms, it is generally called a palm garden, although it contains other trees also. That is why Allah said immediately after it, "he has in it all kinds of fruits." "*al-Kibr*" is old age; "*adh-dhurriyyah*" means children, offspring; "*ad-du'afa*" is the plural of "*ad-da'if*" (weak).

This parable joins the old age of the progenitor with the weakness of the progeny to emphasize the utmost need of the said garden, in the absence of any other means of livelihood. Had the garden owner been young and strong he could have earned his livelihood with his hands even if the garden had been burnt down. Alternatively, if he had had no weak offspring, even if he had been an aged person, he would not have felt the effects of this calamity so much; he would have known that his days were numbered and soon he would be free from all troubles. And if he had been of old age but had had strong offspring who could have work and earn their livelihood, they could have lived on their earning and the loss of the garden would not have caused much distress. But when old age coincides with weak offspring and the garden is burnt down, all possible means of livelihood are cut off. The old man cannot regain his youth and strength, so that he can re-create the garden as he had done before. His offspring are weak and they cannot do it themselves. And the garden is burnt down, it cannot regain its bloom and fruit.

"*al-I'sar*" is a cyclone. This parable puts before our eyes the position of those who spend their wealth and then follow it with reproach and injury, and thus their deed is nullified; and there is no way to return that deed to its state of validity again. The parable perfectly fits this situation.

Through this parable Allah expects such people to ponder upon their position. Such deeds are done only when people are overtaken by such evil traits as love of wealth and honor, pride and avarice. These evil traits do not let them contemplate and meditate; do not give them a chance to distinguish between what is beneficial and what is harmful, between good and bad. And if they had stopped to ponder they would have seen the truth.

QUR'AN: *O you who believe! spend (benevolently)... Allah is Self-sufficient, Praiseworthy: "at-Tayammum" is to aim, to intend; "al-khabith"(bad) is opposite of "at-tayyib" (good); "Wit" is related to the word "bad." The phrase "that you may spend in charity" shows the "state" of the subject of the verb "do not aim"; the phrase "while you would not take it yourselves" shows the "state" of the subject of the verb "you may spend it"; it is governed by the same verb. The phrase "unless you connive at it" is in place of an infinitive verb. It is said that a "li"(because) is understood before it - thus it would mean, "except because of your connivance at it." Others have said that a "bi" (with) is understood here - in this case it would mean "except with your connivance at it."*

Whatever the grammatical explanation, the meaning of the verse is a quite clear. Allah explains the condition of the wealth which should be spent: it should be from one's good property; and not from bad property which the spender himself would not deign to accept unless he connived at it. Giving bad wealth in charity is not generosity at all; it is getting rid of an unwanted item. Such spending will not create any love of generosity in the donor's heart, nor will it bring to him any spiritual perfection.

That is why the verse ends on the sentence "and know that Allah is Self-sufficient, Praiseworthy." When you spend anything, keep in view the Self-sufficiency and Praiseworthiness of Allah. He needs nothing, yet He appreciates your good spending. Therefore, spend from your good property. Or, it may mean: He is Self-sufficient and Praiseworthy. You should not bring to Him what is not fit for His Great Sanctity.

QUR'AN: *Satan threatens you with poverty... Allah is Amplegiving, All-knowing:*
The verse explains that choosing a bad thing for charity is not good for the charity-giver; it is only

good property which is good for them to spend. The prohibition is for their own good, as the thing prohibited is bad for them. They dislike giving good items in charity because they believe that a good property makes one wealthy and rich; they therefore resist the idea of giving it away in charity. A bad item is worthless, and so they are ready to donate it in alms. But it is the temptation of Satan who frightens his friends with poverty. The fact is that donating property and spending it in the way of Allah to seek His pleasure is just like any other good trade and dealing - it has its recompense and profit, as Allah has mentioned in these verses. Moreover, it is Allah who makes one rich and bestows abundance; property, by itself, has no power to enrich anyone. Allah says: *And that He it is Who enriches and gives to hold* (53:48).

In short, it was a mistake on their part to withhold the good and likeable items from their charity because of fear of poverty. Allah points this out in the sentence "Satan threatens you with poverty." This sentence puts the cause (Satan's threatening) in place of its effect (fear of poverty). This figurative expression has been used to indicate that this fear is damaging to their interest, because whatever Satan incites one to do is bound to be wrong and an error - either directly or indirectly, that is, through something disguised as right.

Someone might have thought that this fear of poverty was reasonable, even if it was caused by Satan. The next sentences do not leave any room for such a misunderstanding: "and enjoins you to abomination." This withholding, this heavy-heartedness in spending good things creates in their souls the trait of miserliness and niggardliness, which in its turn leads one to disobey and reject those commands of Allah that effect one's wealth and property; it is clear disbelief in the Great Lord. Also, it casts the needy people into the perdition of poverty, privation and depression, which in its turn leads to loss of lives, and honor, and to every hope of crime and abomination. Allah says:

And there are those of them who made a covenant with Allah: "If He gives us out of His grace, we will certainly give alms and we will certainly be of the good." But when He gave them out of His grace, they became niggardly of it and they turned back and they withdrew. So He made hypocrisy to follow as a consequence into their hearts till the day when they shall meet Him because they failed to perform towards Allah what they had promised with Him and because they told lies... Those who taunt the free-givers of alms among the believers and them who cannot find but their hard earnings, so they scoff at them; Allah will pay them back their scoffing, for them is a painful chastisement. (9:75-79)

"And Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance; and Allah is Ample-giving, All-knowing.": It further removes the earlier-mentioned possible misunderstanding. Allah had already clearly told the believers that there is either truth or falsehood; there is no third alternative. Truth is the straight path, that is from Allah; and falsehood is from Satan. , Look at the following verses of the Meccan period: *and what is there after the truth but error?(10:32); Say: 'Allah guides to the truth' (10:35);... surely he (i.e. Satan) is an enemy, openly leading astray (28:15)*. In short, the above-mentioned sentence reminds them that the idea of niggardliness coming into your mind because of the fear of poverty is based on a bad judgment; forgiveness of Allah and increase in wealth (mentioned in previous verses) come from spending from good property, not from niggardliness or from giving away unwanted items.

The sentence "Allah promises... " puts (like the preceding sentence "Satan threatens you... ") the cause in place of its effect. Also, it shows the contrast between the promise of Ample-giving, All-knowing Allah and the threat of Satan, so that the spenders may look at both and choose for themselves what is in their own interest.

The verse, in short says:

You choose bad items for spending, instead of good property, because you are afraid of poverty; and because you are unaware of the good results which accrue from spending good things. So far as the fear of poverty is concerned, it is the evil suggestion of Satan, and Satan always wants to put you in perdition and lead you to falsehood and abomination: you should never follow his evil whisperings. What follows a charity of good things is abundance and forgiveness. And it is sure to follow, because it is Allah Who has promised it, and His promise is true; He is Ample-giving - it is easy for Him to fulfill His promise and to give you abundance and forgiveness from Himself; He is All-knowing, not a single thing or condition is hidden from Him; therefore, what He has promised is based on His All-encompassing knowledge.

QUR'AN: *He grants wisdom to whom He pleases:*

"*al-Ita*" (is to grant, to give). "*al-Hikmah*" (wisdom) is on paradigm of *fi'lah* which denotes a species or a variety of it. Its literal meaning will, therefore, be a sort of precision and perfection, or a species of perfect and precise thing in which there is no defect or flaw. Mostly it is used for intellectual cognition that is true and not liable to falsehood and error at all.

This sentence shows that what has preceded it (spending, its causes and its good effects on human life) is based on wisdom. *al-hikmah* (wisdom) is a true proposition, conforming to the facts; it contains the bliss and felicity of man, because it clarifies the divine realities concerning the origin and the end of the world and mankind, and explains the principles of the physical world in-as-much as it touches on human bliss and felicity; it includes the fundamental truths of nature upon which are based the laws of religion.

QUR'AN: *And whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good:*

The meaning is clear. The sentence is in the passive voice, although the preceding sentence has clearly said that it is Allah Who grants wisdom; this passive voice has been used to show that wisdom, in itself, is the source of a great good; whoever gets it, is bound to get that great good; and that good is not only because wisdom is given by Allah. If "giving" is attributed to Allah it does not necessarily mean that the thing given is good, or that it will end in good. Allah says about the Qur'an: ... *and We had given him of the treasures, so much that its keys would certainly weigh down a company of men possessed of strength... Thus We made the earth to swallow up him and his abode, so he has no body of helpers to assist him against Allah...* (28:76-81).

The verse attributes "great good" to wisdom, instead of unqualified "good", although wisdom has a high status and a great splendor. It was to show that every affair depends, for its good end, on the care and help of Allah; and that blessings and bliss is good only when its end is good.

QUR'AN: *And none but men of understanding mind:*

"*al-Lubb*" (literally means kernel, the softer part within hard shell). It is used in the meaning of *al-'aql* understanding because understanding has the same position *vis-à-vis* the man as the kernel has *vis-à-vis* hard shell. It is used in this very meaning in the Qur'an. The use of the noun *al-'aql* with the meaning of understanding, seems to be of a later origin; that is why it has not been used in this form in the Qur'an; although its verb have often been used, for example, "*ya'qilun*" (they understand). "*atTadhakkur*" means to remember, to mind. It means going from a conclusion to its premises or from the premises to their conclusion. The verse shows that wisdom depends on minding, which in its turn depends on understanding. There is no wisdom where there is no understanding. Some details about understanding have been given earlier in the discussion about the words used for perception.

QUR'AN: *And whatever alms you give or whatever vow you vow surely Allah knows it; and the oppressors shall have no helpers:*

What Allah has called you to spend, and what you have made obligatory on yourselves through a vow is not hidden from Allah. He shall give rewards to him who obeys Him, and shall chastise him who is unjust to others and oppresses them. There is a shade of threatening in this sentence (... *Allah knows it*), and this is emphasized by the next sentence: "and the oppressors shall have no helpers."

This last sentence proves four things:

First: The oppression in this verse means the oppression of the needy and poor by not spending on them and by withholding their financial rights. It does not mean other sins and injustices, because there are helpers, atonements and interceders in the case of other sins. For example, there is repentance, the avoidance of great sins, and the intercessors on they Day of Resurrection for the sins concerning the rights of Allah. Allah says:

... do not despair of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives the faults altogether ... And return to your Lord... (39:53-54); If you avoid great sins which you are forbidden, We will expiate from you your (small) sins(4:31);... and they do not intercede except for him whom He approves... (21:28).

This also explains why this verse mentions "helpers" (in the plural). It is because there shall be many helpers in case of other sins.

Second: This oppression, that is, neglect of charity, is not liable to expiation. Had it been a minor sin, it would have been wiped out by expiation. In other words, it is a great sin. Also, it proves that it is not forgiven by repentance. It gets support from the traditions which say that repentance from sins concerning the rights of people is not accepted unless the sinner returns and gives all the due rights to those who possess them. Nor shall the intercession of the intercessors avail them on the Day of Resurrection, as is clearly seen in the words of Allah:

Except the people of the right hand, in gardens; they shall ask each other about the guilty: "What has brought you into Hell?" They shall say: "We were not of those who prayed, and we used not to feed the poor... " So the intercession of the intercessors shall not avail them (74:39-48).

Third: This oppressor is not of those with whom Allah is pleased. Intercession shall be for only those whose religion Allah approves and is pleased with. (Vide the topic of Intercession.) This shows why Allah used, in verse 2:265, the words "seeking the pleasure of Allah", and did not say "seeking the Person of Allah"

Fourth: Not spending property on the needy and poor when they are present and need assistance is a great and mortal sin. Allah has counted some kinds of not spending as equivalent to ascribing partners to Allah and disbelieving in the last day. For example, He says about not giving alms: *... and woe to the polytheists, who do not give zakat and they are unbelievers in the hereafter (41:6-7).* It should be noted that this chapter is from the Meccan period when *az-zakat* (poor rate) as known to us was not ordained. Therefore, it must refer to general alms.

QUR'AN: *If you give alms openly, it is well, and if you hide it and give it to the poor,... and Allah is aware of what you do:*

"al-Ibda" means to show, to exhibit. *"as-Sadaqat"* is the plural of *as-sadaqah*, which means expenditure in the way of Allah; it is a general word used for both obligatory and voluntary spending. Sometimes it is said that its original meaning is voluntary spending.

Allah praises both ways of spending because each has some good effects. Giving alms openly presents a practical example of enjoining good; it encourages people to spend and to be generous. Also, it makes the needy and poor happy - they see that there are in society people who have sympathy with them, that there is some wealth earmarked for them, and kept in reserve for the day they will need it. This, in its turn, removes their pessimistic feelings, gives them a new vigor to

pursue their activities, and creates a feeling of oneness between them and the wealthy members of society. And all these effects are good.

Hiding alms and giving secretly to the poor is also good; such an alms-giving is far removed from showiness, reproach and injury; it protects the poor members of society from shame and disgrace, and preserve their honor and prestige in the eyes of the public. Thus, open charity creates good effects in society much more than secret charity; and secret charity is purer in intention.

The foundation of religion is purity of intention; the more a deed is nearer to this purity, the more it is nearer to excellence. That is why Allah gave more weight to secret alms: "and if you hide it and give it to the poor, it is better for you." Needless to say that "better" is in the comparative. And Allah is well-aware of the actions of His servants; there is no chance of His mistaking the "better" deed for some thing else, "and Allah is aware of what you do."

QUR'AN: *To make them walk in the right way is not incumbent on you, but Allah guides aright whom He pleases:*

It is a parenthetic sentence addressed to the Prophet, in between the general talk addressed to the believers. The Apostle of Allah felt that there were many differences in various aspects of the charities given by the believers: some of them were sincere, while others indulged in reproach and injury, or were reluctant to spend out of their good property. This observation saddened him, because all of them were believers. Therefore, Allah consoled and comforted him by reminding him that the belief found in them and their guidance are in the hands of Allah; He guides whom He pleases to belief and the various degrees of it; it is not in the power of the Prophet to create it or to preserve it. Therefore, it is not the responsibility of the Prophet to preserve their belief, nor should he worry about its weakening or extinction, nor should he be disappointed by the threatening and harsh tone used in some of these verses.

When an infinitive verb is joined to a noun or pronoun in a possessive phrase, it implies that verb's coming into being. In this verse Allah has used the phrase "*hudahum*" which means "their guidance." As explained above, it implies the "guidance" which actually exists. That is why we have translated it as "To make them walk in the right path."

Apart from this, whenever Allah has attributed guidance to Himself, showing that the Prophet has no power to guide them, it has been done to comfort and console him.

In short, this sentence is parenthetic, inserted between the address to the believers, so that the Prophet may not be disheartened. It is like verse 75:16-18: *Do not move your tongue with it to make haste with it. Surely on Us is the collecting of it and the reciting of it. Therefore when We have recited it, then follow its recitation.* When the purpose was served, the speech reverted to the original talk with the believers.

QUR'AN: *And whatever good thing you spend... and you shall not be wronged:*

Now the speech is again addressed to the believers, in a style which is devoid of both good news and warning, unaffected by the tone of mercy or anger. Obviously, it results from the preceding words, "but Allah guides aright whom He pleases."

Now the speech only calls them to spend, clearly saying that the speaker has nothing to gain from this call. Whatever benefits are in spending are for their own good - provided they do not spend except to seek Allah's pleasure. The sentence "and you do not spend but to seek Allah's pleasure" shows the state of the principle sentence, and its meaning is: "and whatever good things you spend it is to your own good while you do not spend but to seek Allah's pleasure ."

As it was possible for someone to think that this benefit (which was supposed to accrue to them from spending) was just a name without any substance, Allah continued the verse, saying "and

whatever good thing you spend shall be paid back to you in full, and you shall not be wronged." These sentences make it clear that the benefit of this recommended spending, that is, the reward promised for it in this world and in the hereafter, is not an imaginary thing; it is a factual and actual existent; Allah shall pay it back in full to the spender, and he shall not be wronged, that is, his repayment shall not be reduced or lost.

The verb, "shall be paid back to you in full", is in the passive voice. The payer (i.e. Allah) has not been mentioned by name. This style was opted for so that the speech may be more effective. Whatever benefit is there, is for the spender only; the Giver of the rewards gains nothing from it; look here, even His name is not mentioned in this verse.

The verse, in short, is like a speech which has no speaker; if there is any benefit from it, it will accrue to the listener only.

QUR'AN: (Charity is) *for the poor who are besieged in the way of Allah... surely Allah knows it: "al-Hasr"* gives the meaning of constraint. ar-Raghib has written in his *al-Mufradaat: "al-Hasr"* and *"al-ihsar"* means to prevent people from the way of the House (of Allah). *al-ihsar* is used for the manifest hindrance (like the enemy) as well as for the hidden snag (like sickness). But *al-hasr* is used for the hidden hindrance only. Therefore, the words of Allah: *but if you be prevented* (2:196), cover both types of hindrance; so also are the words "for the poor who are besieged in the way of Allah." But the words of Allah "or who come to you, their hearts shrinking" refer to hidden hindrances like cowardice and miserliness.

"at-Ta'affuf" means to acquire the characteristics of chastity and integrity; *"as-sima"* is the sign, the mark, *"al-ilhaf"* is to beg importunately.

The verse explains the way to use alms - the best use those poor persons who have been besieged in the way of Allah and are confined in it, because of some factors beyond their control. For example: an enemy who took away their dress and covering, or prevented them from going out to earn their livelihood; a sickness which closed the door of income for them; an activity (like acquiring knowledge) which does not leave them time to earn their livelihood.

The words, "the ignorant man (i.e., ignorant of their condition) thinks them to be rich on account of their self-control", mean that they do not display their poverty, except that which cannot be hidden in any way, like the etchings of poverty on their faces, or like old clothes, etc.

It is said that the words "they do not beg from men importunately" mean that they do not beg from men at all, so that it could push them to importunity. Once a man begs from someone for his needs, he loses his restraint and soon a time comes when he begs from everyone importunately and shamelessly.

More probably, the sentence means what it says; it negates importunity in asking from men, and not discrete asking. Importunate begging may mean such asking which exceeds the limit

of the necessary description of one's needs. It should not be forgotten that explaining one's needs in extreme hardship is not only allowed but sometimes becomes even necessary. But exceeding that limit is importunity, and is condemned.

Allah said "thou canst recognize them by their countenance"; and did not say "you can recognize them." It was done to protect their honor and preserve their self-respect, because of which they exercised self-control and did not ask from men indiscreetly. Had Allah said "you can recognize them" it would have meant that their poverty was well-known to everyone; and it would have been against their honor, an open humiliation. But there is no disgrace for them if the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) knows their conditions by looking at their countenance: after all, he is their Prophet, sent to them, has mercy on them and is kind to them. This is the reason - and Allah knows better - why in this sentence the singular pronoun has been used, in contrast to the other pronouns in this verse.

QUR'AN: *Those who spend their wealth... nor shall they grieve:*

The words "secretly" and "openly" are opposite to each other and they describe the condition of spending. This verse covers all possible times (*by night and by day*) and conditions (*secretly and openly*) of spending; it shows how much those spenders were keen on obtaining the reward, and how deep was their desire to seek the pleasure of Allah. As a result, Allah turned towards them with mercy and promised them a good promise in the language of kindness and grace: "for them is their reward with their Lord, and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve."

Traditions

It is narrated in *ad-Durru'l-manthur*, about the words of Allah: *and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases*: Ibn Majah has narrated from al-Hasan ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, Abu 'd-Darda', Abu Hurayrah, Abu Amamah al-Bahili, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Jabir ibn 'Abdullah and 'Imran ibn Hasin, all of them narrating from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) that he said: (And Ibn Majah Majah)

and Ibn Abi Hatim have narrated from 'Imran ibn Hasin from the Messenger of Allah that he said:) "He who spent a property in the way of Allah and himself stayed in his house, shall get for every dirham seven hundred dirhams; and he, who himself fought in the way of Allah and spent his property in this way, shall get on the Day of Resurrection for every dirham seven hundred thousand dirhams." Then he (the Prophet) recited this verse: *and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases*.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "When a believer does well in his deed, Allah multiplies his deed, every good deed seven hundred times. And this is the word of Allah: *and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases*. Therefore, make good your deeds which you do to obtain the reward of Allah." (*at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi)

This tradition has been narrated by al-Barqi also.

'Umar ibn Muslim said: "I heard Abu 'Abdillah (a. s.) saying: 'When a believer does well in his deed, Allah multiplies his deed, every good deed seven hundred times. And this is the word of Allah: *and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases*. Therefore, make good your deeds which you do to obtain the reward of Allah.' I (i.e. 'Umar ibn Muslim) said: 'And what does "making good" mean?' He said: 'When you pray, make your *ruku'* and *sajdah* good, and when you fast, keep away from that which spoils your fast, and when you do *hajj*, be on guard against all that is forbidden to you in your *hajj* and *'umrah*. Then he said: 'And every deed that you do should be clean from impurity.'" (*ibid.*)

In the same book there is a tradition from Himran from Abu Ja'far (a.s.). Himran said: "I asked him (i.e. Abu Ja'far - a.s.): 'Do you think that a believer has superiority over a Muslim in anything like inheritance, judgments and orders, so that a believer should have more than a Muslim in inheritance or other things?' He said: 'No. They both proceed on the same path (i.e., are equal) in all this, when the Imam decides between them; but the believer has a superiority over the Muslim in so far as their deeds are concerned.'" He (Himran) said: "I told him: 'Has not Allah said: *Whoever brings a good deed he shall have ten like it?* And you think that they (i.e., the other Muslims) are gathered together with the believers in prayer, fasting and the *hajj*?' He (the Imam) said: 'Has not Allah said that Allah multiplies for whom He pleases manifold? Thus, the believers are those for whom the good deeds are multiplied, for every good deed seventy fold; so this is among their excellence; and Allah multiplies for the believer his good deeds according to the rectitude of his belief a manifold multiplication; and Allah does for the believer what He pleases.'"

The author says: There are other traditions with this meaning. And all of them are based on the view that the sentence: *and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases* is general, and that it covers does

of other good deeds also, in addition to those who spend in the way of Allah. And this view is the correct one; because the only thing that can be said for limiting it to the spenders is the fact that it was revealed in the context of spending; but we know that if a verse is revealed at a certain time or in a certain context, that time or that context does not restrict the general meaning of the word or the sentence.

And as the verse is not limited to spending, likewise, the word "*yuda'if*" (increases, multiplies) should be treated as general; it implies every kind of increase, in number as well as in other ways. In short, the meaning of the verse will be: And Allah increases, enhances and multiplies a good deed in any way He pleases for anyone He pleases; He multiplies for every doer of good his good deed seven hundred times, or more, or less, as He increases for those who spend more than seven hundred times when He so pleases.

Question: You said earlier that it was wrong to interpret this sentence as saying "and Allah multiplies this multiplication for whom He pleases", and now you interpret it here in this very way.

Reply: What we refuted there was limiting this meaning to those who spend. And this tradition also rejects the idea that the verse is limited in any way.

The words of the Imam "Allah multiplies for whom He pleases manifold" combine two verses together: one, this very verse under discussion, and second, verse 245 of this second chapter: *Who is it that will lend to Allah a goodly loan, so He will multiply it for him manifold.*

It may be inferred from this tradition that the deeds of (those of) other sects of Islam (apart from the believers) may be accepted and given their reward. We shall discuss this topic under verse 98 of chap. 4: *Except the weakened ones from among the men...*

The author of *Majma'u'l-bayan* says: This verse is general about spending in all these things (i.e. *jihad* and other ways of charity); and the same is narrated from Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.).

'Abdu 'r-Razzaq has narrated in his *al-Musannaf* from Ayyub that he said: "A man came to the Prophet from Ra's Tall. Thereupon they (i.e. the companions) said: 'How brave is this man? Would that his bravery were in the way of Allah!' The Prophet said: 'Is only he who was killed in the way of Allah?' Then he explained: "The one who went out in the earth seeking a lawful (earning) to sustain his parents is in the way of Allah; and the one who went out seeking a lawful (earning) to sustain his family is in the way of Allah; and the one who went out seeking a lawful (earning) to sustain himself is in the way of Allah; and the one who went out vying in exuberance is in the way of Satan." (*ad-Durru'l-manthur*)

Ibnu'l-Mundhir and al-Hakim have narrated (and the latter has said that it is correct) that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) asked al-Bara' ibn 'Azib: "O Bara'! How is your spending for your mother?" (And al-Bara' was generous to his family.) He replied: "O Messenger of Allah! How good it is! (i.e. it is very good)." (The Prophet) said: "Verily, your expenditure on your family and child and servant is alms; therefore, you should not follow it with reproach or injury." (*ibid.*)

The author says: The traditions containing this meaning are numerous from the chains of both sects; and those traditions say that every deed which Allah is pleased with is in the way of Allah; and every expenditure in the way of Allah is alms.

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsir* of al-Qummi, under the verse: "Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah... ", from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: "Whoever conferred something good on a believer and then injured him (i.e. his feelings) with his talk or reproached him has surely nullified his charity... " as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: *as-Safwanis* a big rock in a desert. *al-Wabil* is rain; and *at-tall* is what settles at night on trees and plants. *al-I'sar* is wind.

Ibn Jarir has recorded from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) about the words of Allah: *O you who believe!*

spend(benevolently) *out of the good things that you have earned* (he said, "from gold and silver"), *and of what We have brought forth for you out of the earth*, (he said, "from grain and dates and everything in which *zakat* is prescribed). (*ad-Durru'l-manthur*)

Ibn Abi Shaybah, 'Abd ibn Hamid, at-Tirmidhi (and he has said that this tradition is correct), Ibn Majah, Ibn Jarir, Ibnu'lMundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Marduwayh, al-Hakim (and he has said that it is correct) and al-Bayhaqi (in his *as-Sunan*) have narrated from al-Bars' ibn 'Azib, that he said about the words of Allah, *and do not aim at what is bad of it that you may spend* (in charity): "It was revealed about us, the group of the Helpers (*ansar*). We owned date-palms. (It was our custom that) a man used to come from his trees, however numerous or few they might be; and he brought a bunch of dates or two, and hung it in the mosque; and the people of the "raised platform" (*Ahlu's-Suffah*) had nothing to sustain them. Therefore, when one of them felt hungry, he used to come to that bunch and hit it with his stick; thus, unripe and ripe dates dropped down and he ate them. And there were some people, not inclined to generosity, who brought bunches which had gone bad and had dried, and also broken bunches; and they hung them (in the mosque). Thereupon, Allah sent down the verse: *O you who believe! spend*(benevolently) *out of the good things that you have earned and what We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and do not aim at what is bad of it that you may spend* (in charity), *while you would not take it yourselves unless you connived at it*. Allah commented that if one of you were given a present like that which he gave in charity he would not accept it except if he connived at it or felt shy of rejecting it." al-Bars' then said: "Therefore, everyone of us used to bring the best that he had." (*ibid.*)

There is a tradition in *al-Kafi*, that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allah: *O you who believe! spend*(benevolently) *out of the good things that you have earned and of what We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and do not aim at what is bad of it that you may spend* (in charity): "When the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) ordered *az-zakat* (poor-rate) on dates, some people used to bring various types of dates as poor-rate, (dates) of the worst kind. They took out as their poor-rate the dates called *aj-ju 'rur* and *al-mi'afarah*, those with little flesh and big stones. And others brought good dates. Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: 'Do not estimate these two (types of) dates and do not bring any of them (as poor-rate).' And concerning this was revealed: *and do not aim at what is bad of it that you may spend* (in charity), *while you would not take it yourselves unless you connived at it*. And conniving means to take these two dates."

There is another tradition from Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) about the above-mentioned verse, that he said: "The people had earned bad earnings in the (days of) ignorance. When they became Muslims, they wanted to take that (unlawful earning) from their property to give it in charity. But Allah did not allow them except that they should take out from the best of their earnings."

The author says: There are many traditions with this meaning from the chains of the both sects.

It is quoted in *at-Tafsir* of al-Qummi about the words of Allah: *Satan threatens you with poverty...* that Allah means, "Satan tells you, 'Do not spend, otherwise you shall become poor', and Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance", that is, He shall give you if you spend for His sake and shall reimburse you abundantly.

at-Tirmidhi (and he has said that this tradition is correct), an-Nasa'i, Ibn Jarir, Ibnu'l-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Hibban and al-Bayhaqi (in his *ash-Shu'ab*) have narrated from Ibn Mas'ud that he said that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: "Verily, Satan has a nearness with the son of Adam and the angel has a nearness (with him). As for the nearness of Satan, it is a threatening with evil and a denying of truth. And as for the nearness of the angel, it is promising of good and a confirming of truth; therefore, whoever felt it, should know that it is from Allah, so let him thank Allah. And

whoever felt that other (effect), should seek the protection of Allah against Satan." Then (the Messenger of Allah) recited: *Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins you to abomination...* (*ad-Durru'l-manthur*)

at-Tafsir of al-'Ayyashi quotes Abu Ja'far (a.s.) about the words of Allah, *and whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good*, that he said: "The knowledge (of Allah)."

The same book quotes as-Sadiq (a.s.) as saying: "Verily, wisdom is the knowledge (of Allah) and understanding of the religion."

al-Kafi quotes as-Sadiq (a.s.) as saying in explanation of this verse: "Obedience to Allah and knowledge of the Imam."

The author says: There are other traditions with the same meaning; and they present some examples of a general meaning.

There is in *al-Kafi* a tradition: from a group of our companions, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid, from some of our companions, who mentioned the chain of narrators reaching the Messenger of Allah; the narrator said that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: "Allah did not distribute among (His) servants anything better than wisdom; so, the sleep of the wise is better than the wakefulness of the ignorant, and the staying of the wise is better than the rising of the ignorant. And Allah did not send any prophet nor any apostle till (his) understanding was perfected and his wisdom was superior to all the wisdom of his people. And what the prophet keeps hidden in his mind is superior to the endeavors of the endeavourers. And the servant does not fulfill his obligations (towards) Allah until he knows Him; and all the worshippers together do not reach in the excellence of their worship what a wise (person) attains; and the wise people are the people of understanding; Allah says: *and none but men of understanding mind.*"

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Wisdom is the light of knowledge, and the weighing scale of piety, and the fruit of truth; and if you were to say that Allah did not bestow upon His servant a bounty greater and higher and better and more magnificent than wisdom, you would be saying (the truth). Allah, Powerful and Great is He, has said: *He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good, and none but men of understanding mind.*"

The author says: There are many traditions about the verse: *And whatever alms you give ...*, concerning the alms, the vow and the injustice, which we shall write, God willing, in more appropriate places.

It is reported in *ad-Durru'l-manthur* from several chains from Ibn 'Abbas, Ibn Jubayr, Asma' bint Abi Bakr and others that the Messenger of Allah used to forbid (the giving of) alms to non-Muslims; and the Muslims disliked spending on their nonbelieving relatives. Then, Allah sent down this verse: *To make them walk in the right way is not incumbent on you...* Thereupon, (the Messenger of Allah) allowed it.

The author says: It has already been explained that the phrase "*hudahum*" (their guidance; to make them walk in the right way) appropriately means guiding the Muslims themselves by making them follow the right path; it has no connection with the unbelievers. The verse, therefore, is quite unrelated to the story of its revelation mentioned in the above report. Moreover, the very next verse which prescribes the group on which the alms should be spent (*for the poor who are besieged in the way of Allah ...*) does not support this story.

So far as spending on a non-Muslim is concerned, the generality of the verse is enough to allow it provided it is done in the way of Allah and to seek the pleasure of Allah.

al-Kafi quotes as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the words of Allah: *And if you hide it and give it to the poor, it is better for you*, that he said: "It is in other than *az-zakat*; verily *az-zakat* is openly, not secretly."

There is another tradition in the same book from the same Imam: "Whatever Allah has made obligatory on you, announcing it is better than hiding it; and whatever is voluntary, hiding it is better than announcing it."

The author says: There are other traditions with the same meanings as the two above traditions. And its meaning may be clearly understood from earlier explanations.

It is written in *Majma'u 'l-bayan*, under the verse: (Charity is) *for the poor who are besieged in the way of Allah ...*, that Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said: "It was revealed about the companions of the raised platform." the author of *Majma'u 'l-bayan* goes on to say that the same thing has been narrated by al-Kalbi from Ibn 'Abbas. "And they were about four hundred men; they had no houses in Medina, nor were there any people of their clans where they could find shelter. Therefore, they got themselves settled in the mosque; and they said: 'We shall go out in every expedition sent by the Messenger of Allah.' Therefore, Allah exhorted the people to (help) them. Then (it became a custom that) if a man took his meal and some food was left over, he brought it to them."

In *at-Tafsir of al-'Ayyashi*, Abu Ja'far (a.s.) is quoted as saying: "Verily Allah hates the one who begs importunately."

It is written in *Majma'u 'l-bayan*, under the words of Allah: "Those who spend their wealth by night and by day..." Ibn 'Abbas said describing the reason of its revelation: "It was revealed about 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.); he had four dirhams; and he gave them in charity, one at night-time, and one in the daytime, one secretly and one openly. Then came down this verse: *Those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and openly...*" at-Tabrisi (author of *Majma'u 'l-bayan*) further said: "And the same is narrated from Abu Ja'far (a.s.) and Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.)."

The author says: And this thing has been narrated by al-'Ayyashi in his *at-Tafsir*; al-Mufid in his *al-Ikhtisas*, and as-Saduq in his *'Uyunu'l-akhbar*.

'Abdu 'r-Razzaq, 'Abd ibn Hamid, Ibn Jarir, Ibnu'l-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, at-Tabarani and Ibn 'Asakir have narrated through the chain of 'Abdu'l-Wahhab ibn Mujahid from his father from Ibn 'Abbas about the words of Allah: *Those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and openly ...*, that he said: "It was revealed about 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) that he had four dirhams; and he spent them (in charity) at night one dirham, and in the day one dirham, and secretly one dirham, and openly one dirham." (*ad-Durru'l-manthur*)

al-Burhan (Tafsir) quotes Ibn Shahrashub (in his *al-Manaqib*) who narrated from Ibn 'Abbas, as-Suddi, Mujahid, al-Kalbi, Abu Salih, al-Wahidi, at-Tusi, ath-Tha'labi, at-Tabrisi, al-Mawardi, al-Qushayri, ath-Thumali, an-Naqqash, al-Fattal, 'Abdullah ibn al-Husayn and 'Ali ibn Harb at-Ta' (in their books of *at-Tafsir*) that: 'Ali ibn Abi Talib had some silver dirhams; so he gave in charity one at night and one in the day, and one secretly, and one openly. Thereupon was revealed (the verse): *Those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and openly...* Thus Allah named (his) every dirham a wealth and gave him the good news of acceptance.

It is written in some books of *tafasir* (pl. of *tafsir*, i.e., commentary) that the verse was revealed about Abu Bakr; he gave in charity forty thousand dinars - ten by night, and ten by day and ten secretly and ten openly.

The author says: al-Alusi has written in his *at-Tafsir* under this tradition: "al-Imamu 's-Suyuti has commented that the report of his (i.e., Abu Bakr's) giving forty thousand dinars in charity has only been narrated by Ibn 'Asakir in his history from 'A'ishah, and there is no mention of the revelation of this verse in that report. It seems that those who claimed it (i.e., the revelation of the verse about Abu Bakr) inferred it from the tradition narrated by Ibnu'l-Mundhir from Ibn Ishaq that he said: 'When Abu Bakr died and 'Umar became Khalifah, he addressed the people; he thanked Allah and praised Him as

He should be praised; then he said: "O people! verily, some avarice is poverty, and some abandoning of hope is self-sufficiency; and verily you gather what you do not eat, and you hope for what you do not get. And know that some miserliness is a branch of hypocrisy; therefore, spend for your own good." Then he said: "So where are the people of this verse?" - and saying it, he recited this verse. And you know that these words do not show in any way that this verse was revealed about Abu Bakr."

It is reported in *ad-Durru'l-manthur*, through various chains, from Abu Amamah, Abu 'd-Darda', Ibn 'Abbas and others that the verse was revealed about the people of the horses.

The author says: "The people of the horses" refers to those who kept the horses (for the purpose of *jihad*) and spent on them by night and by day. But the wording of the verse, "secretly and openly", does not fit this interpretation. What would be the sense of this generalization and particularization in the case of spending on horses?

There is also in *ad-Durru'l-manthur* from al-Musayyab that this whole verse was revealed in praise of 'Abdu 'r-Rahman ibn 'Awf and 'Uthman ibn 'Affan when they spent on "the army of straitened circumstances" (i.e., army of Tabuk).

The author says: The same objection arises here as has been leveled against the preceding interpretation - that it does not fit the wordings of the Qur'an.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 275-281

لَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبَا وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ
الرِّبَا فَمَنْ جَاءَهُ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَانْتَهَى فَلَهُ مَا سَلَفَ وَأَمْرُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ 2:275

يَمْحَقُ اللَّهُ الرِّبَا وَيُزْبِئِي الصَّدَقَاتِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ أَثِيمٍ 2:276

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ 2:277

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَذَرُوا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبَا إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ 2:278

فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْذَنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُؤُوسُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا تَظْلِمُونَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ 2:279

وَإِنْ كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَى مَيْسَرَةٍ وَأَنْ تَصَدَّقُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ 2:280

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ 2:281

2:275 Those who swallow down interest cannot stand except as one whom Satan has confounded with (his) touch does stand. That is because they say, trade is only like interest. And Allah has allowed trade and forbidden interest. To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists, for him shall be what has already passed, and his affair rests with Allah; and whoever returns (to it) - these are the inmates of the fire; they shall abide in it.

2:276 Allah effaces interest, and He causes charities to grow; and Allah does not love any ungrateful sinner.

2:277 Surely they who believe and do good deeds and establish prayer and pay the poor-rate they shall have their reward with their Lord and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.

2:278 you who believe! fear Allah and forgo what remains (due) from interest, if you are believers.

2:279 But if you do (it) not, then be apprised of war from Allah and His Apostle; and if you repent, then you shall have your capital; neither shall you deal unjustly, nor shall you be dealt with unjustly.

2:280 And if (the debtor) is in straitened circumstances, then let there be respite until (he is in) ease; and that you remit (it) as alms is better for you, if you knew.

2:281 And fear the day in which you shall be returned to Allah; then every soul shall be paid back in full what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly.

General Comment

These verses were revealed to emphasize the prohibition of interest and to put strong pressure on the interest takers; they are not the verses that originally legislated the prohibition of interest; their language is not that of legislation. The law forbidding interest was ordained most probably by the following verse of the third chapter

O you who believe! do not devour interest, making it double and redouble, and fear Allah, that you may succeed (3:130).

Also look at one of the verses under discussion: "O you who believe! fear Allah and forgo what

remains (due) from interest, if you are believers." It shows that the Muslims, even after the previous prohibition, sometimes took interest; and therefore Allah ordered them to desist from this practice and to remit that part of the interest which remained due from the debtors. With this background, the meaning of the following sentence becomes quite clear: "To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists, for him shall be what has already passed, and his affair rests with Allah ... "

Even long before the verse of the third chapter, a Meccan chapter (the 30th), had condemned the practice of taking interest: *And whatever you lay out as interest, so that it may increase in the properties of men, it shall not increase with Allah; and whatever you give in charity, desiring Allah's pleasure - it is these (persons) that shall get manifold (30:39).*

It shows that interest was a thing abhorred since the early days of the Call, before the *hijrah*; then it was clearly forbidden in the third chapter; and finally it was most forcefully condemned and denounced in these seven verses (under discussion), the style of which clearly shows that interest was forbidden long before they were revealed. It also proves that these seven verses were revealed after the third chapter.

Moreover, interest was prohibited in Judaism, as Allah says about the Jews: *And their (Jews') taking interest, though indeed forbidden were they against it (4:161)*; and also He says quoting them: *this is because they say: there is nothing upon us in the matter of the unlearned people (3:75)*. Add to it the fact that the Qur'an verified their book and did not abrogate this law. All of this together was enough to make the Muslims understand that interest was prohibited and forbidden in Islam.

These verses of interest have some connection with the preceding verses of spending in the way of Allah. And this connection has been clearly pointed out in these verses: for example, "Allah effaces interest and He causes charities to grow"; "and that you remit (it) as alms is better for you." Likewise the verse of the thirtieth chapter contrasts it with alms; and that of the third chapter is followed by praise of spending, exhorting the believers to spend benevolently in the way of Allah.

Moreover, reason also recognizes the contrast and mutual opposition of interest and charity. Interest is taking without giving anything in exchange; charity is giving without taking anything in exchange. The evils emanating from interest are poles apart from the good effects of charity. Charity spreads mercy and love, strengthens the morale of the poor members of society, increases wealth, maintains good social order, and then as a result of mutual love and respect, peace reigns over the land. The evils resulting from interest are exactly opposite to these good effects.

Allah has, in these verses, condemned interest in the most emphatic words. No other deed has been condemned in such a harsh tone. The only exception is befriending the enemies of religion, which also has been execrated with equal force. All other major sins have been condemned emphatically in the Qur'an, but the level of their condemnation is far below that used for these two evils. Not only fornication, liquor and gambling, but even more grievous sins like murder and creating mischief in the earth seem milder than these two - interest and making friends with the enemies of religion. Why? The reason is very clear. The bad effects of the above-mentioned sins remain mostly confined to individuals, one or more; further, they impair only some particular psychological traits of the doer.

But these two evils bring such destruction in their wake that religion is uprooted and even its signs are obliterated; the life-line of human social order is severed; human nature is overpowered by their harmful intoxication, and it loses all its control over the people's thinking and action.

History has shown why the Qur'an had spoken so forcefully against befriending the enemies of religion and against interest. Look at the pitiable condition of the Muslim countries. They started

adulating the enemies of Islam, making friends with them and adoring them. They inclined psychologically towards them. And now we see the result: they have fallen down into the pit of perdition; they are plundered and pillaged by the same "beloved" enemies; they have no control over their own destiny; they have lost their wealth, their honor and even their identity; they deserve neither death nor life; they are not allowed to die, and they are not given any breathing space to enjoy the bounties of life. Religion has departed from there, and virtue abandoned them long ago.

As for interest, it caused the treasures of the earth to be concentrated in few select houses, and the wealth to be hoarded by the takers of interest. The money gave them power over other less fortunate human beings. It was the real cause of the world wars. It divided mankind into two opposing groups: the wealthy who enjoy all the blessings of life, and the poor who find it difficult to meet their barest necessities. The grouping has already appeared. It is a calamity which has shaken the earth and leveled the mountains. It is threatening humanity with downfall and the world with destruction. *Then evil was the end of those who did evil (30:10).*

You will see that what Allah described about interest and making friends with the enemies of religion was a forecast of the carnage which has now come true.

Commentary

QUR'AN: *Those who swallow down interest cannot stand except as one whom Satan has confounded with (his) touch does stand:*

"*al-Khabt*" means to walk unevenly; to grope about awkwardly. They say: *khabata 'l-ba'ir* (the camel became disorientated in its walk).

Man has a straight path for his life, from which he normally does not deviate. He acts according to the norms of the society in which he lives; those norms are based on reasonable ideas, and man tries to fit his individual and social activities to them. He eats when he is hungry, drinks when thirsty, desires rest when tired, and looks for shelter when staying somewhere, and so on. He feels happy with some things, and becomes annoyed with others. When he wants some task done, he produces its cause, and when he needs an effect, he brings about its necessary ingredients.

This, in short, is man's normal way of life - the actions related to the ideas, in a well-balanced relationship. Man was guided to this straight path by a power ingrained in his nature, the power that discriminates between good and bad, differentiates between beneficial and harmful, and distinguishes virtue from evil.

But a man whose discriminating power is confounded sees no difference between good and bad, between beneficial and harmful and between virtue and evil. He treats every thing like its opposite. It is not because he has forgotten the meaning of good and bad - after all, he is a human being who has his own freewill and choice, and a man can only do a man's deeds. Rather, it happens because he believes evil to be virtue, and virtue to be evil. He is, in short, confused and confounded; he applies the rules in completely wrong places, and does not know which demands which.

It is not that he always treats the normal as abnormal and vice versa. If it were so, he would have at least been consistent in his misjudgments. We could have said that he had some organized way of thinking, although he applied his judgments in a wrong way. But he has not even this consistency. Good and bad, virtue and evil, normal and abnormal, all are equal in his eyes. Whatever he wants at a given moment is to be done and obtained - like a camel that has become disorientated; he starts walking forward, no matter which direction he happens to face at that time; he has lost his bearing,

and normal and abnormal are the same to him.

This is, then, the condition of the interest-taker.

What do we mean by interest? It is giving a thing and later taking back a similar thing plus an increase. Social life is based on a sound principle. Let us say that Zayd has a property in excess of his needs, and he needs something else which Bakr has got. Now Zayd may give his excess property to Bakr and take in exchange Bakr's property (which, incidentally, is in excess of Bakr's requirements). It is trade and it is the dictate of human nature.

But giving a property and taking back a similar thing with some increase nullifies the demands of nature and destroys the basis of the economy. The property is snatched from the hands of the debtor, and accumulates in the coffers of the interest taker. The interest-taker's wealth grows and grows; but the growth is achieved by adding another man's wealth. Thus wealth goes on decreasing and diminishing, on the one side, and increasing and accumulating on the other.

The debtor who has to pay interest is burdened with that much extra expenditure; as the days pass, he goes on paying interest, without getting anything in exchange; his need of more and more money increases and he is caught in a vicious circle - he must borrow ever more to fulfill his normal needs as well as to pay the ever-increasing expense of interest. Thus his life is ruined.

Interest is, therefore, diametrically opposed to the balance and equilibrium of society; it destroys that system which man had created with the guidance of the Divine Creation.

So, this is the interest-taker, confounded like the one touched by Satan. Taking interest makes his reason topsy-turvy; he sees no difference between normal and abnormal, between trade and interest. When he is told to leave interest and stick to trade, he says: "Trade is only like interest; it has no superiority over interest; why should I leave interest and stick to trade?" That is why Allah showed his confusion by quoting his reply, "trade is only like interest."

From the above discourse, the following matters become quite clear

First: The word "standing" in the phrase, "cannot stand except as one whom Satan has confounded with (his) touch does stand", means "managing" one's life and "looking after" one's livelihood. It is one of the meanings of "standing" which people generally use in their speech. Allah says: ... *so that men may stand with justice* (57:25); ... *the heavens and the earth stand by His command* (30:25); ... *and that you should stand for the orphans with justice* (4:127). This word has not been used here with the meaning of "standing up" (i.e., as opposed to "sitting"), because such an interpretation would not fit the topic, and the meaning of the verse would not be correct.

Second: "Confoundedness of the touched one in standing" does not refer to the involuntary movements of an epileptic during or after an attack of epilepsy, as some commentators have written. Such a meaning would have no relevance to the topic at hand. Allah has given us the simile of the interest-taker who does not differentiate between trade and interest, and who acts according to that idea. This is done by his own choice and will - the choice that is based on his confused thinking. There is nothing in it like the involuntary convulsions of an epileptic. This phrase, in short, means that the interest-taker manages the affairs of his life and livelihood as does the one whom Satan has confounded with his touch.

Third: There is a fine point in saying "they say, trade is only like interest" instead of saying "interest is only like trade." The reason for choosing the former expression may be understood from the above explanations. For an interest-taker, normal and abnormal are both alike. We shall explain it in detail later on.

Fourth: The similitude, that is, "as one whom Satan has confounded with (his) touch", gives a hint that this may happen sometimes in cases of lunacy. The verse does not say that every madness is

caused by the touch of Satan; but it indicates that some cases of lunacy are the result of Satan's touch. Further, the verse does not say that this touching is done by Iblis himself, because Satan means the evil one; this word (Satan) is used for Iblis as well as for other evil ones among the jinn and human beings. And Iblis is from the jinn. What looks certain from this Qur'anic hint is that the jinn are instrumental in the madness of some persons, if not of all.

Some commentators have opined that this simile is not based on any fact. People in those days believed that lunacy was caused by the touch of the jinn; and Allah used that belief of their's for this similitude; it is just talking to people in their own language. There is, of course, no harm in it, because it is just a similitude; it does not confirm that common belief. Such a comparison is not wrong just because the thing has no actual existence. What the verse, therefore, means is simply this: 'These swallows of interest are like a lunatic who is confounded by the touch of Satan.' It is against belief in the Justice of Allah to say that madness could be caused by the touch of Satan. Allah is Just; He cannot give Satan authority to overpower the intellect of His servant, or to subdue His believing servant.

But this opinion has many flaws:

1) Allah is too Great to insert any vain or incorrect promise in His talk without, indicating its invalidity. Allah has said about His Book: *and most surely it is a Mighty Book; falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it; a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One (41:41-42); Most surely it is a decisive word, and it is no joke (86:13-14).*

2) He says that it is against belief in the Justice of Allah to say that Satan can manipulate and disturb the intellect of a person, and can turn him into a lunatic. Well, is it not against belief in the Justice of Allah to say that lunacy occurs because of natural causes? Are not the natural causes created by Allah? And yet they do disturb the mind of man.

The fact is that there is no problem in believing that Allah allows the mind of man to be disturbed - no matter through which agency it is done. Because Allah at once removes all responsibilities away from such man. Of course, there could be a problem if his thinking power were taken away and still the responsibilities of a sane person were imposed on that man. Also it would be against belief in the Justice of Allah to say that Satan can manipulate a sane man in such a way that, in spite of his sanity, he sees truth, falsehood and virtue as evil and vice versa.

But there would be no problem if a man's intellect is disturbed or ceases to exist provided the responsibilities of sanity are also removed from him - no matter whether the disturbance occurred through natural causes or through Satan's touch.

Moreover, when we attribute madness to the touch of Satan we do not mean that he confounds the intellect directly without any middle cause. Rather, we believe that natural causes, like nervous disorders and psychological disturbances are the near causes, and Satan is a cause beyond these causes. Likewise, many miracles are attributed to the angels, although there occur natural causes in between. An example of this may be seen in two verses both of which quote Ayyub (a.s.) beseeching his Lord after his affliction. In one verse he says: *Satan has afflicted me with toil and torment (38:41);* and in the other he says: *Harm has afflicted me and Thou art the Most Merciful of the merciful (21:83).* "Harm" here refers to his sickness; and sickness has its own natural causes. See how, in the first verse, he attributes his sickness, caused by natural causes, to Satan.

The root of the trouble is this: When the materialists hear us attributing events to Allah (or attributing some happenings to the spirit, to an angel or to Satan) they think that it amounts to a rejection of natural causes, and that it sets metaphysical agencies in the place of physical causes. They should be somehow made to understand that by such declarations we add one more

(metaphysical) link at the farther end of the chain of (physical) causes. We do not replace the physical causes with metaphysical ones. (We have mentioned this fact in previous discussions several times.)

Fifth: Also, it is wrong to say, as some other exegetes have done, that the similitude aims at describing the state of interest-takers on the Day of Resurrection; and that they will rise from their graves on that day like an epileptic who is afflicted by madness.

Evidently, the verse does not support this meaning. The tradition which describes the condition of interest-takers is about the Day of Resurrection; it does not purport to explain the similitude of this verse.

It is written in *al-Manar (Tafsir)*: "The similitude, that one who swallows interest stands like one who has been confounded by the touch of Satan, has been explained by Ibn 'Atiyyah as follows: 'The aim is to show the likeness of the interest-taker in this world to the one who is confounded and afflicted with epilepsy; as it is said about the man who is convulsed with various involuntary movements, that he has gone mad.'

"I say (the author of *al-Manar*): This is the meaning which comes into my mind on reading this verse. But a major group of commentators have gone against it. They have said: 'The standing mentioned in the verse refers to the rising from the grave at the time of resurrection; that Allah has made it a sign of the interesttakers on the Day of Resurrection that they shall be raised like epileptics.' They have narrated it from Ibn 'Abbas and Ibn Mas'ud. and at-Tabarani has narrated a tradition of 'Awf ibn Malik (which he has referred to the Prophet): 'Beware of the sins that shall not be forgiven: embezzlement, so whoever embezzles anything, shall be brought with it on the Day of Resurrection; and interest, so whoever swallows interest shall be raised on the Day of Resurrection as a lunatic who gropes hither and thither aimlessly.'"

(The author of *al-Manar* goes on saying:) "The commonly understood meaning is the one given by Ibn 'Atiyyah, because when the word 'standing' is used, one generally understands it to mean managing some affairs; and there is no association to show that it refers to the rising from grave. So far as traditions are concerned none of them is free from one or another defect in the chains of narrators; and those traditions were not revealed together with the Qur'an, nor does the *al-marfu'* (tradition raised to the Prophet) purport to interpret this verse. (It only talks about the condition of interest-takers on the Day of Resurrection, without mentioning this verse.) And had not this tradition been there no-one would have interpreted this verse except in the way Ibn 'Atiyyah has done... And it was the custom of the forgers of traditions, when they were perplexed by the apparent meaning of a Qur'anic verse, to forge a tradition to explain it; and there are few exegetical traditions that are really correct."

He is right when he exposes the mistake of the exegetes. But he himself has gone wrong when he tries to explain the meaning of this similitude. He says: "What Ibn 'Atiyyah has said is quite clear. Those who are entangled in the love of wealth do become its slave. Their whole existence revolves around money; they want wealth for the sake of wealth. They have abandoned the natural means of earning, and have concentrated on earning money through money only. In this way, their souls deviate from the straight path of moderation on which most of the people are. This immoderation, this loss of equilibrium, shows itself in their movements and actions. Look at the speculators on the stock exchange or compulsive gamblers; the more they indulge in these activities the more they become entangled in it, until a time comes when their behavior becomes illogical, and their movements disorientated. It is this aspect which is the common factor between their activities and the movements of confounded lunatics. The Arabic word translated as "has confounded" is derived from *al-khabt* which means disorganized movement."

The author's comment: To say that the interest-takers' movement become disorientated and

disorganized is correct in itself. But interest-taking is not the only cause of such disorientation. This occurs when man forgets that he is a servant of his Creator and Master, and when material pleasure becomes his only goal - and this is the final reach of his knowledge! Then he loses self-control (which come through religion) and sobriety of demeanor. And he gets at once affected by every big or small worldly pleasure; and this results in a disorientation of his movements. It may be observed in any person who is immersed in worldly pleasure, and who has forgotten Allah, even if he has not taken a single penny as interest all his life.

Nor is that disorientation the purpose of this similitude. The proof, given in the verse, of their being confounded does not fit this supposed purpose of the similitude. Allah says that they are confounded in their standing, "because they say, trade is only like interest." If that disorientation of their behavior was the purpose of the similitude, it would have been more appropriate to prove it by their disorganized actions and disorderly movements.

Obviously, what we have described in explanation of this simile and about its purpose, is the only reasonable interpretation.

QUR'AN: *That is because they say, trade is only like interest:*

We have already described why trade was likened to interest, and not interest to trade. A man confounded in his thinking and disorientated in his movements is in an abnormal condition. Good and bad, virtue and evil are both the same to him. If you tell him to leave the bad deed that he is doing and to do the good, he will reply to you - if he replies - that what you tell him to do is like that which you are forbidding him; that has no preference over this.

Now note the difference. If he had said, "what you forbid me to do is like that which you tell me to do", he could not be said to be confounded or mad. At the most he would have been called a sane person who is mistaken in his view. Why? Because his reply would have shown that he knows that the thing ordered is good and should be done; but he mistakenly thinks that the forbidden thing also is good like the former. In other words, he knows and appreciates the superiority of good actions. He does

not think that nothing is good or bad, or that all are equal.

Interest-takers say that trade is like interest. It shows that they have lost their bearings; they do not accept that trade has any superiority over interest. If they had said "interest is like trade", it would have meant that they were not confounded, they knew that trade was a good thing; but they thought that interest too was good like trade. In that case, they could have been called rejectors of the *shari'ah* and sinners against Allah, but not "confounded like the one touched by Satan."

Ponder over the sentence, "That is because they say, trade is only like interest." Apparently they had not spoken these words by their tongues; it was their state and behaviour which was crying out loudly about their thinking. This style of narrating the state as uttered speech is very common in every language.

Once it is understood, the error of the following two interpretations becomes self-evident

1) Some people have said: The interest-takers said that trade was like interest, because they treated both in a like manner. The reason why they reversed the simile and said, "trade is like interest" was to emphasize - it was as though interest was the main thing and trade a secondary matter which would become respectable if it was likened to interest.

All this is out of place. They did not utter this sentence in words, so that it should require all this explanation.

2) Someone else has said: Maybe the simile is not reversed. They thought that trade was allowed so that one might earn profit. And profit was a certain thing in interest and rather uncertain in other

means of earning. Therefore, they gave primacy to interest and assigned a secondary place to trade.

The same comment applies here as was written about the first.

QUR'AN: *And Allah has allowed trade and forbidden interest:*

It is a new sentence. It is not in conjunction with the preceding sentence, and does not show the state of that sentence. In other words, it does not mean: "they say trade is only like interest, while Allah has allowed trade and forbidden interest." If a sentence, beginning with a verb in the past tense, is inserted to denote the state of the preceding sentence, it invariably always begins with *qad* (a prefix, used before past and aorist tenses) for example, "Zayd came to me" *wa qad daraba 'Umar* (when he had beaten 'Umar). In this verse, the meaning of the preceding sentence does not allow one to say that this sentence is its 'state'. The phrase denoting 'state' restricts the main sentence to the time and state denoted. If we treat this sentence as a phrase of state, it would mean: "The interest-takers' confoundedness (because of their saying that trade is only like interest) is confined to the time when Allah allowed trade, and forbade interest." But the fact is otherwise. They were confounded before this legislation as much as they were after it.

Therefore, this is an independent sentence, and not a phrase of state. Also, this sentence is not the original legislation forbidding interest. As mentioned in the beginning, these verses evidently show that interest was already prohibited before they were revealed. They explain and emphasize what was legislated by the following verse of the third chapter: *O you who believe! do not devour interest making it double and redouble, and fear Allah, that you may succeed*(3:130).

Therefore, the sentence, "And Allah has allowed trade..." does not ordain a new law; it just refers to a previously given order, and paves the way for the next sentence, "To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists, he shall have what has already passed ..." This is the apparent meaning of the verse.

Someone has said: The words, "And Allah has allowed trade and forbidden interest" are meant to refute the interest-takers' assertion, "trade is only like interest." If their claim were correct, the legal position of trade and interest would not have been different from each other in divine legislation, while the fact is that Allah has allowed one and forbidden the other.

Reply: The argument mentioned above is correct in itself: but it is not in conformity with the wording of the verse. It could be correct only if this sentence were a phrase of state. But it is not so

Someone else has written another explanation: The sentence.

"And Allah has allowed...", means that the increase of wealth through trade is not like its increase through interest, because "I have allowed trade and forbidden interest; and order is My order, and creatures are My creatures; I ordain about them as I wish, and make them obey My command in any manner, I please; none among them has any right to protest against My decision."

Reply: This also is dependent on the wrong theory that this sentence is a phrase of state. Moreover, it is based on a denial of any relationship of cause and effect between religious laws and their benefits. If you accept this interpretation, you will have to reject the relationship of cause and effect in the whole universe, and to attribute every action to Allah without apparent and middle causes. Evidently such an idea is wrong. Further, this explanation is against the Qur'anic style. The Qur'an often explains the reason for a given order, and mentions the general or special benefits emanating from a particular law. Even in the present instance, various sentences hint at the reason upon which this rule is based: "... and forego what remains (due) from interest if you are believers"; "neither shall you deal unjustly, nor shall you be dealt with unjustly"; "Those who swallow down interest... trade is only like interest." All these hint at the reason why trade has been allowed: It is in conformity with nature's demand; and why interest has been forbidden. First, it is a deviation from the straight

path of life; second, it is not in conformity with belief in Allah; and third, it is injustice.

QUR'AN: *To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists, for him shall be what has already passed, and his affair rests with Allah; and whoever returns (to it) - these are the inmates of the fire; they shall abide in it:*

These sentences branch out from the preceding sentence, "And Allah has allowed trade..." The principle laid down in this statement is not restricted to interest; it is a general rule although it is mentioned in a particular context. The meaning, therefore, will be as follows: "What We have told you on the subject of interest, is an admonition; and to whomsoever the admonition comes from his Lord and he desists, for him shall be what has already passed and his affair rests with Allah; accordingly, if you now desist from interest, you shall have what you have already taken, and your affair rests with Allah."

It is clear from the above explanation that "the admonition has come" means "the information of the law ordained by Allah has reached"; "then he desists" means "then he repents and desists from the forbidden action"; "for him shall be what has already passed" means "the ordained law shall not be applied retrospectively, rather it shall be enforced from the time the information has reached him"; "for him shall be what has already passed and his affair rests with Allah" means that he shall not be affected by the ever-lasting punishment mentioned in the next sentence (*and whoever returns [to it] - these are the inmates of the fire; they shall abide in it*). In this way, they shall be allowed the benefit of their previous action, still their affair is in the hands of Allah - He may leave them free in some matters, and may sometimes oblige them to make up for the past shortcomings.

This verse needs special attention. Beginning from the words "to whosoever then the admonition has come" up to the end of the verse, in spite of the given concession and the severe threatening, a basic principle is explained; it is a general law covering all mortal sins. Yet people have missed this clear point, and have interpreted it as though it were confined to the topic of interest only.

In view of the above-mentioned generality, the words, "for him shall be what has already passed, and his affair rests with Allah", can be taken only as a general principle - its particulars depending on the nature of the sin concerned. Whoever desists from a sin after receiving the admonition from his Lord, shall be forgiven the sins committed in the past - no matter whether the transgression was against Allah or against the people. But it does not mean that he shall automatically be absolved from its other consequences. His affair is in the hands of Allah: He may prescribe for him some expiation or amendment - as, for example, if he neglects prayers, he should pray and make up the arrears; if he did not fast, he should fast the same number of other days; if he took any property unlawfully, he should return it to the lawful owner, and he should undergo the prescribed penal sentences in relevant cases - all this going hand in hand with repentance and desisting from that sin in the future; and thus the past sins are forgiven. Or, Allah may forgive the sin altogether, after repentance, without imposing any penalty or expiation - as, for example, when a polytheist repents and enters into Islam, or when a liquor drinker or a singer repents and desists from these sins. The words, "To whosoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists", are general; they cover all the believers and unbelievers of the Prophet's time as well as all those who came later or shall come afterwards.

"And whoever returns (to it) - these are the inmates of the Fire; they shall abide in it": The word, "returns" here is in contrast to the word, "desists", in the preceding sentence. Therefore, it means, "does not desist." Thus, it refers to the person who goes on committing that sin and does not accept the divine command. Such an attitude exposes the infidelity or apostasy that is hidden in his heart even if he does not utter a single word to show it. Whoever returns to a sin and does not desist from it, and does not even feel ashamed of it, has in fact not submitted to the command of Allah; and he

shall never succeed. Thus the two sides mentioned in this verse are: (1) accepting and obeying the divine command which creates the resolve that one will not go against the law; (2) continuing in the sin which proves that one has not accepted that divine command, which, in its turn, makes one liable to remain in the Fire for ever.

The Mu'tazilites offer this verse as a proof of their belief that the one who commits a major sin shall remain in the Fire forever.

The author's comment: No doubt that the verse shows that not only the one who commits a major sin, but anyone who commits any sin, shall remain in chastisement for ever. But it is conditional; it refers to only that sinner who commits a sin and does not accept the divine command. And such a person will admittedly abide in the Fire. But it is different from the view of the Mu'tazilites.

Other commentators have mentioned many possibilities and explanations about the words of Allah, "for him shall be what has already passed", "his affair rests with Allah", and "whoever returns..." But all those discussions are based on their erroneous understanding of the verse (as we have explained earlier). It is not worthwhile mentioning them here, since their very basis is wrong.

QUR'AN: Allah effaces interest, and causes charities to grow... :

"*al-Mahq*" is gradual decrease and deterioration leading to extinction; "*al-irba*" is to make grow; "*al-athim*" is the sinner. The verse contrasts the growing of charities with the effacement of interest. It has been described earlier how the growing and multiplication of charities is not confined to the hereafter; it is its general characteristic which is found in this world as well as in the hereafter. Therefore, effacement and obliteration of interest must also be common to this world and the hereafter.

It is the characteristic of charity that it grows and grows. necessarily and inevitably. It spreads love, propagates mercy. creates good accord, unites hearts and brings peace and security in society; it protects the psyche from evil thoughts and anger. The members of such a society never think to usurp other's property, or to take it openly by force, or stealthily by theft. and so forth. Charity leads them to unity, cooperation and mutual help. As a result, most of the ways in which property can deteriorate become closed; and it helps in making property grow, and grow many times.

On the other hand, it is the characteristic of interest that it gradually obliterates and destroys wealth. It spreads hard heartedness and cruelty, creates enmity and distrust, destroys peace and security and incites the "have nots" to take revenge from the "haves" in any possible way - be it by talk or by action. be it directly or indirectly; in short, it leads towards disunity and discord. As a result, most of the ways of deterioration and destruction of the property are opened; and wealth becomes a target misfortune and calamity.

These two items - charity and interest - have a direct impact on the life of the poor section of society. Needless to say, poverty and need inflame their feelings, and they are provoked to defend their rights and are ready to confront the others, come what may. With this background, if society treats them with kindness and does good to them without asking for anything in exchange, their noble feelings are stirred and they welcome this generosity with goodwill and brotherly feelings; and it creates loving effects. If, on the other hand, they are treated with hard heartedness and greed, and are faced with danger to their property, honor and life, they stand up to take their revenge from their oppressors in any possible way. Those who have seen and heard about those who swallow interest know that such people seldom escape the evil effects of such confrontation. Often their properties are lost, their houses are ruined and their endeavors go in vain.

It is necessary to mention here two things:

First: The causes upon which social effects are based differ from physical and creative causes in

one important aspect. While the perfect physical and creative causes can never fail to produce their effects, social factors and causes bring about the expected result in most, but not all, cases. We deal with someone in a certain manner and expect those results which appear in the wake of that behavior - in most cases.

If we ponder upon the Qur'anic verses which describe the benefits and harms of the given actions, we shall find that the Qur'an (when it shows the relation between actions and their causes, and between actions and their effects) has adopted this very system, and mentions a frequently recurring effect as an ever-recurring one.

Second: Society is like an individual in its various conditions and states. An individual is born, lives, dies, acts and leaves his footprints on the sand of life. Likewise, a society has its own birth, life, death, actions and effects. Allah says in the Qur'an: *And never did We destroy a town but it had a fixed-term. No people can hasten on their doom nor can they postpone (it) (15:4-5)*

But an individual's life and death are different from a society's, as are the effects of their respective activities. Now, if an individual's characteristic spreads to the whole of society, the ways of its existence and extinction, as well as its effects will change considerably. Let us look, for example, at chastity and licentiousness. They have an effect on life, when they are found in an individual. People generally look down upon a profligate man, they do not like to set up marriage with him; his company is avoided and he is not trusted. It all happens when it remains an individual's vice, and if society on the whole is free from this evil. But if this debauchery spreads in society, and people become used to it, the above-mentioned effects simply vanish away. Those effects were the product of general abhorrence and common distaste of this evil; when it spreads to the whole of society, that abhorrence and distaste give way to general acceptance. In this way, this effect of an individual's immorality ceases to exist when that immorality spreads to the whole of society. Yet its other evil effects will surely follow: venereal disease will spread, reproduction will be effected; and other undesirable social evils would increase - for example, natural affinities will be destroyed and relationships will be upset.

Also, the effects of a characteristic found in an individual are felt very soon, while those of the same characteristic found in a society take a longer time to appear.

Allah effaces interest and makes charities grow. But there is a difference between an individual taking interest and a society doing so. When an individual indulges in this sin, the interest almost always destroys him; few and far between are the cases in which an interest-taker, because of some other mitigating factors, escapes this punishment. But retaliation is not so swift in case of a society wallowing in interest. Look at today's world: interest is a recognized institution of all societies and governments; the economy is founded, and laws are made, on the foundation of interest, and it is interest that is the corner-stone of banking. Now some of the evil effects mentioned above may not happen in this case, because society has adopted it and people never pause to think about its evils and wickedness. Yet, its natural results must follow: the accumulation of wealth on one side, and an all-pervasive need on the other. Complete separation of, and confrontation between, the two - the have and have-nots have already appeared; and its ill effects are already darkening the world's atmosphere. This has taken longer to appear than in case of an individual; yet judging from the life-span of society it has appeared rather soon. The life of society is different from an individual's; and a day for society may be equal to an eon in the eyes of an individual. Allah says: *and We bring these days to men by turns (3:140)*. This "day" refers to the time when people stand against people, nations against nations, governments confronting governments, and states opposing states.

It is necessary that man's bliss be always cared for, be it of an individual, of society or of the

whole of humanity. The Qur'an looks after both types of bliss - of an individual as well as of the whole of mankind. It was sent down to manage the man's affairs, and to safeguard the world's happiness and felicity - of the individual as well as of the species, in the present day as well as in the time to come.

Let us now look at the words of Allah: "Allah effaces interest and He causes charities to grow." These sentences describe the ultimate state of these two activities - whether done by individuals or by society. Effacement is the inseparable characteristic of interest, as growth is that of charity. Interest is effaced, although it is named *ar-riba* (growth); and charity continuously grows, although it is not called by any such name. And to this reality Allah draws our attention in these words: "Allah effaces interest, and He causes charities to grow"; thus He attributes "growth" to charities of all kinds, and describes interest *ar-riba* (literally, growth) in a word, effacement, which is its opposite in meaning.

After this explanation, the weakness of the following interpretations of other exegetes becomes obvious:

1) Someone has written: the effacement of interest does not mean that such money is lost or that such endeavors do not succeed. Because experience proves otherwise. What is actually meant by the sentence "Allah effaces interest" is that Allah deprives the interest-taker from the main objective of this activity. The interest-taker aims at hoarding wealth through interest so that he may enjoy a good life; but he never gets a chance to rejoice in his wealth, as he remains too busy in adding money to money. Then he has to remain on guard against defaulters; and ultimately he passes his days in disappointment when he finds that he has become unpopular and is especially hated by the poor.

The weakness of this interpretation is obvious.

2) Other exegetes have said: The frame of reference for this effacement is the life hereafter. The one who takes interest neglects many good deeds because of his involvement in interest and his many acts of worship are nullified because he uses money gained by interest in them.

The author's comment: No doubt, this explanation gives examples of effacement. But effacement is not restricted to the life hereafter.

3) The Mu'tazilites attempt to prove from the words, "and whoever returns (to it) - these are the inmates of the Fire; they shall abide in it", that one who commits a major sin shall remain in Hell for ever.

We have already shown the defect of this argument, and described the true import of this sentence.

QUR'AN: *And Allah does not love any ungrateful sinner:*

"alKaffar" translated here as "ungrateful" is on a paradigm which is used for emphasis. Thus, it means, "inveterately ungrateful"; "abstinately unbelieving."

This sentence gives the main reason of the effacement of interest. The swallower of interest shows his obstinacy and ingratitude for the countless bounties of Allah. He puts obstructions in the natural path of human life, that is, in natural modes of dealing; he rejects a major part of the rules about worship and mutual dealings; he uses the unlawful money of interest for his food, drink, clothing and housing, and in this way nullifies most of his acts of worship. Also, by using that money in his commercial transactions, he invalidates most of his dealings and usurps others' property, and the liability for such things remains on his own head. Further, he tramples ethical values under foot. remains immersed in greed and avarice, becomes hard-hearted and uses force and coercion to collect from his debtors what he thinks is his due. In this way, all his faculties and actions are submerged in disbelief and ingratitude. And also he is *"athim"* that is, sin is ingrained in his nature. And Allah does not love him, because He does not love anyone sunk in ingratitude, sin and disbelief.

QUR'AN: *Surely they who believe... nor shall they grieve:*

It is a general principle - those who believe and obey the divine law, "they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve ." This general rule fits those who spend in charities and desist from swallowing interest, which Allah has forbidden.

QUR'AN: *O you who believe! fear Allah and forgo what remains (due) from interest, if you are believers:*

The verse addresses them with their attribute of belief and faith, and then reminds them to fear Allah. It prepares the ground for the order which follows, "and forgo what remains (due) from interest." It shows that when these verses were revealed, there were some believers who indulged in this sin and their debtors still owed them some interest payments. Therefore, Allah ordered them to forgo that amount. This order was followed by the threat "But if you do (it) not, then be apprised of war from Allah and His Apostle."

It supports the tradition (to be quoted later) which gives the reason why these verses were revealed.

The verse ends on the words, "if you are believers." This shows that desisting from interest is an inseparable characteristic of belief. It puts more emphasis on the preceding sentences: "and whoever returns (to it) - these are the inmates of the Fire... ", and "Allah does not love any ungrateful (unbeliever) sinner."

QUR'AN: *But if you do (it) not, then he apprised of war from Allah and His Apostle:*
"al-Idhn" means to know. "Fa'dhanu" (be apprised, know) has also been recited as *fa'adhinu* (announce) imperative mood of *al-'idhan* (to announce). The preposition "bi" in "*bi harbin*" (of war) gives the meaning of certainty. The meaning thus shall be: Be sure of war from Allah and His Apostle. "War" is used as a common noun, to hint that it shall be a great war, or to refer to various kinds of war. The war is attributed to Allah and His Apostle because it is in connection with a law which was legislated by Allah and promulgated by His Apostle. Had it been connected with Allah only, it would have been a creative decree. So far as His Apostle is concerned, he is not independent of Allah in any affair; Allah says: *you have no concern in the affair* (3:128).

How do Allah and His Apostle wage war with one who does not obey a law? They fight with such a disobedient Muslim to compel him to submit to divine authority, as is declared in the Qur'an: ... *then fight that (party) which acts wrongfully until it returns to Allah's command* (49:9).

Moreover, Allah has another way of defending His laws; and that is fighting against the offenders through the agency of nature. He lets the masses flare up against them; and in this way their lands are devastated and their footprints obliterated. Allah says: *And when We wish to destroy a town, We send Our commandment to the people of it who lead easy lives, but they transgress therein; thus the word proves true against it, so We destroy it with utter destruction* (17:16).

QUR'AN: *And if (the debtor) is in straitened circumstances, then let there be respite until (he is in) ease:*

"Kana" (is) in the beginning of the verse has not been used as an auxiliary verb: it is an independent verb and means "exists"; "an-nazirah " is respite, a moratorium. "al-Maysarah" (is ease, affluence); it is the opposite of "al-'usrah" (straitened circumstances).

The verse says: If there is one of your debtors who is at present unable to repay your loan, then give him respite until he is affluent enough to repay it.

The verse is general and not restricted to the loan given with interest, although it covers such cases also. They used to demand repayment when the stipulated time came; if the debtor was not in a position to pay, he asked for some more time, agreeing to pay more interest. The verse forbids this interest, and tells the creditor to give his debtor respite until he is in ease.

QUR'AN: *and that you remit (it) as alms is better for you, if you knew:*

If you forego the loan and remit it as charity, it shall be better for you; because by this remittance you will change into charity what you intended to increase through interest; in other words, you will change what was sure to be effaced with what is sure to grow many times.

QUR'AN: *And fear the day... and they shall not be dealt with unjustly:*

This is the epilogue of the preceding verses of interest; it reminds the believers of the Day of Resurrection, and mentions some of its aspects which are relevant to this topic. The verse prepares the audience to fear Allah and desist from the things forbidden by Allah, especially concerning the people's rights upon which whole edifice of life is founded. It says that a day is coming in which you shall be returned to Allah and then every soul shall be paid back in full what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly.

What is the meaning of being returned to Allah while we are never far from Him? And what is this "paying back in full"? We shall explain it, God willing, in the sixth chapter (The Cattle).

It has been said that this verse was the last one to be revealed to the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.). A tradition to this effect will be found in the following discussion.

Traditions

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsir* of al-Qummi, under the verse: "Those who swallow down interest... ", that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: "When I was taken to the heavens, I saw such a group that if any of them wanted to stand up, he could not do so, because of the bulkiness of his stomach. I said: 'Who are they, O Gabriel?' He said: 'These are they who swallow up interest; they cannot stand except as one whom Satan has confounded with (his) touch stands; and lo! they are on the path of the people of Pharaoh; they are exposed to the Fire in morning and at night, and they say: "Our Lord! when shall the Hour come?"'"

The author says: It is an illustrative example pertaining to the period between death and resurrection. It confirms the Prophet's words: "As you live, so shall you die; and as you die, so shall you be raised."

al-Isbahani has narrated, in his *at-Tarhib*, from Anas (ibn Malik) that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: 'The swallower of interest shall come on the Day of Resurrection, confounded, dragging both his sides.' Saying it, he recited: *they cannot stand except as one whom Satan has confounded with (his) touch stands.*" (*ad-Durru'l-manthur*)

The author says: There have come numerous traditions about the punishment for interest, both from Shi'ah and Sunni chains. Some of them say that interest is equal to seventy acts of incest the swallower of interest would have committed with his mother.

There is a tradition in *at-Tahdhib*, that 'Umar ibn Yazid Bayya' as-Sabiri said: "I said to Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.): 'May I be your ransom! Verily, people say that taking profit from a "needy" person is unlawful.' He said: 'Have you seen anyone, whether rich or poor, purchasing anything unless he "needs" it? O 'Umar! Allah has allowed trade and forbidden interest. Therefore, take profit; but do not take interest.' I said: 'And what is interest?' He said: 'Dirhams by dirhams, two against one; and wheat by wheat, double (weight) against single (weight).'"

'Ubayd ibn Zurarah narrates from Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) that he said: "There is no interest except in that which is measured or weighed." (*Man la yahduruhu'l-faqih*)

The author says: There is a difference of opinion as to which things are liable to interest. It is

themadhab of *Ahlu'l-bayt* (a.s.) that there is no interest except in gold and silver and those things which are measured or weighed. Further details are beyond the scope of this book, as the topic concerns Islamic jurisprudence.

There is a tradition in *al-Kafi* from one of the two Imams (al-Baqir or as-Sadiq - a.s.) and in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the words of Allah: *To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord*, that he said: "The admonition is repentance."

Muhammad ibn Muslim said: "There came to Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) a man from Khurasan who had dealt with interest till he had amassed a fortune. 'He asked the scholars of jurisprudence, and they said: No deed of yours shall be accepted until you return it (the interest) to its owners.' Then he came to Abu Ja'far (a.s.) and told him his story. Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said: 'Your way out is the verse from the Book of Allah, Mighty and Great is He! *To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists, for him shall be what has already passed, and his affair rests with Allah*'. Then he (the Imam) said: 'Admonition is repentance.'" (at-Tahdhib)

There is a tradition in *al-Kafi* and *Man la yahduruhu'l-faqih* that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Every interest which people swallowed because of ignorance, and then they repented, it shall be accepted from them when the repentance is known from them." And he said: "If a man inherits a property from his father, and he knows that that property includes interest, but it is mixed up with (the money of) trade, then it is lawful for him; so let him consume it. And if he recognizes something of it (interest) then he should keep his principal and return the excess."

A tradition is narrated in *Man la yahduruhu'l-faqih* and *'Uyunu'l-akhbar* from ar-Rida (a.s.): "It (interest) is a major sin, after explanation." And he said: "And to treat it as a small matter is to enter into disbelief."

The Imam was asked about a man who consumes interest thinking that it is lawful. He said: "There is no harm for him in it until he takes it on purpose (i.e. knowing that it is unlawful). When he indulges in it on purpose, then he shall be (liable) to the place which Allah has mentioned." (al-Kafi)

It is reported in *al-Kafi* and *Man la yahduruhu'l-faqih* that as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked about the words of Allah: *Allah effaces interest, and He causes charities to grow...*, and was told (by the one who asked): "I have seen (many a man) who swallows interest and his wealth increases." He (the Imam) said: "What effacement could be more effective than that of the dirham of interest? It obliterates religion; and if he repented, his wealth would go and he would become poor."

The author says: The tradition, as you see, explains effacement in terms of religious obliteration - he does not become owner of that property and he is not allowed to use it. Charity is just its opposite in these respects. This tradition does not go against the general meaning of effacement which we have written earlier.

'Ali (a.s.) said: "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) has cursed five persons concerned with interest: the one who consumes (i.e. takes) it, the one who gives it to be consumed, its two witnesses and its writer." (*Majma'u'l-bayan*)

The author says: The same thing has been narrated in *ad-Durru'l-manthur* from the Holy Prophet through several chains.

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsir* of al-'Ayyashi from al-Baqir (a.s.) that he said: "Allah, High is He, has said: 'I have given (some) authority to others (i.e. angels etc.) about things, except charity, because I take hold of it with My (own) hand. So much so that a man or a woman gives half a date in alms, and I nurture it for him as one of you nurtures his calf and colt; until I shall leave (i.e., return) it on the Day of Resurrection (and it shall be) bigger than the (mountain) of Uhud.'"

The same book quotes 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (peace be on them both) narrating from the Prophet that

he said: "Verily, Allah nurtures the alms for one of you, as one of you brings up his child; until he (the alms-giver) shall find it on the Day of Resurrection, and it shall be like Uhud."

The author says: The matter has been narrated also through a Sunni chain from many companions like Abu Hurayrah, 'A'ishah, Ibn 'Umar, Abu Barzah al-Aslami, all from the Prophet.

It is written in *at-Tafsir* of al-Qummi that when Allah sent down (the verse): *Those who swallow down interest...*, Khalid ibn al-Walid stood up before the Messenger of Allah and said: "O Messenger of Allah! My father lent (money) with interest in the (tribe of) Thaqif, and he told me at the time of his death to collect it. Thereupon Allah revealed: *O you who believe! fear Allah and forgo what remains (due) from it...*"

The author says: Nearly the same thing has been narrated in *Majma'u'l-bayan* from al-Baqir (a.s.) as-Suddi and 'Ikrimah have said: (This verse) was revealed about the balance of interest due to al-'Abbas and Khalid ibn al-Walid; they were partners in pre-Islamic days, they lent with interest to some people of Banu 'Amr ibn 'Umayr, a clan of the (tribe of) Thaqif. Then came Islam, and they had great riches in interest. Thereupon, Allah revealed this verse. So the Prophet said: "Now, surely every interest of the pre-Islamic days is waived, and the first interest which I waive is that of al-'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib; and all the blood of pre-Islamic days is waived, and the first blood which I waive is that of Rabi'ah ibn al-Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib." (He was given to Banu Layth for suckling and was killed by Banu Hudhayl.) (*Majma'u'l-bayan*)

The author says: This has been narrated in *ad-Durru'l-manthur* from Ibn Jarir, Ibnu'l-Mundhir and Ibn Abi Hatim from as-Suddi. But there the name of Khalid is not mentioned openly. It says that it was revealed about al-'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib and a man from Banu al-Mughirah.

Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi (who has said that it is correct), an-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, Ibn Abi Hatim and al-Bayhaqi (in his *asSunan*) have narrated from 'Amr ibn al-Ahwas that he participated in the last pilgrimage with the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.); so he (the Messenger of Allah) said: "Now surely every interest of the days of ignorance is waived, you shall have your capital, neither shall you deal unjustly, nor shall you be dealt with unjustly." (*ad-Durru'l-manthur*)

The author says: There are numerous traditions with a similar meaning. What is deduced from Shi'ah and Sunni traditions is that the verse was revealed about some interest money which Banu al-Mughirah had due from Thaqif; and they used to lend money to them with interest in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance. When Islam came, Banu al-Mughirah demanded from Thaqif the balance which was due; they refused to pay (interest) because Islam had waived it. Their case was put before the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.); then this verse was revealed.

It supports what we have mentioned in the General Comment that interest was prohibited in Islam long before these verses were revealed; and that the aim of these verses was to emphasize that prohibition.

With this background, those few traditions which say that the law prohibiting interest was revealed in the last days of the Apostle of Allah, and that he died before he could explain the rules concerning interest are not worthy of interest. Such traditions are reported in *ad-Durru'l-manthur*, through Ibn Jarir and Ibn Marduwayh from 'Umar ibn al-Khattab that he said in a lecture "Among the last verses to be revealed was that of interest; and the Apostle of Allah died and he had not explained it to us. Therefore, leave what seems doubtful to you for what is not doubtful to you."

Moreover, it is the *madhhab* of the Imams of *Ahlu'l-bayt* that Allah did not give death to His Prophet until He had legislated all that was needed by people for their religious affairs, and until His Prophet had explained it all to his people.

It is reported in *ad-Durru'l-manthur* through several chains from Ibn 'Abbas, as-Suddi, 'Atiyyah

al-'Awfi, Abu Salih and Sa'id ibn Jubayr that the last verse to be revealed was: *And fear the day in which... shall not be dealt with unjustly.*

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Much stress was laid on the prohibition of interest so that people should not refrain from doing good through loan or charity." (*Majma'u'l-bayan*)

The same book narrates from 'Ali (a.s.): "When Allah intends to destroy a town, interest appears among them."

The author says: The earlier comments make the meanings of these traditions clear.

The author of *Majma'u'l-bayan* writes under the verse, "And if (the debtor) is in straitened circumstances, then let there be respite until (he is in) ease": "There is a difference of opinion regarding the definition of straitened circumstances. And it has been narrated from Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) that he said: 'It is when he does not have anything in excess of his own sustenance and that of his dependants, in the sense of economics.'... to give respite to a poor man is compulsory in every religion, as is narrated from Ibn 'Abbas, ad-Dahhak and al-Hasan; and similar traditions have come from Abu Ja'far and Abu 'Abdillah (peace be upon them both). al-Baqir (a.s.) said: 'Until (he is in) ease', means, until his report reaches the Imam; then the Imam shall repay (on his behalf) out of the share of 'those in debt', provided he had spent that loan on lawful expenses."

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "The Messenger of Allah ascended the pulpit one day; he thanked Allah and praised Him and asked for His blessings on His prophets, and then said: 'O people! he who is present should convey (it) to him who is absent. Now, whoever gives respite to a poor person, Allah shall credit him every day with charity equal to his money (given in loan), until he recovers it.'" Then Abu 'Abdillah (as-Sadiq - a.s.) said: "*And if (the debtor) is in straitened circumstances, then let there be respite until (he is in) ease; and that you remit (it) as alms is better for you, if you knew that he is in straitened circumstances, then give him your money (principle) as alms, as it is better for you.*" (al-Kafi)

The author says: This tradition explains the divine words "if you knew"; and its other meaning has been mentioned earlier. The tradition on this and related subjects are very numerous; and the reader is advised to refer to the chapters concerning loans in the books of Islamic jurisprudence.

A Discourse about Interest

It has been repeatedly mentioned that man has only one aim in sight when he does any work. That aim is to gain perfection in his life; in other words, to fulfill his physical and material needs. He does a work and obtains the necessities of life. Thus, he is the rightful owner of his work and of the things made by him. The word "work" is used here with a comprehensive meaning; it includes his actions and reactions as well as every relationship with other things which produces an effect on them, and which society acknowledges. He acquires and reserves for himself what effect he has produced on a matter, and believes that it is his lawful property; the sane persons of society also accept his ownership of that item.

But it was not possible for him to fulfill all his needs by his own labor. This led to mutual cooperation in society; it became inevitable for one to benefit from others' endeavors. This resulted in the mutual exchange of properties. It became customary that a man worked in one or a more vocations, and produced many necessary items, then kept for himself according to his needs, and exchanged the excess items for what he needed from another man's products. This was the foundation of mutual dealing and barter.

Now, it was found that most of the products and items were totally different from each other; many were of completely different species; some were in great demand while others were not needed so frequently; one thing was found in large quantity while the other was rare, and so on. This created difficulties in bartering. Fruit is used for eating, a donkey for carrying loads, water for satisfying the thirst, and pearls and gems for jewelry, and so on. All these things have different values as necessities of life, and are totally unrelated to each other. How can they be exchanged with justice and fairness?

Thus arose the need to fix the value of a thing in terms of money. They took a rare item, like gold, and turned it into a standard by which the value of other products and goods could be decided. They also fixed units of length, mass and weight, for example, the meter, the liter and the kilogram to measure and weigh goods. In this way, confusion and complication was removed, and the worth of a thing in relation to other things could be decided by comparing both with gold. Let us say that a carat of diamond is equal to four dinars, and a certain heap of wheat flour is equal to one-tenth of a dinar. Now we can easily decide that a carat of diamond is equal to forty such heaps of wheat flour.

Gradually, it was found more practicable to make coins of some other metals also, like silver, copper, bronze and nickel; finally currency notes made of paper came into being. The details about this may be found in books on economics.

Now the road of trade and commerce was open. Some people took for themselves the occupation of keeping various commodities with them and exchanging them for money or other goods. Their purpose was to earn profit by this exchange. The profit represented the extra price obtained from the customer for the goods sold.

Then a time came when people began treating money as though it was all that was needed for life. The price almost usurped the place of the commodity itself. It was because by acquiring money, man could acquire all the necessities of life.

Some people treated it as a commodity to be sold and purchased. These people are called moneychangers. They change foreign and local currencies and earn profit by this transaction.

This is an outline of the story of trade and money. It will be seen from above that its basic element is bartering one thing for another, because someone needed one thing more than another; or exchanging an item for its price, because one needs the profit. In all these cases, the thing given is always different from the thing received in exchange. It is this difference upon which commercial life is based.

So far as exchanging a commodity for the same type of commodity (e.g. wheat for wheat) is concerned, it could be either without any increase or with increase. If it is without increase (e.g. lending money or food grain and taking it back without any increase), then it is a reasonable dealing, which sometimes becomes necessary; it corrects the imbalance of society, fulfils the needs of the poor, and no harm comes out of it. But if it is with increase on the side of repayment, then it is interest. Now, let us see what its effect can be.

The basic element of interest is the exchange of one commodity for the same commodity with an increase in repayment; for example, lending ten dirhams for a fixed time and taking back twelve dirhams; or selling an item on credit at ten dirhams and recovering twelve at the end of the stipulated term. Why does a buyer or debtor take any money or commodity on loan? Because his needs are greater than his earnings. Let us say that he earns ten dirhams daily, while his necessities cost him twenty. He is obliged on the first day to take a loan of ten dirhams, with interest of two dirhams. On the second day, he has to pay two dirhams of interest from his earnings of ten; now he is left with eight dirhams only, so he has to take another loan of twelve dirhams with larger interest. This is the beginning of his ruin. Day by day, ever-larger portions of his earnings go in paying ever-increasing

interest, until a day comes when the interest eats up his total earnings; he pays ten in interest and is left without a single dirham to meet his needs. It is sheer destruction of life and livelihood.

And the lender gets back his own ten, plus the ten of the debtor; he gets the whole twenty. The wealth of both sides accumulates on one side, while the other side is left in the lurch without any money*.

In this way, interest leads to the destruction of the poor section of society, and all wealth gravitates towards the already wealthy group. Because of this financial strength, they become arrogant, they manipulate the money market, and rule over people's properties, honor and lives in any way they wish and desire (exploitation of others is, after all, ingrained in human nature). On the other hand, the deprived and exploited people try their best to protect themselves from this humiliation, and to free themselves from the domination and exploitation by wealthy persons; they use all means of defense and offence available to them. As a result of this confrontation, chaos appears on the earth, and disorder and violence spread in society. Humanity races towards extinction and civilization towards obliteration.

This is apart from the periodic loss of capital - not every debtor is able, or willing, to pay the accumulated principal plus interest.

This much about loans which rich people give to poor persons. In other cases of interest, for example, commercial loans given by banks to traders to increase their trade, the defects are not so transparent. But their least harm is that they gradually pull wealth to those trading houses by increasing their capital far in excess of their actual capacity and strength. Then those commercial concerns try to compete with each other; the more powerful ones swallow up the weaker ones. In this manner, weaker traders go out of business; the list of needy persons becomes longer and longer; and wealth concentrates in a few houses.

The scholars of economics must admit that the only reason why communism was started, and why socialism spread so much, was the preposterous and exorbitant accumulation of wealth within a few houses, while the overwhelming majority was deprived of the bare necessities of life. The reader should be made aware of an interesting phenomenon. The wealthy minority always swore in the name of civilization, justice and freedom; they preached equality and human rights. They said with their mouths what was not in their hearts. They used words for totally opposite ideas. By this method, they hoped to keep the common people, the exploited masses, in their place, to keep them lulled in their servitude, so that they might go on oppressing them more and more. But very soon it boomeranged back to them; the cunning phrases of the exploiters came back to haunt them; they planned, and Allah also planned, and Allah is the best of planners; thus evil was the end of those who did evil.

And only Allah knows what the future holds for this troubled humanity.

Another evil effect of interest springs from the facility it provides for accumulating wealth in the hands of a few. Huge amounts of money, in millions and billions, are kept idle in the strong rooms of banks. Some people enjoy extravagant living and inexhaustible luxuries, idling their times on the thrones of their financial empires; at the same time, there are others who spend their lives in idleness, but for a totally different reason; these hungry masses remain idle, because they are unemployed. One group does not work because of its superabundant treasures; the other group does not work because it is deprived of employment. Both become idle - an affront to human nature, which says that man, must work for his livelihood.

* This is now happening on a much larger scale in dealings between developed and developing nations. The former started giving interest-bearing loans to the latter, to "help" them out of their troubles. (Of course, this "generosity" had many strings attached to it; but that is not our concern

here.) Every poor nation fell into this trap. Many such loans accumulated; and after a short respite the interest on them began falling due in rapid succession. Many nations, unable to meet their obligations, took further loans to repay the interest due. It is an open secret that many a poor nation has already been swallowed up to its neck in this quicksand.

Another Discourse about Interest

Al-Ghazali has written in his *Ihya'u'l-'ulum* (chapter of "Thanks") as follows:

"One of the bounties of Allah is the creation of the dirham and the dinar; and the world cannot do without them. They are two metals, which are of no use in themselves; still mankind depends upon them. Every man needs a multitude of items like food, clothing and various other necessities. Sometimes he does not have what he needs, and has in his hands what is not needed by him. For example, he has in his possession a quantity of saffron, but he is in need of a camel to ride. And someone else has a camel which he has no use of, and he needs saffron. Both should exchange their properties. But it is necessary to estimate the worth of the things so changed. Naturally, the owner of the camel will not give away his camel in lieu of a small quantity of saffron. And there is no correlation between camel and saffron, so that it can be said that the camel owner should be given saffron, for example, equal in weight to the camel. The same difficulty would arise if one wanted to purchase a house with cloth, or flour with a donkey. These things have no correlation with each other. Exchange would be extremely difficult in this way.

"These unrelated and dissimilar items need an intermediary who can decide between them with justice, and can fix each item's place, worth and rank. By this assignment of ranks, it would be known which things are equal and which are unequal.

"Accordingly, Allah created the dirham and the dinar as two judges for, and intermediaries between, properties, so that properties might be measured by them. Now, it can be said that this camel is worth one hundred dinars, and this much saffron is equal to one hundred dinars, therefore, this camel is equal in value to this amount of saffron.

"This comparison by means of the two metals is possible because they are not wanted in themselves. If they, like other commodities, were wanted in themselves, somebody would have needed them and another could have refused to accept them if he had no use of them at that actual time. And the whole system would have been disturbed. Therefore, Allah created them to circulate in the hands of people, and to decide between properties with justice.

"There was also another benefit: One may acquire all things through the dirham and the dinar. It is because they are precious items in themselves, and they are of no use in themselves. Their relationship with all other commodities is the same. Therefore, for anyone who owns them, it is as though he owns everything. This benefit is not found in other thing. A man who owns a cloth has only that cloth; if he needs food, he cannot be sure that the owner of the food will accept his cloth in exchange; perhaps that man needs a horse; why should he take cloth? Hence the need of a thing which in appearance is nothing, and in reality is everything.

"Only that thing which has no particular form of its own can have an equal relation to various different things. A mirror has no color of its own, therefore it reflects every colour which comes before it; prepositions have no independent meaning of their own, so they make other words' meanings clear. Likewise coins serve no purpose on their own, that is why all purposes are served through them. This is the second benefit; there are other benefits also; but they are not mentioned here

for the sake of brevity."

After this al-Ghazali expresses his views, the gist of which is as follows:

"As these two coins are the bounties of Allah (because of the benefits mentioned above) anyone who uses them in a way that nullifies their originally intended benefits is guilty of ingratitude against the bounties of Allah."

After this, he infers the reasons for many laws from his above-mentioned principle:

According to him "it is because of this principle that the hoarding of the dirham and the dinar is prohibited, as this is injustice and nullifies their benefit. Hoarding them is like putting a judge in prison - it prevents him from discharging his duties, and creates disorder in society."

He also says: "It is because of this reason that one is not allowed to make or use pots of gold or silver. Using them as pots turns them into things that are wanted for their own sake, while they have been created only as a means to acquire other things. This also is injustice; it is like forcing a judge to work as a weaver, to collect levies or to do other such jobs which are done by lowly people."

And he has justified the prohibition of interest in the dirham and the dinar by the same principle. According to him, it is injustice and ingratitude against the bounties of Allah, because gold and silver have been created for the sake of other things, not for their own, as there is no need which can be fulfilled by gold and silver in the same way as gold and silver.

This was, in short, al-Ghazali's explanation. But he seems confused in his principle, as well as in the reasons by which he has inferred various rules from that principle.

First: He says that gold and silver are not sought for their own sake. If so, then how could they determine the value of other things? The hand is used to measure the lengths of things. How is that done? By the length of the hand itself. A piece of iron is used to determine the weight of a thing. How is it done? By the weight of the iron itself. If gold and silver were unwanted in themselves, how could they decide the worth, that is, "wantedness", of other things?

Further, he admits that they are precious items in themselves. How can they be precious in themselves unless they are wanted for their own sake? How can a thing be called "precious" if it is not wanted?

Moreover, if they were created only as a means to acquire other things, then there should be no difference between gold and silver in worth and prestige. But the fact is otherwise. According to al-Ghazali's principle, both metals should be equal in value!

Second: The reason why the hoarding of gold and silver is prohibited is not that which al-Ghazali has thought - that a hoarder treats them as though they were wanted for their own sake. The real reason has been mentioned in the words of Allah: *And (as for) those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah's way, announce to them a painful chastisement (9:34)*. It is clear that their hoarding is prohibited because it deprives the poor of their dues; and also because they are needed for keeping the cycle of work, payment and exchange in motion.

Third: The reason which he has ascribed to the prohibition of making and using pots of gold or silver, that it is injustice and ingratitude, is equally applicable to ornaments made of gold and silver, as well as to money changing. And these things have not been prohibited by the *shari'ah*, nor are they considered by religion as injustice or ingratitude.

Fourth: What he has written as the reason for the prohibition of interest in gold and silver neither includes all cases of interest nor excludes cases of "non-interest." If the reason given by him, that is, injustice and ingratitude, were the real reason, it would have prohibited even money-changing and foreign exchange, just like those financial dealings in which interest is involved. And it would not have prevented interest in other things which are measured or weighed, like wheat and milk.

Therefore, his whole explanation is wrong in basic principle as well as in the other topics based on that principle.

The real reason for the prohibition, which Allah has mentioned, fits perfectly the explanation given before by us: that the excess amount is taken without giving anything in exchange. Allah says: *And whatever you lay out as interest, so that it may increase in the properties of men, it shall not increase with Allah; and whatever you give in charity, desiring Allah's pleasure - it is these that shall get manifold* (30:39). This verse shows that interest increases "in the properties of men"; in other words, it increases by adding to itself parts of other people's properties, as a seed grows by nourishing itself on earth, and adding parts of the earth to itself. Likewise, interest grows and grows while other people's properties go on decreasing until they are totally expended.

It is this Qur'anic reason which we have described earlier.

Also, look at the words of Allah, "and if you repent, then you shall have your capital; neither shall you deal unjustly, nor shall you be dealt with unjustly." The verse says that you shall not deal with people unjustly, nor shall you be dealt with unjustly by the people or by Allah. It means that interest is injustice against the people.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 282-283

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تَدَايَنْتُمْ بِدَيْنٍ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوهُ وَلْيَكْتُب بَيْنَكُمْ كَاتِبٌ بِالْعَدْلِ وَلَا يَأْب كَاتِبٌ أَنْ يَكْتُبَ كَمَا عَلَّمَهُ اللَّهُ فَلْيَكْتُبْ
وَلْيُمْلِلِ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا يَبْخَسْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا فَإِن كَانَ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ سَفِيهًا أَوْ ضَعِيفًا أَوْ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يُمْلِئَ هُوَ
فَلْيُمْلِلْ وَلِيُّهُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَاسْتَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ فَإِن لَّمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ مِمَّن تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَاءِ أَن تَضِلَّ
إِحْدَاهُمَا فَتُذَكِّرَ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَىٰ وَلَا يَأْب الشُّهَدَاءُ إِذَا مَا دُعُوا وَلَا تَسْأَمُوا أَن تَكْتُبُوهُ صَغِيرًا أَوْ كَبِيرًا إِلَىٰ أَجَلِهِ ذَلِكُمْ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ
وَأَقْوَمُ لِلشَّهَادَةِ وَأَدْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَرْتَابُوا إِلَّا أَن تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً حَاضِرَةً تُدِيرُونَهَا بَيْنَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَلَّا تَكْتُبُوهَا وَأَشْهِدُوا إِذَا تَبَايَعْتُمْ وَلَا
يُضَارَّ كَاتِبٌ وَلَا شَهِيدٌ وَإِن تَفْعَلُوا فَإِنَّهُ فُسُوقٌ بِكُمْ وَانْقُوا اللَّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ 2:282
وَإِن كُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ وَلَمْ تَجِدُوا كَاتِبًا فَرِهَانٌ مَّقْبُوضَةٌ فَإِن أَمِنَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا فَلْيُؤَدِّ الَّذِي أُؤْتِمِنَ أَمَانَتَهُ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا
الشَّهَادَةَ وَمَن يَكْتُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ آتَمٌ قَلْبُهُ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ 2:283

2:282O you who believe! when you deal with each other in contracting a debt for a fixed time, then write it down; and let a scribe write it down between you with fairness; and the scribe should not refuse to write as Allah has taught him, so he should write; and let him who owes the debt dictate, and he should be careful of (his duty to) Allah, his Lord, and not diminish anything from it; but if he who owes the debt is unsound in understanding, or weak, or (if) he is not able to dictate himself, let his guardian dictate with fairness; and call in to witness from among your men two witnesses; but if there are not two men, then one man and two women from among those whom you approve of the witnesses, so that if one of the two errs, the (second) one of the two may remind the other; and the witnesses should not refuse when they are summoned; and disdain not of writing it (whether it is) small or large, with its fixed time; this is more equitable with Allah and assures greater accuracy in testimony, and the nearest (way) that you may not entertain doubts (afterwards); except when it is ready merchandise which you give and take among yourselves from hand to hand, then there is no blame on you in not writing it down; and have witnesses when you trade with one another; and let no harm be done to the scribe or to the witnesses; and if you do (it) then surely it will be a transgression in you, and fear Allah; and Allah teaches you; and Allah knows all things.

2:283And if you are on a journey and you do not find a scribe, then (there may be) a security taken into possession; but if one of you trusts another, then he who is trusted should deliver his trust, and let him fear Allah, his Lord; and do not conceal testimony, and whoever conceals it, his heart is surely sinful; and Allah knows what you do.

Commentary

QUR'AN: 0 you who believe! when you deal with each other in contracting a loan... and Allah knows all things:

"at-Tadayun" is to give a loan to another; "al-implal" and "al-impla" both mean 'to dictate'; "al-bakhs" is to diminish, to do justice; "as-sa'mah" is to be fed up; to disdain; "al-mudarraah" on the paradigm of "al-mufa'ilah" from "ad-darar" (harm) means to harm one another; "al-fusuq" is

transgression, refusal to obey; , "*ar-rihan*" has also been recited as *ar-ruhun* both are the plurals of *ar-rahn* (the thing mortgaged, pawned or deposited as security).

"And let him who owes the debt dictate... but if he who owes the debt is unsound in understanding..." The whole phrase "he who owes the debt" has been repeated here instead of using a pronoun. It was done to remove any possible misunderstanding, as a pronoun could easily be mistaken to refer to the "scribe" mentioned in the preceding sentence.

"... or (if) he is not able to dictate himself, then let his guardian dictate..." The manifest and separate pronoun "*huwa*" (translated here as "himself") has been included in the sentence to show that in this particular case the debtor and his guardian both have the right to dictate. In the first two situations, when the debtor is deficient in understanding or is weak (in body or mind), the guardian has total authority, and the debtor himself cannot deal in his own affairs. But in this third situation when the debtor is, for any reason, unable to dictate himself, then the guardian shall have joint authority to do so. Therefore, this pronoun has given the following meaning to the phrase: "what such a debtor himself can do, he should do it; but what he is unable to do, his guardian shall do it."

"... so that if one of the two errs, the (second) one of the two may remind the other": In this sentence a word, *hadhar* is understood before "*an*"; together they literally mean, "lest one of the two errs..."; the words, "one of the two" have been repeated in this sentence. While at first glance it would appear that the second phrase could be replaced by a pronoun, the fact is that the two phrases do not have the same significance. The first phrase (*if one of the two errs*) refers to either of the two without pointing to a particular woman; the second phrase (*the one of the two may remind...*) points particularly to the second who has not erred. That is why we have added the word (second) in its translation.

"And fear Allah"; The believers should guard themselves against disobeying the orders and prohibitions promulgated in this verse. "And Allah teaches you"; it is an independent sentence, not connected with the preceding one, "and fear Allah." The sentence describes the grace of Allah bestowed on the believers. In this respect it is like the words of Allah in the verse of inheritance: *Allah makes it clear to you lest you err* (4:176). Allah in both these sentences shows that He has bestowed His bounties upon the believers by teaching them the rules of religion and by instructing them as to what they were allowed to do and what not.

Some people have said that the sentence, "and fear Allah, and Allah teaches you", were connected to each other. According to them, they show that there is a relation of cause and effect between the two - when people fear Allah then Allah teaches them.

Comment: The principle mentioned above is correct in itself, and is supported by other verses of the Qur'an and by traditions. But this verse has nothing to do with that principle. The second sentence begins with "and"; if it had wanted to enunciate that principle, the word "and" would not have been there; the sentence would have been like this: "and fear Allah, He will teach you." Moreover, the said interpretation is not supported by the context; if we accept it then the end of the verse will be quite irrelevant to the main topic of the verse.

The above-mentioned reconstruction of the verse gives us another argument against that interpretation. Had that meaning been correct, the divine name, Allah, would not have been repeated in "and Allah teaches you", a pronoun would have been more appropriate.

In these three consecutive short sentences, the divine name, Allah, has been repeated three times. It was necessary in the first sentence, "and fear Allah"; it had to be repeated in "and Allah teaches you", because it was an independent sentence; and in the last sentence, "and Allah knows all things", the name gives the proof of this statement - He knows all things because He is Allah.

The two verses contain nearly twenty basic rules concerning loan, mortgage, evidence, etc. There are numerous traditions about these and related topics. But the proper place to go into these details are the books of jurisprudence. Therefore, we shall not quote them here.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSE 284

لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِنْ تُبْدُوا مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ يُحَاسِبِكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ فَيَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ 2:284

2:284 Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's, and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allah will call you to account for it; then He will forgive whom He pleases and chastise whom He pleases; and Allah is powerful over all things.

Commentary

QUR'AN: *Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's:*

Allah is the Owner of all creation, whether it is in the heavens or in the earth. This declaration paves the way for the next sentence, "and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allah will call you to account for it." To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth; and among those things are you as well as your actions, and all that your souls have earned. Therefore, Allah encompasses you and preserve your deeds; it makes no difference to Him whether your actions are manifest or hidden, He will call you to account for them.

It has been said that the heavens have an affinity with the mind's faculties, psychological traits and spiritual characteristics. What is in our souls or minds is a part of what is in the heavens, and it belongs to Allah. When the hidden traits and characteristics manifest themselves through the actions of the body,, they become a part of what is in the earth, and that also belongs to Allah. Thus, whatever is found in our minds, whether it is manifested or remains hidden, belongs to Allah, and He will decide about it after calling us to account for it.

QUR'AN: *and whether You manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allah will call you to account for it:*

"*al-Ibda'* (to manifest) is opposite of "*al-ikhfa'*" (to hide). "What is in your souls" means "what is settled in your minds"; it is the meaning that is understood by scholars of the language as well as the general public. It refers to traits and characteristics, whether good or bad, like belief and disbelief, love and hate, strength or weakness of the will, and so on. These traits may be manifest or hidden. They are manifested through the actions of body, which may be perceived by others and which prove the existence of those traits in the doer. One knows that but for those particular traits, for example, love or hate, belief or disbelief, inclination or repulsion, those deeds could not be done. In this manner, actions manifest the motives that are fixed in the minds of the doers.

Conversely, these traits may remain hidden if one does not do any action that could prove their existence in one's mind.

We have said above that "what is in your souls" means what is settled in your minds. It does not mean ineradicable and firmly rooted characteristics; rather it refers to the substantial existence of such characteristics from which actions may emanate.

The two alternatives, "whether you manifest... " and "hide it", show that those characteristics are capable of being shown or hidden; it may be a well-ingrained trait or some appropriate psychological state. But it does not, and cannot, mean passing notions and transient ideas that invade one's mind without one's intention; for example, the mental image of a sin when one has no intention or inclination to do it. The words of the verse do not include such involuntary notions, because they are not "settled" in the mind, nor does any action emanate from them.

The verse, in short, says that mental states, the characteristics and traits settled in mind, are the basis of a man's actions, obedient as well as disobedient; and Allah will call man to account for them. In this respect, this verse has the same significance as the following verses:

Allah will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned (2:225).

... his heart is surely sinful (2:283).

... surely the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these, shall be questioned about that (17:36).

These verses prove that there are some conditions and characteristics of hearts, that is, minds, for which man will be called to account. The following verse also proves it

Surely (as for) those who love that scandal should circulate respecting those who believe, they shall have a grievous chastisement in this world and the hereafter... (24:19).

It shows that the chastisement shall be because of the "love" of circulating scandal; and love is a state of mind.

This is the apparent and clear meaning of this verse. It proves that man shall be called to account for what is settled in his mind, whether he hides it or shows it. But the verse is silent on the questions as to whether the chastisement in all cases - manifesting it or hiding it, acting according to one's intention or not doing so, succeeding in the intended transgression or not succeeding - will be the same or different.

Most of the commentators have misunderstood the significance of the verse. They have thought that it is said that man will be asked about even a passing notion that invades the mind, even if it has not settled therein and even when it is beyond the control of a man. Holding a man responsible for such fleeting notions is, without doubt, imposing a duty beyond the limit of one's ability. From this point on, these commentators have differed among themselves.

a) Some have admitted that Allah might impose on a soul a duty beyond its furthest limit. Others have tried to escape from this difficulty in various ways.

b) Some have accepted that the verse ordained for man what was in fact a duty beyond his ability. But, they claimed, it was abrogated by the sentence in the next verse: "Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability."

Comment: It has been clearly shown that the verse does not include such transitory ideas and notions. Therefore, the whole argument and interpretation is out of place. Moreover, imposing a duty beyond one's ability is, *ab initio*, against reason; Allah cannot do so even for a single moment. He has declared that He never ordained anything in religion beyond our ability: ... and (He) *did not lay upon you any hardship in religion (22:78)*.

c) Some others said that the verse was connected with the preceding one, and that it speaks particularly about the hiding of testimony.

Comment: This restriction of meaning is clearly against the general nature of the verse.

d) Still others have said that it was restricted to the unbelievers. Only they shall be called to account for their fleeting fantasies.

Comment: This restriction too is against the generality of the verse.

e) Someone else has interpreted the verse in this way: If you manifest your hidden evil by committing transgression openly, or if you keep it hidden by committing sins secretly, in both cases Allah will call you to account for it. According to this interpretation, the chastisement shall be, not for the ideas, but for the sins.

Comment: Such interpretation is totally against the apparent and clear meaning of the verse.

f) Yet others have said that "what is in your souls" means any kind of idea, whether fixed or otherwise. But "Allah will call you to account for it" means "Allah will inform you of it." According to this interpretation, the verse is similar to the verse: ... *so He will inform you of what you did* (5:105). Whether we manifest such ideas and notions or hide them, Allah will tell us about them on the Day of Resurrection.

Comment: This interpretation too, like the preceding one, is totally against the clear meaning of the verse.

QUR'AN: *then He will forgive whom He pleases and chastise whom He pleases; and Allah is powerful over all things:*

The alternatives of "forgiveness" and "chastisement" give a hint that "what is in your souls" refers especially to evil thoughts and characteristics. Although "forgiveness" has also been used in the Qur'an in a few such cases where no sin was involved, it is a very uncommon, indeed a rare, usage, and there should be some strong reason and clear association before the word "forgiveness" is being diverted to such meaning.

"And Allah is powerful over all things": It gives the reason for the said forgiving and chastising; or it may show the reason for the whole verse.

Traditions

It is narrated in as-Sahih of Muslim from Abu Hurayrah that he said: "When the verse: Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's; and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allah will call you to account for it was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), the companions of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) were very much perturbed. They came to the Messenger of Allah and crouched down (before him) and said: 'O Messenger of Allah! we were ordered to do what we were able to do - prayer, fasting, fighting and charity; but (now) Allah has sent down this verse and it is beyond the extent of our ability.' Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah said: 'Do you want to say as the people of the book before you said, "We hear and we disobey"? Rather, you should say, "We hear and obey; our Lord! Thy forgiveness (do we crave) and to Thee is (our) march." ' When they recited it, and their tongues had been subdued by it, Allah immediately revealed: The Apostle believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers... " and to Thee is (our) march. When they did so, Allah abrogated that (law) and revealed (the verse): Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability... "

The author says: as-Suyuti has narrated in *ad-Durru'lmanthur* through Ahmad, Muslim, Abu Dawud (in his *an-Nasikh wa 'l-mansukh*), Ibn Jarir, Ibnu'l-Mundhir and- Ibn Abi Hatim from Abu Hurayrah; and he has narrated another tradition with nearly the same meaning through several chains from Ibn 'Abbas. And the abrogation has been narrated through several chains from other companions too, like Ibn Mas'ud and 'A'ishah.

And it has been narrated from ar-Rabi' ibn Anas that the verse is confirmed and unabrogated; and that "calling to account" means that Allah will inform the servant, on the Day of Resurrection, about his deeds which he did in this world.

And it has been narrated from Ibn 'Abbas through several chains that the verse is restricted to hiding and giving testimony. Accordingly, it is a confirmed verse, not abrogated.

And it has been narrated from 'A'ishah that calling to account means the vexation and grief which a man feels when he intends to commit a sin and does not do it. This interpretation also treats the verse as confirmed and unabrogated.

And it has been narrated, through the chains of 'Ali, from Ibn 'Abbas about the words of Allah: *and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it* (i.e. all your hidden and manifest affairs) *Allah will call you to account for it*, that it is not abrogated. When Allah gathers the creatures on the Day of Resurrection, He shall say: "I shall inform you of what you had hidden in your souls which my angels were not aware of." Then, as for the believers, He shall tell them what they had imagined in their souls, and will forgive them. It is the word of Allah: *Allah will call you to account for it*, that is, will inform you. And as for the people of doubt and suspicion, He shall inform them of the denial of truth which they had kept hidden; and it is the word of Allah: ... *but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned*.

The author says: All these traditions, in spite of their mutual differences have one thing in common: All are against the clear meaning of the Qur'an, as explained earlier. The verse clearly says that men will be called to account for what their hearts have earned either directly or through other limbs; and there is no "earning" in passing notions and fleeting images which invade the mind. And testimony does not differ in this from other affairs, nor is there any difference in this matter between a believer and an unbeliever; and "calling to account" evidently does not mean informing someone of his transitory thoughts; it obviously means calling one to account for reward or punishment. This is the clear meaning of this verse, and all other verses confirm this meaning.

So far as those traditions are concerned which say that this verse was abrogated, there are several defects in them.

First: They are against the evident meaning of the verse, as explained above.

Second: They claim that there is no injustice in imposing a duty on a soul beyond the limits of its ability. Such a thing is evidently invalid, and especially so if it is attributed to Allah. The subsequent abrogation cannot right this wrong, rather the incongruity will increase; the tradition says, "... when they recited it... Allah abrogated...", in other words, the order was abrogated before it was acted upon. And such an abrogation is not acceptable in Islam.

Third: You will see in the commentary of the next verses that the sentence, "Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty' but to the extent of its ability", is not capable of abrogating any rule. That verse says that every soul is confronted by whatever it has earned, whether it finds it hard to bear or easy. If such a thing was imposed upon a soul which it did not have the strength to bear, or if such a burden was laid upon it as was laid upon those before us, it was all the result of what the soul had itself earned, because of its wrong choice; it should not blame anyone but itself. With this background, the sentence: *Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability*: looks like a parenthetic sentence, written to remove any possible misunderstanding.

Fourth: The subject of the next two verses has nothing to do with fleeting thoughts and transitory ideas; nor do those verses stand face to face with this verse as an abrogating verse stands in relation to an abrogated one.

In short, the purpose of the next verses is quite different from the aim of this verse, as you will see.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH, VERSES 285-286

أَمَّنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّن رُّسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا
 2:285 وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ
 لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إصْرًا كَمَا
 2:286 عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَارْحَمْنَا أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ

2:285 *The Apostle believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers: they all believe in Allah and His angels and His books and His apostles; We make no difference between any of His apostles. and they say: "We hear and obey; our Lord! Thy forgiveness (do we crave), and to Thee is (our) march."*

2:286 *Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability; for it is (the benefit of) what it has earned, and upon it (the evil of) what it has wrought; "Our Lord! do not punish us if we forget or do a mistake; Our Lord! do not lay on us a burden as Thou didst lay on those before us; Our Lord! do not impose upon us that which we have not the strength to bear; and pardon us and forgive us and have mercy on us; Thou art our Guardian, so help us against the unbelieving people."*

General Comment

These are the last verses of this chapter. They summarize the details given in it, and recapitulate its main objective. As we mentioned at the beginning, the chapter aimed to show that it was an integral part of the worship of Allah to believe in all that He sent to His creatures through His apostles, without making any difference between those apostles. It is this reality which is described in the first of these verses: "The Apostle believes... between any of His apostles."

The chapter then gives many stories of the Israelites: How Allah bestowed upon them His countless bounties, like the Book, the prophethood, the kingdom, etc., and how they answered it with disobedience, rebellion, breach of covenant and even infidelity. It is these stories that are obliquely hinted at in the remaining part of the first and the whole of the second verse, where the believers are reported as saying "We hear and obey", and then they go on seeking the protection, forgiveness and help of Allah.

Thus, these verses connect the end of the chapter with its beginning. The epilogue is a mirror of the prologue.

Allah opens this chapter by describing the qualities that are essential for a God-fearing people, and without which they cannot discharge their duties towards their Lord. He says that His pious and God-fearing servants believe in the unseen, keep up prayer, spend out of the sustenance given to them by Allah, believe in that which was revealed to the Apostle and to the previous apostles and are sure of the life hereafter (vide verses 2-5 of this chapter). Allah guides them through the Qur'an; and then He shows the contrast between them and the infidels and hypocrites.

Then the talk turns to the affairs of the people of the Book and especially the Jews. It explains how Allah, in His grace, guided them, and exalted them with His bounties and favors. And what was their response to all those favors? They became arrogant, disobeyed the commandments of Allah, and repaid His bounties with ingratitude; they stood against Allah and His apostles, bore malice against His angels, and made differences between one apostle and the other, and one book and the other. As a result, Allah laid on them heavy burdens, like the order to kill their own people; and imposed upon them that which they had no strength to bear, like turning them into apes, and sending lightning and plague from the sky on them.

After going into all these details, Allah recounts in these two verses the good attributes of the Apostle and the believers who have followed him; He shows that their condition is /in clear contrast with that of the people of the Book. They have responded to the divine bounties and guidance with submission and obedience; they believe in Allah, His angels, His books and His apostles, without making any difference between any of the apostles. And they know their own limitations as powerless mortals, and recognize the all-pervasive power of Allah. Although they have unconditionally submitted to the Caller towards the truth, they confess that they cannot do justice to that Call because of their inherent weakness and ignorance. They are afraid that they may transgress the limit by forgetfulness or mistake, or that they may fall short in their duties of divine worship; they are worried lest a sinful act puts them in disgrace, as happened with the people of the Book before them. Therefore, they beseech the All-merciful Lord and pray to Him not to punish them if they forget or make a mistake, not to lay on them a burden and not to impose upon them that which they have not the strength to bear; they entreat Him to pardon them, to forgive their mistakes and to have mercy on them, and to help them against the unbelieving people.

This is the true place of these two verses in the scheme of this chapter; they are a sort of resume of the chapter. This observation should be enough to further repudiate the claims of the commentators

a) that these verses were connected with the preceding one: "and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allah will call you to account for it";

b) that this preceding verse imposed a duty upon every soul beyond the limit of its ability;

c) that the first of these verses, "The Apostle believes... and to Thee is (our) march", describes how the companions submitted to, and accepted, this imposition of duty beyond the limit of their ability;

d) And that the second of these verses, "Allah does not impose... help us against the unbelieving people", abrogated that verse which imposed such duty.

Moreover, our explanation is in perfect harmony with the reported "reason of revelation" of this chapter, that it was the first chapter revealed at Medina. The Prophet emigrated to Medina, and settled therein; the Medinite believers, that is, the Helpers (*ansar*), eagerly accepted the divine religion, and stood up to help the Apostle of Allah with their properties and lives; the Emigrant believers (*muhajirun*) abandoned their properties and homes, and left their families and children in the cause of Islam, and came to Medina to remain with the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). That was indeed the time when Allah should have praised them for their answering the Call of His Prophet with acceptance and obedience, and thanked them for their submission.

The last sentence "Thou art our Guardian, so help us against the unbelieving people" also indicates that this prayer was at a time when Islam had begun its march forward, and when there was danger of attack from the unbelievers.

This verse contains wonders of elocution; there is generality followed by specification, and brevity by amplification; it shows the servants of Allah the perfect way of submission and servitude; and, in

short, contains all the basic elements of perfection and felicity.

Commentary

QUR'AN: *The Apostle believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers:*

This makes known the belief of the Apostle and the believers. The Apostle has been mentioned separately as the one who believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord; then the believers have been joined to him in this virtue; it has been done to maintain the dignity of the Apostle. It is the usual style of the Qur'an: On such occasions, it first mentions the name of the Apostle separately, and thereafter the believers are joined to him. Look, for example, at following verses: ... *then Allah sent down His tranquility on His Apostle and on the believers*(48:26); ... *on the day on which Allah will not abase the Prophet and those who believe with him...* (66:8).

QUR'AN: *they all believe in Allah and His angels and His books and His apostles:*

This specifies the generality of the preceding sentence: "What has been revealed" to the Messenger of Allah demands belief in Allah and acceptance of the truth of the books and apostles and angels who are Allah's honored servants. Whoever believes in what has been revealed to the Messenger of Allah must believe in all those things, in a suitable manner.

QUR'AN: *We make no difference between any of His apostles:*

It is the quotation of the believers' saying, without using the introductory verb, "They said". We have explained in the commentary of verse 2:127 (*And when Ibrahim and Isma'il were raising the foundations of the House; "Our Lord! accept from us; surely Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing"*) the general reason for this type of quotation, and how it is one of the most elegant styles of the Qur'an. Apart from that basic reason of portraying the speakers before the eyes and ears of the imagination there was in this case one particular reason for omission of the words 'They said': this speech depicts the believers' state of mind; it does not describe their verbal declaration. Even if we suppose that they actually uttered these words, each of them must have done so individually and in his heart; they never said it jointly and together by their tongues. It was only their shared faith that announced this belief, not in words but in their state of minds, which spoke louder than the words.

This verse quotes two sayings of the believers, one after another, but with different styles: "We make no difference... " is without the words 'They said'; then the sentence is followed immediately by, "and they say: 'We hear and obey ... '" which, as we see, is introduced with, "they say ". Yet both are the believers' sayings when they answered the Call of the Prophet.

The reason for this difference is that the first sentence describes the state of their minds, while the second was actually uttered by them in words.

The verse begins by describing the belief of all the believers, "everyone of them" taken separately. Then it turns to plural verbs and pronouns (*We make no difference...*), and it continues up to the end. What was done in this respect by the people of the Book was done by their whole of their nations. The Jews made a difference between Musa on the one hand, and 'Isa and Muhammad on the other; the Christians made a difference between Musa and 'Isa on one hand, and Muhammad on the other. Thus they became divided into many groups and sects, although Allah had created them one people. Also, they were chastised and heavy burdens were imposed on the whole of their groups jointly, not separately. And the prayer at the end of the verse 'to be helped against the unbelieving people' was, likewise, a collective affair. Therefore, all these things demanded plural words. In contrast to this,

"belief " is a personal and individual matter, and it was appropriate to describe it in an individualistic style and a singular number.

QUR'AN: *And they say: "We hear and obey; Our Lord! Thy forgiveness (do we crave), and to Thee is (our)march":*

"We hear and obey" is not information; it is the declaration of their submission to the divine command. To hear allegorically means to accept and believe in; to obey is used for complying with order. Together these two words point to the acceptance of the call through believing with the heart and doing one's duty with the body. Thus hearing and obeying refer to perfect belief.

Their declaration to hear and obey is, thus, fulfillment of the rights Allah has on His servants; it is the sum total of the duties that Allah has imposed upon them: to hear and to obey. It is the "worship" mentioned in the following verses: *And I did not create the jinn and the human beings except that they should worship Me. I do not desire from them any sustenance and I do not desire that they should feed Me (51:56-57) ; Did I not enjoin you, O children of Adam! that you should not worship the Satan? Surely, he is you open enemy, and that you should worship Me; this is the right way (36:60-61).*

And Allah has decreed on His Own Self a right for His servants, in consideration of the above-mentioned duty imposed on them, that is, forgiveness. It is a thing which nobody can do without - right from the apostles and the prophets to an ordinary believers. Allah promised them that He would forgive them if they obeyed and worshipped Him. This promise was the first thing ordained when the *shari'ah* was given to Adam: *We said: Get down you there from all together; and when there comes to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve (2:38).* And it is what forgiveness means.

The believers said "We hear and obey"; their declaration of faith and obedience was unconditional, they did what was expected of them about the rights of their Lord. Then they asked the Lord to bestow upon them His promised grace, that is, forgiveness. They said: "Thy forgiveness (do we crave), and to Thee is (our) march." "*al-Maghfirah*", and *al-ghufran*, both of which are translated as "forgiveness", literally mean "to cover". When Allah forgives the sin of a servant, the due punishment is averted from him; in other words, Allah covers and hides his shortcomings. This grace will be bestowed upon the servant when he reaches His Lord. That is why they said, soon after praying for forgiveness, "and to Thee is (our) march."

QUR'AN: *Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability; for it is (the benefit of)what it has earned, and upon it (the evil of) what it has wrought:*

"al-Wus" is ability and power. Originally, the word was used for dimension, to show the area or capacity of a place or receptacle; then the power of man was thought of as a receptacle from which his actions come forth. A man has the ability to do a certain task; it is as though the said task is accommodated in his ability. On the other hand, a task which he cannot do is too great for his power and ability. In this way, the word 'dimension' came to mean power and ability.

As mentioned above, it is the sum total of the rights of Allah on man that he should hear and obey. Obviously, man can say "I hear" only about that which he can understand; how can he answer by hearing and accepting what he cannot understand? Also, he can say "I obey" only about that which can be performed by his faculties and organs directly or through some tools. Obedience means that man follows the given order, and his faculties and organs are actuated to perform accordingly. The question of obedience does not arise about things that cannot be done; for example, if one is told to hear by his eyes, or to sit in two rooms at the same time, or that one should be born from his parents a second time. No such order can be given by any sane person. When the believers answer the Call of

religion with hearing and obedience, it means that the Call is about such things that are within their power and ability; and it is these things which man obeys or disobeys, earning for himself what will benefit him or harm him. The "earning", mentioned in this verse, is the best proof to show that what man earns, he earns through his ability and power.

The words of Allah "Allah does not impose upon any soul ... " describe the divinely established system that Allah does not impose upon His servants what is beyond their power; for example, He does not tell them to believe in that which is beyond their understanding; nor does He ordain for them a duty which they cannot do. This is, also, the custom of all sane persons. It is a sentence that is neither more nor less than the believers' declaration "We hear and obey"; it agrees with it perfectly.

This sentence, that is, "Allah does not impose upon any soul... ", is in perfect harmony with the preceding and the following sentences. It is related to the preceding one, as it shows that Allah does not impose any duty except that which the servants can hear and obey, that is, which is within their ability and power.

And it is related to the following sentences, as it shows that what the Apostle and the believers prayed for - that Allah should not punish them if they forget or do a mistake, and should not lay on them burden as He laid on past nations, and should not impose upon them anything which they do not have strength to bear - was not an imposition beyond the extent of their ability, although such things, if imposed, could cause hardship. When Allah imposes upon a group that which they have not the strength to bear, it is not the imposition of a duty; it is the imposition of a punishment for their transgression and rebellion.

Forgetfulness and committing mistakes, *per se*, are beyond man's power; but, more often than not, it is man himself who paves the way for them. It is possible to prevent these two (forgetfulness and erring) by desisting from those things which cause them. It is especially true in cases where one forgets or commits a mistake because of his wrong choice.

The same may be said about laying on one a burden like that which was laid upon previous people. It refers to the cases in which Allah imposed hard rules in place of easy ones, when those people went against those easy rules. It was not the unwarrantable imposition of duty beyond one's ability; it was brought upon them by those people themselves because of their wrong choice. And such punishing rules are not bad in law.

QUR'AN: *Our Lord! do not punish us if we forget or do a mistake:*

They first said, "We hear and obey" which showed their unconditional surrender and obedience. Then they looked at themselves and became aware of their intrinsically weak and imperfect being. Also, they remembered what had happened to previous nations. This prompted them to beseech their Lord for mercy, and they prayed to Him not to take them to task as He had done with past people. They sought His protection because Allah had taught them that there was no power or strength except from Allah, and that nothing can save from Allah's displeasure except His mercy.

Why did the Apostle prayed to Allah in these words when he was sinless and protected from mistake and forgetfulness? He did so because his sinlessness had come from Allah; he was protected from mistake and forgetfulness by Allah's protection. Therefore, it was quite in order for him to include himself in the group of believers to ask from his Lord what he knew was a grace of the Lord.

QUR'AN: *Our Lord! do not lay on us a burden as Thou didst lay on those before us:*

"*al-Isr*" (burden) is also interpreted as detaining a thing by force. This is not very far from the first meaning: If a thing is confined and detained forcefully it puts a heavy burden on it.

"Those before us" refers to the people of the Book and especially the Jews, because this chapter describes many stories about them; and because the seventh chapter, *inter alia*, refers to the Apostle

of Islam in these words: ... *and removes from them (the people of Torah and Injil) their burden and the shackles which were upon them...* (7:157).

QUR'AN: *Our Lord! do not impose upon us that which we have not the strength to bear:*

It does not refer to unbearable rules of the *shari'ah*, because reason does not allow such rules, and Allah has Himself said that He does not impose any duty beyond one's limit of ability; and the words of the believers "We hear and obey" show that Allah's commandments are within their ability to understand and act.

This sentence in fact refers to severe punishments meted out to previous peoples - the imposition of retaliatory hard rules, sending upon them severe chastisements or transforming them into animals or insects.

QUR'AN: *And pardon us and forgive us and have mercy on us:*

"*al-Afw*" (is to erase the signs of a thing); "*al-maghfirah*" is to cover it; "*ar-rahmah*" is mercy. From the linguistic point of view, the three, sentences proceed from branch to root and from particular to general. The believers beseech Allah first to erase and eradicate the sign of their sin (by removing its due punishment from them), then they ask Him to cover and hide the sin (by letting all concerned forget about it completely); lastly they crave for His mercy that will cover the sin and make them worthy of His grace.

The three sentences are in conjunction with the previous ones: "Our Lord! do not punish us if we forget or do a mistake..." The context shows that the pardon, forgiveness and mercy asked for are in connection with such sins which they might commit by forgetfulness or mistake. Therefore, the forgiveness asked for in this verse is in a particular context; it is not like the forgiveness asked for in the previous verse, "Thy forgiveness (do we crave)", which is an unrestricted and unconditional forgiveness in consideration of the believers' unrestricted and unconditional acceptance of the Call.

It is clear from the above that there is no repetition of the prayer of forgiveness, because both are in separate contexts.

In these prayers the word "Lord" has been repeated four times. This was done to invoke the divine mercy. The name "Lord" by contrast, hints to the servitude and total dependence of the beseecher.

QUR'AN: *Thou art our Guardian, so help us against the unbelieving people:*

It is an independent sentence and a separate prayer. "*al-Mawla*" means 'helper' - not any helper, but that one who looks after the affairs of the helped one. The root word is *al-wilayah* (to govern, to rule, to take charge of). Allah is the Ruler of the believers; therefore, He is their Guardian in all their affairs. Allah says: ... *and Allah is the Guardian of the believers*(3:68); *That is because Allah is the Master of those who believe, and because the unbelievers have no master for them* (47:11).

This prayer of theirs shows that their only desire, after hearing and obeying the basic religion, was to spread the true faith and to fight in the way of Allah to establish the word of truth, so that all the nations could unite in that cause. Allah says: *Say: "This is my way: I invite you unto Allah; with clear sight (are) I and he who follows me; and glory be to Allah, and I am not of the polytheists"* (12:108). To call to the faith of monotheism is the way of true religion. It involves one in fighting, enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, and in all the methods of propagation of religion. This is done to remove the root of discord from the human species. The importance attached to this endeavor may be understood from the verse: *He has prescribed for you of the religion what He enjoined upon Nuh and that which We have revealed unto you, and that which We enjoined upon Ibrahim and Musa and Isa, that establish the religion and be not divided therein* (42:13).

This prayer of the believers (*Thou are our Guardian, so help us...*) proves that the first thing that came into their minds after firmly deciding to hear and obey, was the general call to invite the whole

of mankind to the religion' of truth. And Allah knows better.

Wa'l-hamdu li'llah (And praise and thank be to Allah).

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